

*Leave of Absence**Monday, March 28, 1994***HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES***Monday, March 28, 1994*

The House met at 1.43 p.m.

**PRAYERS**[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]**LEAVE OF ABSENCE**

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Members, I have granted leave of absence from today's sitting of the House to the Member for Tabaquite (Dr. Carl Singh).

**PAPER LAID**

Annual Report of the Integrity Commission for the year 1993. [*The Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley)*]

**FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT****Presentation**

**The Minister of Finance (Hon. Wendell Mottley):** Madam Speaker, I beg to present the Third Report (1993—1994 session) of the Finance Committee of the House of Representatives of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on proposals for the expenditure from public revenue which were not included in the Annual Estimates 1993.

**ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS****Balmain Slope Bridge**

**64. Mr. Ramesh Lawrence Maharaj** (*Couva South*) asked the Minister of Works and Transport and Minister of Local Government:

Could the Minister state:

(a) Whether he is aware that the Balmain Slope Bridge which connects Balmain Village to Calcutta Road Settlement No. 2 was washed away by floods some 12 years ago;

(b) Whether his Government intends to replace this bridge?

(c) If it does, could he state an approximate period within which it intends to do so?

**The Minister of Works and Transport and Minister of Local Government (Hon. Colm Imbert):** Madam Speaker, yes, the Minister is aware. Yes, the Government intends to replace the bridge as soon as practicable.

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The proposed structure will be a large one with a total span of approximately 50 metres (160 feet) and with a depth to the river bed of about 12 metres (40 feet). The expected total cost of the bridge, including soil stabilization works which must be done on the slopes, is of the order of \$6 million.

The ministry is seeking to have this bridge included on the list of bridges to be undertaken under the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) funded Agricultural Access Roads and Bridges Reconstruction Programme Phase II. If approved for construction, work on this bridge should begin around March 1995.

**Squatters Regularization Programme  
(Arena/Carlsen Field)**

**72. Mr. Raymond Palackdharrysingh** (*Caroni Central*) asked the Minister of Housing and Settlement:

Would the Minister state the status of the squatters regularization programme at Arena and Carlsen Field in the constituency of Caroni Central?

**The Minister of Housing and Settlement (Dr. The Hon. Vincent Lasse):** Madam Speaker, with respect to Arena Road, Freeport, this project is on the National Housing Authority's programme and, as such, the necessary preparatory work is in progress. The advancement of the project has been complicated by the fact that the lands in question had previously been earmarked for use by the Praesto Persto Youth Camp. For the lands to be used for housing purposes, approval must be obtained from the Town and Country Planning Division.

In 1994, it is the intention of the Ministry of Housing and Settlement to resolve the land use and planning approvals issues and, barring unforeseen circumstances, undertake actual regularization work in 1995.

With respect to Carlsen Field, this project has been delayed because of existing agricultural agreements. For regularization to take place, a change of use of the area occupied by the squatters would be required.

As with the Arena project, every effort will be made to resolve the administrative issues in 1994 with a view to starting regularization in 1995.

**San Fernando West Constituency  
(Development Works)**

**73. Mr. Raymond Palackdharrysingh** (*Caroni Central*) asked the Minister of Works and Transport and Minister of Local Government:

Would the Minister state:

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- (a) Whether the flood-proofing of the surrounding areas of Coconut Drive and Green Acres is only the first stage of ongoing developments in the constituency of San Fernando West;
- (b) The other stages of development envisaged for implementation;
- (c) Whether the construction of an elevated pedestrian crossing over the river is one of the stages of that development;
- (d) The projected date for completion of the development works;
- (e) The cost of the development works;
- (f) Whether works of a related nature would be carried out in any other part of the country?

**The Minister of Works and Transport and Minister of Local Government (Hon. Colm Imbert):** Madam Speaker, the widening and realignment of sections of the Ciperó River between Gulf City Link Road and Ciperó Street is only part of the proposed development works to be undertaken in the Ciperó River Basin. On completion of this exercise, similar work will be undertaken on the section of the river east of Ciperó Street.

The construction of an elevated pedestrian crossing is being undertaken by the ministry to replace the structure which was destroyed during the passage of Tropical Storm Bret in August 1993.

The works presently programmed to be undertaken, and which I have indicated, are all scheduled to be completed later this year at a total cost of \$295,000.

Similar works are being undertaken on rivers and water courses throughout the country by the Drainage Division under the Flood Relief Programme.

**1.50 p.m.**

**Ciperó River  
(Development Work)**

**78. Mr. Raymond Palackdharrysingh** (*Caroni Central*) asked the Minister of Works and Transport and Minister of Local Government:

- (a) Would the Minister state whether any work was carried out on the Ciperó River in the constituency of San Fernando West over the past year?
- (b) If the answer is in the affirmative, would the Minister state:

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- i) The nature of the work carried out;
- ii) When the feasibility study was commissioned and completed for such work;
- iii) Whether the work carried out would alleviate flooding in the Green Acres area when there is heavy rain and high tides?

**Hon. C. Imbert:** Madam Speaker, yes, works were carried out on the Ciperó River in the constituency of San Fernando West in 1993.

The work carried out included the widening, deepening and realignment of that section of the Ciperó River between Gulf City Link Road and Ciperó Street. These works were undertaken using as a guide a study of the Ciperó River which was commissioned in 1979 and completed in 1981.

**Mr. Palackdharrysingh:** So you found the old one?

**Hon. C. Imbert:** The study was undertaken by Messrs. Lee Young & Partners, Consulting Civil and Structural Engineers.

Yes, the work done would alleviate flooding in the Green Acres area when there is heavy rain and high tide.

**Mr. Palackdharrysingh:** Better look for one for Caparó River; you will find an old one, too.

*The following questions stood on the Order Paper in the name of Miss Pamela Nicholson (Tobago West):*

### **Domestic Route (Air Fares)**

- 82.** (a) Is the Minister of Works and Transport aware that there was an increase in air fare after the new domestic travel arrangements were established from August 08, 1993?
- (b) Were there any identified concessions that the two airlines serving the domestic route should meet? If there were, would the Minister identify these concessions?
- (c) Since the increased air fares, did the Government or its agent, ATLA, confirm these changes? If the answer is in the affirmative, would the Minister say why there is a difference in the fare structure between British West Indian Airways (BWIA) and Air Caribbean?

- (d) Would the Minister please inform the House what were the conditions outlined in the agreement reached after an attempt was made to keep or limit BWIA's operation on the domestic route?

**Domestic Route  
(BWIA's Removal)**

- 83.** (a) Can the Minister of Works and Transport tell the House whether he or his Government was informed by ATLA about the removal of BWIA's Friday service on the domestic route from March 04, 1994?
- (b) Is the Minister aware of the serious negative impact that this discriminatory position would have on the travelling public, especially Tobagonians, and Tobago's only industry—tourism?
- (c) Is the Minister aware that British West Indian Airways is the only airline on the domestic service that has an International Computer Reservation System in place and this is a critical ingredient in the tourism thrust?
- (d) Can the Minister inform this House why Air Caribbean is not linked to any International Computer Reservation System that makes connection to Tobago?

**Trinidad and Tobago Methanol Company  
(Equity Sold)**

- 84.** (a) Would the Prime Minister state what percentage of the equity in the Trinidad and Tobago Methanol Company was sold to Ferrostaal and Helm AC, respectively?
- (b) Would the Prime Minister indicate whether domestic and other foreign investors were given equal opportunity to bid for the available shares in the Trinidad and Tobago Methanol Company? If so, was the opportunity provided through advertisement in the local and international media including industry magazines? Would the Prime Minister indicate the dates and publications used?
- (c) (i) Did the advertisements information memorandum state the date by which bids should be submitted and the number of shares being offered for sale and the criteria by which the bids would be evaluated?
- (ii) Would the Prime Minister indicate the names of the bidders and the amounts offered?

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- (d) If such bids were received, would the Prime Minister indicate by whom the evaluation was done and who negotiated the final terms of sale?

**The Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley):** Madam Speaker, I seek your leave to have questions Nos. 82, 83 and 84 deferred for a period of one week. It is agreeable to the Member for Tobago West.

*Questions, by leave, deferred.*

**ADJOURNMENT (LEAVE REQUEST)  
(Water Shortage)**

**Mr. Mohammed Haniff (Princes Town):** Madam Speaker, because of the bad situation with the lack of water in many districts, I earlier today sent you a letter. It is a matter of urgent, public importance, pursuant to the provisions of the Standing Orders of the House of Representatives, Standing Order No. 12.

The matter relates to the lack of an adequate supply of water to many parts of the country at this time. The matter is definite because in many parts of the country people cannot even cook; neither can they carry out the normal hygienic requirements such as bathing, and cleaning their homes. Madam Speaker, the matter is urgent because it has been approximately two months since the contractors' trucks have stopped supplying water, causing an already bad situation to get even worse.

The matter is of public importance since this state of affairs is causing loss of productivity, very low attendance at schools, together with the possibility of causing an epidemic.

I am satisfied that this matter cannot await a Motion on the Adjournment for almost two weeks from today, having regard to the fact that neither the Water & Sewerage Authority nor the local government bodies are supplying water at this time when all the other possible sources of water, such as ponds and rivers, are either dry or polluted. I am compelled to raise this matter today, hoping that the newly appointed Minister of Public Utilities would tell us how soon steps will be taken to bring about some relief to the thousands of suffering people out there who cannot afford to pay large sums of money for the precious commodity without which life cannot go on.

Madam Speaker, over the weekend I have had cause to visit a few areas—

**Madam Speaker:** No, you cannot go into a debate.

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**Mr. Haniff:** I am just saying that that is what prompted me to bring this Motion, having regard to the general situation and the suffering I have witnessed again.

**Madam Speaker:** I think the hon. Member is aware that I am really not required to give reasons. I am not satisfied that this matter falls under Standing Order 12, but I think, for the benefit of the Member, I would state that I agree that the matter is definite and that it is of public importance. Unfortunately, the limb of urgency is not satisfied. I think the Member is aware that the lack of an adequate water supply has been engaging the national attention for some time now. The Member himself has raised this matter on many occasions; several Members have raised it; and it is not the kind of matter that requires the interruption of proceedings of this House to be pursued. It is really an ideal matter for Standing Order 11.

#### ECONOMIC POLICY REVIEW

**The Minister of Finance and Minister of Tourism (Hon. Wendell Mottley):** Madam Speaker, it is now approximately five months since I delivered the 1994 Budget statement to this honourable House—

**Mr. B. Panday:** Time for a second one?

**Hon. W. Mottley:**—and almost two and a half years since this administration took office. I think that it is appropriate to review with you and with the national community the problems and progress which have occurred as we pursue our new economic course. This review and assessment is consistent with the administration's promise to be open, and to communicate regularly with the national community on matters affecting our collective welfare—

**Mr. B. Panday:** He should not be permitted to do that.

**Mr. Maharaj:** Madam Speaker, on a point of order. We are objecting that this does not fall under a ministerial statement, because the Minister is using the national Parliament for the purpose of entering into a matter which we cannot debate. If there is some important policy decision that has been made one may have to look at Erskine May's *Parliamentary Practice*; but having regard to the introduction of what he has said, if he agrees that we are going to debate it, we will have no problem with that. But he is going to be making these statements, nobody can discuss or debate them, and the press is publishing one side of what is happening. That is a misuse of the Parliament.

**Mr. Valley:** Madam Speaker, the matter falls under the Minister's portfolio. If the Opposition wish they can file a Motion to have the statement debated.

**Mr. B. Panday:** When? Next month?

**Mr. Valley:** We would be prepared to treat it as urgent, and give it priority, Madam Speaker. But according to the Standing Orders there are no grounds on which the Opposition can object.

**Mr. B. Panday:** No, no, no, there are rules about these things.

**Hon. W. Mottley:** Madam Speaker, there is a Bill before the Parliament and this side is quite prepared, if the Members opposite wish to discuss this during the course of the debate, with the Speaker's permission.

**Madam Speaker:** All right. Proceed.

**Hon. W. Mottley:** If I may restart—it is now approximately five months since I delivered the 1994 Budget statement to this honourable House, and almost two and a half years since this administration took office. I think that it is appropriate to review with you and with the national community the problems and progress which have occurred as we pursue our new economic course. This review and assessment is consistent with the administration's promise to be open, and to communicate regularly with the national community on matters affecting our collective welfare. During the term of this Government, the Ministry of Finance, through me, has made available to this House and to the public, an unprecedented flow of economic information.

**2.00 p.m.**

It is important, as well, to place certain facts on record in order to discount rumour, speculation and mischief. Let me emphasize, however, that this statement constitutes a review and assessment of Government policy initiatives and accomplishments. Nevertheless, I will point out certain adjustments which Government will have to make to fine-tune our policy mix in light of changing circumstances.

First, let me restate the vision. The vision which this administration has articulated for the economy of Trinidad and Tobago is one in which we create a diversified economy making the fullest use of our natural resource endowment and our human potential. Driven by a vibrant private sector comprising highly productive foreign and national, small, medium and large enterprises, we will seek to develop a competitive market-oriented economy integrated into the global economic order.

In this economy, the State will no longer be a major investor in enterprises. Nevertheless, the State will play a major role in facilitating investment and steering the nation forward. As I indicated in the 1994 Budget statement, it is only through such efforts that we can become:

"The most accessible and efficient regional business, financial and manufacturing centre—The Global City of the Caribbean."

I now turn to the objectives.

In order to obtain this vision of our economy, we need to:

1. bring Government finances under control, because large fiscal deficits are unsustainable and lead inevitably to inflation and exchange rate depreciation which impact most heavily on those of our people least able to bear it, and a loss of confidence and, therefore, capital flight on the part of investors;
2. institute appropriate monetary and financial policies;
3. reform the legal institutional framework in order to improve efficiency in the conduct of business in the country, while ensuring that the welfare of consumers is protected;
4. promote investment, from both foreign and local sources since it is only through increased investment that growth and development and employment will occur;
5. develop a world-class labour force through education, training and the introduction of new skills and technologies associated with new investment.

Over the last 28 months, we have addressed all of these objectives and I propose to review our progress in these areas.

Fiscal policy: Much has been done to bring the fiscal situation under control.

**Mr. B. Panday:** What has this House degenerated to? The Minister is delivering a budget speech. That has to be laid on the Table and debated.

**Mr. Maharaj:** Madam Speaker, we must object!

**Mr. B. Panday:** This cannot go on. What are you doing?

**Mr. Maharaj:** We must object to this. Look at the volume of that document. We represent the people of Trinidad and Tobago. We were not even given the courtesy of being told that such a statement was being made. This does not fall within the category of a ministerial statement.

**Mr. B. Panday:** That is a budget speech!

**Mr. Maharaj:** If they want it to be debated and they want us to say that, then let us go with the ordinary business of the House, have a special sitting, give us a copy of it and we will debate it.

**Miss Nicholson:** Why are they hiding?

**Mr. Maharaj:** But what is the purpose of doing that? Just for the press to print it and there is no debate on it?—misusing the process of Parliament.

**Mr. B. Panday:** Propaganda! That is all they are interested in! Propaganda! Not the country!

**Hon. W. Mottley:** Madam Speaker, I did make a statement on the matter and I will proceed.

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Members, I think when the objection was first made, the hon. Minister indicated that it would be available for debate and I ruled that he should proceed.

**Mr. B. Panday:** Today, Madam? After he reads that, are we going to debate it today?

**Miss Nicholson:** That is impossible!

**Mr. B. Panday:** Is that what the ruling is going to be? You are making this House into a joke!

**Miss Nicholson:** That is the first time we have ever seen that. Wicked!

**Mr. B. Panday:** This House is becoming a joke! He is delivering another budget speech, and if he is doing so, he must be prepared to have it debated! What are you hiding? Why are you afraid? That is not a speech to be made on the—

**Madam Speaker:** All right. All right. [*Mr. A.N.R. Robinson rises*]

**Hon. W. Mottley:** The fiscal balance has moved—

**Mr. Maharaj:** A Member is on his feet!

**Mr. Robinson:** Madam Speaker, may I suggest that out of respect for this House, the Minister be gracious enough to desist and to use another procedure to make that kind of speech.

**Hon. W. Mottley:** Madam Speaker, the fiscal balance has moved from a deficit of 0.2 per cent in 1991, to a small surplus of 0.2 per cent in 1993.

**Mr. B. Panday:** Is that the attitude that you intend to continue with in the House?

**Mr. Maharaj:** You are spending all the moneys in Plipdeco. You are robbing the country.

**Hon. W. Mottley:** In a system of floating exchange rates, Government and the Central Bank use fiscal and monetary policy to influence the exchange rate.

**Mr. B. Panday:** This House is not worth sitting in. You will make your speech in my absence.

**Mr. Maharaj:** You want to run the country! You do it in our absence!

**Mr. B. Panday:** When you are through, I will come back.

*[Opposition Members leave the Chamber]*

**Hon. W. Mottley:** The small surplus we achieved in difficult circumstances in 1993 was our major contribution to the stability of the exchange rate and the moderation of price increases following the floating of the Trinidad and Tobago dollar in 1993.

External debt service has been met fully and on time and the debt stock has been reduced from US \$2,433 million at the end of 1991 to US \$2,098 million at the end of 1993. The sacrifices involved in making our debt service commitments have been tremendous and the national community has to be congratulated on its patience. In 1995, we will be rewarded when our external debt service falls from US \$645.7 million in 1994 to US \$413.4 million in 1995. This means an additional TT \$1.3 billion will remain in the domestic economy in 1995 which will be available to support more retail sales, jobs and investments.

In 1992, we re-entered the international capital markets after a four-year absence. As a middle-income country we are currently making extensive use of resources from the multilateral agencies. However, the international capital markets will become our major sources of external financing, together with increased foreign direct investment. We need, therefore, to continue to improve the image and reputation we have built in these international markets where our credit rating is now comparable to that of Mexico and Chile.

However, there has been an increase in our internal debt over the last few years. While Government's borrowing from the Central Bank increased in 1992, we were able to reverse this in 1993, as Government was able to reduce outstanding advances by \$771.8 million. At the end of 1993, the level of advances from the Central Bank had fallen to \$1,320.5 million, the lowest level since 1988.

The fiscal consolidation process is, however, not quite complete. We have to address the matter of the arrears to public servants. The amount involved is estimated at \$1.6 billion. Government has acknowledged its obligations to public servants and is continuing the dialogue with their representatives with a view to

arriving at a settlement which is mutually satisfactory. It should be clear that Government's finances do not enable it to make cash payments in full and immediate settlement of these arrears. The effects on the economy would be simply disastrous. We are exploring a number of options, paid vacation leave and bonds, on which we confidently expect agreement with the unions. We must also acknowledge that the level of transfers to state enterprises and utilities remains unacceptably high. While we have made good progress in reducing transfers from \$563 million in 1991 to \$405 million in 1993, more and faster progress needs to be made.

Given the recent shortfall in oil revenues resulting from lower oil prices, that is, the \$396.5 million shortfall, the Ministry of Finance has acted quickly in identifying and implementing a number of measures designed to minimize the impact of the shortfall in revenues on Government's fiscal operations in 1994. Our current projections suggest that the small surplus we budgeted in 1994 will turn into a small and manageable deficit of 0.6 per cent of GDP, even after increasing our total budgeted expenditure by an additional \$66 million.

**2.10 p.m.**

Let me assure this honourable House that Government will manage this situation without recourse to any increases in taxation, or cuts in salaries and wages or in separation of workers beyond what has already been mutually agreed with the respective unions, and without jeopardizing our social safety net. Rather, we will intensify our revenue collection efforts and increase compliance levels, while seeking to achieve a further measure of saving on non-statutory expenditure.

For the technically minded, I have appended a comparative statement of the 1994 fiscal operations as read in November 1993, and as we now project.

The point is that we are not losing sight of our basic macro-economic objectives. It would be irresponsible in the extreme to attempt to maintain expenditure, no matter how laudable or useful the project, if this is done at the cost of unsustainable fiscal deficits, increasing inflation levels and unwarranted exchange rate depreciation with consequences for every one of us at the grocery store and everywhere else.

Of all the areas of our national life, the adjustment which has had to occur in the public sector has been perhaps the most difficult and traumatic. Traditionally, the public sector was seen as a gigantic sponge which absorbed the labour surpluses thrown up by a weak non-oil economy and a capital-intensive petroleum

sector. Public sector employment was perceived to be secure, and in some areas of the public service, not very demanding.

Let me hasten to say that certain functions in the public service are as demanding if not more so, than most jobs in the private sector. We created a great many state enterprises and public utilities, several of which came to rely heavily on the Treasury to fund their day-to-day operations. The commitment of administrations, past and present, to a degree of welfare support for the aged and the disadvantaged, added to the burden of expenditure.

From the outset, this administration recognized that the solution to the problems of the public sector went beyond mere expenditure reduction. It was necessary to reform and modernize the public service and to engender a culture of performance and efficiency, both in the mainstream public service, as well as in the state enterprises and utilities. To this end, we have embarked on a comprehensive reform exercise.

The change of culture and organization in the public service which is contemplated will not occur overnight; it will take years. However, we have started down that road and we are well on the way to a modern and efficient public service.

I turn to divestment. The need to reduce the level of transfers to ailing state enterprises and utilities has been only one of the motivating factors in Government's divestment programme.

We have used divestment in several ways beneficial to all of us. We have used divestment to stimulate further investment and create jobs, as with methanol; to help us pay off burdensome debt and expand production as at Fertrin; and to secure our low-cost, abundant and reliable energy advantage, we have now decided to partially divest the generation component of T&TEC's operations. Furthermore, divestment is being used to broaden local share ownership, including the expansion of employee share ownership, as well as to fund critical capital requirements in our efforts to combat and contain the crime situation.

Government, in 1993 and 1994 to date, has realized TT \$636 million from divestment. The divestment proceeds are not the only measure to be used in assessing the success of this programme. One specific example of this is the divestment of the Fertrin/Urea complex. Since the divestment of the plant to Arcadian in March 1993, Arcadian Trinidad Limited has invested US \$23 million for expansion of the plant, and production has already increased by 12 per cent. The company also expects to commence construction of a new urea plant by the

end of 1994. There has been no retrenchment. Out of a total workforce of 390 persons, 24 took enhanced voluntary early retirement. An employee stock ownership programme was introduced in January 1994 and a profit-sharing plan was also introduced on January 01, 1994. All supervisory staff have been sent for further training in Memphis, USA.

Furthermore, there has been a demonstrable improvement in the performance of state enterprises, generally, such that in 1993, Government received \$300 million in dividends and loan repayments, and approximately \$229 million is expected in 1994.

