

Leave of Absence

Monday, March 27, 1995

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, March 27, 1995

The House met at 1.55 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 to the Member for Oropouche (*Mr. Trevor Sudama*).

PAPERS LAID

1. Report of the Auditor General on the accounts of the Airports Authority of Trinidad and Tobago for the year ended December 31, 1991. [*The Minister of Finance and Minister of Tourism (Hon. Wendell Mottley)*]
2. Report of the Auditor General on the accounts of the Airports Authority of Trinidad and Tobago for the year ended December 31, 1992. (*Hon. W. Mottley*)
3. Special Report No. 1/95 of the Ombudsman of Trinidad and Tobago. [*The Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley)*]
4. Draft White Paper on Food and Agriculture Policy 1995—1997. [*The Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources (Hon. Dr. Keith Rowley)*]

Papers No. 1 and 2 to be referred to the Public Accounts Committee.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

The Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley): Madam Speaker, of the questions on the Order Paper today, the Government is able to answer the following: Questions Nos. 71, 90, 91, and 124.

Madam Speaker, as I said on Friday, we are attempting to be up to date with the answers and are therefore requesting a deferral of the other questions for a period of two weeks.

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

The following questions stood on the Order Paper:

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Construction of Community Centres

- 70.** Could the Minister of Community Development, Culture and Women's Affairs state:
- (a) The locations where community centres are earmarked for construction during 1995 from the E.C. grant of \$18.5 million and the estimated cost of each such community centre?
 - (b) Would any portion of this grant be made available for the repairing and refurbishing of existing community centres? [*Mr. T. Sudama*]

Question, by leave, deferred.

Funding for Recreation Grounds

Mr. R. L. Maharaj on behalf of Mr. T. Sudama asked the Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs:

- 71.** Could the Minister state:
- (a) Whether funding under contracted services could be made available for the upgrading and development of the following recreation grounds:-
 - (i) Debe;
 - (ii) Diamond Village;
 - (iii) Gandhi Village;
 - (iv) La Fortune; and
 - (v) Woodland

as discussed in the Committee Stage of the debate on the Appropriation Bill, 1995?

- (b) Whether her Ministry has any plans for the construction of a regional recreation ground for the Penal/Debe area? [*Mr. T. Sudama*]

The Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs (Hon. Jean Pierre): Madam Speaker, yes, the programme started in December, 1993. Recruitment was done through voluntary organizations; village community councils; religious organizations; the Community Development Division and other community groups.

Region	Tutors	Teaching Assistants	Trainees
Central	4	8	144
South	4	8	120

[*Interruption*]

Madam Speaker: The question is No. 71 by the Member for Oropouche—funding under contracted services.

Miss Nicholson: Step up. Do not let down the ladies.

Mr. Maharaj: Madam Speaker, I think the hon. Minister was misled by the information that was supplied to her. Perhaps we could defer it.

Mr. Valley: Madam Speaker, there seems to be some error. Question No. 71 is by the Member for Caroni Central as to whether the National Training Service Programme has begun. We have to defer question No. 71, Madam Speaker for two weeks.

Question, by leave, deferred.

The following questions stood on the Order Paper:

**Marshall Trace/Extension, Cunupia
(Development Works)**

- 86.** Would the Minister of Works and Transport indicate:
- (a) Whether he is aware that Marshall Trace and Marshall Trace Extension in Cunupia have been in a deplorable condition since 1991?
 - (b) Whether he intends to undertake development works on these roads?
 - (i) If the answer is in the affirmative, when does he intend to commence these works? [*Miss Hulsie Bhaggan*]

**Agricultural Access Roads
(Development Works)**

- 87** Would the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources indicate:
- (a) Whether he is aware that the following agricultural access roads require urgent repair:-
 - (1) Alexander Road;
 - (2) Ramlal Trace and Ramlal Trace Ext.; and

- (3) Abidh Road?
- (b) Whether he intends undertaking development works on these roads?
- (c) If the answer is in the affirmative, when does he intend to commence these works? [*Miss H. Bhaggan*]

Media Time for Opposition

- 89.** Would the Prime Minister indicate:
- (a) Whether the Government has taken or intends to take steps to ensure that the official Opposition in Parliament obtains state-sponsored media time to express its views on Government's actions?
- (b) The sums of money the Government spent on public relations and media time since it got into office? [*Mr. R. L. Maharaj*]

Playing Fields Under Five Acres

- 96.** Would the Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs state:
- (a) How many playing fields in this country are under five acres in size?
- (b) Whether such playing fields would be enhanced to encourage sporting activities?
- (c) If not, what alternative arrangements would be made for the members of such sporting communities? [*Mr. R. Palackdharrysingh*]

Restoration of Bad Roads

- 98.** (a) Would the Minister of Works and Transport state whether he is aware of the bad conditions of the Freeport Village Road, the Arena Road, La Cuesa Road, the Enterprise Road, the Old Southern Main Road from Montrose to Edinburgh 500?
- (b) If the answer is in the affirmative, would the Minister state when the necessary corrective measures would be taken for the restoration of such roads? [*Mr. R. Palackdharrysingh*]

Road Repairs

- 110.** (a) Would the Minister of Works and Transport state whether his Ministry has any plans to repair the following roads:-
- (i) Buen Intento Road;
 - (ii) Sisters Road; and
 - (iii) Sancho Road?
- (b) If the reply is in the affirmative, would the Minister state:
- (i) the type of repairs planned;
 - (ii) the estimated cost of repairs;
 - (iii) when will the repairs begin; and
 - (iv) the anticipated date of completion.
- for each project [*Mr. M. Haniff*]

Questions, by leave, deferred.

Squatters on State Lands (Water and Electricity Connections)

- 90. Mr. R. L. Maharaj** (*Couva South*) asked the Minister of Housing and Settlements: Would the Minister indicate whether his Government intends to take steps to facilitate squatters on state lands and/or lands owned by state enterprises to receive water and electricity connections without their having to get the consent of the owners of lands, a condition precedent for such connection?

The Minister of Housing and Settlements (Hon. Dr. Vincent Lasse): The Ministry of Housing and Settlements is currently engaged in the presentation of a squatter regularization programme involving 7,000 squatter households and 34 designated sites located throughout the country. These sites are all state lands which have been vested in the National Housing Authority. Inter alia, the regularization process involves the upgrading of infrastructure to minimum approved developmental standards, including the provision of electricity and water.

On sites other than the designated sites squatters are usually given consent to obtain water and electricity connections after an investigation has been carried out by the National Housing Authority to determine the following:

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- (1) Sites for regularization;
- (2) Whether the site is required for any public purpose such as school, cemetery, health centre, recreation ground, etc. and
- (3) Whether the site lies in close proximity to mains such as water and electricity.

In this connection it is instructive to note that Cabinet recently took the decision to designate the Ministry of Housing and Settlements as the agency that will give the necessary authorization to the Water and Sewerage Authority and the Trinidad and Tobago Electricity Commission in respect of the supply of water and electric power respectively to squatter settlements on state lands approved for regularization.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

2.05 p.m.

Mr. S. Panday: A supplemental question, Madam Speaker. Do the same conditions apply for the squatters that occupy Cocoyea Village in the constituency of San Fernando East?

Hon. Dr. Lasse: Madam Speaker, I thought I made myself very clear, that lands on which designations have been made for squatter regularization, these sites would be provided.

Claxton Bay
(Jetty for Fishermen)

91. Mr. Ramesh Maharaj (*Couva South*) asked the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources:

- (a) Would the Minister indicate whether his Government intends either to take steps to provide a jetty for the fishermen of Claxton Bay or to take steps to dig a channel at the said Bay?
- (b) If it does, could he indicate when such action is likely to be taken?

The Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources (Hon. Dr. Keith Rowley): Madam Speaker, the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago intends to continue investigating the problems experienced by fishermen of Claxton Bay with a view to bringing about a resolution. Technical advice received thus far indicates that the underlying cause of the problem relates to natural phenomena, mainly the topography with its low gradient, the circulation

of currents in the Gulf of Paria and siltation due to the effluent from the Orinoco, the Caroni and other rivers. Most fishing beaches in the Gulf of Paria are similarly affected.

It is difficult at this time to indicate precisely the corrective action that is likely to be taken. It would be first necessary to determine the most practical and cost-effective measure to solve this problem. An earlier attempt at solving the problem through dredging of a channel in 1985 did not work. The channel became silted up in about 12 months. This effort had cost \$600,000 at the time. Feasibility studies would need to be undertaken to establish precisely the benefits and cost of the alternative options.

Mr. Maharaj: Could the hon. Minister state since when his investigations began—how many years ago?

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: Madam Speaker, this matter is one which has been ongoing. Some corrective action was taken but it did not work. Other corrective action might be forthcoming, but all within the context of available resources and allocations.

Inadequate Water Supply

97. Mr. Raymond Palackdharrysingh (*Caroni Central*) asked the Minister of Public Utilities:

- (a) Is the Minister aware of the hopelessly inadequate water supplies in Pepper Village, Flanagin Town, Upper Chickland and the Caparo areas?
- (b) If the answer is in the affirmative, would the Minister state what steps are being taken to provide an adequate supply?

The Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley): Madam Speaker, WASA has advised that Pepper Village and Flanagin Town are being supplied by the Freeport Waterworks via the Gran Couva booster and the Pepper Hill tanks. These villages are on a scheduled supply once per week on Fridays. The once-per-week schedule has been maintained for the village since the end of January 1995 but inadequate water levels at the Pepper Hill tank have affected the supply to Flanagin Town over the last four months.

In an attempt to improve the supply, WASA has completed a leak repair programme on the system. However, full relief requires the replacement of the 10-inch diameter main supplying the Pepper Hill tank. This project is part of the WASA emergency rehabilitation programme and will commence in April, 1995.

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Upper Chickland is supplied from the Freeport Waterworks and is on a scheduled supply two days per week, Mondays and Tuesdays. The water mains in this area are now undersized to meet the current demand and are old and encrusted. Improvement of supply requires the replacement of these mains. This project is included in WASA's emergency rehabilitation programme.

The Piparo areas are supplied from the Carlsen Field well, via the Todds Road Booster on a scheduled once-per-week supply. WASA has completed a programme of leak repair, valve replacement and booster station refurbishment, which has improved the reliability of its supply schedule in the area.

WASA acknowledges that a twice-per-week supply is less than satisfactory. It should be noted that Pepper Village, Flanagin Town, Upper Chickland and the Caparo areas are not unique. There are problems with unsatisfactory water supply in other parts of the country. In order to improve the availability of water in the district, WASA is carrying out a programme of well refurbishment and the drilling of new wells at the Freeport/Carlsen Field wells.

As at February 20, 1995, four wells in the Freeport well field have been returned to service to increase water production from 300,000 gallons per day to one million gallons per day. Two additional wells are to be brought on line by the end of March, 1995, with two additional new wells scheduled to be drilled to bring the production at Freeport to three million gallons per day by mid-year 1995.

Mr. Palackdharrysingh: A supplementary question, Madam Speaker. Would the hon. Minister state what steps are taken to refund consumers' moneys paid by them in lieu of not receiving an adequate water supply?

Hon. K. Valley: Madam Speaker, I do not know the answer to that question.

Mr. Haniff: Madam Speaker, a supplemental question to the hon. Minister. In the area where there was a breakdown in the system of water supply for four months as said by the hon. Minister, can he indicate whether WASA or the Government in any way assisted these people with a truck-borne supply of water or otherwise during that period?

Hon. K. Valley: Again, Madam Speaker, as you know I am only deputizing here. If the Member files a question, obviously we will have the answer.

Madam Speaker: The Minister is under a disability. He is not the Minister of Public Utilities.

**Ste. Madeleine Sugar Factory
(Soot and Ash Pollution)**

124. Mr. Ramesh L. Maharaj on behalf of the Member for Oropouche (Mr. Trevor Sudama) asked the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources:

In view of the perennial complaints made by residents of the Oropouche, Naparima, San Fernando East and San Fernando West constituencies about the pollution of their homes by soot and ash emanating from the Ste. Madeleine Sugar Factory could the Minister state:

- (a) Why Caroni (1975) Limited has not to date addressed this problem?
- (b) What immediate action the company intends to take to eliminate this continuing nuisance?

The Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources (Hon. Dr. Keith Rowley): Madam Speaker, Caroni (1975) Limited utilizes at Usine Ste. Madeleine sugar factory a fly-ash arrestor and removal system which was installed in 1976. The system, by its design and operating principles causes fly-ash emissions which have been affecting residents in South Trinidad. The company conducted examinations at the Usine Ste. Madeleine factory during the 1991 and 1992 crops to determine the extent of maintenance and design changes required to alleviate the problem and finalize a plan of action.

Two conveyor fans were installed in 1992 to improve the effectiveness of the system. The entire system was again refurbished during the 1993 and 1994 wet seasons. Provisions have been made in 1995 for funding capital investment works in the Caroni sugar factories in accordance with the recommendations of the tripartite report. It is expected that further installation of a more effective and efficient system to alleviate the environmental problems would form part of the overall upgrading process.

Mr. Palackdharrysingh: A supplemental question. Would the hon. Minister indicate when in 1995 this project would begin?

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: Madam Speaker, for the benefit of the Member I would read the last paragraph:

Provisions have been made in 1995 for funding capital investment works at the sugar factories in accordance with the recommendations of the tripartite report. It is expected that further installation of a more effective and efficient system to alleviate the environmental problems would form part of the overall upgrading process.

Mr. Maharaj: Could the hon. Minister state when this efficient system that he is talking about in the latter part of the question, is likely to be installed?

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: Madam Speaker, I am not in a position to give the answer to that question because at the overall upgrading of the factories, no programme—

Hon. Member: The upgrading of the factories has nothing to do with the ash problem!

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: Have some manners, nuh! Within that overall upgrading of the factories the environmental problems would be taken into account. I do not have with me any plan of action for the upgrading and if Members file at a later stage when one exists, I will answer it.

2.15 p.m.

Mr. Maharaj: Madam Speaker, a supplementary question. Can the hon. Minister tell this House when would the people of Central and South Trinidad get some relief from this problem which has been existing for years?

Mr. B. Panday: Get up and say, no. That is all you are good for.

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: Madam Speaker, as the reply to the question indicated, upgrading arrangements have been taking place from 1976, 1991, 1993, 1994 and we expect further upgrading, and each action would bring about some relief. At the next phase when additional capital expenditure is made available and utilized, it would bring about some relief.

FINANCE (VARIATION OF APPROPRIATION) BILL

A Bill to vary the appropriation provided for by the Appropriation Act, 1994 and to authorize the utilization of any sums occurring 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 and Minister of Tourism*]; read the first time.

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

INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT (ESTABLISHMENT)

The Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley): Madam Speaker, I beg to move,

Whereas Parliamentarians for Global Action, a non-governmental organization, has prepared a Parliamentary Declaration in support of the establishment of an International Criminal Court;

And whereas the Declaration calls for the establishment of an International Criminal Court to administer justice against crimes at the international level, such a Court would provide support for the rule of law in democratic systems and for the preservation and advancement of democratic structures of Government globally;

And whereas Parliamentarians for Global Action has circulated this Declaration to Parliamentarians of many member countries of the United Nations for their support and signature;

And whereas the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, with the support of several other member countries of the United Nations initiated the process for the establishment of such a Court at the 1988-1989 sessions of the General Assembly of the United Nations:

Be it Resolved that this honourable House support the Parliamentary Declaration in support of an International Criminal Court, such Declaration to be signed by Parliamentarians:

And be it further resolved that this honourable House is of the view that the said Parliamentary Declaration should be attached to Trinidad and Tobago's comments on the draft Statute for an International Criminal Court prepared by the International Law Commission, which document and comments thereon are to be discussed at the meeting of the *ad hoc* committee commissioned by the General Assembly of the United Nations by Resolution 49/L.24 scheduled for April 3 to 15, 1995.

Madam Speaker, from the very beginning of history the world has witnessed ruthless acts and atrocities committed against our fellow men by both individuals and countries; crimes against peace, humanity and inhumane acts committed against civilians continue to occur. The war crimes trials, after World War II, gave witness to the initial desire for the establishment of an international criminal court. These early proposals envisaged a court whose jurisdiction would cover individuals charged with violations of rules of international laws such as war crimes and genocide.

The stories of the atrocities that arose during World War I and subsequently, during World War II, are familiar to all of us and serious reflection on the international society today show that such atrocities could still continue as do the arguments put forward for the establishment of an international criminal court.

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We are once more, some 50 years later, presented with the opportunity to establish a structure and system for dealing with the offences which horrify us all. The world has changed much since the proposal for an international criminal court of justice first arose, as we have witnessed, since then, the collapse of a number of authoritarian regimes. The concept of a global economy is becoming a reality as we witness the breaking down of barriers between countries, and the necessity for co-operation in order to progress, whether it be on the economic, social or political front.