Monetary policy: Over the last two years monetary policy has focused on maintaining a regime of fairly tight liquidity and a level and structure of interest rates appropriate to the direction of our macro-economic policies. There have been complaints from several quarters about the level of interest rates, in particular the fact that lending rates seem to be so high as to inhibit investment and growth.

While the prime lending rate of the commercial banks has remained at 15.50 per cent for much of the period, the lending rate to some of the larger customers has averaged 13 to 13.5 per cent. However, the actual cost of funds to those borrowers who can issue commercial paper has been even lower, and we have seen more recently an increase in US-dollar lending to enterprises which have foreign exchange earnings.

It is far more important for us, at this stage, to maintain relative exchange rate stability and fiscal discipline, than to attempt to force economic recovery by initiating an unsustainable reduction in interest rates. The stance of monetary policy will therefore remain conservative until an easing of liquidity conditions is warranted.

Financial sector reform: This administration appreciates that the transformation of our economy will not be complete unless there is an improvement in the efficiency of operations and regulations of the financial system. Our financial markets have advanced sufficiently to encourage us to take the view that Trinidad and Tobago can become the business and financial capital of this sub-region. We would like to see financial institutions operating here and in Central America and using this country as their base. We have, therefore, brought forward a significant package of reform legislation which will shortly come before this House to join the Financial Institutions Act which has already been passed.

Let me turn to the foreign exchange market. It is not possible to create a competitive market-oriented economy where business is shackled by complex bureaucratic controls. This country operated a regime of exchange controls for many years. This was proving to be inimical to inflows of capital, so that in April of last year much of the exchange control legislation was repealed, thus creating a new regime in which the exchange rate is determined on the inter-bank market and in which there are no longer official controls on the movement of funds. In many respects the foreign exchange market in this country is now more open than many in Latin America.

The foreign exchange market has worked well thus far, especially given that the banks as authorized dealers were learning the ropes. The weighted average selling rate of the US dollar has fluctuated from its initial level of \$5.76 in April of last year, to \$5.66 in September and then down to \$5.86 in January 1994 and \$5.88 in February. Over the last two weeks the weighted average selling rate has appreciated to around \$5.85. The Central Bank has indicated its satisfaction, thus far, with the range of the fluctuation of the exchange rate. There is still, however, much progress to be made, but the evidence is there that the public has become more confident and relaxed about the operations of the system.

Over the last six months the Central Bank has been granting licences to certain enterprises to operate *cambios*, or *bureaux de change*. These kinds of enterprises have been considered for licensing and are now in operation.

The foreign exchange reserves of the country have improved over the last two years. At the end of 1993 the gross reserves of the country were US \$435 million, about the same level as at the end of 1991, and US \$120 million higher than at the end of 1992. Of greater significance is the fact that the country's net reserves turned positive in 1993 for the first time since 1991, reaching US \$200 million at the end of 1993 compared with minus US \$31 million at the end of 1991.

The process of trade reform has continued over the last 28 months. The import surcharges which had been imposed as part of the shift to tariffs, have begun to come down, and would have helped to moderate the price increases engendered by the effective depreciation of the TT dollar. The remaining surcharges are scheduled to be removed in 1995.

Even more important, after an initial period of hesitation our business community is responding more positively to the new trading environment. The drastic job losses predicted in the manufacturing sector have just not come to pass. Indeed, let me cite a few examples to support the new enthusiasm.

**2.20 p.m.**

In 1993 Automotive Components Limited increased their export sales volume by 59 per cent over their 1992 level; 41 per cent of which was extra-regional. In the case of Bermudez Biscuit Company, recent data indicates that export sales increased by 32 per cent in 1993; Carib Brewery, a subsidiary of Caribbean Development Company, has undertaken a \$105 million plant expansion programme which will result in additional employment of more than 200 persons over the 1993—1995 period. In 1993, export sales of this company increased by 80 per cent and is expected to expand by over 100 per cent in 1994 to reach a target of US \$20 million.

In 1993, exports of Associated Brands Industries Limited increased by 25 per cent over their 1992 level, reaching a total of TT \$50 million. Export sales in the first quarter of 1994 is up 80 per cent in US-dollar terms over the corresponding period in 1993. A similar story, again, for the Trinidad Cement Company, and so the tale goes on.

In 1993, total non-petroleum exports—excluding petroleum, minerals, fuels and chemicals—increased by 33 per cent over the 1992 level, from \$1.54 billion, and for the first time this class of exports crossed the \$2 billion mark in 1993.

I turn to investment promotion. Without a high rate of investment our economy simply will not grow. The key to investment is the creation and maintenance of a climate of confidence, a clear indication of Government's objectives and a consistent commitment to implement the required policies. This administration is extremely sensitive to these concerns and has been working assiduously to address them. Most recently, representatives of the Multi-Lateral Investment Guarantee Agency have been in Trinidad and Tobago on workshop missions, as we continue to ready our investment climate for a much-increased volume of investments.

Even so, since this Government assumed office, the level of direct foreign investment in Trinidad and Tobago has increased substantially. In 1993 approximately US \$428 million was invested by US investors, and this year, approximately US \$600-\$700 is expected to be invested. The Government has its own investment programme, and the Public Sector Investment Programme, which has averaged \$575 million over the last two years, is expected to be fully implemented this year.

Labour market: Our goal here is a world-class workforce that can compete against the Taiwanese, the Japanese and the Europeans. Consequently, the level of

unemployment remains the most troubling aspect of the transition to a more dynamic, market-oriented economy. There have been wide swings in the number of persons reported unemployed over the last two years. The data, however, does not show a clear trend. Over the same period, the number of persons with jobs increased by approximately 3.8 per cent, from 396,800 to 411,700.

The initiatives we are taking to encourage and promote investment will serve to increase employment, but there also needs to be a greater flexibility in the way in which our labour market operates, identifies and responds to available opportunities. A key aspect of this, therefore, is the provision of information on these opportunities.

I wish to draw attention to our recent experience where foreign investment is having a tremendous effect on the productivity of local labour. The local construction industry adopted certain recommended practices; NUCOR is now high in praise of the productivity of our construction workforce. Amoco and Enron have done the same for the oil servicing industry. I have already mentioned the overseas training given by Arcadian to their local staff; and the Southern Electric Company's bid for T&TEC makes specific provisions for overseas training of T&TEC's power generation workers.

Let me conclude, therefore, by stating that this statement has focused almost exclusively on the area of economic policy. There is much that is also being done in respect of social policy, health sector reform, education system reform, as well as in areas such as the battle against the drug trade and the violent criminal activity that it has helped to spawn, and the complementary reform of the police service and its administration. These issues continue to be debated and discussed in the editorials, the talk shows and from the pulpits. Yet there is an important sense in which progress in these areas is contingent on progress in the area of economic policy.

When the present administration embarked on this new economic course, we were under no illusions that it would be easy. Our ultimate aim remains achieving economic security for our nation within a global economy characterized by open trade and investment and greater international competition. Economic security cannot mean closing our economy; it means accepting the challenges of openness, and having the self-confidence as a people to seize the opportunities that are there. We have not been deflected from this goal by the noise and clamour of partisan politics, nor the histrionics of those who would seek to disrupt the economy.

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We have listened carefully to the counsel of those who have this country at heart and who appreciate the demands of the contemporary global economy, and we have modified our policies where necessary. We have paid close attention to the sentiments of our people at all levels, and we have attempted to respond to them. For us, caring has meant securing the means for long-term economic survival. For us, like a concerned mother, caring is as much looking after the weaker siblings as it is exposing our economic institutions to the realities of global life, knowing that it is in that exposure, competition and growth, we will ultimately ensure our economic security.

We in Trinidad and Tobago are thrice blessed. We not only have the incomparable advantage of our oil and moreso our natural gas, but we also have a superb geographical location; and a people noted for their resilience and their *joie de vivre*, qualities which have allowed us to withstand, and soon to conquer the rigours of structural adjustment. Our future remains in our hands, and with God's help we will succeed.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

#### **FINANCE (VARIATION OF APPROPRIATION) BILL**

Bill to vary the appropriation provided for by the Appropriation Act, 1993 and to authorize the utilization of any sums accruing from a reduction in expenditure under certain Heads of Expenditure for the purpose of meeting any liability incurred through the increase in expenditure under other Heads. [*The Minister of Finance*]; read the first time.

*Motion made*, That the next stage be taken at a later stage of the proceedings.  
[*Hon. W. Mottley*]

*Question put and agreed to.*

#### **ORDER OF BUSINESS**

**The Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley):** Madam Speaker, I beg to move that the House proceed with "Bills Second Reading", Bill No. 1 on page 12 of the Order Paper; to be followed by Motion No. 3 under "Government Business" on the Supplemental Order Paper; followed by the second reading of the Finance (Variation of Appropriation) Bill.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Flaming Word Ministry*

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**2.30 p.m.**

**FLAMING WORD MINISTRY**

*Question put and agreed to, That a Bill for the incorporation of the Flaming Word Ministry, be now read a second time.*

*Bill accordingly read a second time.*

*Bill referred to a Special Select Committee of the House chosen by the Speaker as follows:*

Dr. Rupert Griffith	Chairman
Mr. J. Narine	Member
Mr. C. Rajaram	Member
Mr. C. Sharma	Member

**RELATED MATTERS**

**The Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley):** Madam Speaker, I beg to move that the House in considering Motion No. 3, because the Bill for second reading deals with the same matter, that the debate on both matters be joined.

*Assent indicated.*

**FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT**

**The Minister of Finance and Minister of Tourism (Hon. Wendell Mottley):** Madam Speaker, I beg to move,

That this House adopt the Third Report (1993—1994 Session) of the Finance Committee of the House of Representatives of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on proposals for the expenditure from the public revenue which were not included in the Annual Estimates 1993 which was laid on the Table at an earlier stage of the proceedings.

Madam Speaker, the Members on the other side claim disrespect when matters of this nature are not brought before this House. They want information but they do not wish to have the information brought before them. In any case, the matter that is now before this House is the matter concerning the supplementary appropriation.

*Finance Committee Report*  
[HON. W. MOTTLEY]

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The Finance Committee of the House of Representatives met on Friday, March 18, and agreed to a number of proposals relating to the 1993 accounts. Members will know that it is customary that by about April the Auditor General's Department, with the Treasury, completes the accounts for the year 1993 and the final closing of the accounts will be available to this House some time shortly after April, usually in May.

Before us at this time are proposals which include the variation of expenditure under the following heads of expenditure which, altogether, total \$27,524,811.00 outlined as follows:

<u>Head</u>	<u>Department/Ministry</u>	<u>Amount \$</u>
13	Office of the Prime Minister	8,280,645
20	Pensions and Gratuities	7,358,268,000
28	Ministry of Health	2,000,000
43	Ministry of Works and Transport	2,000,000
44	Ministry of Public Utilities	5,695,558.000
47	Ministry of Foreign Affairs	2,190,340

I stress that the variation will not result in an increase in the total sum appropriated since savings have been identified under other items. It should be noted that the original appropriation was \$8.410 billion and the supplementary appropriation was \$488 million. So that the total appropriation, to be precise, is \$8,899,747,933. The revised expenditure for 1993 is \$8,287,691,400. There were savings of \$612,560,533. The details of the variations are as follows:

There was a provision of additional funds for the Supreme Court Judiciary in the amount of \$865,394. This was largely to meet the arrears due to the MTS for repairs and janitorial work. Savings were realized under the magistracy, where a number of posts which were expected to be filled during 1993 were, in fact, not filled. There was a provision of additional funds to the Office of the Prime Minister in the amount previously stated. Cabinet had agreed that the Government of Trinidad and Tobago would acquire the assets of the Trinidad Turf Club and the Union Park Turf Club.

Cabinet also agreed to make part payment in the sum of \$8,280,645 towards the acquisition of these facilities. At the same time the Betting Levy Board, which is responsible for these facilities, paid Government an equivalent

sum for arrears of taxes owed. The Members on the other side requested the total amount due to the turf club. I will obtain that information a little later in the proceedings.

Payment of these amounts was made possible by savings which arose as a result of a number of posts where provision was made but they were not filled, and also because provision was made for the payment of fees in respect of a number of cases which were not finalized during 1993. In particular, the Attorney General has informed me, a number of the Jamaat matters were not finalized in 1993.

The next item was provision of additional funds to the Ministry of Health in the amount of \$2,000,000. The Ministry of Health owed the MTS for services rendered during 1993 and because the sum provided to meet the payments to MTS was inadequate it was necessary to advance additional funds in the amount of \$2,000,000. Savings were identified under the Ministry of Legal Affairs to retire this advance.

On a provision of additional funds to the Ministry of Public Utilities, both WASA and PTSC needed additional funds during the course of 1993, principally because, in both instances, their revenues did not come up to expectations. Consequently advances in the amount of \$2,545,558 were given to the Public Transport Service Corporation to meet wages, salaries and outstanding taxes, and the sum of \$3.150 million was given to WASA to meet outstanding payment for the rental of some of their major trucks and other vehicles, as well as to meet the cost of purchasing chlorine and alum.

The savings to retire these advances were identified under Head 18, Ministry of Finance, interest on overdraft, where there were some savings identified there. A provision of additional funds to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the amount of \$2,190,340.

As a consequence of the flotation of the Trinidad and Tobago dollar, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs incurred certain inescapable increases in expenditures since those expenditures were in foreign currencies. Consequently, the expenditure exceeded the allocation and it was necessary to provide additional funds in the amount of \$2,190,340. Savings were identified under Head 18, Ministry of Finance, the same interest on overdraft to meet the shortfall.

Provision of additional funds to the Ministry of Works and Transport \$2,000,000. Again, there was a shortfall in the provision for MTS and these moneys had to be provided and savings were identified as a result of non-filling of

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a number of posts and the non-completion of a number of cases under the Attorney General's Department where there were savings identified and, therefore, transferred to this particular item. There were a number of transfers between subheads under the same Head of Expenditure.

With effect from August 01, 1988, Cabinet delegated its authority to approve transfers between subheads to the Ministry of Finance. I wish to advise that requests for transfers of funds initiated by the respective ministries and agencies—those ministries and agencies, in accordance with changed circumstances, may reorder their priorities during the course of the year. In some instances the provisions against certain items of expenditure proved inadequate to meet the commitments against those items. This was so especially in the case of the Tobago House of Assembly, details of which I have provided for the Member for Tobago West. The transfers are listed at the back of the Schedule.

**2.40 p.m.**

In conclusion, I wish to state that the variations in the sum of \$27,524,811 will not increase the total appropriation. They represent transfers between heads of expenditure.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

*Question proposed.*

**Mr. Trevor Sudama** (*Oropouche*): Madam Speaker, I rise today to record my displeasure at the role which the Executive has assumed for this Parliament. I rise to inform the House and the country of my total disgust with the manner in which this House is treated; and the conventions which support parliamentary democracy, how easily they are abused by the processes of this House.

**Dr. Rowley:** Are you challenging the Speaker?

**Mr. Maharaj:** Why do you not shut up?

**Mr. T. Sudama:** We have had another instance, quite apart from the display we had here today by the Minister of Finance, who has just told this House that we complain that there is disrespect for the House when a matter of this nature—by that he means the variation of appropriation—is not brought to this House. That is not a courtesy that the Government offers this House; it is our right as the monitors of Government's finances. It is our right that Government has to bring this here. That is its duty.

**Mr. Mottley:** I was not drawing reference to that. I was drawing reference to the fact of general economic information, not specifically appropriation matters, being regularly brought to the attention of this House.

**Mr. T. Sudama:** He was introducing the Finance Bill. He said it in that context. He could have included that in his ministerial statement. It might have been longer, but he was given the privilege of doing that.

I want to tell this country that what is happening in the manner in which this Parliament is allowed to function is an abuse. This Parliament is supposed to keenly monitor Government's finances, but the mechanisms that we have in place—we have complained about this from time to time—are totally unsatisfactory, for examining, analyzing and investigating the finances of our country. The budget exercise, which is supposed to be the major item that this House deals with, has become meaningless.

We have had a budget presented, and variations to the appropriation are being made and brought to this House without any attempt or opportunity for Members to look into every detail. It cannot be done by a sitting of this House. This is why it is so necessary that we set up the right institutions and committees of the House which would sit continually to look into—for want of a better word—the shenanigans in which the Minister of Finance is involved. As I go through this report, you would see what I mean.

We rely on the Auditor General as an officer of Parliament. The Auditor General reports duly, year after year, and the Executive refuses to take him on. It is as though this report does not exist. I do not know whether anybody on the other side reads what the Auditor General has to say and acts on his recommendations. He is the person delegated by the Constitution to investigate and see that moneys appropriated by Parliament are not spent other than with the approvals that were given.

For the record, I want to read to the House what the Auditor General is supposed to do. The question is: Does the Auditor General have the resources to carry out that function effectively and efficiently? The Auditor General's Report of Trinidad and Tobago, at page 12 states:

"The Auditor General shall satisfy himself that:

all money expended has been applied to the purpose or purposes for which the same was granted by Parliament and that such expenditure conforms to the authority which governs it and has been incurred with due regard to the avoidance of waste and extravagance;"

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I wonder if the Minister of Finance reads this. Is he aware that this is what the Auditor General ought to do, and therefore in his ministry, they should so function that there is due regard to the avoidance of waste and extravagance?

The Auditor General says that the objective of the thrust into comprehensive auditing is to conduct wide-scope examinations that would include an objective assessment of the extent to which financial and other resources are being economically and efficiently managed.

Therefore, this House should sit—if it takes us weeks to look at every detail of governmental expenditure to see whether financial and other resources are being economically and efficiently managed. Do we have the opportunity to do this? I humbly submit that we do not have the opportunity under the present procedures to satisfy ourselves that the waste, extravagance and corruption committed by this PNM Government are not allowed to continue without scrutiny.

The report continues:

"The Auditor General should establish whether procedures have been put in place to measure and report on programme effectiveness; and report the results of such examinations thereby contributing to greater accountability."

In this big comprehensive mandate which the Auditor General has, they were only able to do comprehensive auditing on two institutes for 1992—one being cash management of the Public Library of Trinidad. This is all they could have done with their resources and time. Therefore, we ask the question: Who is really looking into financial integrity and financial propriety, if the Auditor General does not have that kind of resource? We would have liked to get explanations on a number of matters.

**2.50 p.m.**

For example—I have to come to debt forgiveness and interest on debt. It says here in the 1992 Report that according to the books of the Treasury, the Exchequer Bank Account was overdrawn by \$3,265,971,512.95, an increase of \$614,682,364.58 over the corresponding figure for 1991. I want to ask the Minister of Finance: Does the Minister think this is proper management of the financial resources? They are blaming the previous government for all sorts of things, and by the very account of the Auditor General, they are spending money and overdrawing on the Exchequer Bank Account—more than last year—to the tune of \$614 million.

"The overdraft balance of \$3,265,971,512.95 has been reconciled with the balance of \$2,683,438,221.68 certified by the Central Bank."

I want to find out—

**Mr. Mottley:** Madam Speaker, I am grateful to the Member for giving way, but had the Member done us the courtesy of remaining in his seat earlier, he would have learnt of the substantial repayments on that particular—*(Applause)*

**Mr. B. Panday:** If you want to debate it, put it as a budget document.

**Mr. Maharaj:** We told you you would have to bring a second budget. You want to avoid debate on that and you come to hide behind TTT—*[Interruption]*

**Mr. B. Panday:** You should have been out of here. You should be expelled from this House for abusing it.

**Mr. T. Sudama:** Included in the reconciliation statement are amounts totalling \$23,426,871.67, representing unrepresented cheques dating back to 1961. Is this the way you manage the finances of Trinidad and Tobago? It is a question that we cannot answer simply because we do not have the facility of detailed and specific enquiry into how they spend money. And now they are coming to this House with this Bill and just asking for approval for a transfer from one vote to another vote and variation to the tune of \$27,524,000.

With all this talk about revenues and savings, we are told that we have a savings of \$612 million, but 40 per cent and more of the population of this country cannot get any water. The Government has come here to boast to this House that there are all sorts of investments flowing in, and that we are on the point of take-off, but people cannot get water to drink. They sit there as if everything is hunky-dory and there is no problem in Trinidad and Tobago.

They come here to boast about savings of \$612 million, financial and fiscal integrity, but something as basic as water is unavailable to anything like half the population. On the basis of that alone and of their incapacity to deliver services to the people of Trinidad and Tobago, this Government ought to resign, quite apart from going back on their manifesto promises.

The Auditor General has made his comments on overpayments:

- "6.13 The Financial Instructions, 1965 require that overpayments be reported to the Comptroller of Accounts and the Auditor General.
- 6.14 Seven hundred and forty-two (742) cases of overpayments, totalling \$1,954,147.44 were reported to this Department in the year 1992....Of

this amount, 605 cases totalling \$1,663,873.98 were reported by the Ministry of Education."

We would like them to say what systems are in place to minimize the level of overpayments that are being made. There are hundreds of cases of overpayments, and the excuse which is given here in this report is totally unsatisfactory. Therefore, we believe that what we are doing here makes extremely little sense if we are not able to devise some mechanism to really look into the question of how the Government spends moneys appropriated on an annual basis.

If we go through this report, we would see that it is an indictment against the management that this country is subjected to. I will not go through the whole report; I will just pick out some items to give the House an indication of where the Government places its priorities.

"Item No. 3—Provision of additional funds to the Office of the Prime Minister"

They are taking money out of Legal Affairs, Personal Expenditure, Salaries and COLA, and the Ministry of Legal Affairs is so grossly understaffed. They cannot get through their cases. They do not have the resources; they do not have a satisfactory number of magistrates; they do not have judges; they do not have all the necessary personnel in order to expedite the system of justice in our country. But they are taking money out of the provision for salaries and putting it to pay for the acquisition of the assets of the Trinidad and Tobago Turf Club and Union Park Turf Club.

I want to ask whether they feel this is a real priority. We cannot get water to drink in this country, but they are moving money from one vote to another to pay for the acquisition of the assets of the Trinidad and Tobago Turf Club and Union Club. That will give an idea of who runs this country and whose interests are being served. Is the interest of the race horse fraternity more important than the thousands of people who cannot get water? Is this what this Government comes here to present to this House?

As far as I can see, this is a gross insult to this House that in a time of such great crisis we have to make payments to special interests in Trinidad and Tobago—the Trinidad Turf Club and the Union Park Turf Club and the racing fraternity, of which, presumably, they are members and in which they have friends. Poor people are not involved in the running of those clubs. So that you can understand whose interest they have to serve and whom they have to satisfy by this transfer.

**3.00 p.m.**

I come now to the question of the public utilities.

"The matter for the consideration of the Finance Committee is the provision of additional funds in the sum of \$5,695,558 to meet payments to the Water and Sewerage Authorities and the Public Transport Service Corporation.

In order to meet payments for the Water and Sewerage Authority for alum, chlorine and for rental of vehicles it was necessary for the Minister of Finance to advance the sum of \$3,150,000 from Treasury Deposits on the understanding that this sum would be retired."

If this sum is not retired, what does that mean? Does that mean that the Water and Sewerage Authority has to find this money later on and repay it to the Treasury? I do not understand what this means. In any case, how could one run a utility and not provide for alum and chlorine? If you cannot run the utility, get out of there and let somebody else get a chance to handle the utilities of Trinidad and Tobago.

But you are not getting out, you are selling out! *[Interruption]* But they are not getting out, Madam Speaker, and this is deliberate. Because the plan is to sell out Trinidad and Tobago. How do you do it? You frustrate the management of Trinidad and Tobago Electricity Commission; frustrate the management of Water and Sewerage Authority, frustrate the management of every utility and then make a case to the public for privatization. So that my friend the Member for Diego Martin Central, the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance, together with Mr. Ken Julien can sell out the patrimony of Trinidad and Tobago behind the people's back. This is their objective! This is their line!

**Mr. Valley:** Madam Speaker, I rise to thank the hon. Member for Oropouche for his referring to me as his friend.

**Mr. T. Sudama:** Madam Speaker, in politics one cannot choose whom one has to deal with.

**Mr. B. Panday:** You can choose your party but you cannot choose your friends, or is it the other way around?

**Mr. T. Sudama:** The fact that I have to deal with the Member for Diego Martin Central is not a matter over which I had a choice. But if I had the choice the hon. Member would not have been sitting here.

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With respect to this question of water. You cannot have revenues totalling \$8,889,000,000 to be expended on one and a quarter million people and you cannot give them water! On that score alone the Government should get out. Go!

**Mr. B. Panday:** In the name of God, go!

**Mr. T. Sudama:** In the name of the long-suffering people of Trinidad and Tobago, go!

**Mr. B. Panday:** Free the people of Trinidad and Tobago by going.

**Mr. T. Sudama:** Madam Speaker, if by the Government's mismanagement it is necessary to provide an allocation to WASA in order to improve the water supply, for heaven's sake, why not do that, or do something to improve the situation?

The Member for San Fernando East, while in Opposition, complained to this honourable House about the situation of the water service under the previous Government. I quote from *Hansard* of Friday, July 31, 1987:

"...we had begun to become accustomed to a consistent water supply of high water pressure and of a very high quality, so a lot of the problems that had confronted those of us in San Fernando and in the southern areas in the past had, we believe, become a matter of the past."

That is, he meant the previous PNM Government had done this.

"Within recent times, however, it is clear that some of these problems have begun to recur. It is not unusual to get up on a morning to find the water is running very slowly; it is not of the same pressure to which we had been accustomed and therefore we are having all kinds of problems in individual households to be able to use water in the way that one had become accustomed to using it.

What is worse is the fact that very suddenly the water would just go. You would have water now and a few minutes later you would have none. So much so that I have been the subject of a very unfortunate experience of taking a bath and having used the soap, to find out that the water is no longer there."

I do not know what he did subsequently; I do not know whether he contacted the Minister of Public Utilities. And sometimes I wonder, having done that and not being able to find water to wash off the soap, whether he still maintains his slippery condition up to now. *[Laughter]* Because the most slippery of them all is the Member for San Fernando East.

"That is the difficulty. And a lot of my constituents have been in contact with me and have indicated that that occurrence is by no means unusual."

So apparently, many people in the constituency of San Fernando East used to soap themselves and did not have water to wash off the soap. That was under the NAR regime. Bitter complaint!

"Mr. Speaker, it becomes that much more difficult for families who have children and particularly families who have babies, when they have become accustomed to a level of water supply, consistent with their own aspirations in terms of health care, to find that what they have grown to expect is no longer available to them."

He was then on the Opposition Benches. Today, this same Member for San Fernando East is the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago and has the power and authority to do something about the water situation but he sits there and frustrates WASA. He frustrated the previous Minister of Public Utilities to such an extent that it drove him to his untimely demise.

This Member for San Fernando East sits there as Prime Minister knowing full well the difficulties, hardships and sufferings of people throughout the country who cannot avail themselves of a water supply even to drink, and he does nothing about it. He frustrates the utility with a plan to sell out WASA and make all their deals, and this House and country would be none the wiser.

When we asked for the divestment activities to be brought before this House and to be given all the documents so that we can make an independent assessment of what they are doing with the resources of Trinidad and Tobago over which they have been put in charge, how they told the public one thing and how they are doing something else—

Madam Speaker, even the fledgling government of Guyana has seen it fit—I quote from a report in the *Trinidad Guardian*, dated Tuesday, March 22, 1994:

"Guyana Govt to release deals with foreign firms to Parliament."

That is the respect that they show for the Parliament. Not this group here. They want to hide everything from Parliament. We want the details and all the documentation of the T&TEC divestment laid before this House for an independent enquiry. We want the details of the Nucor deal laid before this House. We want the details of the sale of the methanol company laid before this House. We want to be in a position to call for documents and to question people.

That is accountability! Here you have a fledgling Caribbean Government leading the way: Two controversial foreign investment deals made with two Canadian firms and an Asian conglomerate three years ago will be released to Parliament. So if the Guyana Government could do it, why can this Government not do it, unless it has something to hide?

**3.10 p.m.**

I get regular information. I am not saying that everything in that newspaper is correct, but I have always held that where there is smoke there is always a bit of fire. If the Government has nothing to hide, give us the details of all the deals it is making, running all over the world and doing its deals with the patrimony of the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

So this is a promise which that Guyana party made when it was campaigning, and it kept its promise. It is also keeping a promise to release private documents about state assets. That is the kind of parliamentary democracy that we are supposed to be following here, but every time you ask for details, you are told that it is a private matter, that it is a private commercial transaction, and releasing it to Parliament and the public would damage the Government's international reputation. But the Guyanese government is not concerned with making such excuses—for that is what they are—for not dealing truthfully with the people of that country. I just thought I would make that comment.

This transfer from the Ministry of Finance to the Ministry of Public Utilities has come from interest on overdraft. Again, that is something on which we want to get information. How come the Government is saving on overdraft interest? Am I to assume that the balances with the Central Bank are falling, that the Government is borrowing less and less money from the Central Bank or wherever else it borrows money? Is that a fact? Because, some of the other information which we have seems to throw some doubt. How is it that this Government is in such a financial bind that it has no money to give WASA to buy chlorine on a timely basis, but yet there is a provision for transferring \$5,695,558 from overdraft on interest? It is this kind of investigation and analysis which this House is supposed to do, in order to do its job properly and see that the Government is not mismanaging our financial resources.

We have had to pay additional sums to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for the upkeep of our embassies and, again, the money has come from debt servicing and interest on overdraft: this time it is \$2,190,340 that is being transferred, and presumably saved. And as we go along I am finding many instances of the

Government saving on interest and overdraft. My question here is: What kind of bogus estimates were presented to this House and passed in November 1993, making a mockery of this whole system of budgeting? There is no way one could have enquired on the basis of the Government making those estimates.

Security and maintenance services: We have made a big saving on consulting and other contractual services, Item 7, to transfer to security and maintenance.

Then I come to an item which says that carpet to the value of \$7,000 was stolen from Whitehall. Now, I think a carpet is a very big thing to steal; it is not something to be put into one's pocket, and I wonder whether there is security at Whitehall that would permit the loss of this carpet. It is a small sum, but it really points to the way in which the Government has been run.

As we go through this item by item—and this is not something this House ought to be doing. This should be the subject of an incisive committee investigation.

I come to the Ministry of Education—

"Write-off of overpayment of salary to Ms. Victoria Balbosa, former Assistant Teacher I, St. Michael's Anglican Primary School, and Mr. Errol Alcantara, former Teacher I, Rosary Boys RC Primary School."

We have another instance of debt forgiveness—this Government is in the habit of forgiving debts, and if it is not the debts of Ministers, it is as a result of total laxity and ineptitude—

**Mr. Valley:** Madam Speaker, on a point of order. For the record, this Government has not forgiven any debts of any Minister.

**Mr. Maharaj:** What is the position of the debt?

**Mr. T. Sudama:** Madam Speaker, would the Government be willing to set up a parliamentary committee to enquire into the status of that matter?

**Mr. Valley:** Which matter?

**Mr. B. Panday:** The blind trust.

**Mr. T. Sudama:** The blind trust and the indebtedness which was supposed to have been waived.

**Mr. Valley:** Madam Speaker, again for the record. This Government has not forgiven any debt of any Minister.

**Mr. Maharaj:** Madam Speaker, I wonder if the hon. Minister would state whether the Minister has paid that debt or any part of it, and what is the position and status of that debt, and whether other people in Trinidad and Tobago who owe that bank have been compelled to pay the money?

**Mr. Valley:** Madam Speaker, as far as I am aware, there is no Minister who is so indebted to the Government.

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Member, if there is a question maybe you can file it as a question.

**Mr. Maharaj:** Is the Minister saying that Dr. Saith did not sign a guarantee?

**Madam Speaker:** Carry on, please, Member for Oropouche.

**Mr. T. Sudama:** Madam Speaker, as I said, debt forgiveness is a matter very much in the air, and the Government's role in debt forgiveness is something that should be subject to some kind of enquiry. What is amazing in this is whether anybody is responsible for this matter. Because it is the length of time that this overpayment has been made. The Auditor General spoke about the lack of internal audit facilities in the various ministries. If there was proper internal auditing then perhaps this kind of financial irregularity would not have occurred.

"Ms. Victoria Balbosa was overpaid the sum of \$49,466 for the period January 1, 1961 to December 31, 1988."

For 27 years an officer had been overpaid and nobody was the wiser in the Ministry of Education or elsewhere. Now tell me, what kind of effectiveness of your financial regulations is this?

"Mr. Errol Alcantara, former Teacher I, Rosary Boys RC School was overpaid the sum of \$22,056 for the period January 1, 1963 to September 4, 1983."

So, for almost the whole period of PNM administration there was this kind of laxity going on. And if you hear the excuse. This is what the report to the committee says:

"These overpayments were reported to the Comptroller of Accounts and the Auditor General—"

When, it does not say—

"The Comptroller of Accounts has considered the circumstances of the cases and recommendations of the Accounting Officer and has concluded that because of the administrative system in place at the Ministry it is reasonable to assume that the officers would not have been in a position to realize that they were being overpaid."

In view of the administrative system, “the officers would not have been in a position to realize they were being overpaid”.

**3.20 p.m.**

“The Comptroller of Accounts therefore agrees with the Ministry of Education that the officers received the amount in good faith.”

When I was a Minister, I was overpaid—I think by about \$200-odd. I received the money in good faith, you know! Do you know what they did? Big note! I asked for some details; I said, “But how come I was overpaid? I do not know; I do not recall that I was overpaid.” I was given a letter which really did not satisfy me, and the next month, under the direction of the Comptroller of Accounts, that money was deducted from my salary. I am saying, it was put on my salary, I received it in good faith and nobody showed me how I was overpaid. It gives you an indication of how they run Government, their attitude to governing.

There is another case of debt forgiveness, in the case of item No. 12:

“By memorandum dated July 25, 1983, the Director of Personnel Administration advised that the Public Service Commission had agreed that Mr. Moreau should be declared to have resigned his appointment with effect from December 24, 1982 without prejudice to his indebtedness to Government.”

Look when this happened! On July 25, 1983. This is 1994 and you now bring this to Parliament to get a formalized approval of this House. I wonder how many cases like this are still pending in governmental administration, which they hide from the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago.

Then there are other instances. There was one Harold Ramdular—overpayment of salary. He was a Supervisor of Cesspits in the Ministry of Local Government and he was overpaid from 1980 to 1984.

As one goes through this, the joke becomes palpable that the time of this House has to be spent on these kinds of matters when this could have been dealt with otherwise. I am raising all these points but I am not going to get any response from the other side. They will just ignore what I said. The Minister will just get up and say, “I beg to move”, and that would be it. Whatever queries we raise in this House, we would get no response from them, except that he begs to move.

In many cases, security at the post offices is a problem. There are items missing and, after so many years, these items are brought here to be written off.

I come to the transfer of funds between subheads under the same heads of expenditure. I have said in this House, yes, when you are running the business of

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Government you must be given some flexibility and so forth. But when you have to deal with \$118,713,510, I think this an abuse of your powers of flexibility. It means that you can just take it upon yourself to transfer money from one subhead to another when, in this Parliament, we voted moneys for specific purposes—all you do is just come and make a casual report to this Parliament. That, again, has to do with what they conceive the role of Parliament to be. Madam Speaker, \$118 million, just to be shifting around, is no small sum of money. When one looks at the areas to which moneys have been transferred, it makes one wonder where the Government's priorities lie.

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

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

*Question put and agreed to.*

**Mr. T. Sudama:** Madam Speaker, as I look at this, it irks me that I have to come to this Parliament to talk to a blank wall on the other side.

Roads and bridges: Look at the condition of roads and bridges in this country! A transfer of \$1,100,000 from this item. Also, from Major Water Resources—\$2,962,000; and Rural Water Supplies—\$200,000. You are transferring money from these areas in a situation where there is a water crisis in Trinidad and Tobago. From Major Water Resources, there is a transfer of \$600,000 to the Ministry of Education for secondary school expenses. I have no doubt that there is some urgency to which these funds have been transferred, but which is the greater urgency as far as this Government is concerned? Is it the adequacy of a supply of water, or is it anything else? Water is one of the most precious commodities that we have. It is one of the essentials of life.

Debt servicing: The Ministry of Finance is transferring \$10 million from debt servicing to financial services. I would like to get some information about this \$10 million transfer from debt servicing. Does that mean that the debt of this country has fallen and, therefore, having made your estimate you are transferring money from the debt servicing provision to another area of financial services? Financial services for what and to whom? We would like to know.

**Mr. B. Panday:** Privatization of the public service.

**Mr. T. Sudama:** Privatization of the public utilities? Privatization of everything in Trinidad and Tobago! On the one hand, we have been told in a statement made by the Minister—not to this House, to a seminar—that because the dollar was floated, the debt servicing requirements in TT dollars went up. It is

a contradiction! The dollar was floated in 1993; the debt servicing requirement in TT dollars, obviously, will go up. How come you are transferring \$10 million from debt servicing to financial services? To pay whom and for what? We would like to know. This is the kind of thing I have been put here to serve as a watchdog over. This Parliament should be a watchdog to see how the public finances of this country are being dealt with. Instead of being a watchdog, this Parliament has been reduced to a toothless—

**Hon. Member:** Bulldog!

**Mr. T. Sudama:** Toothless chihuahua! That is what we do here—nothing else—instead of being very rigid in our investigations.

Madam Speaker, you would not believe that an amount of \$3,600,000 is being transferred from the State Liability and Proceedings Act to boost the allocation for official overseas travel. One of the largest industries that have been initiated by this Government since it came into power is ministerial travel. Apart from crime and ministerial travel, there is no other industry expanding in Trinidad and Tobago. The sum of \$3,600,000 has been added to what was budgeted. Why? We would like to know.

Every Monday morning one gets up, one of these Ministers is on a jaunt somewhere, either selling out the country or saying that they are going to get investors, and so forth, and that is why the long-suffering public of this country has to now pay the price of that to the tune of an additional—this is not the total figure you know—\$3,600,000 for official overseas travel. So one understands all these trips which the Prime Minister made to Cyprus and Europe—he is going to Miami “just now”, and he went to America recently.

**Hon. Member:** Ken Julien!

**Mr. T. Sudama:** I want to know how much of this is also accounted for by the bigwigs—the “Ken Juliens” and others; the fellow down at Plipdeco.

**Hon. Member:** —paying for cricket, too.

**Mr. T. Sudama:** How much of this money has gone to support the official overseas travel of the bureaucrats, together with the Ministers who treat public finances as their own private resources? How much? That is why we need scrutiny.

That is why we need to have a system and a mechanism so that the Government would not be allowed to get away with this kind of expenditure. They must be brought to book; they must be held accountable for what they do with the people's money.

**3.30 p.m.**

I see in another instance here, where they have taken money from the development of a computer system for the police service—we need to do everything in this country to beef up police resources, the security, their capacity to fight crime—money has been taken from that and, apparently, they are running short of food at the institutions. I do not know whether people are eating more at the institutions—they are not employing additional people—so it means that those who are there are eating more—to the tune of \$446,696.00.

It is these contradictions, as we go through this, taking money from sugarcane subsidy, \$4,190,000; subsidy for cocoa, coffee, milk, citrus and other approved subsidies of \$3,450,000. They want to assist our agriculture, but they are taking money from the subsidies allocated and putting it elsewhere to pay salaries and wages.

I am not satisfied with the manner in which we deal with these matters of approving variations of appropriations. I have asked before that we have a system set up for the Government to be made more accountable for what they do, and the trouble is that this country is paying through its nose and we are not getting the services that Government ought to provide.

In Trinidad and Tobago we produce oil and petroleum and yet our gasoline cost is the second highest in the Caribbean. At US \$1.75 per gallon in June 1993, this country was listed as having the second highest consumer price in the Caribbean. The article points out that all of the region's oil producing and exporting countries, with the exception of Venezuela, are selling their fuel to consumers at prices higher than the opportunity cost.

So that it is from these areas where they put oppressive pricing on the consumers in this country—whether it is for gasoline, water, electricity—whatever it is, they put an oppressive pricing mechanism, they extract every dollar from the hard-pressed public of Trinidad and Tobago. And how do they spend this money? They spend it as outlined in this report for which the Government is not accountable and, in fact, for which it should be thrown out of office for the manner in which it is spending the money.

What is worse is that they have gone back on all that they stood for, all that they put out to the public.

**Mr. Valley:** I hope you paid for that copy.

**Mr. T. Sudama:** They have fooled and hoodwinked the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

**Mr. Humphrey:** I lent him my copy that you gave me.

**Mr. T. Sudama:** I have just listened to the Minister of Finance say that Government will no longer be an investor in Trinidad and Tobago. They will be a facilitator. The private sector will have to do all that.

Now I want to quote, to show you what they said in one instance when they were in Opposition, and how they turned around and contradicted themselves by the actions which they are taking. The Member for Diego Martin Central:

"The basic objective of economic development is the elimination of poverty and the provision of social and economic justice."

And you know what is happening to poverty, Madam Speaker? Far from being eliminated, poverty is on the increase in Trinidad and Tobago.

"Our rising unemployment is a cause for concern as it exposes the country and its citizens to the dangerous and debilitating social consequences of unemployment. If growth does not promote social justice, if it fails to utilize to the fullest extent, the people of the country, our most important resource, if it does not reduce the concentration of economic power, one cannot say that real development occurs."

Tell us what is happening to the concentration of economic power since you took office. Is it more diffused now?

**Mr. Valley:** Of course!

**Mr. T. Sudama:** It continues:

"Emphasis on growth, and the achievement of foreign exchange balance, without—"

We should direct some of this advice to the Member for St. Ann's East.

"ensuring that there are institutions and mechanisms which promote social justice, will fail to achieve real development."

**Mr. Valley:** \$1.1 billion in total development—safety net. That is the point.

**Mr. T. Sudama:** Ask him how much it is now—how the shortfall in their oil revenue has affected the so-called \$1.1 billion in so-called safety net.

**Mr. Valley:** No effect.

**Mr. Maharaj:** But they do not want to debate it.

**Mr. T. Sudama:** It goes on—

"Without social and economic justice, as many examples in the world indicate, there will be social and political instability."

Well, that is coming, because there is no social and economic justice.

Now we hear about globalization, and how it is necessary for us to get—

**Mr. Valley:** *In Defence of the People's Interest*—a good book.

**Mr. T. Sudama:** Let me quote something on foreign investment and divestment—

"Nor does Telco's 'large' external debt provide a rationale for the sale to a foreign investor."

They are selling T&TEC, you know; they are selling WASA; they are selling almost everything in sight, but they are saying:

"Nor does Telco's 'large' external debt provide a rationale for the sale to a foreign investor. Such an argument is devoid of economic logic..."

says the Member for Diego Martin Central—

"partly because of the rescheduling of the public sector's external indebtedness of which Telco's is part; and the fact that this approach implies a strategy to convert the temporary foreign exchange obligation (foreign debt) into a permanent one through foreign equity financing."

Did the Member write this? What are they doing with their divestment policy?

**Mr. Valley:** That is why you all remain over there.

**Mr. Robinson:** I am saying they do not have any at all!

**Mr. T. Sudama:** Then he goes on to talk about free trade—and this is his policy when he was in Opposition.

"The World Bank has convinced this Government with the traditional 'virtue-in-free-trade' argument. It seems our leaders never bothered to ask, where in the world is trade free in reality today."

**3.40 p.m.**

But they are going for globalization. Globalization—we must get into the mainstream; we will be left behind; that is the only survival we have. But he says that nowhere in the world is there really free trade.

"Moreover, can free trade work in an environment such as ours in which the freedom of movement of capital and labour is restricted?"

This is the point that we have been making all the time in this House. There is a lack of freedom of movement of capital and labour and, therefore, free trade has only limited uses and advantages in such a situation. He acknowledges that but they are going full speed. If one reads the United States Ambassador, from whom they get their direction, they are not going fast enough.

The Member for Diego Martin Central continues:

"Developed countries have a vested interest in 'selling' this free trade concept to developing countries while they continue to protect segments of their home markets. The more the argument is accepted, the more the exports that could be sold to developing countries and the dependency syndrome is strengthened."

**Mr. B. Panday:** Somebody else wrote that for him.

**Mr. T. Sudama:** "The 'free trade' argument is not a valid one for Trinidad and Tobago."

**Mr. B. Panday:** Oh! Oh!

**Mr. T. Sudama:** I do not know whether the Member for Diego Martin Central and the Member for St. Ann's East belong to the same party.

**Mr. B. Panday:** Oh, no!

**Mr. T. Sudama:** Said the Member:

"The 'free trade' argument is not a valid one for Trinidad and Tobago. This does not mean that a certain level of external competition or that international competition in certain areas of our economy is not needed. What it means is that the total freeing-up of our fragile economy, especially at this time, exposes it to the vagaries of an unkind and contemptuous external environment that has long lost its soul."

I would like to know where the soul of the PNM is today. Where is it?

**Mr. Robinson:** It is Marshall who wrote that, not Valley.

**Mr. T. Sudama:** Not Valley. Well, if Marshall wrote it, he was using the *nom de plume* of Valley—Ken Valley, March 1990.

"When one, knowingly, enters a competition with the odds stacked against them, then one is asking to be mauled. There can be no free trade without the corresponding freeing up of capital and labour."