Given this scenario, it is clearly an opportune time for us to seek to co-operate in the prosecution and punishment of persons who perpetrate such crimes. The nature of the crimes committed have not changed and, in fact, the categories of crimes have increased as acts of terrorism and drug trafficking become a regular feature in international news. Nations must co-operate in the campaign against criminal activities and collaborate in the fight against crime at the international level.

The opportunity to preserve and strengthen the gains of democracy must not be lost on this occasion, and it is to this end that Government would support, in principle, the statute to establish the International Criminal Court.

This document would form the substance of discussions at an *ad hoc* committee to be convened at the Secretariat of the United Nations from April 3 to 15, 1995. The recommendations arising therefrom would be submitted to the 50th General Assembly of the United Nations.

Government is currently engaged in the examination of the draft statute and in the preparation of comments that would be submitted for discussion at the *ad hoc* committee meeting.

We are well aware that there are many issues of sovereignty and jurisdiction that would arise in the establishment of an international criminal court. These matters would require considerable discussion before they can be resolved satisfactorily. In the meantime, the Parliamentary Declaration provides an opportunity for each of us to signify that we abhor the atrocities that we witness daily on the international landscape, and are willing to support, in principle, the establishment of this International Criminal Court of Justice which we hope would seek to foster world peace.

Madam Speaker, I beg to move.

Question proposed.

2.25 p.m.

Mr. A.N.R. Robinson (*Tobago East*): Madam Speaker, first of all, may I emphasize that what hon. Members are asked to do, is to approve the signing of a Declaration which every Member of the House will be asked to sign. That Declaration, this House is asked to resolve should be attached with signatures, to the submissions made by Trinidad and Tobago to the *ad hoc* committee of the United Nations which meets next month to consider a statute for an International Criminal Court, which has been drawn up by the International Law Commission on the mandate of the General Assembly of the United Nations. So we are being asked to subscribe to a declaration by parliamentarians to be attached to Trinidad and Tobago's submission to the United Nations next month, when there will be consideration of a draft law for the Court which has been drawn up by the International Law Commission.

Madam Speaker, may I read, with your permission, the Declaration into the *Hansard* record. The Declaration that we are asked to subscribe to states, and I quote:

"Significant progress has been made in recent years toward the goal of an International Criminal Jurisdiction which has eluded statesmen and eminent jurists for over a hundred years. The need for mechanisms to try persons accused of the most serious crimes in international law has long been established and has now been underlined by the decision of the Security Council to institute *ad hoc* tribunals for the trial of persons accused of atrocities committed in the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda half a century after the International Military Tribunals at Nuremberg Tokyo.

For the second time, the first being in 1953, a draft statute for an International Criminal Court has been prepared by the International Law Commission following the mandate of the United Nations General Assembly. The 1953 attempt to establish such a court fell victim to tensions and conflicts of the Cold War, which made cooperation among nations to establish a permanent criminal court impossible. Times have changed. The collapse of authoritarian regimes, and the remarkable proliferation of democratic systems have created a more favourable climate for tackling one of humankind's greatest scourges—crime of international dimensions such as aggression, genocide, crimes against humanity and other serious violations of international law.

Indeed, the need to bring crimes of this magnitude into a permanent justice system is all the more compelling in the new international scenario that is unfolding with ultranationalists and fundamentalist forces, vast destructive

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power, and sophisticated technological capabilities in the possession of nations, groups and individuals.

The current window of opportunity for cooperation among the nations of the world should now be fully exploited, particularly during the fiftieth anniversary of Nuremberg.

It must not be assumed that fledgling democracies will easily survive. Many, even the more established ones, face serious challenges, not the least among them being a rise in organized criminal activity, the corruption of law enforcement agencies, and subversion of justice systems and of the whole apparatus of governments.

Populations, particularly in smaller countries, are sometimes ridden with fear of criminal gangs and even of high public officials who have put themselves beyond the reach of the law. This fear erodes confidence in law enforcement and the judicial process, and leads to the collapse of the rule of law which is an essential pillar of the democratic system.

Agreement among nations to cooperate in the campaign against criminal activity concretised in an International Criminal Court, would not only provide a framework for collaboration in the fight against crime at the international level. It would send an important message to elements in national jurisdictions combatting crime: they have available to them, if they so desire, not only moral support but material assistance in numerous ways—including another avenue of prosecution—from powerful allies in the international community.

Such multilateral reinforcement on a global scale can have decisive results within national jurisdictions without the risk of external intervention or interference. This would provide powerful support for the rule of law in democratic systems and for the preservation and advancement of democratic structures of governments globally.

In light of these considerations, we parliamentarians request that no effort be spared by your government in taking measures to ensue that deliberations on the establishment of an International Criminal Court proceed towards the convening of a diplomatic conference.

Further, we wish to convey to members of the *ad hoc* committee the view that the campaign to create a permanent court has, indeed, reached an historic moment; we urge that the Committee seize this moment and move decisively towards a new pillar of global security."

That is the Declaration which parliamentarians are asked to subscribe to and this, may I emphasize, Madam Speaker, is a non-partisan matter. I approach it, as it is my duty to do, in a non-partisan manner.

The request has come from an organization called Parliamentarians for Global Action which consists of over 1,050 members from some 79 countries. Members join in their individual capacity and they have the background of different ideologies, different political parties, even opposing political parties, but they subscribe to one objective, and that is to promote matters which are in the interest of all the world.

It allows parliamentarians to participate in their personal rather than legislative capacities, thereby transcending ideological and national boundaries.

Much work has been done already by Parliamentarians for Global Action in the field of nuclear and chemical disarmament, peace-keeping, international law, democracy, population and sustainable development. It has played a leading role in promoting parliamentary democracy in transitional countries, most notably, Togo, Côte d'Ivoire, Zambia, Haiti, Gambia and Burundi. And, at this moment parliamentarians, along with UNDP, are engaged in preparing a programme for assistance at the request of Suriname in this part of the region.

Parliamentarians for Global Action is in a unique position to foster multilateral co-operation among political leaders. It is against that background that the requests came from Parliamentarians for Global Action, and, may I state the reason for this request.

While the idea of an international criminal court has occupied the attention of statesmen and jurists in the world for over 100 years, and while a statute was first introduced in the United Nations in the year 1953, the whole matter ran into difficulties and, in fact, was virtually aborted. A new initiative was taken by Trinidad and Tobago under the previous Government in the years 1988/1989. Trinidad and Tobago, along with Caricom countries reintroduced the matter on the United Nations agenda and since then, the matter has been pursued by Trinidad and Tobago and other countries and there has been a tremendous amount of support which has developed over the years.

While, originally, there was a great degree of pessimism, cynicism and opposition, there has been a tremendous amount of support recently to the extent where, the International Law Commission, at the mandate of the General Assembly of the United Nations, has drawn up a statute for the court, and it is that statute which will be considered by a committee of member-nations of the United

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Nations who are interested, next month, and another session is due to be held, if necessary, in July of this year.

2.35 p.m.

There still continues to be some opposition to the establishment of the court by some powerful countries that are concerned about any diminution of their sovereignty or who are concerned about the possibility of their own citizens being charged before the court. In one particular case, I think the United States of America is very concerned about keeping control over its own operations in respect of the drug trade. I do not propose to go into any details regarding the reasons for that. I am merely stating that there is this opposition which is continuing. There is very great concern among persons and countries that are interested in the establishment of a court, that this opposition should not delay and possibly abort its establishment.

In fact, at a meeting of international experts on criminal justice which dealt with the historic and contemporary issues from December 4—8 in Syracuse, a resolution was passed urging all states to support actively the establishment of a permanent international criminal court and to call for a plenipotentiary conference in 1996. There was an effort to delay the calling of the plenipotentiary conference to endorse the establishment of the court indefinitely.

Having regard to, or largely because of, the efforts of a number of middle income countries and finally, France, which drew up a compromise resolution, a programme has been established for progress in the work of preparation for the establishment of such a court. That resolution resulted in the establishment of the *ad hoc* committee which is to meet next month and, if necessary, in July.

The actual document before the Parliament has emanated from Trinidad and Tobago. It was not intended for this particular purpose. Parliamentarians for Global Action has different organs through which it operates. It has an international council and an executive council consisting of directors, some of whom are called presidents with particular responsibility.

The Member for Tobago East has the honour to be elected a director on the executive and, as one of five presidents of the organization, was assigned responsibility for international law and human rights, as a result of his background of activity in this field. As a result of this appointment, the Member for Tobago East prepared a document seeking to reposition the court concept in the context of current global concerns, taking into account the concerns of the biggest countries like the United States and the United Kingdom.

The secretariat of the organization considered that the document should not only be for internal circulation but also that it would be useful to have it circulated for the endorsement of parliamentarians. As a result of this, I was requested to approach the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago for agreement that the document be attached with signatures from parliamentarians around the world, to the Trinidad and Tobago presentation in April. I pay tribute to the Prime Minister for his acceptance of the idea and to the Cabinet for agreeing that the document be attached to Trinidad and Tobago's presentation next month at the United Nations.

In a matter of a few days, the document already has the endorsement of 78 parliamentarians from 21 countries. This is a very short space of time. I would like to read the countries which include Senegal, New Zealand, Canada, Ghana, Sweden, Germany, United Kingdom, Australia, Pakistan, Ireland, Switzerland, Italy, Netherlands, Uganda, the European Parliament, Scotland, France, the Dominican Republic, Bulgaria, Japan and Colombia. There is no doubt that many more endorsements will come in as the document is circulated. As this issue is likely to continue for some time and to be agitated at the level of the United Nations for a considerable period of time, it is quite possible that the document would be circulated during the course of the year to other countries and other parliamentarians, and there would be hundreds of signatures attached.

Meanwhile, I have the honour to mention that another organization with 600 representatives in 40 countries which is meeting in Rome from 7—9 April is interested in the matter and has actually invited me to participate in order to deal with the subject of the international criminal court.

The point I wish to make is a matter of tremendous importance. If the country succeeds, if the United Nations succeeds; if the global community were to succeed and the prospects seem reasonably favourable for the establishment of this court, before the end of the century, it would be one of the more significant achievements of mankind in the 20th Century; the establishment of an international jurisdiction which will bring to account the most powerful persons, wherever they may be, who have committed crimes of the most serious nature. Many of these crimes are being committed against children, may I say, and have serious consequences for children and the future of all of us.

I would read from this 1995 report, *The State of the World's Children*. It refers to situations such as former Yugoslavia, Mozambique, Angola, Somalia, the Sudan, Afghanistan, Cambodia, Haiti, Bosnia. It states:

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"All of these conflicts, made the more devastating by weapons exported from the industrialized nations, have brought not only short-term suffering to millions of families but long-term consequences for the development of people and of nations. What kind of adults will they be, these millions of children who have been traumatized by mass violence, who have been denied the opportunity to develop normally in mind and body, who have been deprived of homes and parents, of family and community, of identity and security, of schooling and stability? What scars will they carry forward into their own adult lives, and what kind of contribution will they be making to their societies in 15 or 20 years from now?

...At one time, wars were fought between armies; but in the wars of the last decade far more children than soldiers have been killed and disabled."

There are far more casualties taking place among the children of the world in all these conflicts which are arising in these different locations than in respect of soldiers. The question that is being asked is: What are the consequences for the future?

2.45 p.m.

We in Trinidad and Tobago have our own situation. We have seen the activities of young people who have resorted to criminal activities for one reason or another and can well understand the reason for their fear. It not only relates to children. There is the menace of the drug trade, the menace of fraud, the menace of money laundering; all these criminal activities are transnational; they go across international frontiers. As the Leader of Government Business in the House quite rightly said, as we live in a global village, crime has become globalized and we have to be in the strongest possible position to have global co-operation for dealing with globalized crime. So, from every point of view this matter is of critical historic importance.

I commend the Government for accepting the proposal that the matter be put to all the Members of the House of Representatives for their signature. I ask all the Members, in the spirit of a non-partisan approach to a matter of momentous importance, that they agree that individual signatures be subscribed to this Declaration.

I thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Ramesh L. Maharaj (*Couva South*): Madam Speaker, in this matter we are, in effect, part and parcel of the fight to get the necessary machinery put in place so that the rule of law would be promoted throughout the world. I think we ought to put on record that the Member of Parliament for Tobago East has been in the forefront of the struggle to get such a court set up.

As a matter of fact, in the days when I had time to attend international human rights meetings and in the days before the Member for Tobago East assumed the office of Prime Minister in 1986, I met him on several occasions at some of those meetings. I recall at one of those meetings in Barbados, sponsored by the International Commission of Jurists, the Member dealt with the rule of law. One of the battles that he was always trying to get the International Human Rights Movement involved in was getting governments to agree to set up such a court. We cannot get away from the fact that he has been one of the pioneers for the setting up of such a court.

The concept of this court obviously evolved because over the last 20 or 30 years the international community has seen that governmental power can be easily abused. There has, therefore, been the movement from time to time to try to put in place as many checks and balances and safeguards that one can, to ensure that if governmental power is abused, there would be some machinery to provide redress to the communities to ensure that these injustices do not continue.

It was as a part of the concept that governmental power must be limited—there must be checks and balances to ensure that power is not misused and abused—that the International Criminal Court evolved. It recognized that human and fundamental rights, and the rule of law are not national matters but international matters, therefore, one needs regional and international machinery to protect and promote these basic rights and principles.

It is the same concept which has caused us in Trinidad and Tobago, for example, to have the protection and entrenchment of fundamental rights. As you will recall, Madam Speaker, in 1962 when we had to get independence, it was thought that we could control governmental and state power, and that the only way we could do it was to entrench individual rights with certain checks and balances and safeguards in the Constitution.

What we are really doing here is becoming part of history in trying to promote in the international community more safeguards, more checks and balances, for the protection of individuals' rights, and it is consoling to see that this Government is committed to protect and promote individual rights and the rule of law on the international scene. At another stage we will examine that policy in relation to the local arena to see whether that policy and programme applies to Trinidad and Tobago.

One sees how the law has been developing in international law. Trinidad and Tobago is part of a covenant known as the International Covenant on Civil and

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Political Rights, and if I am correct, I think it was the Member for Tobago East, years ago in this Parliament, who filed a motion for Trinidad and Tobago to ratify that covenant and be a party to it. He has assured me that is so. That International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights has provided international machinery, which is known as the UN Committee on Human Rights, and which, although it sits out of the country, has power to determine matters which occur in the country. That is the same concept which also applies, for example, to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights.

This resolution has to do with the promotion of the rule of law; it has to do with the question of state aggression; it has to do with crimes against humanity. With all that has been said, I do not want it to be hidden. As the hon. Member for Tobago East has stated, it has to do with ensuring that even the judicial process is not used against individuals. It has to do with preventing the collapse of the rule of law and it being an essential pillar of the democratic system.

I would like to put on record that we are saying that international law and thinking are being developed. For example, for centuries it was the law that a court under the British system could not grant an injunction against a minister—no matter what the government did, a court could not grant an injunction against a minister—and the concept was that it was the Queen's court and even in a country which became independent, that principle of the common law remained. It was only about three years ago that the British House of Lords decided—which now applies to all Commonwealth countries—that a court can grant an injunction against a minister and if he disobeys the order, the court has the power to order him to be jailed. The court could never have done that before, and this is all part of the development of international public law.

For example, it was also the law that if one writes things about a minister or a government, the same laws of libel and slander applied. That is to say, if one thought that one had good information and one printed it and it turned out to be wrong, libelous and in defamation, a newspaper could be closed down because the Government could keep filing action after action.

Madam Speaker, you will recall how the government in Guyana, under Burnham, filed several actions against the only independent newspaper in Guyana and because of those actions almost crippled the company.

2.55 p.m.

Madam Speaker, a year ago that international law was changed. It has now been recognized by the Privy Council in the House of Lords that if you print

something against a government or a government minister which may be untrue, and even if you accuse the government or the minister of corruption, the fact of the matter is, that cannot be a basis for libel. It is stated that people have a right and the press has a right to write these things even though they may be untrue.

I am saying these things to show who would benefit from this in the long run. The people of Trinidad and Tobago would benefit from this. The people of the world would benefit. By presenting this Motion in Parliament, we are seeing here that this Government is recognizing that there cannot be any argument, that it is an attack on the sovereignty of the nation of Trinidad and Tobago if we have an external court adjudicating on matters which would occur in Trinidad and Tobago. It recognizes that when it comes to the promotion of individual rights and the promotion of the rule of law that one cannot have those arguments again, because we are all living in a global village.

I do not plan to make a long contribution today. As a matter of fact, I only have a few more minutes. One matter has attracted my attention which I cannot help noticing and which I feel very good about. I noticed that this International Criminal Court would not only deal with genocide and matters relating to war, but also with things such as crimes against humanity. Well, crimes against humanity is a very wide subject that could have a very wide meaning. We are heartened to know that we are most likely to have another forum to deal with governmental crimes or state crimes against humanity.

I am thinking aloud that if people cannot get water and are charged water rates, there is no greater crime against humanity than a failure to supply water. I cannot think of any greater crime against humanity than poverty. I cannot think of any greater crime against humanity than saying that to alleviate poverty prices would go down and then prices go up.