**Mr. B. Panday:** Oh! He sounds like Panday.

**Mr. T. Sudama:** He goes on again.

"External interference in domestic economic decision-making is economic colonialism,—"

I think he should write a note to Sally Cowal. Write a note to her and say what she is doing is economic colonialism, according to Ken Valley.

"—which is the opposite of economic independence of which we heard so much during the early life of this Government. Given the poor record of the World Bank and its sister institution, the IMF, in assisting developing and less developed countries out of economic crises, one can place little faith in the wisdom of its policy prescriptions."

Whose policy prescriptions are you following today, in 1994?

**Mr. Valley:** Madam Speaker, for the record, let me inform the House that the policy prescriptions that are being followed by this Government are of the People's National Movement, on which we fought and won an election. It is all in that manifesto.

**Mr. T. Sudama:** People's National Movement, when there are IMF people writing your budget. Whose national movement? When the IMF people are permanently residing in the Central Bank towers to write your budget and to scrutinize what is done on a day-to-day basis—talking about economic independence.

What we are doing here in this House today, debating these transfers from one vote to another, debating the ineptitude of a government—something which everybody has known from time immemorial—or listening to statements which betray everything they have said in the past, which betray all their manifesto promises, the mandate which the people of Trinidad and Tobago gave to this Government. It is a government of total betrayal. I do not know what kind of propaganda it will use when it goes to the polls this time to convince the majority of people in this country that it is operating for the benefit of the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

**Mr. Valley:** They are already convinced.

**Mr. T. Sudama:** We will see.

Madam Speaker, in closing I want to make a final appeal. We have to reform the system, or else it does not make sense. What we are really doing is allowing

this Executive *carte blanche* to do as it pleases with the national assets of Trinidad and Tobago after we in this House have passed a budget according to which moneys ought to be raised and expended. That is what we should do, for the system as it now operates is totally meaningless, and we cannot invest this Parliament with the authority to be a watchdog over public finances and public assets.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Minister of Works and Transport and Minister of Local Government (Hon. Colm Imbert):** Madam Speaker, the Motion before the House today is essentially a closing of the accounts for 1993. The Member for Oropouche has referred to a number of items that were in the minutes of the Finance Committee meetings we have had over the last week or so and queried a number of these items. But if one goes into the actual documents themselves, one would see that some of the statements made by the Member are inaccurate and, also, that there is quite a detailed explanation of some of the write-offs of debts and write-offs of the amounts paid.

For example, write-off of carpet stolen from Whitehall in 1988—when we were not in office—the minutes indicate that a sum of \$7,000 representing the value of carpet stolen in 1988 from Whitehall was written off because the police could go no further in their investigations. As a matter of fact, the police advised that the records concerning the matter were destroyed as a result of a fire on July 27, 1990. This information was all here, so I am somewhat surprised at some of the questions that the Member for Oropouche—

**Mr. Sudama:** How was it stolen in the first place?

**Hon. C. Imbert:** —asked in this honourable—.Well, ask the Member for Tobago East. It was in 1988.

**Mr. Sudama:** Are you implying that the Member for Tobago East knows?

**Hon. C. Imbert:** Yes. I understand the Member for Oropouche was there also so he might know when and how the carpet was stolen. He might know where it is also. I withdraw that. It was just “picong”, Madam Speaker.

Let me go to a matter relating to overpayment of salary to someone from the Ministry of Education. Again, the notes are quite detailed, and the Auditor General and the Comptroller of Accounts have considered the circumstances of all the cases, and have concluded that because of the administrative system in place at the ministry, it was reasonable to assume that the officers in question—

**Mr. Sudama:** Could you give way to a question, please? Do you not think that this House should really question the Auditor General and the Comptroller of Accounts to find out how they arrived at that decision? Do you not think that that is our duty here in Parliament, rather than to merely accept their statement?

**Hon. C. Imbert:** No, Madam Speaker. The point is that a teacher was overpaid—

**Mr. Sudama:** For 27 years.

**Hon. C. Imbert:** —and the Auditor General and the Comptroller of Accounts believed that the overpayments were done in good faith, that the teacher was unaware of the overpayments and, therefore, it would be unreasonable, harsh and oppressive to ask the teacher to repay that money at this time.

**Mr. Sudama:** Saith borrowed money in good faith!

**Hon. C. Imbert:** This is standard procedure. In a budget involving expenditure from \$8 billion, the sums that this House is being asked to write off are relatively small. For example, write-off of the indebtedness of a former estate constable in the Civil Aviation Division, Ministry of Works and Transport—overpayment of salary, \$668, on the grounds of illness.

### **3.50 p.m.**

So I would venture to say that the Member is being unnecessarily cantankerous in raising these issues as matters of great import. During the discussion the Member also made some scathing remarks about the Government's economic policy, our financial management, and so on. One wonders if the Members on the other side read the international press. I, myself, read an article some two weeks ago in the international press which indicated that out of all the countries in Central and South America—this is a report coming out of the World Bank—only four countries in all of Central, South America and the Caribbean were able to reduce their foreign debt in 1993. These included Mexico, Costa Rica and Trinidad and Tobago.

Trinidad and Tobago was able to reduce its foreign debt in 1993, according to the international press, by some 12 per cent. There are many larger countries, many more sophisticated economies, in Central and South America, yet this Government has been internationally recognized as being one of four, out of dozens of countries, that were able to reduce their foreign debts through proper fiscal management.

Additionally, I understand, in terms of financial restructuring and economic management in the region—this is Central, South America and the Caribbean—we are second only to Mexico in this hemisphere, if one excludes the developed North American countries.

So I am surprised when I hear some of the matters raised by the Members on the other side, because the facts do not bear testimony to some of the wild allegations and the misleading statements they make. If one looks at the documents again, the Member queried transfer of funds between heads and subheads. But these are matters on which we have already reported. I will go to the Ministry of Works and Transport, for example. If one looks very carefully, one would see that the transfers were primarily from Goods and Services items to the Unemployment Relief Programme. The Minister of Finance and I, as Minister of Works and Transport, have reported on this matter. There was a shortfall in revenue towards the end of 1993. There was a shortfall in the collection of the unemployment levy, which is a levy on oil companies, which goes into a separate fund, the unemployment fund. We stated quite clearly last year that there was a shortfall of some \$10—\$15 million in the unemployment fund. As a result, in order to maintain the Unemployment Relief Programme, we transferred funds from our Goods and Services allocations to the Unemployment Relief Programme.

So this is not coming as a surprise to the Member for Oropouche. He knows this. Therefore, I am at a loss to understand why he is querying it at this time as if it suddenly fell out of the sky. This is not so. The fact is that these transfers take place at the end of the year. That is a very important point.

For a number of reasons, projects are not implemented; for a number of reasons, expenditure is not made and, therefore, there are savings, if I can use that word—because they are not really savings—but there are reductions in expenditure and room is created within the allocations. Most of this money—I would not say all of it, but the large majority of these funds—would not have been spent in any event and would have been retired to the Treasury. Therefore, there is no significant or serious impact upon the functioning of these ministries by the transference of these funds.

Ministries re-prioritize their operations during the year, like any business operation. The Ministry of Works and Transport has an allocation of approximately \$500 million, and I would challenge the Opposition to tell me what private sector organization in this country, or any organization for that matter,

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with a budget of \$500 million, will cast every item of expenditure in stone on January 01, and stick to that for the ensuing 365 days of the year. No organization can operate like that. It is impossible. One must have flexibility.

There are external shocks, such as a drop in oil prices. One must be able to react to this. There are internal shocks. In my ministry, for example, last year, we had to deal with the severe effects of three storms. There was Tropical Storm Bret; there was a severe meteorological event on October 05, and again, on November 20, there was a severe storm. When this happens, the ministry, as a responsible ministry, has to determine its priorities and re-allocate funds; in this particular case, the cleaning and dredging of rivers, to the clearing of roads, to the repair of landslips, to the repair of retaining walls, and so on.

That is how a ministry runs its affairs. The Member for Oropouche knows this. He knows that businesses, organizations and ministries must allow themselves the flexibility to react to unforeseen events. That is what it is all about. There is nothing sinister inside here.

He spoke about transfers of funds out of the Attorney General's Office. What is it? It is a transfer of vacant posts. The money would not have been spent in any event. There are a series of rules and regulations within the Government system. Ministries set projections; they advertise for staff. For one reason or another, they are unable to recruit people within the time frame that was originally planned, and therefore the allocation for vacant posts can be utilized for other more pressing matters, such as the Water and Sewerage Authority. Because what the Member very conveniently left out in his dissertation was the fact that one of the transfers—Item No. 5—is a transfer from interest on overdraft, \$5.7 million, to the Water and Sewerage Authority and to the Public Transport Service Corporation: \$3 million for WASA and \$2.5 million for the PTSC.

I shall read this, since he clearly cannot read. These payments were for essential items at WASA—

**Mr. Sudama:** Chlorine.

**Hon. C. Imbert:** Yes, chlorine and alum. Would he have us not put chlorine and alum in the water? The Members on the other side have some brief experience in Government. Some of them more than others. Some of them were there for five years, some of them one year, some were there for one day. Some have Cabinet experience totalling one day, I understand. The Member for Tobago East, who has not spoken yet, has considerable experience, and I would assume that he is very familiar with the workings of Government.

**4.00 p.m.**

The Members for Oropouche and Couva North have some experience in Government—one year, six months, three months, whatever it is—and they will know, for example, that when the dollar was floated on April 13, 1993, it was anticipated that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs would need additional funds to meet the expenses of its missions abroad. That is self-evident.

The missions abroad incur expenses in foreign currency, therefore, if there is a change in the exchange rate, one must have additional outflow of funds in order to maintain the missions. I understand the hon. Member for Couva North was in that ministry for a short while so he ought to know of the things I am talking about.

This Bill before us today is very straightforward. It talks about increasing heads of expenditure in five ministries, the head for pensions and gratuities and reducing expenditure in two ministries: total increase of \$27 million with a total reduction of \$27 million; simply balance the 1993 accounts. That is all; simple balancing of the accounts. If one goes through the documentation one would see that the bulk of the transfers is on items where no expenditure would have been incurred in any event. There is no mischief as the Members would have this honourable House believe.

Additionally, the Member for Oropouche was very critical of the financial management of this Government. Prior to that, the Members on the other side walked out when the Member for St. Ann's East was reporting on the good news to the country. The problem is that the Members on the other side would prefer that the progress of this Government is not indicated to the national community. That is what they would prefer. They made noise, and when they realized that they could not prevent the statement from taking place, they walked out. For what? It is the right of a government to inform the population and the nation of what it is doing.

We were elected to serve the people of this country, and if we do not have the right to come to this Parliament, as Government, and inform the national community of the progress we are making in our financial affairs, then something has to be wrong. It is merely for information purposes. *[Interruption]* The Member is free to have it debated.

Madam Speaker, with your permission, since the Member for Oropouche used the opportunity of this Bill—the closing of the accounts—to stray into the Government's financial management of the economy, I would simply like to touch on a few points. Those of us who have eyes would have noticed, recently, that

there is confirmation that over the last year, there have been commitments and direct investment by US corporations in this country of some US \$600 million; that is over TT \$3 billion. In addition, in 1994 and 1995, based on commitments already made on agreements already entered into, it is projected that there will be additional investment of some US \$1 billion, or close to TT \$6 billion.

The fact of the matter is that all of this investment, nearly TT \$10 billion in foreign investment that has come into this country over the last two years, is as a direct result of initiatives of this Government. The Member queried expenditure on foreign travel. But how does he think these foreign investors have come here? It is because of visits to the United States of America and Europe by the Minister of Finance, the Minister with responsibility for investments, the Prime Minister and the Minister of Energy. All these visits have already borne fruit.

We are in an enviable position as a Government. After two years we can account to the country and indicate that already TT \$10 billion of foreign investment is here. Unlike previous administrations, we are not talking about foreign investors coming soon, and again, and just now, and next year they would come and so forth; no, no. They are already here!

When one looks at the expenditure on travel—just about \$2 million—an investment of \$10 billion arising out of foreign travel of \$2 million, what is the argument? How many thousand times is that? Can the mathematicians in this Chamber tell me? Divide \$10 billion by \$2 million and tell me what they get. Several thousands, as far as I know.

The investments are not only being made by foreign investors. Local investors—

**Hon. Member:** Like who?

**Hon. C. Imbert:** Carib Brewery, a \$100 million expansion project penetrating export markets; Trinidad Cement Company Limited, going into expansion and joint venture, taking over a plant in Barbados to expand its markets; Thomas Peake, exporting to the former Soviet Union.

I do not need to go on. It is making the Opposition uneasy, because they know that after just two short years, there is a resurgence in the construction sector to the point that some practitioners are talking about a mini boom; direct foreign investment coming here, creating job opportunities for persons in the manufacturing sector. That is the point that needs to be made. The energy plants are capital intensive, and the direct employment on site, after the plant is constructed, is in the few hundreds; during the construction of the plant employment peaks at several thousands.

The upcoming LNG plant—a \$5 billion investment—construction employment on site is supposed to peak at 3,500. There is a rule of thumb in the construction industry where for every one job created, three to four jobs are created in the manufacturing sector. For every job on site, there are three to four jobs in the service industries that manufacture PVC, steel, blocks, plastics, aggregate and so forth.

If there is a resurgence in the construction sector out of all these very capital-intensive plants, there are going to be several thousand jobs created in the construction sector, and many more thousands created in the industries that service the construction sector. That is the answer to his question. This Government intends to continue the stimulation of the construction sector.

#### **4.10 p.m.**

If one goes through the various investments that are being made, one sees the Nucor Plant, TT \$100 million in direct construction investment in Trinidad and Tobago. The new methanol plant, TT \$200 million in construction-related goods. It is part of the contract that the foreign investor had to guarantee that out of the total contract, which is US \$200 million, TT \$200 million minimum has to be spent on local goods and services in the construction sector.

When one goes to the private sector, there is the Clico/Methanol Plant—they would not have involved themselves in that type of expenditure unless they had confidence in the Government and confidence in the local economy. That is a serious investment that a company has got into—millions of dollars—with a German investor. We have the airport project, US \$80 million. We expect jobs in construction to peak at over 1,000. Therefore, I am always surprised when the Members on the other side say that the Government is doing nothing, that we are not bringing in any investment, because the truth belies their statements. Look at the stabilization of the exchange rate.

I remember the Member for Oropouche outside this House making statements to the effect that 20 to 1; cricket scores! How long will it come? Today is March 28, 1994. Two weeks from now will be exactly one year that the foreign exchange rates were freed up. Where are the cricket scores? Where are the 100 to 1, 50 to 1 and the 60 to 1? *[Interruption]* Listen to the Member for Couva South, that it will come dramatically. That is what he said a year ago, and he has been proved wrong. The exchange rate is as solid as a rock despite the mischief, rumour and the underground patriotism.

I noticed the Member for Couva South laughing. I wonder if he has been reading the *Underground Patriot*, or perhaps he has a greater

connection to the *Underground Patriot* than some of the others in this House; some of the language is quite similar to the language used by the Member for Couva South.

**Mr. Maharaj:** Misconduct in public office will come to me.

**Mr. Sudama:** You have a section called the deal maker.

**Hon. C. Imbert:** You wrote that? Earlier this month, the Minister of Public Utilities reported to this House that we had been successful in finding an investor for the Trinidad and Tobago Electricity Commission for the generation aspect of T&TEC. This has come out of a long process. This did not happen overnight. I have observed that this process was in train for several months. The announcement by the Minister was a culmination of the efforts of the Government over the last several months.

The point that needs to be made is that we have been successful in attracting a foreign investor to undertake the necessary refurbishment and rehabilitation of our generating plant. So that it is no longer necessary for the Government to find scarce funding to give to the Trinidad and Tobago Electricity Commission to upgrade its plants, which would be necessary within the next two years. If the Government had been unable to find a foreign investor to rehabilitate the electricity commission's plant, we would have had to fund it out of our general revenues, out of our taxpayers' funds, thereby depriving other sectors of the economy of those funds.

That is one very positive aspect of foreign investment in T&TEC. In addition, we expect that the benefits from that project will redound to the benefit of this country over the next 15 years. I am certain that the Minister will report from time to time on the extensive range of benefits that are going to come out of that investment.

The fact is, it is indicated that there will be a change from the present scenario where the Trinidad and Tobago Electricity Commission pays no tax, pays no dividends to its shareholders—the people of Trinidad and Tobago—and based on information and analyses it is expected that over the next 15 years considerable revenue will come into the Treasury from that investment in terms of dividends and taxes. That is another benefit of that investment: Not only do we not have to now find the funds to rehabilitate T&TEC's generating plant but the Treasury will benefit positively rather than giving money to the electricity commission, which it had to do in the past.

This is part of the Government's overall strategy to restructure our state enterprises to make them efficient, to turn them from loss leaders and money losers into organizations that can actually put something back. After all the years

of taking money out of the Treasury—when one looks at the accumulated losses of the Water and Sewerage Authority for example—over \$2 billion. One can imagine that if we restructure the Water and Sewerage Authority in such a way, not only could we get inflows of capital to rehabilitate all the pumps and equipment that are in a state of disarray at present, and repair the leaking pipelines and instal—new pipelines—not only could we attract capital for that—but we could also rejuvenate WASA to the extent that it would pay dividends and taxes to the Treasury rather than be a drain on the exchequer. That is the Government's strategy.

We do not believe we should just adopt a stand-off policy and let it sort out itself. We believe that there is need for affirmative and decisive action.

We also believe that within the next year or two, when the fruits of our labour become more evident, when our state enterprises, our essential services, are functioning far more efficiently than they are doing at present; when the Minister of Finance lays his budget documents in this honourable House you will no longer see an item—subvention for the Water and Sewerage Authority. Instead, you will see an item—income from the Water and Sewerage Authority to the Government and to the people of Trinidad and Tobago. That is where we are going. That is what we intend to do. *[Interruption]*

**4.20 p.m.**

I hear a question on the other side: At what price? Clearly, if we rejuvenate, reorganize and restructure these organizations so that they would become more efficient and pay dividends and taxes instead of being a burden and a drain on the Treasury, clearly, the people of this country would benefit.

**Mr. Humphrey:** That is not correct.

**Hon. C. Imbert:** Not correct?

There are terrible inefficiencies in these organizations at present. We believe that what we are doing is the correct way to do things and we are on the right path. We believe that what interests the population of this country is delivery of efficient and affordable services. That is what the people are interested in. Affordable, efficient and reliable services! That is the direction in which we are taking these enterprises. The country would see, within the next year or two, the efficiency and transformation of these enterprises.

We are all agreed that the water supply situation in this country needs to be improved. It is a matter on which we are all agreed. I have my own problems in my constituency like everybody on the other side. We are all agreed that

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something must be done and now. What is bothering the Members on the other side is that they see the Government is taking affirmative action, as we have done with Trinidad and Tobago Electricity Commission.

They see the prospect of increased efficiency and that there would no longer be a drain on the Treasury; and they are getting jittery and worried. They know that when we solve the problems at Trinidad and Tobago Electricity Commission and at the Water and Sewerage Authority, and people can get a proper water supply, Members opposite would remain on the other side until I am a very old man. They do not want the problems solved. There is nothing they hate more than progress by this Government. They see that we are balancing the fiscal account; foreign investment is coming; they see a stable exchange rate and an increase in our foreign exchange reserves.

One of the positive effects of the floating of the currency is the fact that there are net inflows of foreign exchange to the Central Bank. Previously, the Central Bank was the sole purchaser and controller of foreign exchange and it would sell foreign exchange to the commercial banks. Now there is the reverse. The commercial banks are selling foreign exchange to the Central Bank. How did that happen? That did not happen "just so". It happened because we have a stable and properly organized exchange rate. We have gone from one month of import cover to over two months. All of the graphs are pointing up.

I have some data here. Our foreign debt in 1993 was US \$2.1 billion; in 1994, \$1.9 billion. Therefore, there is a net reduction in our foreign debt of actually US \$150 million. We are not talking about TT dollars; the US dollar value of our foreign debt has decreased by US \$150 million. That is all because of the prudent, fiscal management by this Government.

When we look at the transfer to state enterprises, again we see proper management and control. There is a gradual reduction of the dependency on hand-outs by these state enterprises. We are moving towards, as I said, capital investment, restructuring efficiency and rejuvenation of these enterprises.

I do not think that the Members on the other side should book their seats on this side of the House. I do not think so. I think they had better get accustomed to being on that side of the House for a very long time. They would learn their lesson in the by-election in Laventille West. Bring your candidate! Bring your candidate!

**Mr. Maharaj:** You cannot go there!

**Hon. C. Imbert:** I can go there before you!

**Madam Speaker:** Leave the by-election for Laventille West.

**Hon. C. Imbert:** I am sorry, Madam Speaker. I was merely going to point out that because of the prudent financial management of this Government, the Opposition would get a severe licking in the by-election for the Laventille West constituency. That is all I was going to point out, with your permission, Madam Speaker.

This Bill is very straightforward, as I said. Similar bills are brought to the House all the time. It is simply a closing of the accounts for 1993. Much of what the Member for Oropouche has said is simply just not relevant and totally misleading. I beg to support the measure.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**Mr. Ramesh Lawrence Maharaj (Couva South):** Madam Speaker, what we have seen in this House is clear contempt of the Government for the people of Trinidad and Tobago. We have seen that the PNM Government has decided that it is going to destroy the institution of Parliament—and Parliament's role would already have been diminished under the PNM Government—in that the Government does not want to enter into a debate on issues and matters which should be debated in this House. The Government wants to destroy the very basis of Parliament, whose duty is to scrutinize the actions of government.

This afternoon we have seen that the Government has decided to agree to waive the Standing Orders in order to debate a statement, although it did not—

**Mr. Valley:** Madam Speaker, on a point of order! The Government never attempted to waive any Standing Order. The Minister is entitled to make a statement in this House as provided by the authority of May's. The Minister went according to the Standing Orders. I would refer the hon. Member to May's at page 297.

**Mr. R. L. Maharaj:** Madam Speaker!

**Mr. Valley:** Madam Speaker, I am on a point of order!

**Madam Speaker:** This is a convenient time at which to take the break.

The House would resume at 5.00 p.m.

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

**5.04 p.m.:** *Sitting resumed.*

**Mr. K. Valley:** Madam Speaker, at the break I had referred the Member to page 297 of May's *Parliamentary Practice* which deals with ministerial statements, making the point that while the Government is under an obligation to inform the Speaker of such a statement, neither the permission nor the leave of the House is required.

You would know, Madam Speaker, that Motions on the Adjournment are allowed. At times we have four Motions on the Adjournment. It is allowed by the Standing Orders. We have no objection. Similarly, one fails to understand what objection the Opposition can have to a ministerial statement which is allowed under the Standing Orders.