I hope that the hon. Prime Minister, when this measure is being implemented—most likely he would be in the Opposition then—*[Interruption]*

Mr. Manning: Madam Speaker, the Member for Couva South has a very good imagination.

Mr. R. L. Maharaj: But he would not say that in order to deal with international crime we have to sing religious songs.

Mr. B. Panday: Classical music to deal with crime, not prison anymore.

Mr. R. L. Maharaj: Madam Speaker, I want to assure the Member for San Fernando East and the hon. Prime Minister that it is not only imagination, it is

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prophetic. The hon. Prime Minister knows that on many occasions some of us on this side have made the right predictions. I have no doubt in my mind that he will be on this side—if he is lucky to get the seat, Madam Speaker.

As I was saying—as a bit of humour—I hope that the hon. Prime Minister would not at all recommend that we sing international religious songs in order to deal with international crimes.

Mr. B. Panday: Classical music here.

Mr. R. L. Maharaj: Classical music.

In closing, the United National Congress supports the Government on this measure, which is obviously a non-partisan matter. This is a matter that affects human beings and we support this matter and hope that urgent action would be taken in order to have such a court implemented.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

The Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley): Madam Speaker, this is obviously a historic day, not only because we are coming together to support the concept of an international criminal court; it is historic because I think it is the first time that on all sides of the House there is general agreement. *[Interruption]* One of the few occasions, Madam Speaker.

I really want to congratulate all Members for taking this initiative. It points to the fact that at least on external matters which are of an international nature—

Mr. Manning: When they decide not to be obstructionists.

Hon. K. Valley: —we can in fact come together. In my opening, I neglected to make the point that this whole initiative was engineered by the Member for Tobago East and it was intentional. The original Motion paid that homage to the Member and in consultation with the Member, he asked me to delete that; he wanted this to be non-partisan, that he did not want his name to be so mentioned. It is in recognition of that fact that in my prepared text I deleted reference to his authorship of this matter.

Mr. Robinson: May I say, Madam Speaker, lest there be any misunderstanding about it, what I indicated was that I did not think the name should be in the Motion, that the Member would be free to raise it in the course of the debate if he wished, but not in the Motion.

Hon. K. Valley: I did misunderstand, Madam Speaker, because I thought the Member did not want that sort of back-patting or recognition, as it were. I am sorry, there was no intent. I can inform the Member that I really deleted it from the prepared text because of what he mentioned to me. I think that we are all aware that the Member has been a leading light with respect to the establishment of the International Criminal Court.

I would like to inform Members that the petition is signed by almost all Members; I think it is now with the Member for Tobago West. That shows our ability to get things done—when we want to do them—rather quickly. I hope, Madam Speaker, that this points a certain way as we move forward in 1995 and into 1996.

Of course, Madam Speaker, if we could have a similar haste with respect to dealing with crime, obviously Trinidad and Tobago would be a much better place in which to live and we expect this type of non-partisan behaviour when we come shortly with that matter with respect to crime.

Mr. Robinson: If the Member would allow me to deal with those matters for him—*[Laughter]*

Hon. K. Valley: Madam Speaker, it is well known that the Member had his own chance to deal with his own matter over a period *[Laughter]* but we shall not go into that this afternoon.

With respect to the point about the protection of human rights raised by the Member for Couva South, as a fact, the protection of human rights is enshrined in our Constitution, a Constitution which was passed in a Parliament which had 36 Members of the People's National Movement in 1976. That is the PNM's commitment to the protection of human rights.

I thank my colleagues for their support for this initiative. I beg to move.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved:

That this honourable House support the Parliamentary Declaration in support of an International Criminal Court, such Declaration to be signed by Parliamentarians:

Further resolved:

That this honourable House is of the view that the said Parliamentary Declaration should be attached to Trinidad and Tobago's comments on the draft Statute for an International Criminal Court prepared by the International

Law Commission, which document and comments thereon are to be discussed at the meeting of the *ad hoc* committee commissioned by the General Assembly of the United Nations by Resolution 49/L.24 scheduled for April 3 to 15, 1995.

3.05 p.m.

**FINANCE COMMITTEE
(Second Report)**

The Minister of Finance and Minister of Tourism (Hon. Wendell Mottley): Madam Speaker, be it resolved:

That this House adopt the Second Report 1994—1995 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, 1994.

The Finance Committee of the House of Representatives met on Friday, March 17 and agreed to a number of proposals relating to the 1994 accounts. It would be recalled that the sum appropriated in fiscal 1994 was \$10,186,919,093 in the Appropriation Act No. 29 dated December 16, 1993 in the amount of \$10,100,247,578 with the Supplementary Appropriation Act No. 25 of December 09, 1994 in the amount of \$86,671,515.

The above mentioned proposals can be put into two categories: one, variations on certain Heads of expenditure and then transfers within certain Heads of expenditure.

With respect to the first item, that is, the variation of certain Heads of expenditure, the Finance Committee approved increases totalling \$27,274,205 to three Heads of expenditure. These were Head 28—the Ministry of Health in the amount of \$20,623,223; Head 45—the Ministry of Consumer Affairs and Social Services in the amount of \$4,411,500; Head 47—the Ministry of Foreign Affairs \$2,239,482. These increases all amounted to \$27,274,205 and were financed by savings under Head 18 from the Ministry of Finance.

Let me turn to the major item of variation of heads of expenditure under the Ministry of Health. The increases allocated under the Ministry of Health were to meet the following items: The first one, in an amount of \$5,933,609 was a payment to Calmaquip Engineering Corporation, a foreign corporation. The other item was on account of bringing expenditure made under projects funded under the Fincor Loan Facility, in the amount of \$14,689,614. Those were the two items adding up to the \$20-odd million under the Ministry of Health.

Let me give a little more detail about the Calmaquip matter. Calmaquip Engineering Corporation was awarded a contract for the procurement, installation, commissioning and maintenance of items of equipment for the Eric Williams Medical Sciences Complex. The installation works could not have been effectively implemented until the buildings were completed and handed over to the Government. However, delays were encountered in the completion of the main contract which resulted in time and cost over-runs on the equipment contract as a consequence.

As a result, Calmaquip filed a claim for additional cost in the sum of US \$2,637,742. With a view to properly assessing the additional claims, Cabinet agreed to the appointment of a Committee to conduct a performance audit on the contract between Calmaquip and the Government. The terms of reference of the Committee were:

(1) to investigate all the circumstances regarding the performance of the contract between Calmaquip Engineering Corporation and the Government of Trinidad and Tobago for the commissioning of the equipment at the Mount Hope Medical Sciences Complex;

(2) to consider the request of Calmaquip Engineering Corporation for an extension of the contract between the Corporation and the Government of Trinidad and Tobago;

(3) to make recommendations.

After careful consideration of these matters, the committee concluded that Calmaquip indeed, did have reason for a claim arising from delays in the contract, therefore, the firm was entitled to receive some measure of compensation. The fact of the matter is that the parent contract dealing with Mount Hope had been awarded to Sodeleg and Sodeleg did not, in fact, hand over the Mount Hope Medical Sciences Complex to the Government in September, 1986, so that Calmaquip could not fully discharge its functions and equip the complex and so forth until some time after that date. There were a number of staffing problems and delays and escalations because of the passage of time. There was clearly, therefore, established reason for the overrun. However, the amount of overrun was not established by this original committee.

Cabinet, therefore, in January 1994 set up a team appointed by the Ministry of Finance to negotiate with Calmaquip to arrive at a proper quantum for the claim. That team of public servants went through all the claims and threw out a number of unsubstantiated claims and, based purely on what was substantiable in terms of

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documentation, they agreed in an amount less than what had been claimed by Calmaquip and the matter was settled in the amount of US \$1,996.

The next item relates to payments made under projects funded under the Fincor Loan Facility. The projects relate to the San Fernando General Hospital in the amount of \$2,882,358, and the Arima Health Facility in the amount of \$11,807,256.

The total sum of \$14,689,614 was drawn down by the Ministry of Health in 1994 under the Fincor Loan Facility to fund the general construction of both these facilities.

It is, therefore, now necessary to bring the sum to account for which the additional provision is sought through a transfer of savings under the same Head 18—Ministry of Finance.

3.15 p.m.

Madam Speaker, provision of additional funds to the Ministry of Consumer Affairs and Social Services in the amount of \$4,411,500 is sought. The original provision of \$3.5 million proved inadequate to effectively address the objectives of the Poverty Relief Programme. Consequently, Government advanced an additional amount of \$4,411,500 from the Contingency Fund. The programme is partially funded by the Inter-American Development Bank under the Investment Sector Loan and covers all communities in Trinidad and Tobago. It is implemented through organized community groups. Access to the programme is obtained through application to the Social Rehabilitation Effort Secretariat. To ensure proper accountability, monthly statements must be submitted and there is constant monitoring of the performance of the programme by co-ordinators.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs advised, in the course of 1994, that due to fluctuations in foreign exchange rates, in many instances the allocation for 1994 proved inadequate to sustain some of the overseas missions. The Ministry was required to meet increased cost of schooling for children of home-based staff and payment of 10 per cent increase in Foreign Service Allowance to all officers serving abroad. The Foreign Service Allowance is designed to take account of the difference between living costs in Trinidad and Tobago and those in the host countries, and the need to ensure a standard of living commensurate with the officer's status as a diplomatic representative of this country. The allowance is fixed in the currency of the country of the mission.

In addition, there was an increase in the cost of transfer of officers between headquarters and missions abroad. It should be pointed out that this area of expenditure cannot be estimated with any degree of accuracy, since this would

involve additional costs in airfares and transportation of officers' personal effects. These, together with increases in the cost of the running expenses of vehicles, increases in the rates of medical insurance for mission staff and escalation in the cost of living accommodation have contributed to the need for supplementary funds under this Head of Expenditure.

Madam Speaker, all these items under the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Consumer Affairs and Social Services, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, were financed out of savings identified under Head 18—Ministry of Finance under the item "Interest on Overdraft".

The Ministry of Finance had budgeted certain sums especially for payment to the Central Bank. As a result of the overdraft with the Central Bank and due to the lower amount of overdraft, savings accrued and were identified, out of which these payments to these three ministries were financed.

I turn now to the second class of items—Transfers between Subheads. With effect from August 1, 1988, Cabinet delegated its authority to the Minister of Finance to approve transfers of funds between subheads under the same Head of Expenditure.

During 1994, the Minister of Finance approved transfers in the sum of \$157,220,359. This amount appears large but within the context of an overall appropriation of \$10 billion it is entirely within the normal size for transfers within budgets of this nature, and it is entirely within international norms, I am advised.

May I inform Members that some of the details of these transfers which have been requested at the Finance Committee meeting have been provided.

In conclusion, may I re-emphasize that the increase in the allocation of the three Heads of Expenditure mentioned above would not increase the 1994 appropriation already approved by Parliament as these were met from savings under Head 18—Ministry of Finance.

Madam Speaker, I beg to move.

Question proposed.

Miss Indera Sagewan (*Caroni East*): Madam Speaker, we on this side of the House are here not to make those on the other side look good. We are representatives of the people who have been mandated to represent constituencies which placed us here, and it is our major function to act as checks and balances on those on the other side to ensure that the policies and mechanisms which they put in place are in the best interest of this country. We are not here to agree to

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whatever is put forward simply because it comes from the other side. It is our role and function to analyze that which is put forward here and to ensure that we support measures that will make significant and positive contributions to this country, and that we bring to the attention of the people of this country measures that are about the business of creating camouflage for things which are less than above board.

Madam Speaker, this motion, if I am to understand its intent, should really be a very simple exercise. As the Minister of Finance and Minister of Tourism rightly said, where mis-allocations or under-allocations were provided in the initial estimates of a budget, this allows the Government to transfer funds from one Head to the other in order to meet the increase in allocation that might be necessary.

When I look at the areas for which this Bill is seeking funding, I become extremely concerned. On the last occasion I rose in this House when I spoke on the Finance Bill, I made the point that it was a continuation of the budget debate. Again, this Bill before us is also a continuation of, not the last budget debate but, the one before that. It is a continuation of the budget debate of 1994. My concern is that this mechanism which is available to those on the other side has been used on this occasion to misrepresent the reality of what is happening in this country.

This Bill should be put in the context of a national budget. Therefore, one must ask the question: What is a national budget? A national budget of a country represents the proposed expenditure and revenue-raising measures of the Government over one year, and, as such, it represents Government's primary policy instrument. That is very significant. Through the budget the Government implements structural adjustment planning which should set the framework for public investment plans and, as the instrument which allocates annual expenditure, it is critical to the realization of those plans. Therefore, when an annual national budget is presented to this House one assumes that serious research and analysis took place, such that the proposals and appropriations which are presented in such a document took into consideration all the major factors and contingencies which were necessary and which could have been envisaged in the upcoming year. Therefore, the appropriations as reflected in that budget presentation should really reflect as large as possible the reality of the upcoming year. *[Interruption]*

The Member for Diego Martin Central has just mentioned that it should be bang on. By no means are we suggesting that it should be bang on. As the Member knows, a national budget and the exercise which should take place in the

crisis of developing a national budget is project planning at a macro level and at a national level for a country.

3.25 p.m.

A very major item in the process of project planning is that, having costed a project—and in this instance having costed the end projects that are proposed to be put forward in the upcoming year—what is done is to introduce and ensure that there is a contingency factor, which is a percentage of the cost of the project, which will ensure, in the event that there are factors over which one has no control, for example, currency devaluation; inflation, if it is not projected currently; there is a contingency factor which would allow one to be able to meet any unintentional increase in costs of the project that is being putting forward.

Madam Speaker, again, let me make this point—even that is not necessary because it does not necessarily have to be "bang on". But when there is a Finance (Variation of Appropriation) Bill, it is not expected that the sums that are being sought and drawn down on, to treat with miscalculations of projects or whatever, would represent a 100 per cent, or in some cases more than 100 per cent increase on the initial appropriation. Madam Speaker, that is the position in a number of instances before us; and I will show this honourable House where there is a contingency to spend nearly 20 per cent of the cost of a project, but 100 per cent? Are they saying that, as the Government of this country, they have miscalculated the cost of expenditure by an amount of 100 per cent?

Mr. Bereaux: You have to know because you were working there.

Miss Nicholson: You are fast!

Miss I. Sagewan: Madam Speaker, if the Member for La Brea had done his homework, he would know that I did not work in the Budget Division of the Ministry of Finance.

Mr. Palackdharrysingh: He needed some attention.

Miss I. Sagewan: Madam Speaker, it is a worry to me, then, that a bill of this nature is evoked to camouflage the reality of what is going on, because clearly, if the correct additions were done at the beginning of the year, the budget, as presented, would have spoken of an expenditure that was much greater than what was actually presented to this House. That was my concern, when I spoke on the last budget, with the figures that were presented in the budget. Again, I am seeing the same kind of inconsistencies appearing in a matter such as the Finance (Variation of Appropriation) Bill.

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Madam Speaker, we say the Budget is a primary policy instrument and it is indicative of a government's socio-economic strategy for development. That is very important and it highlights priority areas for targeting. What we see in this Finance (Variation of Appropriation) Bill is that perception; and what was presented in our 1994 Budget was very far from the reality of what this country was going through and far different from what was required as socio-economic policy to meet the problems that were, in fact, occurring in the country and which continue to occur.

What is significant is the major areas where it was required that additional funding be provided—health, consumer affairs and social services. These were the major areas that were targeted, basic services; and we on this side continually complain, while those on the other side mouth that they are a caring government on paper and in the newspaper. When it comes down to policy measures and making the appropriate kinds of allocations for effectively treating with the delivery of social services, this is not done. [*Interruption*] I trust that the Member for Diego Martin Central will respond—in the same way he is responding to my grammar—to the more efficient matters that I will raise.

Mr. Valley: I will leave you alone.

Miss I. Sagewan: Madam Speaker, having made this introduction, let me go now to the first area where the allocation is being made—the Ministry of Health.

Before I go to the Ministry of Health, what is a reality is that when ministries and agencies do their budgets and make their representations to the Ministry of Finance, unfortunately, very often there is a great disparity between what they ask for and what they get; and the disparity is downwards rather than upwards. One has to ask the question: What is the basis on which the Ministry of Finance reduces the requests made from agencies and different ministries? What are the conditionalities that are used to assess the figure that is actually given?

Madam Speaker, I have some figures for 1994. The Water & Sewerage Authority, for example, requested for 1994 an amount of \$110.9 million. The estimate actually allotted to the Water & Sewerage Authority in the 1994 Budget was \$15.1 million. That is a variance of—\$95.8 million.

Mr. B. Panday: No wonder the people cannot get water!

Miss I. Sagewan: Precisely; and this is just the Water & Sewerage Authority.

Mr. Maharaj: They are deliberately running it down.

Miss I. Sagewan: This substantiates the point I am trying to make with respect to requests and the actual allocations given.

Let me come now to the Bill before us and look at the Ministry of Health. The Member for St. Ann's East went into some detail to explain exactly where the sums that were being asked for went. He first spoke of the Calmaquip Engineering Corporation; and he spoke of an amount of \$5.9 million which went into the Eric Williams Medical Sciences Complex and which, he said, was handed over to this Government in 1986. We are in 1995 and it still seems to be an albatross around our necks, and that is very worrying. Madam Speaker, we are still paying for that.

The Member spoke of these moneys being allocated from savings that occurred from the 1994 Budget. Madam Speaker, can you imagine if we did not have to use that money to do away with such old debts, what we could have used \$5.9 million to do? When we take into consideration the level of unemployment, the mismanagement; the way basic services are allocated in this country, \$5.9 million—to a country where people do not earn, in some instances, \$100 for a week—is a significant amount of money; and we had to use the savings from our budget—not to treat with the problems in the country but—to retire old debts which are still incomplete.

Madam Speaker, I assume there was still an amount of, again, approximately \$5.9 million owing to this same Calmaquip Engineering; and in our 1995 Budget an allocation was made for clearing the debt to this company and the debt should have been cleared, according to the document provided to us, by January 31, 1995.

3.35 p.m.

But when we look at what allocation was made in the 1995 estimates for the clearing out of this debt to Calmaquip Engineering, what we see is that the Government has allocated a sum of TT \$6.3 million. We calculate that figure using an exchange rate of TT \$6.31 to US \$1.00. On January 31, the weighted average, was TT \$5.865 to US \$1.00. So that what we had here was an over-estimation of the sum that was owing to Calmaquip Engineering.

My question to the hon. Member of St. Ann's East is why did he overestimate, particularly since the budget was presented in December 1994 and the debt was to be retired in January 31, 1995? Was it that the Member anticipated that our exchange rate would have moved from approximately 5.9 to 6.3 within such a short space of time?

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I continue with the Ministry of Health. We see that the balance of the \$20-odd million that was allocated to the Ministry of Health went towards projects funded under the Fincor Loan Facility. Basically this money went to two institutions in this country; the Arima Hospital and the San Fernando Hospital. The amount from this allocation from the savings from our 1994 budget, of that savings, \$11.8 million went towards the construction of the Arima Hospital. I found that very interesting, especially when I looked at the 1994 estimate for Arima Hospital and saw that the amount allocated was \$12.7 million. This amount was allocated for the construction of the Arima Hospital for the year 1994 and we come here today to say there was cost overrun amounting to \$11.8 million. Do you know how much percentage increase that is over the initial estimate? It is 92.97 per cent.

What is even more worrying is the revised estimate for 1994, which says that for the Arima Hospital, while the initial estimate was \$12.7 million, the revised estimate is \$20 million. That is what is stated in the document. But \$12.7 million plus \$11.8 million totals \$24.5 million. Are there no calculators in the Ministry of Finance? Since we on this side seem to be obstructionists, maybe I should implore the Member for Couva North that we throw a fund-raiser and purchase some calculators for the Ministry of Finance.

Do we not have project-cycle management taking place in the Ministry? I was part of a course that was funded by the IDB—it is implemented in the Ministry of Planning—on project-cycle management. In that course we were taught about these things. Apparently the Member for Diego Martin Central is suggesting because I left the Ministry this is why we have these disparities taking place. At the very least, I am flattered.

But why do we have inaccuracies of such magnitude? We are not asking the Government to be precise and exact in their budgeting process, but we have to worry when it comes in 1994 and asks for almost 100 per cent increase on the estimate that was made for 1994. Clearly—let me quote the Member for Couva North when he says—this is certainly a tragic display of incompetence.

We have an estimate for the Arima Hospital—and I would like it to go on the records—of \$12.3 million. I am very curious to see what its revised estimate will be, and then what we will be asked to vary during the course of 1996 for it. Because apparently we do not have any kind of planning or procedures taking place. When is the Arima Hospital going to be completed? In infinity?

The San Fernando Hospital is another institution—and this one received approximately \$2.9 million. This is how much this Bill is asking that is written

off from the sums that were drawn down on the Fincor loan. The 1994 estimates for San Fernando Hospital asked for \$35 million; the revised estimate speaks of \$40 million. That is an increase of \$5 million. But yet, this is only asking for \$2.3 million. Where is the other \$2 million coming from? Maybe it was hidden somewhere else. I think we, on this side, as does the country, need to know where this \$2 million is coming from.

Again, for the San Fernando Hospital, for 1995 we have an estimate of \$20.2 million. What will the actual be? Are we having currency fluctuations in this country to such an extent? Or is inflation going up to such an extent? Our last budget spoke of inflation in this year at being eight per cent, compared to, I think it was slightly over 10 per cent in the previous year. I am asking what is happening.

Let me quote from the *Express* dated August 17, 1994.

Hon. Member: You still read that paper?

3.45 p.m.

Miss I. Sagewan: Well, one should read it certainly when it helps one to substantiate one's point. This time it certainly does that very effectively.

In this article entitled: Health care reform cost Government \$163 million, our hon. Prime Minister is boasting. I quote:

"The Government spent \$42 million between 1992 and 1993 for upgrading eight major hospitals and primary care institutions in this country.

An additional \$32 million, he said, would be spent in 1994 for further upgrading works on the eight hospitals, 45 health centres and other ancillary facilities. Manning said government is spending a further \$89 million in the construction of a new health facility at Arima and on the new wing of the San Fernando General Hospital,..."

It is clear from the figures I have just quoted that the boast of all these sums of money that is increasing daily is not being translated into physical facilities to provide health services for the people of this country. It is simply reflective of mismanagement of the projects that are taking place. We have an almost 100 per cent increase in the cost allocation to Arima Hospital for 1994. Does that mean there is additional infrastructure being put in place which is accounting for this increase? Is that what is causing this significant increase in cost?

If that is the case, then we might say, "Okay, fine". There are those who would speak after me who would talk about primary health care in this country.

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They are more versed than I am to talk about health. I would give the figures, but they would substantiate them with hard evidence of what is happening with health care in this country. It is deteriorating. While our Prime Minister is boasting of increasing the amount of money he is spending on health care, it is not being translated into physical services to people in this country. *[Interruption]* It is not. When there are disparities in figures—I am quoting from Government's statistics. I am not pulling figures off the cuff as it would seem in this article—these disparities are very worrying.

That is in the matter of health. While we would have liked to come today and say, "Oh, a 10 or 20 per cent increase which can be rationalized; no problem", how can we stand here and say we represent the people of this country and say, yes, and put our eyes to 100 per cent increases in cost when there are people in this country who go for days without food; when there are children who do not have uniforms and shoes to go to school?

Every time I stand in this House to talk about the tragedy that is the social condition that is deteriorating daily in this country, I feel so dejected.

Mr. B. Panday: Keep up courage, my dear, it would not be long now. *[Laughter]*

Miss I. Sagewan: The one concern though, is that while it may not be long, there is so much that can happen so quickly because of the multiplier effect—the Member for Diego Martin Central would appreciate.

Let us look at the overall situation with health. The revised estimates for 1994 in the 1995 estimates, do hon. Members know by how much the expenditure is increased, for a ministry and service that is so critical to the survival of both those in Government and those on this side and all the people of this country? By .09 per cent. What can that do? The development programme between 1994 and 1995 is being decreased by 50 per cent. Has the Government completed all the infrastructure that is needed in order to provide effective health care for the people of Trinidad and Tobago? I certainly hope so.

Maybe, the Member for Arouca South can elucidate on that matter and can certainly enlighten this House as to the plans and projections for the health care delivery service in Trinidad and Tobago. Maybe, we are reducing the allocation to such an extent because before long Government may not be having to speak about health at all because we may have to be speaking about health care only being delivered in the private sector. We would not be talking about survival of the fittest, we would be talking about survival of the wealthiest.

The next area that this Bill is seeking moneys for is in the area of consumer affairs and social services. The Minister says that the project's objectives of the Poverty Relief Programme included in the investment sector loan agreement between the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB) and the Government of Trinidad and Tobago could not have been met due to the inadequacy of the 1994 allocation.

The 1994 allocation was \$3.5 million. So, in 1994, the Government was saying to the country, "All we need for poverty relief in Trinidad and Tobago is \$3.5 million". They were making the point that, "We do not have much poverty in Trinidad and Tobago; our policies are working; things are getting better. All we need is \$3.5 million". Yet, they come in 1995 and say, "Well, unfortunately, it was not enough so we need to increase that amount by \$4.4 million." That is an increase of 126 per cent over the initial estimate.

I remember the Member for Diego Martin Central getting most angry after I made my contribution to the 1995 budget debate. What they are doing is to camouflage because there are mechanisms open to them such as this Finance (Variation of Appropriation) Bill. To John Public a budget is only read once a year by the Minister of Finance followed by a debate and that is the end of the budget. John Public does not have an awareness of all these intricacies which come after the fact that really tell what is happening.

It is nice to stand up and say, "All we need is \$3.5 million to treat with poverty relief" and then to come quietly, post facto, in 1995 and say, "It was not enough, but do not worry, we are not asking for an additional sum of money because we had a saving. We did not draw down on our overdraft so we did not need to use all the money allocated for interest payments; so we had a savings. It is not that we are asking for additional money to come from anywhere, we are just using this money." A 126 per cent increase! And the Government wants to know if we are asking for precision in budgeting?

Maybe, we should suggest that some of the Members on the other side attend the course on project-cycle management so that when costings are given to them and they stand in this House to read estimates, they would be well aware of whether they reflect the reality of the day.

When the Government asks for \$3.5 million and then an increase of 126 per cent, what it is really saying to the country is what the priorities are. The Government's priorities are not about people; they are not about people at all.

3.55 p.m.

Madam Speaker, it is not that information is not available to Members on the other side. We are the ones who have to complain about lack of information. We were making these kinds of estimates for the treatment of poverty in the context of what the state of poverty was, and where we knew of the likelihood of it getting worse. When we engage in the process of negotiating an investment sector loan, and when we engage in the process of negotiating an agricultural sector loan, there were such things as social mitigation programmes and social safety net consultancies that were conducted in order to tell us what would be the impacts, positive or negative, of the implementations of these programmes. The Government has it in black and white as to what the impacts were. And yet, \$3.5 million for poverty relief programmes in a country, where as stated in the *Newsday* dated 22 March, 1995:

"Some 26 per cent of Trinidad and Tobago's population live in poverty according to a PAHO consultant, Edward Greene."

He goes on to say:

"...the middle income sectors also experienced serious setbacks"

So it is not only the traditional poor who are suffering, the middle income people in this country are suffering just as much. He goes on to say:

"...farmers, the unemployed and underemployed, youth and children, female-headed households and the aged were listed as the groups most affected."

Madam Speaker, I am quoting—and I remember quoting these things so many times in this House. Time after time Members on this side stand and plead with those on the other side to recognize the seriousness of what is going on in this country. But they sit in their ivory tower and pretend that all is well in Trinidad and Tobago, and all is not well. They may sit on the other side and they may not listen to me but the reality is there for all to see. It is as if they do not represent people in this country. They represent simply offices.

The Government has information on the social mitigation programme component as to what they should do, mechanisms that they should put into place in order to protect the destitute and those who would become destitute as a result of the introduction of the Government's economic policies. In 1995 we are rationalizing expenditure for 1994. And, to date, many of these things have not been put in place. The document speaks of technical assistance to farmers who are negatively impacted upon because of the liberalization of the agricultural

sector; training, to allow them to get into other avenues, maybe non-agricultural avenues that would allow them to earn a living, but the Government does not want to solve the problem. The only concern that Members on the other side have is with balancing the figures that we all know, making sure that the fiscal balances look attractive, ensuring that our balance of payments look attractive. What is happening to the people of this country is of little consequence.

When we look at the budgetary allocation for this Ministry in 1994/1995, the increase in recurrent expenditure is a mere 3.5 per cent. Under the development programme 1994/1995, the estimates have been reduced by 61 per cent. *[Interruption]* "Cool it", because that is not important. Providing basic services to people is not important at a time when we are introducing measures that are having such negative impacts: taking away people's jobs, their livelihood; they are not matters of public importance, you see.

Under our poverty relief programmes are the emergency cases fund, pension, social assistance, food subsidies, urgent temporary assistance, feeding programmes for the needy and unemployed, rehabilitative programmes, payments to registrars of births and deaths. These are some of the programmes that are in place to treat with this issue of increased poverty in this country, moving from 20 to 26 per cent. It is on the increase, yet the allocation to this item from 1994 to 1995 increased by a measly 8 per cent.

Let me tell you something about pensioners in this country. We asked on this side that old age pension be increased, but nobody takes note of that. I want you to listen to this. An old age pensioner who worked all his life in this country, when he retires is expected to exist on the most meagre of pensions. The food subsidy is \$70.00 per month. This translates to \$2.26 per day. If we assume that the pensioner eats three meals, this is \$.75 per meal. He cannot even buy a doubles.

Madam Speaker, on the account of increasing this allocation to poverty relief, we have to say, thank God, apparently the IADB is saying to the Government, "Look, what you are allocating is insufficient. You have to increase it, or you may have to draw-down on some tranche or some loan," and that is the rationale and reason we had a 126 per cent increase in the poverty relief programme. That is the only thing I could think about that could possibly have accounted for it. So the IADB is apparently more concerned about the people of our country than is our Government.

The third area in which funds are being allocated is the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. That is very, very interesting.

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

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

Question put and agreed to.

4.05 p.m.

Miss I. Sagewan: Madam Speaker, we are giving an additional \$2.2 million to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to deal particularly with the foreign missions that we have out in the field; foreign missions that are supposed to be our ambassadors and selling Trinidad and Tobago; that are supposed to be bringing in all the foreign investors and ensuring that the image of our country is well painted.

I would certainly appreciate some information from the hon. Member for San Fernando West as to what is this country's benefit for having all these missions out there. Why do we have all these international organizations such as MIGA and First Boston supposedly championing our cause and seeking to bring investment into this country? In a context where we are increasing the allocation to our foreign missions, why are our ambassadors out there? Why do we have to appoint an ambassador for trade? Why increase allocations to treat with issues like personal expenditure, allowances, travel, telephone, and household expenditure? The Minister said to treat with the disparities in the standard of living between our country and these other countries. We are very concerned about our foreign missions out there, but we do not seem to care much about the people who are living in this country.

I am asking: what does this money translate into? We on this side would like to know that. If it is being translated into positive things for this country, we would not have a problem in supporting it. In a context where there is increase in the recurrent expenditure to the Ministry of Health by a mere 0.9 per cent, and the allocation to the Ministry of Consumer Affairs increasing by a mere 3.5 per cent, when we look at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, between 1994 and 1995, the total allocation for this Ministry increased by 84 per cent. Certainly, this is an indication of our Government's priorities.

When we look at this mere three pages, they seem so simple. It would appear that we simply have to breeze through it and say it is a meagre sum of money, we come in here and approve it and then go about our business. When we look below the layers, the market is like an onion. When one looks at the onion, one would see the top layer, but as one starts to peel it off, there are a number of

layers underneath. That is the case with this. There are so many layers beneath.

We on this side have called on so many occasions for a parliamentary committee that will oversee the implementation of this country's budget. A national budget is a primary policy maker of a country. It is supposed to be concerned about implementing those policies which are concerned with the development of the people of this country; delivering basic services and ensuring that our standard of living is ever on the increase. Yet it seems to be done in such an ad hoc manner. We come every so often and ask for increases and rationalize it by the existence of savings. We are talking about \$27 million.

I do not wish to go on any longer.

Mr. Valley: Thank God.

Miss I. Sagewan: Yes, we say thank God. The statement of thank God is evidence of the concern that we have for this country and the people. There is no concern.

In concluding, I make a plea and a call again that we set up parliamentary committees in order to oversee the implementation of a mechanism that is as important as our national budget. More than that, I call on those who are currently in power who have to present a national budget in this House, to present one that is reflective of the realities of this country and that has the tools and mechanisms to deal with the real problems. Do not camouflage the problems which exist with the hope of coming in a secretive manner, post facto and getting the real amount that is required in order to implement the programmes that are necessary.

I make this call and I ask that we seriously consider setting up a parliamentary committee, because at the end of the day we are all accountable to the people of Trinidad and Tobago. We are all responsible for ensuring the economic growth of this country. We must set up such a committee to ensure that there will be effective implementation of the policies that are put forward and the programmes that are devised and developed in our national budget. We must ensure that it is done in a cost effective manner and that when we call for money it is not because we have cost overruns of 100 and 126 per cent, but simply because we have marginal increases like 10 per cent which is real and we can understand. This is my contribution.

Thank you.

Miss Hulsie Bhaggan (Chaguanas): Madam Speaker, I rise to make a brief contribution to this debate. I want to begin by saying that the "good news" budget has now become a "bad news" budget in Trinidad and Tobago. When our budget was presented the impression was given that somehow, all the problems of this

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country would have been resolved. Today what we are seeing is a social fallout as a result of the implementation of policies which the PNM itself has condemned in the run-up to the 1991 election. Today, we have come before this House to seek to increase the Heads of Expenditure of three ministries.