**Mr. R. L. Maharaj:** Madam Speaker, I am saying that the general rule is that ministerial statements cannot be debated at the same time. The hon. Minister of Finance and the Member for San Fernando East did say, when the Minister was making his contribution, that they on that side had no objection to the statement on this matter being debated.

**Madam Speaker:** In all fairness to the hon. Minister, I think the Member for Couva South did ask whether he would permit the matter to be debated. I think he said yes.

**Mr. R. L. Maharaj:** But, Madam Speaker, we were saying: Not here, because we had no notice of it. We have not studied the contents; we were not prepared to debate. So, the point I am making is that if the Government is serious about debating that statement, which was an update of the financial situation in Trinidad—I do not want to argue about this but there is no basis for that as a ministerial statement—then it can be put on the Order Paper so that we can debate it. I am also aware that the Opposition can bring it up on a Motion on the Adjournment, but that would not be a debate. That would only mean that one Member says something to which another replies.

If, on an important matter like the economy of the country, an update on the budgetary position and its planning of the state of the economy, the Government intends to hide behind a ministerial statement, in my respectful view, that is treating the Parliament with contempt.

**Mr. Valley:** Madam Speaker, you will remember that during the debate on the Finance Bill, it was the Member for Oropouche who raised the issue of the Minister of Finance making a statement on an important matter outside the House. At that time, the hon. Minister undertook to apprise the House of the current situation. It is with that background that the Government, considering the point

raised by the Opposition, came here today prepared to share with the Opposition, and by extension, the national community, what is happening.

May's *Parliamentary Practice* provides for debate on ministerial statements. It says this on page 298. I am making the point that the Opposition has no right, no logical basis, for objecting to a ministerial statement at any time. In the same way the Government cannot object to a Motion on the Adjournment raised by a Member of the Opposition.

**Mr. R. L. Maharaj:** Madam Speaker, that statement made by the Leader of Government Business in this House aggravates the contempt; it shows the degree of contempt the Government has.

The origin and history of Parliament is the responsibility of Parliament for controlling and checking public expenditure. That is the origin, history and basis of Parliament. So, Parliament's duty is to control and check public expenditure. Therefore, the whole procedure in Parliament is geared towards that. If the Government is interested in having scrutiny of public expenditure through Parliament, it would introduce mechanisms, provide machinery for debate on issues which affect the financial situation, the economy and the financial purse of a country.

Be that as it may, it is quite clear, and we submit, that if the Government was serious about responding to my colleague the Member for Oropouche, when he said that he wanted the other side to make a statement—it is not a statement without debate—then the Government should have engaged in debate. What has happened here is that the Government knows that its economic policy has been disgraceful; it has failed, and therefore, it is afraid to engage in debate. Give us notice, let us prepare, let us debate.

### **5.10 p.m.**

The history of this Government has shown—we have raised it in this House—the Opposition office has asked for extra facilities. It is the first time in the country that the Opposition Benches have 13 Members of the House of Representatives and six Senators; and the office that the PNM had when they were in Opposition with three Members is the same office the Opposition today is using with the same facilities.

Is this Government interested in accountability?

**Mr. Valley:** While the PNM was in Opposition, the Leader of the Opposition had an office. One expects that the same obtains now: that the Leader of the Opposition has an office. There is no office for Members of the Opposition, Madam Speaker.

**Mr. R. L. Maharaj:** Therefore, Madam Speaker, the hon. Leader of Government Business wants only the Leader of the Opposition to have an office, and to have the facilities for the research?

**Mr. Valley:** Also, each parliamentary representative either has a constituency office or is given an allowance of \$700.00 per month towards a constituency office; that was implemented by the PNM Government.

**Mr. R. L. Maharaj:** If the Government is seriously interested in ensuring that the Opposition scrutinizes governmental action, instead of spending all this money on matters which involve waste and mismanagement, they would divert it for the benefit of the people. But they do not want their actions to be scrutinized. They do not want to spend money on research officers for the Opposition. The Opposition must be limited to the same amount they had.

What has happened is that the Parliament has become, under this PNM Government, a very ineffective mechanism for controlling and checking public expenditure. As a matter of fact, the PNM Government will go down in the history of this country as bearing truth to the statement that this Government is an elective dictatorship. It is not interested in open government, it is not interested in transparency of government. As a matter of fact, we have the Government being silent, unresponsive to the suggestion of parliamentary committees to monitor the financial management of the Government. I was about to say “the company”; in truth and in fact that is how they are operating it: as a company. If Parliament is to perform the historic role of controlling and checking public expenditure, how is it going to do that if there is no machinery to do so?

What we are seeing here today is a situation where a budget was debated in 1993. The Government said that there were specific sums of money which would have to be spent in certain areas. There was debate on that. Then we have a situation where the Government, without coming back to Parliament, changed that around. The question that arises is—not as the Member for Diego Martin East said, just switching money—Was it necessary to utilize the moneys which were earmarked for certain purposes but were not necessary for those purposes?

There is no machinery to have contemporaneous checks on that. What in effect happened is that the contingency fund has been used, the resources have been used, and now the matter is brought here for formal approval. The Government, under the Westminster system has used its majority, to have a situation where it is merely going through the motions. We are doing this in a situation where we do not have—as in other Parliaments—the machinery to check

governmental action. Madam Speaker, we have in Trinidad and Tobago the tyranny of unparliamentary government.

In the Mother of Parliaments—*[Interruption]*

I know that the defence of the Government would be to blame the Speaker, but it is the tyranny of an unparliamentary government nurtured by the PNM.

I want to put on record my contention that this Government is contemptuous of the people of this country, of the Parliament of this country and of the basis of parliamentary democracy. In the Mother of Parliaments—which they seem to want to follow all the time in many other things—select committees are appointed to examine the expenditure, administration and policy of every government department. But this is a hypocritical Government. It says one thing and wants to do another. It says things to fool people.

To provide a little more evidence of the hypocrisy of this Government, I shall quote from the *Proposal for a Charter for Civil Society* which this Government has adopted. Not the hon. Member for San Fernando East; he is a Member of the Cabinet, but this Government—the PNM Government—has adopted it and has said that this is the charter for a civil society. In other words they are saying an uncivilized society must not have things which are here. In order to prevent an uncivilized society we must do these things. Here it is that this Government is talking on the Caribbean front and as propaganda to the world that it is interested in a civil society. On page 11 it says:

"We believe, however, that we can now go further in elevating some of these matters to the level of principles and precepts to which member Governments of CARICOM give clear commitment. Such matters as a free press..."

Well, I would not talk about Trinidad and Tobago Television today.

"...a fair and open democratic process, the effective functioning of the parliamentary function, absence of corruption..."

Then it goes on:

"...greater accountability and transparency in Government..."

Would any government which is seriously committed to what is said here and to the conventions of the Constitution of Trinidad and Tobago come with a matter like this? They want to prevent debate contemporaneously with a ministerial statement. But in addition, they bring proposals like these in which \$10 million is taken from the Ministry of Legal Affairs and put for other things, yet they say that

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they are having problems with staff to improve the administration of justice. Is Parliament not supposed to know at the time these decisions are being made so that we could discuss to see whether it is right to do what is proposed?

If you are doing this, then you should not have a legal department, and I will come to that. If all these moneys are earmarked for these services and you can still transfer them to something else and it does not make a difference to the department, then, obviously, something is wrong somewhere.

It goes to the question of projections and estimates. It is not a matter of \$2,000, \$10,000 or \$1 million; \$10 million was earmarked for a ministry which could have done without it. Is that fiscal management?

### **5.20 p.m.**

In the very budget that the hon. Minister talked about in 1983, improved fiscal and monetary management—hypocrisy, total hypocrisy, and that is why people are getting fed up with Parliament. I do not blame John Public when John Public is not even interested in coming to listen to the proceedings in Parliament. As far as John Public is concerned, Parliament has become a useless machinery for the airing of views and having accountability of Government. I do not blame John Public; I sympathize with John Public because of the attitude, the behaviour of the PNM Government. This is the only Government which applauds itself.

When I heard that a ministerial statement was to be made, I thought that it would have been a statement on the lead poisoning in Demerara, which they in Cabinet know about. The lead poisoning— *[Interruption]* Sit down, sit down! I thought that they would have come to disclose the contents of the task force report, but they are not interested in that, and that is a serious matter which affects the lives of the people in Demerara, children—

**Madam Speaker:** Since that is a serious matter maybe the hon. Member can engage the House in a constructive debate on it. Please carry on with the matter before the House.

**Mr. R. L. Maharaj:** All right, Madam Speaker. The point I am making is that if the Government really wants to make ministerial statements, it should do so correctly.

Before I go into the other matters, the hon. Member for Diego Martin East talked about the Nucor Plant. If the Member wants to talk about that plant and say that this is a big gain for Trinidad and Tobago, he must tell us what it is costing the country; what the Government has given away; what is the price of

natural gas; what are the benefits that the company is getting; what environmental measures it has taken to prevent the effects of what Nucor is doing at Point Lisas.

The Member talked about the methanol plant. I would have thought that if he was interested he would have said that the Government was interested to appoint a committee so that the Opposition and the public could investigate, not only Nucor and methanol and Farrell House, but also the real price for T&TEC, who get money and who did not get. That is what I thought they would have done. *[Interruption]* The Government cannot talk about accountability, when it wants to deal with the financial resources and other resources of the country in that manner. It cannot talk about Nucor, about methanol, about T&TEC; it cannot talk about the privatization of these utilities unless it talks about the machinery to ensure that the public is not robbed in any of those sales.

In any country—even under the Westminster system in the United Kingdom—even though the Executive has the right to sell assets, they do not do so without going to the Parliament and having it debated. They do not do that, because that is the convention, that is the moral value of the Government. But here, overnight, a decision is taken and the assets of the people of Trinidad and Tobago are sold, and without any reference to them.

How could that be accountability? How could the hon. Member for Diego Martin East talk about that as a matter of showing that the people of Trinidad and Tobago are progressing? We can only know that the people are progressing if they have an input in what is happening; if they have an input in the participatory democracy and the caring Government which you promised but which you have not given.

Accountability is fundamental in a democratic society, and whenever a government is not accounting, the whole question of democracy—and whether it exists and whether it is threatened—comes into play. It is fundamental and its purpose is to ensure ethical use of public moneys; that is its purpose. In this Parliament we do not have any effective means of checking governmental expenses and expenditure on projects; we do not have it.

It has been proved in the countries which have moved away from the present system and introduced select committees. Those countries have all the public accounts committees, public accounts enterprises committees, and auditors general, but those committees are merely examining reports, no way of monitoring the activities of government departments.

So that we do not have open and transparent government in Trinidad and Tobago; we do not have public information being available to the population,

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either through Parliament or through individual members of the public. So there is no machinery to ensure (1) that there are no acts of corruption or acts of waste and (2) the financial scrutiny of the country's resources, the moneys which the Government spends, but which belongs to the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

Since ours is the Westminster system of Government—and governmental accountability is a distinct feature of parliamentary democracy—I would say that having regard to the conduct of this Government it is not really a democratic one; it is really a dictatorship, a dictatorship under the guise of a Parliament, under the trappings of a Parliament which expects the Opposition to give some form of credibility to a dictatorship Government by its presence in Parliament and participating in the process.

In another matter, I read from a recent edition of the *Economist* about joint select committees. One sees that some of the same things we were saying were happening in England in 1979; people were becoming very distrustful of governments, of ministers, of politicians, of institutions, and there was a war waged—if I could use that expression—that the government must rethink its position if it wanted Parliament to survive as an institution in the country. And what did that government do?

The government did not just turn a deaf ear or a blind eye to it. As a result of what was introduced we see from all the reports that not only has public interest in Parliament been aroused, not only do the people like to go and listen to what is happening before the select committees—and as a matter of fact, from the reports there is more attendance at the select committees than at debates on the floor of the House—but also the institution of Parliament is in effect respected again in England. In Trinidad and Tobago that does not exist.

### **5.30 p.m.**

When in history, Parliament becomes unaccountable and the people regard it as being unaccountable and not being administered for the purpose which it was there to serve, people react to it. In history, the American people felt that the British Parliament was not operating to their benefit, it was not accountable to them, and in the Declaration of Independence—I am about to read from the *Book of Great American Documents*, at page 13.

I think it is appropriate for the Government to recognize what can happen. It says:

"When in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which connected them with another and to assume

among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and Nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation."

I am not saying that applies here now.

"We hold these truths to be self-evident that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed. That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness.

Prudence, indeed, will dictate that Governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes and, accordingly, all experience hath shown, that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. But when a long train of abuses and usurpations pursuing invariably the same Object evinces a design to reduce them under absolute Despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw out such Government, and to provide new Guards for their future security. Such has been the patient sufferance of these Colonies; and such is now the necessity which constrains them to alter their former Systems of Government..."

We have had in the history of Trinidad and Tobago, events which have shown—if we go back in history, we would see that both in 1970 and 1990 there was the perception that the Government was not acting in the interest of the people. If we go back in history, not only in Trinidad and Tobago—but in world history—if we study the French Revolution, the American Revolution, all these matters, we would see that when institutions which are geared for the protection of the people are not being utilized for the benefit of the people, rightly or wrongly, there would be a movement to say that we do not need these institutions. If we have a serious commitment to allow the rule of law and institutions to work, the Government—

**Mr. Valley:** Madam Speaker, all that the Member is saying is very nice and can form part of some other debate, but I am hoping that we are still on the Finance Committee Report, and unless the Member would come back to the report quickly, I would suggest that he is really irrelevant.

**Madam Speaker:** I think the Member was trying to comment on the question of the select committee and, if I understand him rightly, he was using this as a support for it, but I think he is moving on a little slowly in that respect.

**Mr. R. L. Maharaj:** Madam Speaker, I knew that would offend the other side, because the truth always offends. I see a habit on the other side that whenever the truth offends them, they become very restless and they resort to you, Madam Speaker, to try to curtail the issue.

**Mr. B. Panday:** Madam Speaker's name is not "valium", you know.

**Mr. R. L. Maharaj:** What I am saying—and I say it very seriously—is that if we really want this Parliament to work and people to have confidence in us, and in this institution, this kind of behaviour by the Government does not encourage it. As a matter of fact, this kind of behaviour encourages the people to say that Parliament is a waste of time; it does not protect their interests. That is a perception which people must not have, and it is the duty of Government to act in such a way as to ensure that that perception does not exist.

Let us take the Judiciary. If we have to decide now that we must approve \$865,394 from vacant posts and salaries and COLA which was used for prestigious buildings, major repairs, janitorial and security services, of what use is et cetera, that at that stage? If there was control, we could have said at that time that, listen, it is better not to use it for that; there are many more important things to use it for.

For example, if there is a problem with water, give that money to water instead of using it for prestigious buildings, major repairs, janitorial and security services. We may be able to say that there are problems in the administration of justice—an important matter. Why is it you are taking \$865,394 which is earmarked for salaries and COLA for staff and putting it in other areas?

What we are seeing here is that Opposition Members, the people of Trinidad and Tobago, are curtailed or obstructed. When the Government comes with a contingency vote it has to be something that is important. If this money could have been saved because you are not spending it on that but you want to utilize it now for something else, we could have said, "If you want that money, cut short your expenses on state companies and statutory authorities; look and see how they are spending money."

I read a story in the *TNT Mirror* that in one of the state-owned companies moneys are spent for cricket tickets. When one looks at all those expenses, one should be able to ask, is it necessary to use that money? Is it necessary to spend additional money? The additional money which could be spent is money which statutory companies and government companies are throwing away on lavish matters.

I do not think that any meaningful debate can occur on these matters unless there is contemporaneous machinery to determine whether the moneys allotted for these heads of expenditure should be utilized for the particular purpose.

When one looks at Head 13—Office of the Prime Minister—one sees a situation where \$8.2 million is taken from the Ministry of Legal Affairs—\$2.5 million for salaries; \$3.9 million for vacant posts; \$280,645; \$600,000 for travelling; and \$1 million for consulting and other contracting services. We see that that office earmarked an expenditure of \$8 million, and that was taken from the ministry responsible for the administration of justice in the country and put to the Office of the Prime Minister. To do what? For the acquisition of the assets of the Trinidad Turf Club and Union Park Turf Club. Who benefits from that? The people of Trinidad and Tobago benefit from that? Is that a priority? Is that more important than water?

As a matter of fact, if there was a contemporaneous debate, could we not say that is not important, that could have built the Balmain Slope Bridge? Could we not say that could have assisted in repairing all the landslides? Could we not say that is not important so that we do not have robbery of the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago in charging water rates but they do not get water? How can we monitor this? Of what importance is it?

It shows that there is a government debate here on expenditure, but then behind the back of the Parliament, the Executive uses its power to switch things around and decide which are the priorities. The whole basis, origin of Parliament is for that not to occur. The whole basis of it is for the moneys to be scrutinized so that the people would know how it is being spent and they would have a say. Do we have a say now? Would it make a difference what we say here?

What we are doing here is just putting it down on the record so that history would absolve us. That is what we are doing here. Does this give us a say? Madam Speaker, you see the attitude of the Members on that side. Would it move them in any way? Would it change?

With the power that the Prime Minister has under the Westminster system, elective dictatorship, even the Back-Benchers—would they vote for the Government? What we have here is a charade, a sham, for parliamentary democracy.

#### **5.40 p.m.**

In England, there is a recent book, *The Power of the Back Benchers*, and it shows how the select committees are so important that the Prime Minister cannot

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get his Back-Benchers to go along with matters, because they are on the committees and they assert what is in the public interest.

I have confidence that some of our Back-Benchers in the Government, if we had a proper system, would not have gone along with some of these things. But do not worry. I still feel that Marshall, our colleague, is alive in some of their hearts, although I do not see the result of it.

**Mr. Casimire:** The Member cannot see the heart.

**Mr. R. L. Maharaj:** Madam Speaker, we come to the Ministry of Health. The hon. Member for Diego Martin East talked about Laventille. If I were in a Government which was formed in order to promote a national movement and to distribute the power to the people, and the people in Laventille exist the same way they existed in 1956, I would be ashamed.

If one drives through Laventille one would feel sorry to see how the PNM has treated those people with contempt. They do not have security; and the man who gave the power to the PNM—they put him right down the road and, poor fellow, he is in the grave today.

Anyhow, let us come back to the Ministry of Health. We see here another assault on the Ministry of Legal Affairs. I feel that they do not like the hon. Member for Ortoire/Mayaro. I feel they are taking unfair advantage of him. I really feel sorry for him. I hope they do not think that he is a counterfeit Attorney General, why they are treating him so, because they cannot treat a real Attorney General like this. I think they are underestimating the hon. Member for Ortoire/Mayaro—it is as if they decided to take advantage of him.

One of the biggest problems in the country is the administration of justice—staff; Gurley Report; technology, et cetera—these moneys, in his own argument, could be used to get technology, improve the administration of justice. What happened? All of a sudden it is taken away. Assaulting the hon. Member for Ortoire/Mayaro.

**Mr. Sobion:** I wonder whether the hon. Member for Couva South is aware that insofar as the requirements of the Judiciary and the Magistracy are concerned, there is a separate vote, quite apart from the Ministry of Legal Affairs?

**Mr. R. L. Maharaj:** Yes, I am aware of that, but I am also aware that one of the greatest problems confronting the administration of justice is the shortage of staff at both the Attorney General's office and the office of the DPP. Therefore one of the reasons—even with the US Ambassador making statements to the effect that the DPP's office is understaffed—the Attorney General's office does not have

the staff, the prosecution machinery is at a very low ebb; and you do not have investigative machinery for the office of the Attorney General or the DPP's office, or even the police.

In these circumstances, I would have thought that if they had to take \$10 million, they would give it to the police service, because the police service does not have vehicles—and they are talking about crime! Most of the Coast Guard vessels are not in operation. So if it is that they are going to take \$10 million and utilize it properly for an assault on the drug trade and reduce crime, I would have thought that they would have done that. But what did they take the money for? They took \$8 million for the Trinidad and Tobago Turf Club; and I am sure that if my friend the hon. Attorney General knew that they were taking it for the police service, he would have no objection in his heart.

**Mr. B. Panday:** I am sure he objected!

**Mr. R. L. Maharaj:** I am sure that he objected, but when he saw what the Commissioner of Police was saying about members of the Chamber of Commerce as regards drugs, obviously, he would have wanted to ensure that there were resources to get at these people. I am sure that he objected; of course, I know that he cannot disclose what happened in the Cabinet so I sympathize with him.

Then what do we see? The sum of \$2 million went to expenses in the Ministry of Health. Now they have not told us that these expenses would cause health care to be reduced for the ordinary man in the street, you know. If this \$2 million had been used so that the ordinary man in the street would not have to pay so much for health care, and would not be deprived of it, we would have no objection to it—but this \$2 million is to make health care more expensive for the ordinary man.

Have they told us that by spending this \$2 million, the people who have to wait in a long queue now to get an operation will get it sooner? People who have to go to the hospital and cannot get these operations and have to borrow money to get operations—will it make a dent on them? No. So, really and truly these expenses are not for the ordinary people. We have no system in Trinidad and Tobago that enables us—when the Government is retaining experts, or spending money for consultancy services, to investigate—to see whether what they are charging is reasonable and for the benefit of the country. We have no such system. So we see that situation with respect to funds allocated to the Ministry of Legal Affairs being transferred to the Ministry of Health—

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

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

*Question put and agreed to.*

**Mr. R. L. Maharaj:** Madam Speaker, I wish to assure you that I will not take the full 30 minutes. I have to leave, and I do not mean any disrespect to my friend—I have a meeting to go to, so I would not take that time. In any event, I will complete before that, but I am indebted to hon. Members.

Madam Speaker, my—I was about to say “my learned friend”. My friend the hon. Member for Oropouche has dealt with Item No. 5, Ministry of Public Utilities. [*Interruption*] “Learned” is used in the context of learned in the law. My friend is learned in the economics field—he has a specialty.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs: I had some difficulty with this. I am seeing here that about \$2 million is being utilized in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs: for electricity, \$138,000; telephones, \$998,000; water and sewerage rates; rent accommodation; upkeep of vehicles; repair and maintenance. It may be that this \$2 million could have been saved if the policy of the Government was different. Do we really need all these missions abroad, all these military attachés? If, for example, we had a set-up whereby we could scrutinize these matters, and we could have said well, if they are going to take \$2 million for telephone for extra staff, to pay for an extra office in another country, or for repairing a building, we could say no, no, no—do not use that, because our brothers in Laventille do not have water or electricity; they want their tenancy regularized; and we want to stop them from coming to see the Opposition so regularly, because they are complaining to the Opposition.