I am very happy that the Government has come here today to speak about the taxpayers; whether it is from savings or not, we the taxpayers are paying for equipment at Eric Williams Medical Complex. Interestingly, that complex was constructed at an extremely high cost to the taxpayers of this country. Unfortunately, today the taxpayers of this country, especially those who are poor, are unable to benefit from something they have paid for. Today, we are speaking about privatization and paying for services. While that may have been so in reforming the public sector, our contention is that health care must be available to all the people in this country. Today, only if you can afford health care, can you get an operation.

I want to quote one particular example because I understand it is a reflection of a real problem at the Eric Williams Medical Sciences Complex. A very poor constituent of mine, unemployed, formerly a rice farmer, came recently and told me that her son is in need of open heart surgery. She does not have food to eat; no source of income; she plants a kitchen garden to survive and she was told that she has to raise \$100,000 so that her son can have the operation.

I work with the service clubs in my area and when I contacted a few of them, they told me that there are several cases like that pending, where poor people of this country are being asked to raise hundreds of thousands of dollars so that they would be able to have an operation. How can we glibly come to this House and speak about paying for equipment at the Eric Williams Medical Sciences Complex and the poor people out there, to whom that complex is supposed to belong, cannot access the services there because they have no money to pay for them? Today, many of our citizens literally suffer for months and years because they cannot afford any kind of intricate surgery. Something has to be done for them.

4.15 p.m.

As a matter of fact, we also know that people who are being recruited to do various courses at the Eric Williams Medical Sciences Complex are not able to qualify either because I understand that the local students are not being given equal opportunity with the foreign students. Why must this be? Why must the taxpayers of this country pay to equip that Complex, yet it is not being used for the benefit of the people of Trinidad and Tobago?

Of course, the Medical Complex must have a Caribbean perspective because of the kind of facilities which are there, but at the same time the taxpayers of this country must benefit from the facilities. They must be given top priority. They must come first. This is why I am calling on this Government today to do something about the fact that people in this country do not get service at the Eric Williams Medical Sciences Complex.

The reason I am also making this point is that the general hospitals in this country are disaster areas. There are people today who go to the dispensary at the Port of Spain General Hospital at six o'clock, collect a number, and there are people there who mismanage it. Even if the person has an early number he is not able to get his medicine. In fact, people send their friends and relatives to collect their medicine. I call on the Member for San Fernando East to go to the hospital one day and see what is happening. Of course, when he goes everything will be fine. The dispensary will be well equipped; there will be proper lines and proper management, just like when he went to La Brea and water suddenly flowed in the pipes after years of not having water. Wherever the Prime Minister goes, things work suddenly, for that particular day, and after that they stop working.

If we do not have health care at the hospitals and at the health centres, then the Eric Williams Medical Sciences Complex must be made available to the people because they are citizens and taxpayers.

The other point has to do with the fact that in many of the health centres there is no equipment. For example, in Chaguanas, there is a fancy building but no ambulance service. There is an ambulance which breaks down every day. In the case of the Cunupia Health Centre, for months there has been no dentist there and the citizens, especially the poor people, have to seek private health care. We are calling on this Government to state clearly its position with respect to health care in this country. We cannot have a situation where they are privatizing everything and people must pay for all services. In that case, the Government should totally eliminate PAYE. Why are people paying taxes if they cannot benefit from the public services? That is the first point I have to make.

The second point has to do with this question of health again—preventative medicine. Today in this country, in almost every home someone is suffering from a viral infection. We keep hearing people say that they have the virus or the “flu”. Some may be related to dust, but there may be other reasons why many of the people are suffering from a viral infection. Why is it so? Does it have to do with the fact that we are not dealing with the mosquitoes? Is it that people are drinking

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contaminated water? Are these symptoms really a reflection of other kinds of illnesses among our people?

Many people have died from certain kinds of complications and when one looks at the death certificate, one sees that it was viral infection, but when one speaks to the medical person, one is told that there are other things which are involved in that particular situation. I am saying that this Government has to do something about preventative medicine and not wait to spend millions of dollars on hospitals and health centres.

The other point I wish to make has to do with something which was touched on earlier. It is a very serious problem. This Government is not listening to the people of this country. We are saying that the old-age pensioners cannot survive on the pittance they are receiving. When they pay their electricity bill, water rates—and, of course, they have no water in their taps and are now paying a 35 per cent increase—when they have finished paying for medicine—and half of the time they do not get any—these people cannot pay for food. I can tell you that because I have been out in at least seven markets meeting with the people and the old age pensioners come to me and say that they simply cannot survive in this country.

I recall in 1992, in my very first contribution in this House, I raised the issue of old age pension being increased to an amount on which people could survive. The hon. Minister then indicated to this House that it would cost several millions to increase old-age pension. This Government is spending millions of dollars on all kinds of programmes. Why can they not get several million dollars to increase old-age pension so that the senior citizens would be able to live in a fair, just and comfortable manner?

Madam Speaker, if you go to their houses, they cannot afford to buy clothing; they cannot afford to repair their homes and they are in a terrible state. The Social Welfare Department is also complaining that they are under-staffed, ill-equipped and that their staff sometimes has to wait for months for their travelling allowances and so forth. If we are looking after the social fall-out from the economic policies of this Government, which has intensified the implementation of its adjustment policies, the Government has a responsibility to the people of this country to do something about the social fall-out. How can they explain, therefore, that 18 per cent of this population was supposed to be living under the poverty line in 1988 and now, in 1994/1995, it is 26 per cent? Yet, every time these Members make a speech they speak about how the economy has grown. It has grown, but at what cost?

I am not an economist and I think it is good for the economist to talk about figures and so forth—I have always said so. However, unless this Government decides to balance economics with the social aspect—it is one of the messages that I have brought to this House and I will maintain that message—there is no point in talking about growth in the economy of Trinidad and Tobago.

We also raised the issue of prices. Many of us in this country have been raising the issue of prices. Every day food prices are increasing. I heard one minister speak about price control. The other day another minister spoke about monitoring prices. We understand that with the liberalization of the economy and pursuit of an open market-oriented economy, certain things must take place and we must allow the interplay of market forces. I agree with that, but Madam Speaker, as a country we must intervene when the population, especially the poor and the working-class are not able to buy food.

There are thousands of people in this country who, every day, have nothing on their table to eat. That may sound dramatic, but it is a reality. What we are saying, therefore, is that at least the 12 basic foods that people require to survive must be kept within reach of the population. We are not saying that appliances should go down. Let market forces take care of that! But people must be able to buy bread, or flour if they make roti, or split peas, oil, butter, eggs, powdered milk, babies' milk and so forth. Those are the basic things we are talking about. The poor will therefore be able to survive. Every day prices are going up. How do we expect the poor and the working people who have not had an increase for the past five years in many instances to survive?

This Government has maintained a posture that its role must be shrunk and that they are, therefore, now facilitators, but I want them to know that they must deal with the transition from a closed economy to a fully opened one. I challenge this Government to tell me today which other Caribbean island has actually pursued liberalization at the pace at which they have been doing, without the social fall-out.

In Venezuela today, do you know what the government is doing? In those places where the food prices are too high for the poor, the government is intervening and purchasing foodstuff at the wholesale price and selling this foodstuff to the poor at the plazas, at affordable prices.

4.25 p.m.

I am not suggesting that this Government do that, but it has a responsibility to find a way to ensure that all the people of this country have food on their table.

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There is no point in blaming the merchants; there is no point in blaming international food prices. The Government has a responsibility to ensure that the people of this country could feed themselves. That is a point I want to make very strongly. We can come to this House and speak about increasing the Heads of Expenditure in all the ministries, for all we care, what we are interested in at this time is basic living.

Our Prime Minister said, “prices will fall flat in 1995”. Madam Speaker, our dear Prime Minister owes this country an apology for having said so; for having misled this country, and today he goes about as though everything is fine in Trinidad and Tobago. This Government has to understand that it can no longer blame the NAR. They are now in charge. They were here 30 years before and now they are here for three years, and we are saying that they are no longer new. They told themselves that they were a new PNM, a new government, well the time has come when there must be certain kinds of positive impacts with respect to the policies they are implementing. But obviously there would be no positive impact, Madam Speaker, because the policies they are implementing are policies which were dictated by external forces, and they did not have the foresight, the innovation or the creativity to come up with indigenous ideas to help our people.

What I find interesting, is that this Government came up, in the run-up to the election with a blueprint—they mentioned a blueprint to create jobs. What has happened to that blueprint? What has happened to the blueprint to create jobs in Trinidad and Tobago? Any political party which goes on the political hustings and makes promises like that and then comes into office and cannot deliver, must apologize to the people of this country.

Mr. Manning: Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. Member for Chaguanas for giving way. I want to remind the hon. Member that the Government has announced a number of initiatives in the construction sector, including plant construction, tourism and in a number of other areas. I also want to remind the hon. Member that the unemployment figures in the country are falling as the economy responds to the stimulation given by the Government.

The latest unemployment figure is 17.9 per cent at the end of the last quarter last year. We are looking at the figures by the end of June, 1995, which we are certain would reflect yet another reduction in the unemployment levels in the country.

Miss H. Bhaggan: The hon. Prime Minister is very much aware that construction jobs are not permanent jobs. Secondly, the hon. Prime Minister is also aware that when many of these contractors are given contracts, if he were to do a survey for instance, he would realize that many of these workers are vastly

underpaid. When he is speaking about unemployment figures, how does he explain the fact that unemployment is supposed to be going down and poverty is increasing? It means that the rates of pay, the wages, the salaries being received are at the point of almost slave labour and we know that the private security is one of the sectors.

Contract labour is a recipe for chaos and for the introduction of slavery in this country. Workers who are on contract labour have absolutely no security and no benefits; all they know is that they have to go to work 6.00 a.m. and leave at 6.00 p.m. or even later than that. They work seven days per week and many of them have absolutely no protection, no representation.

Therefore what we are seeing in this country is a pauperization of the working class. And in particular, what we are seeing is an erosion of middle class in this country. The middle class which is supposed to be the stabilizing force in Trinidad and Tobago, they are being eroded. They are being called now, in this fancy language, "the new poor". Whether they are the new poor or the old poor, the middle class is being pauperized and this Government must accept responsibility for it.

I would maintain the position therefore, that this PNM Government has to let this country know why it was not able to implement those promises it made. The Government still owes this country an explanation: where is the blueprint for jobs? Regardless of what we debate here about figures and whatever the percentage went up by and so forth, the net effect is, poverty is on the rise; the net effect is, crime is on the rise, even if they tell us it is 1,000 less, let us find out what is the global figure. We have to understand that whether we build jails or not the people of this country are suffering. Children today have to beg on the streets because their parents are unemployed and they cannot afford to send them to school. Children today are staying at home—for instance the bus service is no longer available in many parts of this country and this Government is responsible for eliminating several of those routes.

I want to conclude by saying therefore, that the net effect of this Government's policies is that the poor have become poorer and we have a serious social fall-out. This Government has a responsibility to do something about that problem and it must intervene now before it is too late.

I thank you, Madam Speaker.

4.31 p.m.: *Sitting suspended.*

5.04 p.m.: *Sitting resumed.*

Dr. Carl Singh (*Tabaquite*): Madam Speaker, the Finance (Variation of Appropriation) (1994) Bill, 1995 before this august Chamber, seeks to vary the appropriation provided for by the Appropriation Act 1994 and to authorize the use of any sums accruing from the reduction in expenditure, under certain Heads of Expenditure, for the purpose of meeting any liability incurred through the increase of expenditure under the other Heads.

Madam Speaker, the Member for Caroni East dealt with the economic framework of the budgetary allocations and also some of the shortcomings. As the Member for St. Ann's East mentioned, approximately \$10.2 billion was allocated during the year 1994. Over the same period of time because of a decree or Cabinet decision on August 01, 1988, funds can be transferred from subheads within the same period without coming to Parliament for sanction.

Under this agreement over that period, 1994, a total of about \$158 million was transferred from subheads. Also, over the year another increase in allocation was made to the tune of about \$27 million for increased expenditure of which the Ministry of Health took about \$20 million. Madam Speaker, a perusal of this transfer would show that from the Ministry of Finance—Head 18, under Personnel Expenditure, a total of about \$20 million was transferred among subheads over that period of time.

One wonders, if this is a fund allocated for servicing debts and also for paying interest on loans taken from the Central Bank, and probably elsewhere, why then allocations are made for something just merely for the purpose at the end of the year to have these sums transferred to other subheads. One gets the distinct impression that we are not sure what we are doing, we make a budgetary allocation and we know at the end of the year it can be rubber-stamped into use for any other purpose within the Head. In my estimation, this is poor planning, lack of oversight and, to some degree, management.

Under Subhead 02 on page 2 of the transfers: Head 02—Goods and Services, \$2.7 million; Head 04—Current Transfers and Subsidies, \$533,000; a total of \$3,233,000 was transferred to Subhead 09 for development. We are planning a budget for a year and just off the bat somewhere in the middle of the year, okay, we are going to do this development and we will take this fund from this allocation and put it there, as though the Government is being run by a day-to-day *ad hoc* type of arrangement. Better planning and allocations would have avoided such transfers helter skelter within ministries and subheads. The sum of money, \$20 million, was transferred to the Ministry of Health. My information is that this Ministry did not incur an increase in the true sense of the word, but rather this was surplus left from funds not used.

I come now to the Ministry of Health—Head 28. Madam Speaker, from this Head 28 a total from Personnel Expenditure from six allocations of \$1 million, \$4 million, \$3.4 million, \$2 million, \$2.5 million were transferred to Goods and services. Are we saying then that this allocation was made for the purpose of employment of staff and it was not necessary, so that these funds were transferred *ad hoc* to Goods and Services? This is what one would like to know especially when one considers, generally, there is a shortage of everything in the Ministry of Health with the exception of new buildings standing with four walls and a roof and nothing is going on within. I am to wonder at the San Fernando General Hospital that the extension has been completed; it was opened with a tremendous amount of political fanfare last year—I went to that opening, Madam Speaker on invitation—I did not even have a place to stand because the crowd was so thick.

Again, the Arima Complex is being touted for completion this year. What we are hearing is more and more allocation for that. The Member for Caroni East said it was actually doubled and still we cannot say that the facilities are in place so that they can be used.

5.15 p.m.

I come to the Schedule on page 52—Ministry of Health. Provision in estimates, original and supplemental 1994—\$636,006,702. The revised provision for 1994 is \$656,629,925; a total increase of \$20.623 million. Quite rightly recorded here! The second line of the same page, sub-head 0.1, Personnel Expenditure, \$380,391,500. The revised provision is \$395,091,500. It is recorded as a decrease of \$14.7 million in the very column. This is truly an increase rather than a decrease in the allocation here. From \$380 million to \$395; definitely there was an increase. But it is recorded here in the column, on the same line, as a decrease of \$14.7 million.

As I go further down that very page to sub-item 0.7, I see an allocation for vacant posts—salaries and COLA, \$5.9 million. As I look at the other end of the same line, I see that this sum has been transferred to subhead 02002/16. There are so many vacancies, lack of supplies, lack of reagents—all these things are there—but, more importantly, one has to think about the definite lack in the staffing of the institution.

To show what is happening, I have here an article in the *Trinidad Guardian* of March 06, 1995 which says: "Premature babies die for want of doctors". This is the Mount Hope Medical Complex housing the Maternity Hospital, attached to which is the neonatal ward. This is operated by a consultant, a registrar, three

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house officers. At the beginning of this year there was a shortage of house officers with the effect that every third night there was no medical officer attached to the neonatal ward to operate the respiratory apparatus. This has to be managed by a doctor, a house officer.

Madam Speaker, this particular case is interesting. I read certain parts:

"For nineteen days, death stalked the Neo-natal Unit at Mt Hope Maternity Hospital, Champs Fleurs, taking the lives of a number of premature babies when no doctor was present to monitor their fragile condition."

This was happening. What is disturbing about this whole situation is that the mother was suffering from hypertension, and she was being treated. She was admitted to the hospital seven-and-a-half months pregnant. This is one of the conditions of prematurity, particularly by weight or date; and in the present context, it is by date. They are more susceptible to respiratory failure; they are very fragile, tender, delicate, and they need support with the respirator, particularly in the first 24 to 48 hours after delivery. Believe it or not, on this particular night—

Mr. Eckstein: Madam Speaker, I apologize very sincerely for interrupting the Member. I just heard him say 48 hours after delivery. What specifically is he referring to?

Dr. C. Singh: These premature babies are particularly susceptible to respiratory failure and problems within the first 24 to 48 hours. Having admitted this patient with hypertension, a caesarean section was performed under the guidance of the Chief of Staff and a healthy baby was delivered. Within 24 hours no one was there to assist this baby in the respirator, the baby died.

Mr. Eckstein: Madam Speaker, does the Member have the name of the particular infant?

Dr. C. Singh: Madam Speaker, I am reading from this article.

Mr. Eckstein: Is the name identified in the article?

Dr. C. Singh: Yes. The name of the patient is Roxanne and her husband's name is Nicholas.

Mr. Eckstein: One last question. The information which the member is making available to this House, has he got it entirely from that newspaper alone?

Dr. C. Singh: I have here an interview carried out by one reporter. It states:

"Health Minister John Eckstein when asked to comment said: 'If the matter is brought to my attention, then the Chief Medical Officer whose responsibility it is for dealing with such technicalities will be called upon to conduct an investigation.'"

This delivery was some time at the end of January. It goes on:

"A letter from Mount Hope Maternity Hospital signed by Dr. Ali was sent to both the Chief Medical Officer and the Principal Medical Officer at the Ministry of Health on January 12. It was also sent to the Chief of Staff, Mt Hope and Dean of Faculty of Medicine UWI.

The letter warned the authorities that deaths at the neo-natal unit would continue if there was no house officer or doctor to operate the respiratory unit. It is also noted that the unit was without a doctor since January 1."

Information was passed on to the relevant authorities, but nothing really happened. Listen to this:

"Lennox Cedeno, Public Relations Officer at the Ministry of Health was quoted as saying that two doctors were sufficient to ensure the neo-natal unit was always covered, even if this meant that the two doctors had to work longer hours than usual."

When one is playing with the lives of people and talking in terms of dollars and cents, this is a no-no situation. However expert an administrator may be—he may have spent a year or two being trained as an administrator, but a medical personnel who has spent 10 to 15 years, one cannot tell him how he must treat a patient with respiratory failure. Cost must not be the predominant factor in the medical management of our sick patients.

There is also another article in the *Express* of Saturday March 25, 1995 which states: "Hospital staff to blame". This was an investigation carried out with taxpayers' funds by Dr. Elizabeth Quamina on children's deaths. I quote:

"The absence of both the hospital medical director and a house officer is partly the reason two little girls and a teenaged boy died after treatment at the Scarborough hospital last year.

Three persons died because of this. It goes on:

"This is among the findings of an inquiry which was conducted into the deaths by Dr. Elizabeth Quamina, former Chief Medical Officer. ... that inquiry into the deaths of three young persons during this period disclosed that there was

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a tardy response to emergency calls on the part of some medical staff, and unreported absence from duty by a House Officer and a seeming failure on the part of the nurses to ensure that urgent messages were delivered.

"It is quite extraordinary that this abnormal situation was not appreciated by those in a position to ensure that this critical post was filled as a matter of urgency."

It goes on:

"It is therefore not a hasty conclusion to relate the delays experienced in obtaining medical assistance, particularly the fact that one patient remained for over 24 hours without seeing a doctor, to the absence of a responsible medical head of the hospital at that time."

5.25 p.m.

There was no Head of Medical Staff at Scarborough for more than five months. Everybody knew about it. One applicant who was resident in Tobago was put on temporary hold for a while until a position was filled recently by a Tobagonian who was working in Trinidad.

In her report, Quamina said:

"The circumstances of these deaths have been investigated and are now recorded..."

quite rightly, it is

"not to impute blame,"

but to find the cause and put measures in place to prevent recurrences—just like an inquest or a post mortem examination. You find the cause of something and then move away from a recurrence of it. It is not for the imputation of blame—no. There are so many other things that have happened—our egg nog situation is still hanging in the air. Nothing has happened. Nobody is to be blamed. 14 people died, but that is fine—those are statistics.

"The three deaths investigated were: Renee Gray, nine years old, who died on August 23. Death was said to be due to septicaemia shock, peritonitis"

and so forth.

Madam Speaker: I am trying to follow your argument.

Mr. Manning: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: You recall in his contribution the Minister of Finance actually gave the heading under which that particular sum of money was spent with respect to the Mount Hope Hospital. Now, if you are saying that ought not to have been spent there, I can understand your argument, but I do not understand how the Scarborough Hospital and Dr. Quamina's report come into the approving of the variations under this Bill.

Dr. C. Singh: Thank you, Madam Speaker. What I was trying to put to the House was that funds were allocated for staff, but they were used for other things; and there was a shortage of staff which resulted in the death of citizens both in Tobago and in Trinidad. That is what I am saying. [*Desk thumping*] These are the two points that are clearly outlining what I am saying. I am not using a nefarious type of argument.

Miss Nicholson: Word, doctor.

Dr. C. Singh: I am telling you exactly what has happened. It is because of the lack of staff—and the funds allocated for staffing were used for something else. As a consequence of these, it resulted in the death of citizens of this country.

Madam Speaker: Is it as a result of that, that today we are seeking the approval of this funding that is before us?

Dr. C. Singh: No, Madam Speaker. It is not that we are seeking the approval.

Madam Speaker: I was listening to the Minister's contribution and it gave, specifically, the heading under which this extra expenditure arose.

Dr. C. Singh: Funds were allocated in the budget preparation for staff. Why were the staff not put in place? The funds were used for something else. Were the staff in place at Mount Hope and Scarborough, probably, these kids' lives would have been saved. This is what I am trying to say. This has led to the leader of my party, the Member for Couva North, seeking to set up a parliamentary committee to monitor what is happening with the allocation of funds but, of course, a parliamentary committee would not be allowed to sit and consider: okay, we are voting X dollars for health—what are you doing with the funds?

Madam Speaker, not that I wanted to delay—

Madam Speaker: Calmaquip Engineering Corporation—that is what this funding is about.

Dr. C. Singh: Madam Speaker, with the chaos that exists in the health service today—we have neither chalk nor cheese. This is the situation. There is no

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regional health authority. They cannot function. The Minister has said that National Health Insurance, which is going to bail out the Ministry of Health, cannot come into force within the next two years.

The staff from the public service cannot be transferred to the Regional Health Authorities, because the Public Service Commission says "No, we are not going to give the authority; we are not going to delegate the responsibility to you". How are these transfers going to be done? Again, we have to come back to Parliament to have these things done. These are some of the sore points. Legislation is put on paper. It is inadequately framed and you have to go backward and forward to have it done. One wonders whether we have a Legal Department to put finishing touches in proper perspective.

Madam Speaker, society as a whole benefits from the good health of its citizens. If these services are supplied by private enterprise, many will not be able to access them; and the economic, social and humanitarian conditions demand that the service be provided with heavy subsidization of the state; or free.

Thank you.

The Minister of Health (Hon. John Eckstein): Madam Speaker, I feel I ought to respond to some of the remarks made on the other side.

Let me deal first with the allegation that the Arima Hospital had cost over-runs in the vicinity of 100 per cent. I have here a Cabinet Note dealing with this matter, submitted by the Minister of Works; and the Note advises, in paragraph 2, that the Central Tenders Board awarded a contract to Emile Elias and Co. Ltd. in the sum of \$29,662,906.80. In the third paragraph of that Note, it estimates that there will be an increase in the cost of this facility bringing it to \$41,164,505. This represents an overall increase of 40.3 per cent, of which the flotation of the TT dollar is approximately 15.17 per cent.

Dr. Singh: The Member mentioned that the allocation for 1994 for the completion of the Arima Hospital facility was around \$12 million; and an added sum of \$11 million was asked for to do that completion—not on the overall \$29 million. For correction, Madam Speaker.

Hon. J. Eckstein: Madam Speaker, I hope I am not misrepresenting the Member for Caroni East, but what I heard was that there was an over-run, in respect of the construction of the Arima Hospital, amounting to 100 per cent. The fact is that, notwithstanding the emotion with which it was expressed, that is incorrect. The increase is 40.3 per cent, of which the floating of the TT dollar

accounted for approximately 15.17 per cent, or \$4.5 million.

5.35 p.m.

The note proceeds to detail the elements of the cost increase and some of the items identified are costs due to unforeseen site conditions. Anybody who has a nodding acquaintance with construction will know that this is a normal situation. There were foundations to be put in place over old cesspits. I was amazed myself when I visited the site to see the arrangements that were used for the disposal of sewage under the old system. A massive crater was there that no one knew about. The cost of dealing with that was \$335,000. You had temporary things that had to be done; temporary access roads, temporary electrics to the mortuary to keep that facility functional—\$68,000.

The Ministry of Health requested some amendments to one of the four blocks. That required additional electrics; additional concrete work and block work. There were consequential changes in another block, the total of all of which was \$1 million. There were certain things that were omitted from the bill of quantities, like landscaping, construction of guard hut, general landscaping of the property, amounting to \$504,000. There was another cost, again due to design and construction variations in respect of certain additional external works, septic tank for the engineering building. These matters were not anticipated in the original contract.

Hon Member: Why?

Hon. J. Eckstein: These things are not done by the Cabinet. They are done by the engineers, the technically competent people within the Ministry with the responsibility. Another unexpected matter, as I indicated, was the floating of the TT dollar.

Mr. Sharma: Madam Speaker, on a point of order. The Minister provided us with information and we are dealing with that. The information given by the Member for Arouca South is totally different, so we are dealing with two issues here now. The Minister presented us with one thing and we are now debating another bit of information.

Madam Speaker: The Minister is replying to the contributions made by the Member for Caroni East and the Member for Tabaquite in which they raised completely different issues to what was actually being debated today. Proceed, please.

Hon. J. Eckstein: The Member for Chaguanas raised the matter of the pharmacy services at the Port of Spain General Hospital, in particular, I believe.

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Let me admit at the very outset that the allocation for the purchasing of drugs is really not adequate to meet the demands that are made on the system.

I listened with great attention to the Director of the Pan American Health Organization in his several addresses. What he said was that there is no country in this world, including the Americas, the great European countries, that can finance the demand for health care by its citizens—no country in the world. The Americans are spending 14 per cent of their gross national product, and there are 37 million people who have no health care. So there is no country in the world that can finance the demand for health care. Every country has to determine what it is prepared to spend. I remember a young man in Trinidad required bone marrow transplant and the cost of the surgery was over \$1 million. If we have 100 cases like that it would bankrupt the whole health service. We have to decide, given the resources that we have, what we are going to do.

In Britain they do not fund many of the things that we attempt to do in Trinidad because the treasury cannot afford it. With regard to dialysis, they do not dialyse anybody on a permanent basis. If one requires dialysis for six months, the state will give that dialysis only where there is a reasonable prospect of recovery. That state has taken a decision that it cannot afford to dialyse anybody on a permanent basis. That is a government that is infinitely more endowed than we are with financial resources.

No country in the world can afford to finance the demands placed on the treasury by its citizens for health care. We are no different, and we are going through, as you are aware, extremely difficult circumstances.

So I begin by saying that the allocation for the purchase of drugs cannot meet the demand on the system. But in addition to that, there is a particular problem at Port of Spain at this point in time. We have computerized the pharmacy system. I am not computer literate, but that introduction has slowed down the process of dealing with the public. There is a learning curve. I am advised the pharmacists are becoming increasingly competent and the speed of dealing with each individual will reduce over time. But there is a difficulty right now. In fact, in addition to that, there are some problems with the programme that have to be dealt with, and the vendor has to come in and deal with some of the problems that have arisen. So there are particular problems at this time in Port of Spain, both in respect of the availability of drugs, because I say we do not have a sufficient allocation. At some point in time we are going to have to decide about this question of distribution of drugs across the board which we really cannot afford to do.

The Member for Chaguanas spoke extensively about privatizing the health services. I really am at a loss to understand why this concept should arise in this debate, because certainly this Government has not spoken about privatizing the health services. The assumption of the administrative responsibility by the RHA for the delivery of health care is not a measure designed to privatize the health services. The RHAs, when they become operational, will report directly to the Minister who reports to the Government and to the Parliament and the people. So that changing the system of administration is not intended in any way to privatize the health services.

We have said over and over that the medically indigent will always receive free health care at the Government's expense. But we have a system now that treats everybody as if they are paupers. The system treats the multi-millionaire and the pauper in the same way. Clearly, we have to recognize that some people are able to pay. But the richest of men can walk into our institutions and access care, free of charge. Clearly, if the Government is in a financially strapped position we are going to have, at some point in time to change the way we conduct our affairs. People collect large insurance premiums if they get ill. I saw a company advertising recently that they are going to pay you regardless of whether you have to pay a health care provider. So they can come into our hospitals, use our facilities and make a claim against the insurance company and be paid. Every day you see health insurance policies being marketed. The Ministry of Health derives no benefit from that, although we might be treating substantial numbers of insured people at our institutions. So these are some of the things we have to look at. Because if those who can pay, do so, we would be able to reach out to the indigent far better than we are now able to do.

5.45 p.m.

The Member for Tabaquite spoke about our staff numbers being inadequate and believes that is due to the fact that we did not have a sufficient allocation of funds. That is not correct. If we do not have doctors in sufficient numbers it has nothing to do with the fact that we were not properly provisioned with funding to pay staff. It is just that the doctor *[Interruption]* Am I misrepresenting you, Member for Tabaquite?

Dr. Singh: Madam Speaker, it is not just the shortage of staff. As I said over and over again, funds were allocated for vacant posts in the Ministry of Health in the sum of \$5.9 million. This allocation was transferred to another department completely divorced from staffing. This is what I am saying.

Hon. J. Eckstein: I thought the Member sought to make the connection that we were unable to engage staff because we did not have the funding. I am saying that that is not the case. The fact is that, as with nurses, it takes many years to train a doctor—I think the Member indicated this in the course of his contribution—and from time to time we might have a vacancy which we cannot fill; not because we do not have the financial wherewithal to pay an individual, we just cannot get a doctor.

In Arima, about one year ago, we did not have doctors; we could not get doctors and we had to close the facilities at four o'clock. We subsequently got the quota of doctors and it now operates around the clock. The same thing happened in Couva.

The Member has touched on a very delicate matter about the death of an infant at that institution, allegedly because of the unavailability of a house officer. I do not really know if the proper place to deal with these matters is the Parliament. I do not know to what extent it would prejudice an inquiry into this matter. The plain fact is, in that facility there is a consultant, a registrar and two house officers. There are four doctors and there was one house officer missing. The infant in question was born at 9.30 on January 24 and died at 5.30. That is the record on the files. I do not know what the unavailability of a house officer in the night has to do with that.

Mr. Mottley: Was that 9.30 in the morning?

Hon. J. Eckstein: The baby was born at 9.30 in the morning and died at 5.30 in the afternoon. It is a fact that there was not a house officer who would normally have taken over in the night.

As I said, on that ward we have a consultant, a registrar and two house-officers; but I do not know if this is the place where one should deal with these matters because I do not want to prejudice an inquiry into these matters. I believe it is for the competent authority—and we all know who the competent authority is—to deal with matters involving allegations of indiscipline against public officers.

I do not really know if justice can be served in this Chamber. I really have no objection to dealing with the Member on a personal basis in terms of the information in respect of these particular matters. It makes no sense reading a newspaper article and seeking to portray the contents of that article as having anything to do with what transpired at that institution in respect of that child or any other child.

The Member for Chaguanas made an appeal that the Eric Williams Medical Complex institution should be available to everybody in the country. The fact is that it is. One has to understand the type of hospital that it is. It is a referral hospital. If one goes to Port of Spain and it is determined that you need to be referred, there is a voucher system and you are sent across to the Eric Williams Medical Complex with a voucher, and the Ministry of Health pays directly to the complex for that service.

One can be as poor as a church mouse, but if one requires surgery, an X-ray or anything and it cannot be dealt with at Port of Spain, San Fernando, Arima or wherever, the institution makes out a voucher, the person takes it to the complex which provides the service. That voucher is returned to the Ministry of Health who pays the institution for the service it provided.

The complex operates in a different way. As I indicated, every month we give the Port of Spain General Hospital \$10 million or so and nobody can say what happens there. When the budget is passed in this Parliament, we decide how much is paid to staff, how much for this and for that. There is no link now between production and the moneys that are spent. In the case of the complex, they are paid money for work done. The result is that there is tremendous production there because if they do nothing, they get nothing. At Port of Spain, if they do nothing, they get \$120 million per year. If they do something, they get \$120 million per year. That system is obviously flawed because everybody's pay is guaranteed in the system regardless of what happens. In the complex, a different system operates.

Miss Bhaggan: Madam Speaker, on a point of clarification. Could the Minister, therefore, indicate whether the fact that there are many cases before the service clubs right now, where they are seeking assistance for surgery of some sort at the medical complex, that these people are not aware that such a facility exists?

Hon. J. Eckstein: There is one other little complication I should draw attention to; the open heart surgery service offered at the complex. The Government does not offer that service. The Government is not responsible for that service at the complex. That is done by a contractor; a surgeon who comes from England, also a perfusionist and all other expertise who have rented a part of the complex.

We do not have the financial resources to provide that service. If tomorrow they are not paid, they will not come and there will be no service. There is no open-heart surgeon resident in Trinidad. We do not have that expertise. They will not stay in Trinidad. They cannot afford to stay in Trinidad, so we have an

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open-heart surgeon who visits once a month and he is paid for the services he performs. We have rented out the facility at a very subsidized rate. If it was not for that, the cost would have been much higher.

We are looking to do other things, alternative to which one has to go abroad. Let us take the Community Chest; one of the clubs the Member spoke of which solicits funds throughout the country and sends 30 or 40 children abroad and the Government is not involved at all. The operations are done at one of the large hospitals abroad. We are looking at that. It costs an average of US \$10,000 or so to send a child abroad and they do it. They do not even talk about the Government.