As a matter of fact, I want to tell them that I have a Motion called "Laventille Motion" because these poor people are complaining. If \$2 million is spent on these lavish matters I referred to—and I am not blaming the hon. Member for San Fernando West; he is only one of the Cabinet. The Cabinet has agreed on this; it is their policy. Poor Member, even if he disagrees, because of the system he cannot say that he disagrees. I know that he wants to say he disagrees, but I would advise him not to.

**Mr. B. Panday:** Because he would lose his office and he is afraid of that! He cannot say that.

**Mr. R. L. Maharaj:** Madam Speaker, we do not have room for him here as yet, but we would be able to think about it; and probably see what we can do.

So, what we have here is a situation where we really—and when you look at the other one, the Ministry of Works and Transport—

**5.50 p.m.**

I think that the hon. Member for Diego Martin East should really reconsider this and if he could give back the \$2 million to the Ministry of Legal Affairs, it should be done. Because he has taken this \$2 million and is using it in the Ministry of Works and Transport for security and maintenance services. Who are these services maintaining?

**Mr. Imbert:** On a point of order. The document is quite explicit. It is for the National Maintenance Training and Security Company (MTS) Ltd.

**Mr. R. L. Maharaj:** That is for security and maintenance services. MTS is engaged in security and maintenance services.

**Mr. B. Panday:** And other contractual work.

**Mr. R. L. Maharaj:** Therefore, the money is being utilized for maintenance and security services. This brings us to the whole question again: If it is that a police service is being paid, do we need to finance this company to that extent? If it is that they are coming to this House and saying that they want to take \$2 million from the Ministry of Legal Affairs to use for security and maintenance services, does the role of the Ministry of National Security not come into play?

**Mr. Eckstein:** How?

**Mr. R. L. Maharaj:** Because we do not know. Have they told us? In the contribution of the hon. Minister, did he tell us? He did not tell us. Are we to guess? What system do we have for us to examine it to find out? We do not know.

**Mr. Imbert:** It is for schools.

**Mr. R. L. Maharaj:** Well, if it is for schools, can the police service not provide the security for schools? Maintenance and security services—is it only maintenance?

We have a situation where the PNM Government is finding ways of getting companies and avenues in order to spend state moneys. The reason that is done is that there are many opportunities for official misuse. The other point— *[Interruption]*

The response from the other side is when they try to divest—I have a problem with that. If it is that they are divesting for the people of Trinidad and Tobago so that the people would own it, I do not have a problem. If it is also that they are divesting with transparency in the relationship, I do not have a problem.

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But if they are divesting with a secret state of Trinidad and Tobago in force, and they alone know what is happening, they alone know what are the bids, who are the persons who get the commission, and the people do not know, then I have a serious problem with it.

I see a situation in which the Government is implementing some policy of forgiveness of debts. I do not know the extent of the policy, and I think that if it is that a government is embarking upon, following or implementing—I am not going into the rightness or wrongness because I do not have the facts—whether it is going to agree to forgive debts or it is going to agree that public servants be forgiven debts, where public officials, including Members of Parliament and Ministers, can be forgiven debts or can have situations where debts owed to the Government or debts owed to state-owned or state-controlled companies should not be paid, or should be suspended for some reason or the other, there should be a policy; there should be criteria; there should be guidelines.

Unless the Government can produce guidelines as to what kind of situations would lead to the implementation of a policy of the forgiveness of debts, we are, in effect, not going to use that power or that discretion properly. *[Interruption]* As a matter of fact, it is going to be an uncircumscribed discretion. It is going to be used in matters and areas where—*[Interruption]* for their own political purpose, they may consider that it is necessary for it to be done.

Madam Speaker, it seems that the Members on the other side are very offended about the *Patriot*. If you saw that newspaper, Madam Speaker—

**Madam Speaker:** I spend my time reading better literature.

**Mr. B. Panday:** Very good literature!

**Mr. R. L. Maharaj:** Madam Speaker, I agree with you, but it seems as though they spend all their time reading that.

**Dr. Rowley:** Stop advertising.

**Mr. R. L. Maharaj:** If you notice, they are worried about what is stated in the *Patriot*. If it were not true, they would not be so worried. I know the truth offends.

What I am saying is that if they are going to save taxpayers' money—whether it is public servants, Members of Parliament, or Ministers of Government—if they are not going to enforce the right of payment against the person, then there must be a policy, because if there is no policy, it would amount to misuse and abuse, and we all know too much power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs (Hon. Keith Sobion):** Madam Speaker, every time I have to respond to the Member for Couva South, I find myself having to deal with rhetoric and rumour.

**Dr. Rowley:** And mischief! Outright mischief!

**Hon. K. Sobion:** It reminds me very much of the "newspaper" that he referred to, the *Underground Patriot*.

**Madam Speaker:** Is that a new newspaper?

**Mr. Valley:** It is written by the Member for Couva South.

**Hon. K. Sobion:** Madam Speaker, it is also full of rhetoric and rumour. There is nothing you are missing as a rule.

**Mr. Maharaj:** I wonder if the hon. Member for Ortoire/Mayaro will tell me whether "Elephant Walk" is rhetoric or rumour.

**Hon. K. Sobion:** As far as I know, the gentleman is deceased.

The Member for Couva South sought to make the suggestion that the Government has done something wrong or irregular in presenting this Motion to Parliament today. I think, perhaps, one must get rid of that element of rumour straightaway. The Constitution of Trinidad and Tobago provides for finance in relation to the operations of the Government and it provides for the Minister of Finance to come here where moneys have been appropriated and not expended, to present a Bill to show how those allocations vary from the original allocations.

In simple fact, in bringing this Motion before the Parliament, the Government is only complying with the provisions of the Constitution, which the Member for Couva South is at times at pains to point out is the supreme law of the land, and which governs the relationship between the Executive and Parliament. At section 113 (3) of the Constitution, we find a provision which says:

"(3) If in respect of any financial year it is found—

- (a) that the amount appropriated by the Appropriation Act for any purpose is insufficient or that a need has arisen for expenditure for a purpose for which no amount has been appropriated by the Act; or
- (b) that any moneys have been expended for any purpose in excess of the amount appropriated for the purpose by the Appropriation Act or for a purpose for which no amount has been appropriated by the Act.

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a supplementary estimate showing the sums required or spent shall be laid before the House of Representatives and the heads of any such expenditure shall be included in a Supplementary Appropriation Bill."

So we clear away that one item of rumour, that is, that the Government may have acted somehow irregularly; we are acting strictly in accordance with the Constitution. And whether the Member for Couva South likes or does not like the provision of the Constitution, the Government has an obligation to act in accordance with the law, and that is what we have done.

**6.00 p.m.**

There has been reference to the Ministry of Legal Affairs and moneys which have been transferred from the allocations to that ministry to other ministries and to other heads. For the benefit of the House, I want to point out that just about half of the moneys transferred were taken from heads of expenditure where the need for the expenditure did not arise.

In the case of vacant posts, as the Member for Couva South himself recognized, there are several vacant posts for which allocations have been met, and as I indicated on more than one occasion in this House, an overall review has been done in the Ministry of Legal Affairs with a view to filling those vacant posts by the end of last year. Unfortunately, those posts were not so filled and we are hoping that they would be filled in the course of this year. As a result, there were allocations here which this ministry did not require under "Vacant Posts, Salaries and COLA".

Of the other half, or roughly a further \$5 million, that sum came from a head of expenditure: "Consulting and Other Contracted Services" for which the revised provision was \$9 million and the actual expenditure was \$4 million, roughly. That head is used for the engaging of services to the Ministry of Legal Affairs, and the amount voted was increased in 1993 to deal with possible contingent liabilities of the ministry in that area, arising out of several major cases which were being conducted by the ministry in the course of 1993.

Those matters were not completed in 1993 and therefore there was a surplus in actual expenditure. So these were moneys that were voted for a particular item which did not occur in 1993 and as a result there was surplus, some of which was sent to the Ministry of Health and some to the Prime Minister's Office. This would have been moneys which would not, in any event, have been spent by the ministry in 1993.

We were also told that, perhaps, the moneys could have been spent elsewhere, and I think reference was made to the Ministry of National Security. With all

respect to the Member for Couva South, under the system which we operate, the Executive has to determine certain priorities and those priorities are determined. The Parliament, as a means of control over the Executive, through the Public Accounts Committee, can take such action as it thinks necessary, using that mechanism.

In addition, on the question of select committees, I merely want to note, again, for the record of this House that we have been having discussions with the Members opposite on an appropriate mechanism for setting up select committees. We are operating under several constraints. Right now I am aware that special select committees have been established which are having great difficulty functioning, in some instances, because of the constraints on time of Members of this very House.

So one has to be careful before one imports an idea from outside, and particularly, where that idea finds root in a parliament of several hundred members, where there are a number of people available to work the mechanism of select committees. That is the kind of rhetoric that we get: Why do we not set up select committees? But he does not take the time to analyze how those select committees can operate within the constraints of the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago.

There is one other matter, because I do not think there is any need to detain this House unnecessarily. It has been raised in the course of this debate and has to do with whether the Government is adopting a proper approach to matters. I refer to the statement made by the Minister of Finance which led to the unfortunate sight of Members leaving the Chamber. But the point must be made. Under the provisions of the Standing Orders as expressed in the authority of May's, the Minister can make a statement relating to policy in relation to the ministry over which he has charge. I want to read the relevant portion of May's at page 297. under the rubric, "Ministerial Statements":

"Explanations are made in the House by Ministers on behalf of the Government regarding their domestic and foreign policy... announcing the legislative proposals they intend to submit to Parliament; or the course they intend to adopt in the transaction and arrangement of public business."

The statement made by the Minister of Finance earlier in these proceedings fell squarely within the bounds as set out by May's *Parliamentary Practice*.

But there is one other matter. You see, we get talk from the Members opposite about disrespect of Parliament by the Government. Only as recent as March 21, which was just about a week ago, we had the Member for Oropouche standing in the debate on the Finance Bill and making statements in that regard, and he said:

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"This House is like a depreciating currency. It is losing its worth and credibility every day in view of the manner in which this Government has decided to proceed in giving information to this House."

It goes on:

"I have no objection to the Minister speaking at length at some seminar, but why is he treating this House, in my view, with that kind of disrespect and discourtesy? We are the representatives of the people. Revenue shortfall of \$400 million is a critical issue that this Parliament has to face and confront. But he has announced this to a number of business people, as if they are the more important people in Trinidad and Tobago, and this House, really, is of little or no account."

But when the Minister of Finance stood in this House today to deliver a statement for the benefit of Members of the House and members of the public, generally dealing with his policy direction and noting the matters on which the Government is proceeding on the economic front, and to deliver a report to this House on the progress towards economic modernization and financial security, we were faced with the spectacle of an ill-advised departure from the Chamber by Members who have long years of experience in Parliament.

One, it is in accordance with the Standing Order—

**6.10 p.m.**

**Mr. Sudama:** If the Member would give way on a point of order. When I made this statement about a week ago in this House, I made it in the context that the Minister was presenting a Finance Bill to this House. Therefore, in his presentation on the Finance Bill, he ought to have outlined matters about which he spoke earlier, elsewhere, when they would have then been subject to debate. That is the critical element. So for Members opposite to talk about the Opposition taking a contradictory position is not correct; we want the issue debated. That is the point I want to make.

**Dr. Rowley:** Sit down!

**Mr. Sudama:** Why do you not shut up?

**Dr. Rowley:** Drawing money under false pretences—

**Mr. Sudama:** I will deal with you!

**Madam Speaker:** Would the Member for Oropouche confine himself until—

**Mr. Sudama:**—and you went to work at the university while you were still General Manager of National Quarries. I will deal with you.

**Madam Speaker:** Order! Order, please! Members can deal with that when they are outside.

**Hon. K. Sobion:** Madam Speaker, I am grateful to the Member for Oropouche for his explanation; regrettably, it does not accord with the record of *Hansard*. What the Member was complaining about was the fact that the Minister had made the statement outside the House. In any event, it is not for the Member for Oropouche to tell the Minister what he should put in his contribution to this House. In fact, I think it is a little out of place.

The fact of the matter is that the complaint, as made by the Member for Oropouche and as recorded in the *Hansard*, was to the fact that the Minister had made the statement outside Parliament and, therefore, showed disrespect to the House. But, no greater disrespect in the face of the fact that the statement was in accordance with the Standing Orders; it was providing information which one would have thought Members of this House would have been interested in and information that the general public would be interested in. We had the greater disrespect shown by Members leaving this Chamber, walking out; a most ill-advised approach to the business of Parliament.

Madam Speaker, I found it necessary to raise that matter—it has been raised in the debate—because if we are to conduct Parliament in accordance with its procedures, then I think as responsible Members of Parliament, we should act more responsibly in the way we conduct our affairs.

As I have indicated, the Government has not acted in any improper manner in bringing this Supplementary Appropriation Bill; and the conduct of the Minister of Finance, in making that statement, is also in accordance with the procedure of this House.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**Miss Pamela Nicholson (Tobago West):** Madam Speaker, I could not leave here this evening without comprehensively dealing with the Government, especially when—*[Interruption]* It is not "Oh gosh"; the Members must be able to face the music and not "skin" their faces.

When I listened to the Member for Ortoire/Mayaro I did not agree with him. Why? Because I agree with the Member for Oropouche that the first place that that important issue should have been raised was in this House. We are the

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representatives of the people of Trinidad and Tobago and when there is a very important matter like that, it should be brought to the House and be debated. These were the demands that those people made.

I sat here and listened to the Member for Diego Martin East contributing in this House. He spoke about the amount of money that the Government is spending, and how progressive the Government is. *[Interruption]* Do not run, Member for San Fernando East; sit down. The Member is running? I never ran when he was performing on this side. Why is he running now? I walked with his document; he should sit down and listen, not run.

I listened to the Member for Diego Martin East talking about \$10 billion being pumped into the country; everything is being pumped and everything is nice, and the Government will get taxes, but he did not talk about the impact that "everything" will be having on the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

When the PNM was in the Opposition, and we decided to clean up the essential services—we did not intend selling out the essential services; they were against selling also—and to deal with the over-manning of the institutions, the management and so forth, "not a man must go" they said. They were on the streets with the unions saying "Crucify those people in the Government; A.N.R. Robinson and team; crucify them!" Today, do Members know what is being said? The Government is saying, "Love them."

There is a situation with the essential services that in 1993, \$57 million should have been put into WASA; what did the Government put? Seventeen million dollars for chlorine and alum. What was the Government doing? The Government was deliberately running down the institution. WASA has never before reached the position that it is in today; and it is because of the deliberate running down of the institution. Why is the Government doing that? In order to create an impact upon the population so that it would say, "Let us privatize it." This is what the Government is doing—fooling the people.

The Government is assuming, as people are arguing, that a high percentage of the population is illiterate. Therefore, the Government is—

**Dr. Rowley:** Oh, really?

**Miss P. Nicholson:** Yes! That is what the Government is assuming, but the people are not illiterate; they are going to deal with you.

The Government is assuming that the people are illiterate. Therefore, last year, 1993, when the Government was to put \$57 million into WASA—that is what was

approved in this House—they put only \$17 million when it was under tremendous pressure with people not getting clean water.

What did this Government say? I quote from page 6 of the PNM Manifesto, "An Investment in Our People." *[Interruption]* I am quoting from it to handle the Member for Diego Martin Central. It says that we must "continue to be a God-fearing society..."

It also says at page 4, "Introduction":

"The social fabric is collapsing as the middle class crumbles, an underclass emerges, unemployment rises and as tens of thousands face sheer poverty and daily starvation. The population is disillusioned..."

It goes on:

"There is an alarming escalation in the rate of crime..."

I have never seen murders in Trinidad and Tobago as I am seeing in 1994 under the People's National Movement Government:

"There is a shocking indifference to national security and the lingering trauma of the horrendous events of July 27th, 1990."

—which this Government was a part of and created.

**Mr. Bereaux:** Madam Speaker, on a point of order. The Member is suggesting that members of the PNM were part of the 1990 revolution—*[Interruption]* The other side is the PNM. The Member should be made to withdraw that.

**6.20 p.m.**

**Madam Speaker:** Are you withdrawing the statement?

**Miss P. Nicholson:** With due respect to you, Madam Speaker, I withdraw the statement. He goes on:

"Our national assets have been insensitively and surreptitiously disposed of contrary to the national interest in spite of...open Government."

They are saying one must not sell off the patrimony of Trinidad and Tobago because that would be to the disadvantage of the people. And that was their position even after a proper analysis was made, before taking action and coming to the House for the debate to take place. At one time they said they were not selling the patrimony; the next time they said only the NAR was privatizing, "we are not doing that, we are divesting"; and today, they are selling everything.

When the amendment Bill dealing with telephones came to this House, after a proper analysis was done, it was decided to sell 49 per cent of that company. I want to quote just a few statements that were made by the individual who just walked out here, Mr. Patrick Manning. The first statement he made, and I am quoting it because I am going to link it with what is happening with T&TEC today:

"I rise to make an intervention in the debate on the Trinidad and Tobago Telephone (Amdt.) Bill 1990.

Permit me to begin by saying that I get no special pleasure in participating in debating a measure which, because of the Government's majority in this Parliament, is guaranteed passage; nor in being associated with what must be described as a full-scale sell-out of the patrimony of Trinidad and Tobago, by way of the Agreement signed in respect of the telephone company."

I am going to read that part again: "nor in being associated with what must be described as a full-scale sell-out of the patrimony of Trinidad and Tobago..."

When they announced in the Senate that they are selling 49 per cent of T&TEC, is the new Prime Minister selling the patrimony of Trinidad and Tobago? That is my fundamental question. They are the same people who have argued in this document that they would not be associating with that kind of thing and that they would be extending the public utilities and they would never sell the patrimony.

The People's National Movement Election 1991 manifesto, "About turn!" *[Interruption]* Do not suck your teeth. You used to talk anything like two hours in the House, boring people. This is a dynamo.

**Mr. Valley:** Madam Speaker, when people quote I would just like them to quote properly because from the same manifesto that my hon. friend is quoting—that is why we do not worry with them—on page 12 we said clearly that we defined some firms as strategic, and even in those:

"Government shareholding in the above companies will be reduced over time through a programme of divestment."

The Member cannot, up to now, understand or make the distinction between the Telco privatization and what we are doing with T&TEC.

**Miss P. Nicholson:** Madam Speaker, is he making a speech or is he making a point? I am very clear and I am very distinct on what I am saying. I know the difference between privatization and divestment. A group of people who now form the Government and who were talking divestment, today are handling

privatization in Trinidad and Tobago. It is very clear. Anybody with basic a,b,c can see that.

I want to quote some more. I am doing all of this because I want the population of Trinidad and Tobago to know that these people are doing totally opposite to what they were preaching.

**Dr. Rowley:** She cannot succeed with that. That is not true.

**Miss P. Nicholson:** He goes on; on page 16, we see:

"Now we have to suffer the indignity of coming to this Parliament and participating in a debate in respect of which a significant part of our national patrimony is going to be given away."

The same IMF and the same World Bank that they are hugging up today, they spoke vociferously against. Those are the same people who, when the NAR was in government, had put to our Government the privatization of the essential services of Trinidad and Tobago.

There is a document in the Cabinet from this individual, who was the Minister of Public Utilities. I stated very clearly in the document that we could not privatize the essential services because of the impact the money pumped into that would have on the masses, on the roots of the population. They would not be able to pay the water rates. A case was made out and a position was taken that even though we were going to privatize certain institutions we were not going to privatize the essential services that belong to the people of Trinidad and Tobago and we gave the reasons why. I just want to remind the nine-day population.

He quoted from a document that came from the Ministry of Public Utilities of which I used to be Minister. They used to give them the documents that came from all the ministries, but the same people are crying today. He went on to say that we took a position to raise the tariffs in T&TEC. He got the document and he quoted how we decided to adjust the tariffs.

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

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

They are taking the same position today; it is totally opposite.

**Madam Speaker:** I do not see the link. I am trying to follow the argument that you are advancing. Is it the Minister's statement you are on?

**Miss P. Nicholson:** Madam Speaker, when the Member for Diego Martin West spoke, he made the point about the amount of money that they would be pumping into a number of things. I am saying how can they be doing some of those things he is talking about when the essential services in the country are not addressed—essential services that the Government said they would be addressing in this document? They say they are the caring Government. *[Interruption]*

Madam Speaker, please do not allow the Member for Diego Martin East to disturb me. I did not disturb him. He is a very rude youngster. I withdraw that remark.

**6.30 p.m.**

**Madam Speaker:** I would not get between you and the Member for Diego Martin East.

**Miss P. Nicholson:** Yes. We are very good friends. I am pleased that you would not interfere with us.

I am trying to show that one has to be careful with statements that one makes. He went on to say that the significant increase in public utility rates put increased pressure—that is what we were doing, putting pressure he said—on an already pressured and beleaguered population. He went on in the document to say that we were pressuring the people because we were soulless and heartless. I ask the question today because they must be forced into that position of raising the rates. If I go into a business, and I plough money into it, I must go into it for profit. That is fundamental. *[Interruption]* Miss Sally Cowal does not have to tell me that.

This Government said that it cares. Today there is a situation where there is hardly any chlorine and alum for water. Schoolchildren cannot get into a bus. They used to tell us how we were wicked how we were cutting down on the number of buses, but they were going to increase the number when they won office.

I am seeing money being spent in various areas on all kinds of nonsense but I am not seeing any money to increase—if they cannot run the regular buses, I cannot see them running school buses today. There are no buses to take the children to school in all the rural areas, including Tobago. For example, in Tobago, they are using some of the buses that they have but they cannot go much longer because they do not have money that was estimated to buy gas to transport the children.

What are they telling us that they would be doing with those moneys? Are the children going to walk to school? When you go along the streets on Windward Road, hundreds of children can be seen lining the streets and their parents are unemployed. Sometimes, for two or three days in the week, the children cannot

go to school. I am sure it is the same thing that is happening in Trinidad. This caring and loving Government! What do we have? Schoolchildren cannot get transport. There are no chlorine and alum, but they are putting money into all kinds of nonsense.

There is an increase in crime. I do not have to articulate that because I think the Member for Couva South did a very good job. I think that the population is quite aware. They are demonstrating about the problem, from day to day. We are also seeing an increase in unemployment between the ages of 50 and 60 years. Unemployment is on a scale that we never had before. We are told that \$10 million is being ploughed into the country, yet thousands and thousands of workers are going home. We are not told what they are doing with those people. What is going to happen to their children? That is what we want to hear.

I feel very strongly about this because we have a dictatorial grouping developing here. It can be seen from day to day and there are certain elements in it who are very arrogant. I cannot believe what I am seeing before me. I cannot believe that only \$5 million will be put into the Water and Sewerage Authority, when an institution like that should get at least \$50 million every year to keep it at a certain level, while upgrading the institution. I do not see why this institution should be sold. Our patrimony! (This is your Prime Minister talking). He said that we were selling off the patrimony.