5.55 p.m.

If, tomorrow—we are looking at that possibility, seeking to enter into a contractual arrangement—the Government rents out another part of the Complex, then I am sure they would say, "we want it free". Nobody is asking the Government to provide that service free today, because everybody is aware it does not have the expertise and resources. What the Government is seeking to do with that service is to see if they could locate that kind of expertise abroad and have it come here. Instead of having to raise US \$10,000 to send a child abroad, it might be necessary to raise US \$5,000 or US \$3,000. The argument then, would be possibly that the Government should provide the service free. It is either the Government must say it is not going to do it at all, because we cannot afford to do it or alternatively, we are going to seek to bring the expertise here and try to offer the service at a much reduced rate than it is available abroad.

If it is that the Government is going to be called upon to provide every sophisticated kind of service free, then it might as well not bother with it because it cannot afford to do so. It is plain and simple. It just does not have the financial resources. We do not have any doctors here who can perform the type of surgery being demanded and it would mean bringing down the required expertise once every month or every two months to do surgery. The cost would be at a reasonable fraction, let us say 70 to 80 per cent of the cost if one has to do it abroad. But that is the best, in the circumstances, that we can do.

Dr. Singh: Just for clarification. The Member stated that referrals are accepted from any of the other institutions in the country. In other words, to access treatment at the San Fernando General Hospital, one presents himself there. To access treatment in Port of Spain, you present yourself there. But with

this regional unit, Mount Hope, the citizens who live in that catchment area cannot access treatment at Mount Hope without a referral. This is the difference.

Hon. J. Eckstein: The man who lives in San Fernando does not have to go to the San Fernando General Hospital. The regional arrangements do not confine him. He is free to seek care in Tobago, in any part of the country—and I have said that over and over again. No individual is constrained in terms of the system. He is free to go anywhere he wishes.*[Interruption]* That is a referral hospital.

The observation has been made, and I am not going to argue with it—that the level of service provided in the Ministry of Health is not at the level we would all like to see. I have no argument against that. I agree entirely with that. That is the reason that I have spent the last three years doing what I feel must be done, which is attempting to change the system of administration in the health services. I have said it over and over, that there would be no improvement. We will build the facilities—and we have done that and we have not had cost overruns of any excessive nature. We will engage staff but we will not see, in my view, any significant improvement until we vest in the people who have the responsibility, the authority to discharge that responsibility.

The Member for Tabaquite has said there are defects in the legislation. I agree and I accept that. We are going to come back here, if it means coming back 20 times until we get it right. To my mind, the good that this holds out for the people of Trinidad and Tobago, whatever the embarrassment to me—I know when I come they will say I did not do the right thing. I am telling them right now, I did not do the right thing. The law has to be amended, so criticize me from now—no problem. The fact of the matter is, that if we have to change it, we will change it until we get it right. As I said the good that it holds out for this country is far greater than any little embarrassment that I would suffer. I say again, I am not satisfied, the Government, I am sure, is not satisfied, and the Opposition has indicated that they are not satisfied with the care at our hospitals. We will continue to seek to change the present system of administration until we are able to vest in those people out there, the authority to deal with the problems that they face from time to time.

I thank you, Madam Speaker.

Miss Pamela Nicholson (*Tobago West*): Madam Speaker, I just want to say a few words based on the variation of over \$20 million to health. Firstly, I have a problem with the arguments just made by the Minister of Health with regard to the changes that he has made at the Port of Spain General Hospital from a pharmaceutical perspective.

When one computerizes a system, it is expected that one would be speeding up matters. What the Minister has told us here this afternoon is that he is sluggish and he has become slothful in his action. We are not concerned about that. The Government must train the people and there must be highly trained computerate people to implement the system. To come here today to tell us that they do not know and they are now learning, I find that that is interfering with the quality of individual or the quality of Minister that I thought the Minister was. I did not expect that kind of statement from him, especially when he is trying to improve the health system from a devolution of power perspective, making regions autonomous—which his Government is afraid of, the word autonomy.

When one argues from that perspective—because the representative from Arouca South said that is how he felt the system would improve. When one computerizes a system that is what one expects. One does not just implement. When the system is being implemented we expect that the authorities would take care of the cost to train persons to run the computerized system so that as soon as they want something, it can be tapped and whoever is the druggist can be given the information so we would not hear about slothfulness and sluggishness.

Mr. Eckstein: Madam Speaker, as the Member for Tobago West is probably aware, we are proposing to introduce the same system in Tobago. The pharmacists there have never used the computer. Is the Member telling me that immediately the system is introduced that they would be efficient and experts at the thing, or that they would experience what everybody in the world experiences, a learning process?

Miss P. Nicholson: I do not know why the Minister is anticipating me and why he believes that I must not speak on issues affecting Trinidad and Tobago. Tobago is not separate or apart. We belong to a democratic state called Trinidad and Tobago, and I am addressing a problem that affects everybody in Trinidad and Tobago, who are my constituents too. I do not know why he is anticipating me. I would be one who would help and suggest to our people that there must be properly trained people to run a computerized system.

Secondly, the argument that was made by the Minister that "PAHO says", in this weak way. Not because the PAHO experts have argued that nowhere in the world can governments take care of all their health problems that cannot happen in Trinidad and Tobago.

6.05 p.m.

He must not have that. He must be a confident person when he is going to deal with his ministerial issues. Not because this does not happen in the United

States of America, France or the United Kingdom, he must assume that it cannot happen in a smaller state as Trinidad and Tobago. I feel that he must use experts outside of PAHO. PAHO is a world organization. He must not assume; we must feel.

Madam Speaker: Do not argue too much with the Minister.

Miss Nicholson: Sorry Madam Speaker. I felt a little disappointed to hear this kind of negative argument coming from the Minister.

I am very concerned about the way funds are varied and the priorities. A sum of about \$20 million was given to the Ministry of Health. I belong to the smaller island of a twin island state. The medical complex was built probably over a decade ago, and we still have to be varying funds to it. Basic equipment that is needed in an average hospital, we do not have in Tobago. What one might call minor ailments even in Trinidad, we have to fly those people to Trinidad to get treatment, when some of those funds could be spent in upgrading the facilities in the Scarborough Hospital and in giving us qualified doctors.

Only recently, there was a situation—I would like the hon. representative for Arouca South to have this matter investigated—with a doctor in Trinidad; I think it was said that the doctor was from Nigeria. His wife functioned in Tobago for three years. It is argued that she was an unqualified person. As soon as the doctor in Trinidad was put in jail she disappeared from Tobago.

I did some investigations on my own. One of the arguments that came out from a number of doctors is that there is need for urgent investigation into a situation like that and the whole system of how we bring doctors from abroad. For example, long ago the doctors had to be registered in England. That no longer happens so one is not sure about who is coming into the country. One of the things I feel the funds should be used to investigate seriously is that situation. There are a number of people coming from all over the place that we never heard about before, and just as this lady disappeared, they can disappear too. In the whole situation that occurred in Tobago, that person is related to that in some way.

Then there are other situations. I am appealing to the Member for Arouca South, not only for the advantage of Tobago, but also for the advantage of Trinidad that the whole structure of how we employ our doctors from abroad be investigated. I do not want to hear he does not do that. Many times that is heard. He is my honourable friend. I do not want to expose him. Let me leave that alone. He knows what I was coming with. Many times when we argue, he says that is not his area. That cannot be because he has the responsibility for health in the country. That is, the employment—*[Interruption]*

Mr. Manning: Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. Member for Tobago West for giving way. I wonder if in her contribution she can clarify the point that she just made in respect of the responsibility of the Minister of Health. Is she saying that he is the Minister of Health for Trinidad and Tobago? I just want that clarified please.

Miss P. Nicholson: Madam Speaker, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago is the central government. The Tobago House of Assembly is a government for Tobago. It has all the responsibilities of the county council and several of the areas that belong to the central government are under the purview of the Tobago House of Assembly. The whole question of bringing in doctors to Tobago is not under the purview of the Tobago House of Assembly. It is under the purview of the Minister of Health.

Madam Speaker I think I have cooled down now. *[Laughter]* I am not finished, Mr. Palackdharrysingh.

I am saying that imagine after a hospital was constructed over a decade ago, we still have to be varying funds for that institution, when there are a number of institutions in the country which are in need of equipment. As I argued, because we do not have the basic facilities at the Scarborough Hospital, by the time several of the people in Tobago get into the plane they are dead. As I argued a while ago, there is a problem with quality doctors. Recently, a new head for the hospital arrived and we are hoping that we would see a great deal of improvement from the employment of doctors perspective.

I also have another problem. I do not know if the Minister of Finance might be able to help me, if I could stay because I have to catch the plane at 8.00 p.m. I have a problem with the level of the variation of funds, especially when there is a situation that when the basic budget is being put together, certain things are asked for that are essentials. They are not given in the basic budget; then you see other institutions like what I was talking about, like the extra funding for the medical complex. Those institutions are receiving that level of funding and basic matters that should be addressed are not addressed.

For example there is an agricultural situation in Tobago, an area that is basic and could create a lot of employment. For over four years the Tobago House of Assembly has been appealing for certain equipment for their tractor pool section. Tobago is an island separate from Trinidad. There is no private system where somebody or different groups or organizations operate a tractor pool structure where they can go and plough the people's lands.

6.15 p.m.

All of it is the business of the Tobago House of Assembly and for over four years they have been asking for four new tractors, tractor attachments and tractor parts. The tractors they have now are 11 years old so every day they are breaking down. When people pay their moneys to have their lands plowed, banked, cleared and access roads cut, there is a problem, so there is a liability to the people to get that addressed. For four years the Central Government, under the People's National Movement—the caring People's National Movement—has not addressed that situation.

Mr. Mottley: Madam Speaker, this Government has not been in power for four years. At least one year is attributable to another administration.

Miss P. Nicholson: I am anticipating, Madam Speaker, that they will go right down to December. I know they will; they cannot do anything else. *[Interruption]* I am not afraid of you at all. I will flog you tooth and nail.

When basic things are asked for in the budget and the Minister is communicated with, does he think about that kind of situation or does he just decide that that is his Government and that is the Ministry of Health asking for “X”, “Y” and “Z”, and he just gives them the funding; or, if the Ministry of Social Affairs asks for something they would just give them. We are not getting the basics to prevent crime and so forth, which is very important in developing what they like very much—the tourism industry—and what all of us like—to create employment.

As I argued, it is a separate island; a unique case. They are refusing to understand that we do not have organizations in Tobago which run private institutions to do that for the people. The institution which does that kind of business for the people is the Tobago House of Assembly.

There is another situation—the fishing industry. We ask for funds in the budget, for example \$700,000 or \$800,000, to build facilities for the fishermen. The one down at Swallows was in the budget for more than three years—he might blame someone else for a little piece again. There are about 30 or 40 fishermen in the area bringing in fish. The fishing industry makes the most money in Tobago in the agricultural sector. There are about four fish processing plants in Tobago right now. When the fishermen come in late in the evening in that area, there is need for a structure with ice to keep their fish and somewhere to leave their equipment safely so that the next day they can take their quality fish to the fish processing plants which clean them for export. Some of these fish processing plants employ 70 to 80 persons at times, for example, when there is flying fish.

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When these basics are asked for and they are not provided, I have a problem of how to deal with the budget. How is the budget looked at? Can Tobago ask for certain things? I am talking about the people of Tobago. I am not talking about bringing two or three foreigners and whatever is made is taken out of Tobago. I am talking about funds being made in Tobago and spin-offs creating employment and assisting the whole situation. I do not want to go further. I have a number of things to deal with, but I feel that I will be able to transfer them to the Friday debate. I have a problem, Member for St. Ann's East, with that kind of situation.

I also have a problem with basics again—education. There is an area in Tobago, called Tobago, where the least number of children go to secondary school. The Minister is aware of that. But in the budget, when they put in that they want money for Mason Hall Secondary School—Members read the budget last year and this year—not a penny is allocated to that secondary school to bring more of the children from Tobago into secondary school.

Mr. Ramrekersingh: On the question of the Mason Hall Secondary School, that is one of the schools which form part of the discussion for the World Bank education loan. The discussions have almost been completed. I think the bank is meeting in the middle of the year to make a decision.

Miss P. Nicholson: Thanks to the hon. Minister, but that is not the answer. The point that I am making is that in the basic budget there are five or six secondary schools. The area with the least number of children going to secondary school should have been the number one priority. That is my argument. I am very happy that they now recognize that that was a failing and that with the World Bank Programme it is now being addressed. I congratulate you for now recognizing the weakness and for recognizing that it is long overdue, Mr. Minister. There are others who would not have seen it, so we have to congratulate you for that.

That is the little problem that I have—the basics. I am not talking about having some things already and not really needing them. I am talking about the basics like being the area in which the least number of children go to secondary school. Those statistics came from the university; it came from the Ministry of Education itself when they did their research. Besides these children not having secondary schools to go to, some of them are going to some sub-standard private school that they should not enter. So I am very happy that that is being addressed.

I am really pointing my argument. I do not know if the Minister of Finance is clear on what I am trying to say. I want to understand how he deals with the

basics in the budget as against variations. When he is called upon to vary \$20 million, \$50 million or \$157 million, does he look at basics that a certain region might want, as against the variations? I am very, very concerned about that.

I want to encourage the Minister of Finance that when he is dealing with variations that he consider basic needs for certain areas in the country. I am now dealing with Tobago because I know about the Tobago situation. I am sure there are other representatives who can probably make arguments in that same direction, so that when we come here we will know that the taxpayers of the country are benefiting and that we are doing things to correct problems which might emerge in the country.

I thank you.

6.25 p.m.

Mr. Raymond Palackdharrysingh (*Caroni Central*): Madam Speaker, I hope to create a record this evening because I intend to be extremely short. [*Desk thumping*] [*Laughter*] My deputy political leader has been able to impress upon me that it is time for many of us to take leave of this Chamber.

I will merely raise one issue here this evening [*Interruption*] Why you "fellas" do not find some men to send them. [*Interruption*] [*Laughter*] Many mighty men have fallen, you know that. [*Interruption*] I just want to focus this evening on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The reason I want to focus on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is because I think that we really have a problem with that Ministry. Here we see that we are increasing the allocation to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. One thing that this nation needs to know is, what happens with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, particularly with respect to our missions abroad. One would understand that there is really no easy solution to the number of problems which exist at the missions abroad.

One of the first questions I would like to ask, Madam Speaker, is: How does the Government deal with conversion of foreign currency to meet the needs of our foreign missions abroad, in particular, countries such as London, New York, and Brazil? Is there a fixed standard or a fixed rate of remunerations to our officers abroad, or is this indexed to the cost of living that obtains in the particular countries?

I am interested in that because not long ago I was in Brazil and I had the distinct opportunity to be invited out by the Ambassador to Brazil, Mr. Winston Moore. I found out that the currency, the Brazilian real was at a higher level than

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the US dollar. Therefore, it would seem that there ought to have been some measure of indexing the remuneration to the cost of living so as to keep the officers on the basis of living comfortably on the same basket of goods that might obtain elsewhere. That is one of the questions, Madam Speaker, because while we are concerned that we need to get inputs from the embassies, we also have to recognize that unless the persons abroad are made comfortable they will not be able to discharge their responsibilities. I would tell you that some years ago if I had thought that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was a pleasant place, having gone to Brazil, I now understand why so many people end as political exiles there. Brazil is a lonely place where one does not get information; and there is a slow response to requests and so forth.

Apart from that, it would seem that officers in Brazilia had to be renting apartments that were quite expensive. It was drawn to my attention that the Brazilian government had given the Government of Trinidad and Tobago a large piece of land in what was called the diplomatic village—for want of the real name of the area. That piece of land is still vacant. In front of the piece of land allocated to Trinidad and Tobago was the Nigerian Embassy, on the right hand side of it there is the Romanian Embassy. The Trinidad and Tobago Embassy occupies premises way out in the village and the conditions which exist there are extremely horrible.

What I am trying to find out, having received a piece of land in Brazil, why did this Government not try to construct the necessary facilities, including housing for all officers in Brazil? That is an important question, Madam Speaker, because Brazil is a large country with many economic prospects; I envisage that Trinidad and Tobago's connection with Brazil would last a long time. It would seem that the Brazilian government is asking, what is the Trinidad and Tobago Government going to do with this piece of land. So far there is not even a rio planted on the piece of land in Brazil. That is an extremely critical position. I am talking because I have to admit that for the first time a PNM appointee as an ambassador treated me with all due courtesies. *[Laughter] [Desk thumping]* That does not mean that I have moved my position an inch regarding the Government.

More than that, Madam Speaker, the ambassador wanted to take me to the airport so that I could get the flight back to Trinidad, but do you know what happened, he said, "Mr. Member, I want to take you in this car. It is only a shining body but it shuts down with me all the time, it would be better for you to ride the bus." *[Interruption]* I suppose if he is being recalled he might enjoy that more, because as I said, Brazil is not an easy place to be if you do not have some of the basics by which to function.