**Dr. Rowley:** Madam Speaker, for the second time the Member made a comment which would have the effect of misleading this Chamber and the national population. On the first occasion, I did not intervene. On this occasion, I must intervene when the Member says that only \$5 million would be put into WASA. Earlier, the Member said that this House voted \$50-odd million for WASA and the Government gave only \$17 million.

**Miss P. Nicholson:** Madam Speaker, he has an opportunity to talk.

**Dr. Rowley:** Madam Speaker, I am on a point of order! I am on a point of order!

**Miss P. Nicholson:** Madam Speaker, if he is on a point of order, I would sit. Is it a point of order?

**Madam Speaker:** Let the Minister finish, please.

**Dr. Rowley:** I am on a point of order, Madam Speaker. The Member is misleading the House. The Member stated earlier in her contribution that this House voted \$50 million for WASA and that this Government supplied only \$17

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million. Nothing is further from the truth. This Government has not reduced any expenditure as voted for WASA by this House. In fact, the opposite has happened. The Government, by virtue of transfers, has supplied more money to WASA than was voted by Parliament. The Member said just a moment ago that it was only \$5 million for WASA. That again, is misleading the House.

**Hon. Member:** Sit down!

**Dr. Rowley:** Madam Speaker, I am on a point of order. I am asking the Member to correct that statement or withdraw it.

**Miss P. Nicholson:** I am not withdrawing.

**Dr. Rowley:** The Member is misleading the House.

**Miss P. Nicholson:** Madam Speaker, I am not misleading the House. That is what was in the estimates of 1993 and they did not put that money into the institution. The grouping that they had put inside that institution put forward a case to them, and to this moment they have not addressed what the grouping has said. What they are doing is running down the institution. That was the pressure that the Member for Laventille West was under, because he was battling to talk with the unions and listen to the institution, while an arrogant bunch just wanted to impose what they did not tell the people they were doing.

I am holding my ground, Madam Speaker. It was there. I do not know if you can remember when WASA took some action by cutting off water from the St. Clair Police Station—action for more money. To this date, the Government has not given this money because it is dictated to; the Government cannot fight anything. It is as weak as “sandfly button”. It is only in here that the Members can open their mouths. They cannot sit and articulate and discuss anything with the IMF and the World Bank. They are directed. *[Interruption]*

The point that I am making is that the funding was not put into the institution. The schools did not pay up their funds to WASA. I did my homework with the institutions and I can sit and articulate that. It is factual. They told the people that Trinidad and Tobago is fortunate that under previous PNM administrations there were significant improvements in public utility services. The PNM Manifesto, at page 29, states:

"The PNM will implement policies to achieve:

Reduction of water losses through the implementation of a comprehensive leak detection and pipeline repair programme.

Introduction of metering for domestic and commercial users.

Expansion of existing water storage and water production facilities..."

This is the pressure. It has deteriorated. If 50 per cent of the population was having problems with water, today it is 60 per cent. This is the point I am making here, against the background of how moneys are being used and transferred from one area to another.

I am saying that the essential services, like water, should be addressed. If the Government cares about the people, the school bus system should not be made to collapse. It is in a state of collapse now. And I want to remind the population of Trinidad and Tobago about these gentlemen and two ladies in front of me.

**6.40 p.m.**

Madam Speaker, I asked the question last day about the transfer of funds, particularly for Tobago, and when I posed the question where I should pose it, it was said that it was because the estimates were addressed badly, therefore, they had to transfer funds from one area to another. Secondly, it was said that coming to the end of the year there was approximately \$6 million left and they were in need of it, and because of the deterioration of the system, even though they had asked for the \$6 million, they had not received it.

So, in 1994, they have started with a deficit of \$6 million. This is the situation. A place like Tobago cannot start with a deficit. They want more money, and the \$6 million that should have gone to them did not go to them. They have asked that I voice that in the House because they are very, very concerned with the approach.

What one wants is that when one comes with one's estimates—because they have to come very early with their estimates—the team sitting with them should look at the situation. For example, under WASA, in Tobago, there is also an interference with the water. That was a question that I raised in this House and I raised it with them and they were very, very concerned with the whole transfer of funding and the \$6 million not being released. Those funds were for water projects in a number of areas over there. I thought it was necessary for me to raise that matter.

I am very concerned with the approach. It is not that one should just pump money. Pumping money to create what? Where is the employment? Thousands and thousands are being sent home. Even some of the public servants who have come to see us here this evening will not see us another time. They are now

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understanding the English. The workers, whether PUC, IDC or Tourism, whatever area, they are being sent home. When the Member for Diego Martin East gets up and talks about pumping, pumping to produce what? Answer that question and give us the reason.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**Mr. Basdeo Panday** (*Couva North*): Madam Speaker, I rise to make one short point. It arises from the fact that certain moneys were moved from one point to another.

During the past few months this country has been engaged in a most serious discussion about crime, and this Government has sought to give the impression that it is the Opposition, with its obstructionist attitude, that was somehow preventing the Government from dealing with this issue of crime. It is important, therefore, that the country should know what the Government has done in relation to crime and to ask several questions.

The one I refer to—and I say I will be short—is under Head 22, where the Government has moved \$1,366,756 which was allocated by this House to the police service for the purchase and implementation of a computer system. When I saw that I remembered that when the UNC Opposition was holding consultations with the various departments to deal with the question of police service reform, we had the opportunity to meet with the Police Commissioner on two occasions.

On the first occasion that we went there we went with the proposals of the Government. *[Interruption]* Are we using the same document? Maybe I can help. I am speaking about the document that was laid before this House on March 18. It is the Finance Committee notes. When we visited the Police Commissioner, we went for the purpose of educating ourselves so that we would be better prepared to respond to the Government's proposals in debate.

We were amazed that there were no computer facilities in the police service; that the Commissioner of Police did not have a computer on his desk. We also discovered that if policemen saw a car being driven, believed to be by a criminal, and they wanted to have any information about that car, they would have to phone the Licensing Authority. If it was after 4 o'clock, they had to wait until the following morning as if the criminal would sit in the motor car waiting for them to find out. If it was weekend, they were in trouble. Surely, that is nonsense.

There should be a computer link-up, not only with the entire police service—one police station to another—but also with the Licensing Authority, because car

stealing is a very prevalent offence in this country. Insurance companies are paying millions of dollars; people are losing their motor cars all the time; people steal your car with impunity. They go to funerals and steal your car; they go to weddings and steal your car. They steal your car anywhere. As a matter of fact, I am now beginning to be frightened for my own car outside.

It is a serious matter and to move moneys like that out of the police service for the provision of computer services, and have it spent in any other way cannot help but give the country the impression that this Government is deliberately preventing the police from fighting crime. That is the point I really got up to make.

There has been suspicion surrounding the Prime Minister's dealing with his motor car. There are certified copies that say that the Prime Minister has transferred his car to someone known to be involved in drugs. When you put that evidence with the evidence that the Government is deliberately moving moneys out of the police service, can you prevent the population from coming to the conclusion that the Government has embarked upon a deliberate campaign to prevent the police from dealing with crime? While I am on that, let me answer the point of the learned Attorney General about this statement that was delivered by the Minister. The size of the document speaks for itself. It is not supposed to contain any controversial—

**6.50 p.m.**

**Mr. Valley:** Please, Madam Speaker, the Member is obviously talking about a personal statement which is limited to no more than 10 minutes and which ought not to be controversial. A personal statement is quite different from a ministerial statement.

**Mr. B. Panday:** I maintain that if one comes to this honourable House and intends to make controversial statements, one should have the testicular fortitude to have it debated.

**Mr. Valley:** Madam Speaker, there is a committee with respect to the Standing Orders and if the Member wishes he could advance that suggestion or recommendation to that committee.

**Mr. B. Panday:** It is an act of cowardice, to come with a statement like this which is virtually a revision of your policy on your budget proposals—to come here and under "Statements of Ministers" to read to the House saying, "debate it if you want." You either think of this Parliament as a place to have things done—

**Mr. Valley:** Madam Speaker, again, let me just inform the hon. Member that at times we on this side find it burdensome to answer some of the questions asked. At times we find it burdensome to deal with some of the Motions on the Adjournment that they raise, but they are all governed by the Standing Orders and the same applies to the ministerial statement. We have the place to deal with those matters, if the hon. Member thinks that they ought to be changed.

**Mr. B. Panday:** What is burdensome or not burdensome for my friend, I cannot help that. He has to deal with the problem of what is burdensome for him.

The point I wish to make—when I say that you make statements but you do not want them to be debated. Do you know what is mentioned on page 13? On page 13 money laundering is mentioned. You come here and make a statement about money laundering, but why are you afraid that money laundering should be debated here? Is it because Members on that side are involved in money laundering? When you buy motor cars and sell them to drug lords, why are you afraid of that? Why are you afraid to set up a committee to deal with that? Why are you afraid of an investigation into your conduct? *[Interruption]* You could mumble and bumble as much as you want—

**Mr. Valley:** I rise on a point of order. Again, Madam Speaker, section 36(5) of the Standing Orders says:

"No Member shall impute improper motives to any other Member of either Chamber."

I am insisting, Madam Speaker, that the Member withdraw.

**Mr. B. Panday:** You will wait until the cows come home for that! I would leave this Parliament rather than—

**Mr. Valley:** He wants to walk out.

**Mr. B. Panday:** —have my dignity impugned. You are asking that I should withdraw! When you move, not only \$1,366,000— You tell me why you move moneys which are supposed to be for computers. Do you know that the police have been complaining about vehicles? Every person in this country knows that the police have been complaining about a lack of vehicles why they cannot answer calls.

Do you know what was done in 1993? Let me tell you: In 1993 you moved \$3,737,735, which was allocated for the purchase of vehicles for the police. *[Interruption]* Have you found it?

**Mr. Eckstein:** Watch your heart, Panday, watch your heart!

**Mr. B. Panday:** I shall bury you, you know that! Do not worry about my heart. And the way you are looking these days it seems to be sooner rather than later.

Is there a link with the sale of motor cars to drug lords? Is that tied up with money laundering? Has that to do with your statement that speaks of laundering, and has it got to do with your deliberate removal of moneys to prevent the police from having vehicles? That is a very serious matter.

**Dr. Rowley:** What about the sale of houses?

**Mr. B. Panday:** Well all right, the sale of houses! Well, I do not know but I can tell you one thing: There is a letter in T&TEC signed by your Prime Minister transferring his electricity bill to—do you know who? Daniel Manickchan. Do you know on what grounds? That the house was leased to him for \$500.00 per month. You asked me to talk about house! I did not want to talk about house!

**Madam Speaker:** The hon. Member was proceeding very well, please continue.

**Mr. B. Panday:** I know I was proceeding very well, but Madam Speaker, my friend is an extremely clever politician. He wanted me to talk about the house. And he is just playing he is getting me vex and so forth. But that house is bothering him as much as it is bothering me! And the motor car! Brilliant my friend, absolutely brilliant! Good! I love politics when it is played at its highest! And it is being played at its highest in this House this evening by my dear and learned friend the Member for Diego Martin West. Beautiful politics! Any time you want me to mention anything else just tease me a little more. And, you know, if I were you, I would do the same thing—they put Dr. Saith as Deputy Prime Minister. I disagree with that as much as you do.

As I said, everybody is complaining about police vehicles—police, public, everybody. You want to kill the Commissioner of Police. You want the Police Service Commission to fire him. You take away the money for his computer. You take away the money for his vehicles. You tell him to go and fight crime with his fingernails and so on. You take out the bulldog's teeth. And you want him to fight crime.

I would not have gotten up to speak in this House today because I think all the Members have made the points which I would have made anyway, but I thought that was serious enough. I think this is absolutely serious.

**Mr. Imbert:** Have you finished?

**Mr. Panday:** If he wants me to continue, I do not mind, Madam Speaker, not only for my own edification, but also to assuage the fears of the public. I will be grateful if the hon. Minister could tell this country why he removed moneys from an institution with probably the most important function for the nation and gave them to buy food, as far as I am aware.

Madam Speaker, I await his reply.

**7.00 p.m.**

**The Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources (Dr. The Hon. Keith Rowley):** Madam Speaker, I know it is getting on in the evening, and I really had not come here today intending to take part in this debate. But every day I come into this Parliament I am ready to deal with this Opposition—any time anywhere, any places—especially when they present their circumstances in the manner in which they were presented today. I cannot leave this Chamber today and allow the position taken by the Opposition and some of the statements made to go unchallenged, because to do so would really be a dereliction of duty.

There are some persons who would say that Trinidad and Tobago is a land of rumour. Listening to the Members of the Opposition, especially today, fitting into their normal pattern, I can say without fear of contradiction that Members of Parliament in Trinidad and Tobago are the genesis of much of the damaging rumours to be found in our country. I go further; that document that circulates, called the *Patriot*, in which all kinds of slander is printed, I have very good reason to believe it has its genesis in this House. And it gives me no pleasure to say that.

**Mr. Humphrey:** It has to be on your side.

**Dr. the Hon. K. Rowley:** I have seen some of its contents, and interestingly enough it mirrors much of what has been said privately, and on the floor of this House, and I have every good reason to believe that that is where Members of this House have sunk to.

The Member for Tobago West got up, made some statements and took off. I want to take what she said in the context of the comments she made on the night of the election. For those of you who had the opportunity to see the Member for Tobago West making comments on election night, you would understand that even before the Government had served one day in office, the Member had a position on what the Government would be.

I would leave the Member for Tobago West and similar types to wallow in their political "tabanca", but when the Member for Tobago West gets up in this

House and puts on *Hansard*—especially at a time when the country is facing a water crisis—attempts to put into the minds of the public that we are facing problems because Parliament has voted money for WASA and the Government transferred it elsewhere; that has to be corrected. That is not true.

The Member picked up the PNM Manifesto, and sought to show where in the manifesto the party, before it was elected, said it would do certain things and now it is not doing those things. What are the things we said we would do with respect to water? We said we would embark upon a leak detection programme. As a Member of the Cabinet I can tell hon. Members that that is being done. We said we would embark on an expansion of the water supply system. Only two weeks ago I had the pleasure of visiting Siparia, one of the areas where there is a serious water problem, and I can tell this House that scheduled for completion around April is a significant expansion in the water storage and supply in that area, as part of the overall attempt to increase the water supply and improve the water system. The metering programme—to the best of my knowledge as a Member of the Cabinet, the metering programme at WASA is in progress.

These are the commitments we gave the country and I do not know where the Members of the Opposition live, but these are the things that are happening. They seem to get jittery every time they discover that the Government is doing what it said it would do and problems are being solved. There is no gainsaying the fact that there has been a serious deterioration in the water supply in this country, and the genesis of that has nothing to do with any policy of the Government to run down the water supply system so as to be able to privatize it. This Government is bent on serving the population. After we have deliberated on matters we have no difficulty in taking the corrective action as long as we have come to the conclusion that such action is in the best interests of the people of Trinidad and Tobago. We do not have to run down WASA to create an environment in which to correct WASA's problems.

The biggest problem in WASA today is the quality of the distribution mains; all over the country there are serious problems with respect to the distribution, and that is something which the Government is dealing with, and very soon when the Government takes the corrective action, it would not have anything to do with any ideology.

It is not my fault that my friend the Member for Tobago West cannot, up to this day, understand why we were objecting to the way they had dealt with Telco. We never objected to the fact that the former government sold a portion of the shareholding in Telco; we put that in our manifesto, that we would do the same

thing—reducing Government's shareholding in certain utilities. But specific to Telco, at the time, we objected particularly on two grounds to the way they had gone about dealing with the preferred partner.

One, we said TSTT was operating in the local capital market and was earning its profits in TT dollars and we said that the divestment could have incurred some local involvement: divest to the local population so that the profit that is made would come to the local shareholder. That was one ground on which we objected. More importantly, up to this day we feel aggrieved by the fact that the previous government, as part of its divestment programme, entered into an arrangement with Cable and Wireless, giving that company a 20-year monopoly on telecommunication development in Trinidad and Tobago. Because we understood what that clause meant; we understood that Trinidad and Tobago would not be able to gain from its significant capital investment in TSTT by that clause.

It gives Cable and Wireless a monopoly over our development in an era when we are talking about the information superhighway, where communication development is the cutting edge of international development. A Government of Trinidad and Tobago, blind to the potential of that, entered into an agreement with Cable and Wireless giving that company a 20-year monopoly on telecommunication development in Trinidad and Tobago. Up to now, that Member for Tobago West and her colleagues cannot see that they have done something wrong, and coming here Friday after Friday, complaining and bleating that the people of this country voted them out and voted in the PNM. I cannot deal with that.

I am saying, if the Member cannot understand up to now that today there are people in this country on the edge of a lawsuit with TSTT because they are using some system for communication, separate and apart from TSTT, and they are being told: "No, you cannot do that; we have the rights to do that." We are talking about making this country the financial and business centre of the region, but we have to deal with a monopoly on communication, put there by the previous Government, which even today in purgatory cannot understand that they have done something wrong. I am not asking them to understand it, because it seems to be beyond them.

**7.10 p.m.**

We came here today—as my colleague the Member for Ortoire/Mayaro, the hon. Attorney General said—to satisfy the requirement of the Constitution: to pass a Bill to deal with transfers.

Insofar as my memory serves me, regardless of who formed the Government, there has not been a single year when the Government did not have to come to Parliament to do exactly what we are seeking to do today. All of a sudden, closing the accounts, dealing with some transfers or contingencies during the year, this is being condemned in long self-righteous speeches by Members of Parliament who love to hear the sound of their voices, who love to perform for the theatre, giving the impression that the Government has done something wrong.

We had a whole discourse from the Member for Couva South who, somehow, cannot understand that when he is in the courthouse he is allowed to talk as much as he can and not make any sense, but in the Parliament we expect that one would, at least, try to make sense. There is no Privy Council here.

I make the point again, that I think the time has come to save people's time by reducing the speaking time of Members of Parliament in the Lower House.

**Mr. B. Panday:** By one minute!

**Dr. The Hon. K. Rowley:** What that would do is cause Members to focus on what useful things they have to say and leave out all the trash that gets into the debate. The Member for Couva South spoke for 70 minutes and said absolutely nothing, except that he wants parliamentary reform. We agree that there is a case to be made for reform of the parliamentary system. But 70 minutes in a debate on closing the accounts, and huffing and puffing in a self-righteous way giving the impression that the Government is breaking some law and trampling on rights—and Laventille, Laventille, Laventille, Laventille, Laventille, my foot! As if anybody in Laventille wants the Member for Couva South to speak to them!

**Mr. B. Panday:** They do! They come to the office.

**Dr. The Hon. K. Rowley:** Meet me in Laventille and we would talk about Laventille in Laventille. Right! All those who come to talk to you—we would talk outside about Laventille.

The point I am making is that there is a time and place for everything. The Opposition of Trinidad and Tobago is seeking two things: one, to slander the Members of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago.

**Mr. B. Panday:** No, no!

**Dr. The Hon. K. Rowley:** That is the first thing. From day one, there has not been a sitting of Parliament where certain elements in the Opposition do not seek to “buss some mark” to give the impression that somebody in the Government is

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involved in something underhand. The Leader of the Opposition is a very irresponsible person who will come to the Parliament, sit there in his seat, behind the privilege of Parliament and without a shred of evidence, get up and say that the Editor of the *Trinidad Guardian* is a drug dealer.

**Mr. B. Panday:** No, no, I said that outside Parliament.

**Dr. The Hon. K. Rowley:** Madam Speaker, if the Member feels he has any justification for making a statement like that, he must go outside Parliament and make it.

**Mr. B. Panday:** My brother, I did!

**Dr. The Hon. K. Rowley:** Madam Speaker, the Member of Parliament for Couva North is a person who has served—

**Mr. B. Panday:** You are getting me suspicious now.

**Dr. The Hon. K. Rowley:** I have tremendous regard for the Member for Couva North who has served in this country in his present capacity for quite some time, but he is losing his marbles. He is following his ridiculous colleague the Member for Couva South in his most irresponsible behaviour. After weeks of trying to tarnish the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago by all kinds of routes, he got up here today and sought to give the impression—

**Mr. Sudama:** He is defending Manning now!

**Dr. The Hon. K. Rowley:** Of course, I will defend him.

**Mr. Panday:** No, no!

**Dr. the Hon. K. Rowley:** You defend yours if you have one. He sought to give the impression that the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago is involved with big drug dealers, and called names—Manickchan. Who is Manickchan? Do you know who Manickchan is? If you know who he is, well, go and tell the police, but do not come to the Parliament!

**Mr. B. Panday:** No, no. White Water enquiry!

**Dr. The Hon. K. Rowley:** Madam Speaker, the behaviour of Members of Parliament on the other side is nothing short of disgraceful and disgusting.

He sought to give the impression that in the document it shows that there has been a transfer of \$1 million-odd in the Ministry of National Security, and disregarded all the explanations on that. Do you know how he interpreted it? The

Government wants to create room for "drug agoutis" to run, so it took away \$1.4 million and did not give the police cars.

If my friend the Member for Nariva, or the Member for Oropouche had said that, I would have dismissed it as part of the normal saying, but having come from the Member for Couva North, I am saying he should know better because he understands how the governmental system functions.

**Mr. B. Panday:** Let us have an investigation.

**Dr. The Hon. K. Rowley:** Madam Speaker, if money is appropriated for a particular action in 1993, even though the action is engaged upon, if at the end of the year you are not in a position to make those payments and disburse those funds, then the funds can be transferred without affecting the action and in the succeeding year you re-vote the money. That is all! It has nothing to do with taking away cars from the police, or computers and so forth.

They are the only people who make accusations, statements from the strong position of ignorance. When they do not know, they feel powerful enough to get up and challenge. He does not know what has happened with the computers for the police, so he got up here and carried on about the Government not providing the police with computers.

**Mr. B. Panday:** Tell me if I am wrong!

**Dr. The Hon. K. Rowley:** If he does not know, he should shut his mouth, or ask a question. Ignorance is not a standpoint from which to make accusations. Do not make allegations!

What are the facts? Let me back up a bit. Computers were not invented last week, you know! This Government came into office in December 1991. Computerization is a process and a tool which has been available for years before. How come he is calling on the Government of which I am a Member—1991/1992/1993—to do computerization?

**Mr. B. Panday:** No, no! You allocated the money.

**Dr. The Hon. K. Rowley:** The Member had five years to do it. He ran away from his job, upset his Government, abandoned his post, got dismissed for dereliction of duty, but coming here now seeking to mislead the public.

**Hon. Member:** He was going to work and "bounced up" on a rum shop.

**Dr. The Hon. K. Rowley:** Madam Speaker, we came into office in December 1991, and immediately after embarked upon a process to provide the police

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service with this system. Computerization of the police service is taking place. In fact, Phase I has been completed—equipment has been obtained. We are now in the process of embarking upon Phase II.

**Mr. B. Panday:** Putting them in the office!

**Dr. The Hon. K. Rowley:** Phase III will be the training of those who use the system. Suffice it to say that all the allegations and innuendoes alluded to by my friend the Member for Couva North are simply that—frightening the public; misleading the public; seeking no information. They do not even read the documents given to them in Parliament. Do you know why? They do not need them. They do not need any documents; all they want is to follow their instinct and try to paint the Government as being—I give way.

**Mr. B. Panday:** Madam Speaker, could the Member tell me where the computers which they bought are located?

**Dr. The Hon. K. Rowley:** Madam Speaker, the Member also knows that there is portfolio responsibility. If he wants that information, he should ask the Minister of National Security.

**Hon. Member:** Shut your mouth!

**Dr. The Hon. K. Rowley:** I am speaking here as a Member of the Cabinet. I am speaking under the tradition that if I mislead the House or, to put it bluntly, if I do not speak the truth and he can show that, then I have to resign.

I am saying that Cabinet has approved certain matters, and in the police service Phase I of the computerization is under way and we are embarking upon Phase II. He sought to give the impression that we did not buy any cars for the police—that we transferred the money.

Madam Speaker, \$875,000 spent on motor vehicles for the police; \$1.8 million on motorbikes.

**Mr. Sudama:** Where are they?

**7.20 p.m.**

**Dr. The Hon. K. Rowley:** Where are they? They do not read the parliamentary documents because the print is too fine, they say. But if they even read the newspapers, they would have seen that. The sum of \$1.8 million on motorbikes; \$4 million, computerization; repairs to motor vehicles, \$1.2 million; training, \$300,000; repairs to buildings, \$700,000—all of this in a programme of providing the police service with the means to carry out its responsibility of

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protecting and serving. But they come here tonight wasting people's time—Monday night, I should be home with my children now—talking about withdrawing money and not giving the police XYZ.

Madam Speaker, they know they are misleading the people, but they somehow believe that if they say these things long enough, people will think that the Government is not doing what it is supposed to do, and the problems they are facing are as a result of the Government's behaving in a most irresponsible manner.

**Mr. B. Panday:** I was referring to the document. Is the document wrong?

**Dr. The Hon. K. Rowley:** Madam Speaker, I sought to explain to you how that comes about. If at the end of the financial year the expenditures cannot be disbursed, it simply has—

**Mr. B. Panday:** That is all I am saying—that you did not spend it.

**Dr. The Hon. K. Rowley:** He did not say that. Madam Speaker, he went into a long discourse saying that there was a link between the escalation of drugs in this country and this movement.

**Mr. B. Panday:** And you did not buy it!

**Dr. The Hon. K. Rowley:** He went on to say it was a deliberate ploy on the part of the Government. He said that!

**Mr. B. Panday:** But you did not buy it!

**Dr. the Hon. K. Rowley:** That is why I am accusing him of being mischievous, malicious and irresponsible.

**Mr. B. Panday:** You did not buy it in 1993!

**Dr. The Hon. K. Rowley:** As Leader of the Opposition, Madam Speaker, as a person who is aspiring to run this country, his behaviour is repugnant!

**Mr. Beraux:** He can aspire, but not achieve.

**Dr. The Hon. K. Rowley:** One can seek to improve one's political fortunes, but not by disregarding the facts and coming here, Friday after Friday, repeating rumours and innuendoes—

**Mr. B. Panday:** It is a fact that you did not buy the computers in 1993.

**Dr. The Hon. K. Rowley:** And you know what? When these rumours are not having the effect, others are resorting to printing stories and talking about underground patriotism.

**Mr. B. Panday:** That is coming from that side.

**Dr. The Hon. K. Rowley:** The lowest of the low.

**Hon Member:** We know what we are doing.

**Dr. The Hon. K. Rowley:** Madam Speaker, the time will come when we will have to talk about our days in this Chamber; and I was hoping that I could speak with some pride, with respect to whom I served with, on both sides. But the way they are behaving, Madam Speaker—they like to talk about Morris Marshall.

All of a sudden, Morris Marshall is their friend, you know. Morris Marshall has got so many friends after he died, but I can tell you, Madam Speaker, there is nothing that drove Morris Marshall to work 25 hours a day more than the prospect of these jokers coming into Government. That drove Morris Marshall. [*Applause*]

**Mr. B. Panday:** That is what prompted it? I did not ask him for a water programme in two weeks!

**Dr. The Hon. K. Rowley:** Madam Speaker, I simply intervened to set the record straight, to appeal to my colleagues on the other side and to commend to them that it is possible to score political points by sticking to the facts and to logic, and that they do not have to degenerate into that type of behaviour.

With respect to my colleague the Member for Oropouche who has a habit every Friday of coming here and telling me about "what he has on me" and what "mark he will buss" where—I invite him to come outside the Parliament any time and "buss any mark." Do you understand, Madam Speaker?

**Mr. Sudama:** You should be in jail—you! You are crooked!

**Mr. John Humphrey** (*St. Augustine*): Madam Speaker, I rise to request the hon. Minister of Finance to explain just a couple things to this House. When the hon. Minister made an earlier statement to this House, and I refer to page 2 under "Vision", he said:

"In this economy the state will no longer be a major investor in enterprises."

Now I want to ask him to explain that, in the context of the explanation given to the country when methanol was sold to a foreign investor, that part of the proceeds of the sale was to be reinvested by the Government in new enterprises. I want that to be explained, please.

But I want him to explain another little matter, Madam Speaker. When the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries, who was newly made Minister of

Public Utilities, came to this House to announce to the country that the Government had sold 49 per cent of the generating capacity of T&TEC to a foreign partnership, he said:

"T&TEC would remain responsible for the supply of fuel, natural gas, to this company."

T&TEC, Madam Speaker, does not generate natural gas, and yet T&TEC would remain responsible for the supply of natural gas to the company that is now being established to generate electricity.

This Minister of Finance, in his statement to this House earlier today, said this at page 8:

"...and to secure our low cost abundant and reliable energy advantage we have now decided to partially divest the generation component of T&TEC's operations."

I think that the people of Trinidad and Tobago deserve an explanation, because this does not make sense.

T&TEC has to buy natural gas from the supplier of natural gas, and has to pay in US currency. T&TEC does not generate natural gas. T&TEC buys the natural gas from the National Gas Company which buys it from Amoco at US prices. When the currency of this country was devalued—so-called floated—the rates for electricity imposed on every citizen went up, because T&TEC had to pay more in TT dollars for the natural gas.

What is the energy advantage that T&TEC has established that warrants the Government selling 49 per cent of the generating capacity of T&TEC to foreigners? Because, on their own admission, T&TEC is generating electricity and there is an energy cost advantage enjoyed by this country by T&TEC's cheap generation of electricity—this is, in effect, what you have said—which attracts foreign investors. But T&TEC does not generate natural gas. Is T&TEC now going to drill for natural gas so as to supply this new company with natural gas? Or are they going to continue to buy it and pay US currency for it?

**Mr. Sudama:** And what will they sell it for?

**Mr. J. Humphrey:** Madam Speaker, there is something in the mortar besides the pestle, and it is going to be revealed in due course. But it does not make sense that T&TEC is bound by an agreement to supply natural gas to this company, when T&TEC has absolutely no control over natural gas supplies or prices. So what are the terms of the agreement?

**7.30 p.m.**

The foreigners come here for one reason—profit. No other reason. They do not like your face, or my face, or your face, Madam Speaker. They come to make profit and they do not come to make profit to invest for the benefit of the people of Trinidad and Tobago; they come to make profit in their own interest. How much profit has been expropriated—I should not say “expropriated” but “expatriated”, though expropriated is the correct word—by Amoco over the years through exploiting our natural gas and our petroleum?

It is a pattern that a foreigner would come here and take unfair advantage because of corrupt dealings of certain people who go to bring them in the first place.

**Mr. Sudama:** That is right.

**Mr. J. Humphrey:** In this instance, it is not somebody sitting on that side who transacted the deal; it is somebody who is very closely associated with them, who, when I was examining the corruption of John O'Halloran, was his understudy.

**Mr. B. Panday:** He is a graduate.

**Mr. J. Humphrey:** In fact, in electricity dealings, in the purchase of generating equipment for T&TEC then, he was chairman of T&TEC and O'Halloran transacted business where he had to share his 10 per cent two ways: half to the then chairman of T&TEC, but this is the man who is making the transaction now.

**Madam Speaker:** No. I think this is really not the place for innuendoes and insinuations. Just leave that out. You are asking the hon. Minister to provide you with an explanation. Yes. Let him explain it.

**Mr. J. Humphrey:** Justify it! Justify this deal!

**Mr. Bereaux:** How much did you get from Chin Lee?

**Madam Speaker:** There is no need for the character assassination. The Member is entitled to ask for clarification from the hon. Minister. He has done so. I ask the hon. Member, who is a senior Member, to desist from character assassination in the House.

**Mr. J. Humphrey:** Madam Speaker, the point I am making is that this regime went to the electorate with a manifesto, and it led the people to believe it would do certain things. It was totally opposed to the previous regime for doing certain things, and this regime has totally rejected its manifesto, has even rejected its own

variation of the manifesto in its early years of operation and is now totally selling out this country.

As a Member of Parliament speaking for the people, I cannot sit here quietly—even though I do not feel like speaking—and take it. There is a sell-out of this country. They are selling our assets. They are borrowing money, and we the people of this country will have to pay dearly for it. What is the reason for it? What is the reason? Stand up and explain it to this House.

**Mr. B. Panday:** That is the same fellow who bought Chief Sitting Bull and Chief Crazy Horse, the generators that could not be used at T&TEC. Did you forget that?

**Mr. J. Humphrey:** Madam Speaker, I understand what is happening. They are selling out this country to foreign interests. I do not understand exactly why, because they do not have a mandate to do it, and the people of this country will not reap benefits, either in the short term or the long term, for this gross sell-out of the assets our people have accumulated over the years. They must explain it. They must tell me why in one breath they are selling out methanol, to take part of the proceeds of the sale to invest and, therefore, create jobs and increase production, and now they are saying that the Government is not going into any investment. Explain that.

It is very hard to sit in this House and to be a witness to this total sell-out of the people of this country by a regime that they had confidence in—very, very hard for all of us.

**The Minister of Finance and Minister of Tourism (Hon. Wendell Mottley):** Madam Speaker, if I could deal briefly with the very, very few matters that are before me.

The first question was posed by the hon. Member for Couva South. He enquired about the cost of the total assets of Union Park since what is before us only represented a partial payment against those assets. For the record, the total assets of the Union Club and the Trinidad Turf Club are \$38,540,273. Also, under Item 4, provision for these services was not made in 1993 as all the cases were not finalized. This is the same point that the hon. Attorney General explained earlier.

Similarly, under Sub-item 43, the \$2 million paid to MTS was in respect of work performed by that company—and this is what was enquired—at the

National Stadium, Riverside Plaza and both secondary and primary schools. The sum provided in the original estimates was inadequate to meet the current bills as well as arrears.

Another item raised, I think by the Member for Tobago West, was that we voted moneys to WASA and then as part of a criminal plan to destabilize WASA, transferred those moneys voted to WASA to run it down in preparation for its privatization. Nothing is further from the truth. The fact is that we have here sought to approve an additional \$3 million-odd for WASA to purchase alum for the continued operation of some of their rented truck fleet and for the purchase of chlorine. But that is just one sum in addition to what we originally appropriated.

The fact is that just about \$20 million extra was provided beyond what was originally appropriated in 1993 to keep WASA going. The facts are that for a long time, including the period during which the Member for Tobago West had tenancy over WASA—I would describe it as perhaps not squatting, but she did have some tenancy over WASA for some time—WASA was running up its accounts payable and the situation to this date, even when we acknowledge that approximately \$20 million beyond what was budgeted for WASA in 1993 was allocated by these supplementals to WASA, was that WASA ran up bills of \$157 million on PAYE alone. So we need to understand the dire situation where WASA has now reached, a situation in which, although WASA has accounts receivable of over \$200 million, its own estimate is that half of it is not collectable.

When we reach the state where we hear serious and justifiable complaints from Members on the opposite side, when we hear Members seeking to bring Motions to this House on matters of urgent, public importance, we want them to understand that WASA is not something that happened overnight; it has been a slow, gradual deterioration that goes back a number of years—

**Mr. Sudama:** 1956.

**Hon. W. Mottley:** —and the Government is attempting now to put a firm hand on the problem and handle WASA differently so as to be able to resolve some of the problems about which the hon. Members on the opposite side, and also on this side, make legitimate complaints.

The question was raised by the hon. Member for St. Augustine about the methanol divestment. The matter for methanol divestment is very clear. We have an investment in the original Trinidad and Tobago Methanol Company and we use that investment to joint-venture with outside companies, and in so doing, reducing our percentage shareholding, but getting as a result of that original

shareholding, leveraging that shareholding, so that a much larger investment—indeed, an investment of an additional US \$235 million in new methanol capacity has been engendered which will lead to more than doubling the plant production out of the methanol plant.

**Mr. B. Panday:** But that was by the foreign investors.

**Hon. W. Mottley:** So that the Government, without putting any new money, is seeing more than doubling of the plant capacity leading to construction investment, et cetera.

The question of T&TEC—

**7.40 p.m.**

**Mr. Humphrey:** Your statement is a declaration of current policy.

**Hon. W. Mottley:** What aspect of that statement?

**Mr. Humphrey:** At this point the State will no longer be a major investor in enterprises.

**Hon. W. Mottley:** A major investor.

**Mr. Humphrey:** So we will have no major investments?

**Hon. W. Mottley:** We have retained our interest; we are not enlarging our investment. We are not putting new dollars in there. But the country is benefiting by all the construction labour and the expansion—

**Mr. Humphrey:** By selling out 49 per cent of T&TEC you are not enlarging the investment.

**Hon. W. Mottley:** We now come to deal with the T&TEC matter. When I said that this country has a comparative advantage in energy—we have a comparative advantage in the availability and reliability and cost of natural gas, but electric energy is an equally important energy cost when investors contemplate a decision in a country like Trinidad and Tobago. It is good to have cheap natural gas but as a complement, you need to have a reliable source of electricity, as well, at good prices.

What the contemplated partial divestment of the generation capacity of T&TEC has a potential of bringing to Trinidad and Tobago is that this company, of which T&TEC is a 51 per cent shareholder, will use the existing T&TEC natural gas contracts, some of which run for some time and some to be re-negotiated. It is through that contract that gas will be brought to the joint venture company. The joint venture company will have the job of conversion. Conversion capacity is what they are selling.

They are showing that—because they can link T&TEC virtually into the industrial infrastructure that they have assembled in the southern United States, wherein they can buy spare parts at a fraction of the cost that T&TEC can do—they can buy on credit terms unavailable to a small isolated company such as T&TEC; they can use their joint venture with Amoco to put spare parts on ships destined for Trinidad and Tobago with oil pipe and other cargoes and pay a freight, a fraction of what T&TEC would have to pay to bring turbines, spare parts and so forth, here; offload on docks within the Amoco compound and get them here. They can also link into the new computerized systems of maintenance and so forth.

T&TEC would require to assure this country a degree of reliability—they have to have virtually 50 per cent of their plant idle—this company with their vast store of inventories available on short notice, their modern management systems, their improved capability and technology—all of these things will enable T&TEC to use its existing stock of generating capacity to a much higher level and avoid the necessity for incremental plant being bought on borrowed funds that have to be amortized and which have to get reflected in the rate for electricity.

These are the facts. So that the conversion capacity of T&TEC in the joint venture is improved through all of these efficiencies. There is a further fact that I want to bring to hon. Members' attention.

**Mr. Humphrey:** Madam Speaker, would the Minister give a guarantee to the national community that the rates the citizens pay for electricity will be dramatically lowered?

**Hon. W. Mottley:** Madam Speaker, I spoke about conversion cost. The eventual rate is also a function of the gas price. We know that T&TEC's gas price contract expires in 1995, and therefore that is an important factor. We also have to say that they would be making a conversion cost and passing it on to T&TEC, which must then transmit and then distribute. So that the ultimate cost to the consumer is a matter on which those costs, as well, have a bearing. So that in all honesty, I cannot, at this stage, give the kind of guarantee the Member requires. I have been talking about conversion cost.

Their benefit also has the capacity to be our benefit, because their profit will be made on how much electricity they can sell to T&TEC. By promoting industrial investment in this country, which is their strength, in the areas in which they come from, they will be assisting themselves, in that they will be selling more electricity, and they will be assisting this country, in that they will be attracting electricity-using investors to this country.

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The Member for Couva North raised certain questions about transfers out of the Ministry of National Security, but I think the Member for Diego Martin West dealt adequately with them. Most of those transfers had been done very late in the year, when, in fact, the tenders had been awarded but the actual payments at the back end of 1993 were not on the table, and therefore the funds were transferred. So that, in fact, early in 1994 the payments for computers were actually made. The same thing for the motorbikes. In fact, that was a situation in which the police did have possession of the bikes in 1993, as can be borne testimony by releases and photographs shown in the press, but the actual payments were not made until 1994.

I thank you, Madam Speaker.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Report adopted.*

#### **FINANCE (VARIATION OF APPROPRIATION) BILL**

*Order for second reading read.*

**The Minister of Finance (Hon. Wendell Mottley):** Madam Speaker, I beg to move: That a Bill to vary the appropriation of the sum, the issue of which was authorized by the Appropriation Act, 1993, be now read a second time.

*Question proposed.*

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Bill accordingly read a second time.*

*Question put and agreed to, That the Bill be now read the third time.*

*Bill accordingly read the third time and passed.*

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

**The Minister of Trade and Industry and the Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. K. Valley):** Madam Speaker, I beg to move, that this House do now adjourn to Friday, April 08, 1994, at 1.30 p.m.

**7.50 p.m.**

#### **Gran Couva Police Station**

**Mr. Raymond Palackdharrysingh (Caroni Central):** Madam Speaker, when I communicated with you I stated that I wanted to discuss the matter concerning the dilapidated condition of the Gran Couva Police Station.

*Gran Couva Police Station*  
[MR. PALACKDHARRYSINGH]

*Monday, March 28, 1994*

On page 16 of *Newsday* dated Thursday, March 17, 1994, there was this picture with the headline "Gran Couva Police Station—the house of Rumpelstiltskin O"; and at the side of the picture it states:

"At night a different population takes over at the station, in the form of rats that seem to play hide and seek, cockroaches and other kinds of insects.

It is also a haven for stray dogs who find refuge under the low lying building; and with the stray dogs come the fleas."

Madam Speaker, I was not content to take all that was being said in the newspaper for granted. On Wednesday, March 23, I visited the Gran Couva Police Station and the officers were much obliged; they indicated to me that the report was basically true. The officers did me the courtesy of taking me on a tour through the compound of the police station and immediately I became aware that that building was not designed as a police station; and as far as the oral tradition goes, it would seem that it was an old plantation building handed over to whoever was in charge in those days, 55 to 60 years ago. If one looks at the architecture one would see that it was really of a house formation.

There are about four officers stationed at Gran Couva, a small rustic village that is quite pastoral, but the village is quite a lovely one. I was able to confirm that not only are there dogs and fleas under the station. The building on the western side is elevated between two and two and a half feet with a gradient that slopes to the eastern side. Of course, at times there are also dead dogs found there.

The concrete works in the corridors on the western side of that police station are all fragmented and on the northern side, which is behind the police station, the land is slipping. I was also given the opportunity to take a look at the kitchen and bathroom of the police station, and, of course, when rain falls the kitchen and bathroom flood. The leaking roofs are very obvious from the distinct water stains, and while walking through the station, the officers said to me "Can you tell me what is your weight? Because you are likely to go through as the flooring is so spongy." Of course, they recognized that I am quite a weighty man.

Accommodation at that station is almost non-existent. In short, what I am saying is, yes, a police station in that district is necessary. It is necessary to preserve the peace and as a deterrent to crimes. There are more people moving into that area; there is praedial larceny and there is quite a lonely distance between that village and Couva, which makes it very difficult to get prompt response from any other police station.

*Gran Couva Police Station*

*Monday, March 28, 1994*

I am also aware that the "house of Rumpelstiltskin O" can hardly be repaired. My concern is, what is going to be done immediately to provide some measure of convenience to the officers at the station? When would a new building be constructed to properly accommodate the officers? I hope this would be given immediate and serious attention.

Gran Couva is one of the pastoral, scenic areas of Trinidad and Tobago where there is a rainbow people, the coffee, cocoa and citrus plantations infused with a profusion of flamboyants, poinsettias, the golden poui and the evergreen perennials, and the warbling streams of fresh, cool crystal-clear waters.

The presence of police has not only been to preserve and protect the residents, but also the environment. I am certain that as I plead for a prompt response to urgent needs and basic facilities, the Minister would consent to making provision for the construction of a new police station in consonance with the need for appropriate development and security of the residents.

Madam Speaker, I humbly plead my case before you and make representation and await the unambiguous and sensitive commitment of the Government and an empathizing Minister.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Minister of National Security (Sen. The Hon. Russell Huggins):** Madam Speaker, I will be very brief. The Government is very aware of the dilapidated condition of the Gran Couva Police Station, as it is aware of the dilapidated condition of the Maraval Police Station, the Roxborough Police Station, the Princes Town Police Station, the Sangre Grande Police Station, the St. Madeleine Police Station and some others that I can mention.

The resources of the Government, however, are not unlimited and whilst we also recognize that no useful purpose would be served in seeking to repair this building, it is the intention to do some minor repairs to, at least, bring some temporary relief to the officers occupying it.

The Gran Couva Police Station is one of those police stations for which the ministry is at present preparing a comprehensive package which it will then present to the Cabinet for consideration. So that in the Government's efforts to address all the problems of the police service, we will, at least, address the accommodation problems with the urgency that requires.

*Gran Couva Police Station*  
[HON. R. HUGGINS]

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**8.00 p.m.**

Madam Speaker, let me assure the Member for Caroni Central that the Gran Couva Police Station is high on the ministry's agenda, and as soon as we are ready to do the sod-turning ceremony, I will invite him to be a party to that exercise.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Members, the question is that this House adjourn to Friday April 08, 1994 at 1.30 p.m. What would we be discussing?

**Mr. K. Valley:** Madam Speaker, on that day we are going to deal with the Motions on the Order Paper—that is, Land Acquisition as well as the Privileges and Immunities Bill.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*House adjourned accordingly.*

*Adjourned at 8.02 p.m.*