Madam Speaker, yes, these things ought to be looked at and I think that we ought to be told the quantum of money spent at each mission and how that quantum is decided with respect to the cost of living. Also, when we are looking at returns, what are the functions. It is an extremely costly business but it is also very necessary. We cannot have our people abroad without the basic necessities to function at these embassies. I heard that the Prime Minister was calling home the boys! I do not know if he did, and I do not know what he is going to discuss, but this is something of extreme importance.

There are also sub-items such as travelling, telephones, upkeep of vehicles, expenses and so forth, and what we see happening in foreign countries, especially in Latin America, one can get up one morning and find extreme devaluation in the currency and increases in prices. I would like to know how is our Government responding to situations like these so as to afford—what is called—a basic minimum standard of living and operations in the embassies abroad.

As I said, Madam Speaker, I just wanted to confine my remarks to this ministry and I hope somebody would respond. I think it is a critical matter and I would like to find out what is the Government's intention with the piece of land that the Brazilian government has donated to this country. Are they merely going to leave it to grow weeds and so forth? Investment-wise I think they can work out a formula as to how to make the best use of that piece of land, *viz a viz* the existing structures that they have.

This is all I want to raise this evening. The Minister of Education has been kind enough to speak with me. Probably at another time I would raise some issues with him.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: The Member for Nariva did catch my eye before the Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Krish Jurai (Nariva): We are colleagues, Madam Speaker, I am sure he would not mind. [*Laughter*]

Madam Speaker, I, like my colleague, the Member for Caroni Central who spoke just before me, would like to be very short and to speak on the Finance (Variation of Appropriation 1994) Bill before us here today. I would like to deal with agriculture—although the Minister of Agriculture is not here. I am happy to see that the Prime Minister is here so at least he can lend an ear.

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In 1994, according to the schedule here, \$17 million-plus were allocated to goods and services for the development of agriculture. I was happy to read in the *Newsday* that the Minister had made that statement. Shortly afterwards I see here that there has been a decrease in the amount allocated for goods and services to the tune of \$1.411 million.

Madam Speaker: With the greatest of respect to the hon. Member, what we are doing today is the adoption of the Second Report. I am looking at the Second Report and I do not see anything under agriculture. What was your point? The Report was for specific sums of money under different headings. It was Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Consumer Affairs and then there is Transfers from Subheads. Does agriculture come under this subhead?

6.35 p.m.

Otherwise, if we do that we are going to take this debate into areas that really are irrelevant; your contribution could be proper for another time, but not on this occasion. I urge Members to be careful in their contributions. What we are doing is really adopting this report, and of course, there will be no debate because we would have already adopted the report.

Mr. K. Jurai: Madam Speaker, I was trying to relate this to the fact that the Government has expressed its desire to increase agriculture whereas under the schedule here they have decreased the amount that was allocated.

Madam Speaker: I am just guiding the Member because really it ought not to be raised because we have the specific heads under which this report falls: for example, the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Fincor Loan Facility, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and then you have your subhead to subhead.

Mr. K. Jurai: As I said Madam Speaker, I was about to relate this to the Government's proposal to increase agricultural production and at the same time they have decreased it here and they have vired the funds elsewhere.

Madam Speaker: If you have a problem with the way in which this was done with respect to these heads and why and how and so forth, I propose getting your arguments together—for example, your Friend dealt with Foreign Affairs, someone dealt with Ministry of Health, somebody dealt with the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, but agriculture does not fall under this, so I do not know where it would be relevant. I do not think that you can properly argue this matter under this Motion. I urge you to take a second look and see whether—

Mr. K. Jurai: Madam Speaker, I was trying to tie it up with the increase in prices that have taken place as a result. As you rule Madam Speaker, certainly I would raise this issue at another opportune moment.

Madam Speaker: There would be many occasions for that—but we are trying to have the debate within a certain ambit.

Mr. Mohammed Haniff (*Princes Town*): Madam Speaker, I am concerned about having a document before us which seeks to make payment as a result of cost overruns, delays and so forth. Those delays took place some time ago. Today, we are called upon to pay some \$11 million plus for an issue that, to my mind, should not have occurred.

It raises therefore, an issue of proper management, either with the Cabinet and the Ministers, or with those responsible for awarding contracts, or perhaps, for the managers in the ministries. My concern is, that we are here looking at a cost overrun which resulted from delays in supplying equipment, procuring, installing, commissioning and maintaining equipment at the Eric Williams Medical Sciences Complex. This issue alone is costing us \$11 million plus. It is in that context, I say that I am very concerned. Over the years we have heard on numerous occasions about cost overruns and in certain cases, I am of the view that most of these could have been avoided. There is where my concern lies.

Presently, there is a national debate and discussion about another cost overrun and disagreement about contracts that were awarded concerning the new security prison—I like to call it jail. The Government is making arrangements to put a lot of people in jail. I would imagine that they have to prepare many more jails. Perhaps, because of this, we are spending additional funding to cater for cost overruns and I am of the view that if these moneys were properly managed by people responsible for every aspect of expenditure, we would have had more funding to pay workers, especially retired workers from the Ministry of Local Government and the Ministry of Works. Madam Speaker, I have gone through these schedules and I wanted to discuss each of them here this evening.

I have, however, changed my mind and will seek to point out my concerns on just a few: Schedule—under the Ministry of Local Government, page 67, there was a decrease of \$18.9 million under the heading Severance Pay and Retirement Benefits. The Government can say what they wish, my concern here is, workers have been sent home either on VSEP or early retirement, but they have severed their working relationships and they do not meet the Ministers concerned to ask them about when they will receive what is due to them, they meet us—

Madam Speaker: You have started off your contribution very well by focussing—

Mr. M. Haniff: Madam Speaker, I am pointing out here a decrease of \$18.9 million under Severance Pay and Retirement Benefits. Am I wrong, Madam Speaker?

Madam Speaker: But you zeroed in on the Calmaquip Engineering Corporation and I thought we were going to hear your problems with respect to that, and why that was allowed, but I see you have gone on to the Ministry of Local Government.

Mr. M. Haniff: I am seeing \$11 million on one cost overrun. I pointed out that we have heard about many other cost overruns in the past. As a matter of fact, I would like very much if anyone can, for the last five years, tell us what was the amount of money paid for cost overruns that could have been avoided. I would like anyone here to tell us that. Do you know why? This nation is not aware of that. It is as a result of mismanagement. I am saying some of that funding, including the \$11 million, could have gone a long way in paying especially the retired workers. I would imagine that those retired workers also speak to the Ministers—when they meet them—concerning those moneys which the Government owes them.

6.45 p.m.

They are rushing into the offices and speaking now about daily-paid workers. The Ministry of Local Government, Ministry of Works and Transport, and Ministry of Agriculture, Lands and Marine Resources, all these are here. I am discussing here at this time a decrease of \$18 million under Severance Pay and Retirement Benefits. Anyone in the world with a conscience would have found a way to utilize these moneys to pay workers who have gone home.

Madam Speaker, do you know what is worse? These workers, although they have severed their working relationships, they have not received the moneys which Government owes them. They are receiving a document popularly known as the "White Paper" I am going to put this one on the records because I cannot understand any permanent secretary in this country signing a document with over 15 changes of the original typewritten figures in pen without any initials to it and sending it as an official document. I shall pass it to the Clerk. I am totally disappointed firstly, about the quality of the document and, secondly, the principle. Workers are running to the Ministries of Local Government; Agriculture, Lands and Marine Resources; and Works and Transport for this

document. The heading really is: "Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago Public Sector Employees Liability Statement Arrears of Emoluments". Apart from stating what Government owes present or ex-workers, this document has no other meaning.

They want to know when they will be paid. I am of the view that \$18.9 million under Severance Pay and Retirement Benefits should have taken care of those workers who have gone home. I make it very brief because we are speaking here about workers in the various ministries. Those workers have to run to speak to someone, either their union representatives, who are very difficult to find nowadays, or their Members of Parliament or councillors; and they are having extreme difficulty under this administration—that is one point—but there are others who are having similar difficulties.

I have noticed on page 75 under the Schedule, a decrease of \$7 million under Severance Pay and Retirements Benefits under Ministry of Works and Transport. I would let that issue rest but I wanted to point it out.

Madam Speaker, this sum of \$11 million which I just observed on one cost overrun—and I said that there are so many others—that could have gone a long way in providing water. Do you see this listing? I have thousands of names here in areas where I held meetings concerning people who did not and are not at this time getting a water supply. I am not speaking about putting on pumps and other things, I am speaking about simple issues where one cannot get a valve, the materials required to patch the lines and things of that nature. Had it not been for the late hour and my normal sympathetic mood with people in terms of time, I would have gone for one hour and more pointing out in detail these occurrences. I have signatures. Places such as Robert Village and other areas. When we raise it here we cannot even get the kind of response that is required from the Minister concerned. I hope that someone would clarify it even at this late stage.

I was making the point that these workers, who have gone home and have not been paid, have been complaining in all quarters, to the extent that they have gone to the Ombudsman. There is a report which was laid before us concerning workers in the Ministry of Health, under a particular administration. One would understand workers in the Ministry of Health, under a particular administration. One would understand and hopefully appreciate a simple worker having a problem of funding. That worker runs all over, from his immediate supervisor all upstream, and gets the run-around until he reaches to the Ombudsman, who writes a report and sends it to the Parliament in accordance with his obligations under

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the Act. It comes here, we would look at it and nothing would happen; but we speak about our democratic system.

Madam Speaker, today, I will draw another reference for you. On January 14, 1992—approximately two weeks after I entered this Parliament—I wrote to the Transport Foreman in the Ministry of Works and Transport. Having done that, I have written several other letters and I am making the point that they do not respond. They do not care and they have continued to demonstrate that on an everyday basis. As a result, if a simple worker is having the run-around, then one may try to come to terms and wonder why that is happening. Do you know, as a Member of Parliament, I have signed letters addressed to the Transport Foreman, Ministry of Works and Transport; the Minister of Works and Transport; the President General of NUGFW; the Speaker of the House of Representatives; the Ombudsman; the Leader of the Opposition; the Minister in charge of Administration in the Office of the Prime Minister. Also, letters to the Prime Minister, dated May 18, 1994 and October 19, 1994. One thousand telephone calls! I have spoken to other Ministers quietly and privately and I have reached to the point that a decision can be taken on it.

This Government knows very well the politics of patronage and discrimination. They are experts in that.

Madam Speaker: I wonder if the Member would not like to make that a special question or a motion.

Mr. M. Haniff: No, Madam Speaker. I am making the point of the administrative bureaucracy and the fact that moneys are available. The Government finds it convenient to sit there and deny a daily-paid worker. In that context, I ask: Is it right for daily-paid workers in this country to enter the folds of politics? It appears not, because there is discrimination and it is a matter of administration. They would like people to blame those in administration but it has come upstream, up to the CPO, and the CPO says it has been referred to the Cabinet. I am saying that on the principle that there is funding, they sit there and deny people moneys which are rightfully theirs based on all sorts of bureaucracy.

Mr. Manning: Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. Member for Princes Town for giving way. I wonder if he would be kind enough to be quite specific about the issue to which he is referring. It is not clear to me.

Mr. M. Haniff: Madam Speaker, I have made the issue clear that workers are having difficulty in getting their moneys and, as a result, they go to the Ombudsman. They do not get their money and they get the run-around all the

time. Other people are having problems also. The Government knows exactly what I am speaking about. I wanted to go into details but I do not wish at this point in time to do so. However, I ask: If the Ombudsman writes to the Parliament about a situation where money is owed to Mr. Kelvin Ramjohn and other people in the Ministry of Health—moneys have been transferred in millions for other purposes but none could be found to give to these people.

Mr. Manning: Madam Speaker, may I enquire of the hon. Member for Princes Town whether he is referring to a daily-paid worker at the Princes Town Regional Corporation who may be serving at a higher level, a problem relating to that particular worker. Is it?

Mr. M. Haniff: I do not know of anyone who is serving there, Madam Speaker. I made the point however that the Princes Town Regional Corporation knows. If he does not know, then I leave him with that. But I stand here today and tell you that the Government knows well. They are heroes when it comes to the politics of patronage and discrimination.

Mr. Manning: Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. Member for giving way. In the case of the particular worker to which reference is made, Government has a difficulty in paying an individual for no time spent on the job. In fact, he is doing a job elsewhere in respect of which a remuneration is payable. It is a fundamental difficulty which the Government has with that particular case.

May I point out that a few years ago—this is a similar situation, not very different—when persons came to Parliament from the companies operating in the country, it was the practice of the companies at that time to reduce the salary of the individual, based on an assessment of the time that would have been spent by the individual away from company business, on the business of the state. The reason for that was there was a remuneration attached to being a Member of Parliament, so there was that kind of accommodation in respect of those arrangements.

6.55 p.m.

Mr. M. Haniff: Madam Speaker, all I wish to ask is whether any consideration has been given to the report of the Ombudsman which was referred to the authorities concerned. In the circumstances, Madam Speaker, I wish to continue.

Madam Speaker, in this very document, *Minutes of the Third Meeting of the Finance Committee*, some issues are being raised; and I am saying that that very issue of SHARE—because in the document we see additional expenditure—the distribution of funding under Share which is meant to assist, is not reaching

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those who are hard-pressed in the society, because of the fact that they continue to look for small groups which are sympathetic to, or members of the PNM, to give them the contracts to distribute the food.

Madam Speaker, I am saying that they continue to disrupt and take away the authority that rightfully belongs to the local government bodies; and if there is any system of distribution and any strength or belief in the people of this country, then SHARE and other projects of this nature should fall in the hands of the local government bodies, where the local government representatives know the people in each community well; and that body should also deal with the village councils and so forth. Madam Speaker, that is not happening.

While we stand here and speak about transferring from one Head to another and about making additional allocations for Government at a time when those expenses have already taken place, here is where we must make our suggestions. Now they have said so much about local government, they are taking away and not utilizing the true meaning of local government and, as such the Share programme and other distributive measures that Government undertakes should strengthen that body known as local government established many years ago with people involved.

Madam Speaker, I wish to point out the way they operate in this country. Many of them understand; many do not understand—and do not wish to understand—the hardships being encountered by the folks at the lower levels.

I am going to make one more reference, Madam Speaker. I looked at the expenditures under Ministry of Health—San Fernando General Hospital. A lot of fan fare. It is not operating. If you go there, it is a total disgrace, whether we like it or not. I am telling you because I have cause to go there with people. Many others do not. They can afford otherwise.

Madam Speaker, do you know, in a situation like that we have had expenditures of approximately \$900,000 being made on the Princes Town Hospital and after that expenditure for refurbishment, they come here and say that building, which was repaired, is no longer adequate for what it was originally intended? They now intend to build a new hospital in Princes Town. That is the bureaucracy and mismanagement of which I am speaking. Two references. If in the days of the Mount Hope Medical Sciences Complex money was no problem, it is certainly a problem today, because we are still paying for the mistakes of that era.

Madam Speaker, to come here and ask for approval of expenditures already incurred—additional and variations—without first telling us at some point in time

that "This is urgent and we intend to do it". It could happen in five minutes in the Parliament, because we sit here and allocate moneys for the year and discuss for a week and agree on where and how much we are going to spend under the various ministries. Yet, when they wish to make reduced allocations, send home workers, or vary those allocations, they come here and ask us to approve it.

I want to draw to their attention that there are people in this country who are suffering and who want to feel a little relief, or otherwise, Madam Speaker. Some Members made very good contributions today and this Government should understand the basics. In the week that went by we heard about increasing prices; and as far as the cost over-runs are concerned, we must set up the machinery to prevent those and the contracts which are not properly supervised, because there are too many situations when they have to pay more money and they are getting bad jobs.

If we are taking money from personnel expenditure to put elsewhere and not monitoring what we have and not keeping our people in useful and productive employment, then this continues to go down. People are suffering in this country and the basics must be catered for—CARE, SHARE and otherwise, must be distributed in such a way that the poorer class of people in this country must benefit.

Madam Speaker, because of the lateness of the hour, and as I stand here and look at some very respectable gentlemen who will not, in the circumstances, say that they have been here too long; and because of my long working relationship with them, I sympathize with their position and therefore I will reduce my contribution to this point in time; and thank you very much.

Mr. Chandresh Sharma (*Fyzabad*): Madam Speaker, I am going to limit my contribution to the matters raised by the Member for St. Ann's East and I want to start off by congratulating him, very sincerely, for the simple reason that he indicated that Calmaquip Engineering Corporation of the United States requested a sum of money for services provided in terms of equipment and that exceeded \$5 million—close to \$6 million. What the Ministry did, under his supervision, was to engage the services of public servants—a team of accountants—who were able to reduce that sum of money by almost 25 per cent. So it brought to the country savings of close to \$1.5 million. I want to advance here this evening that if that same format was introduced in many quarters we could have tremendous savings.

The Member for St. Ann's East indicated to us that the Arima Hospital was \$12.7 million and there was an over-run which went close to \$24 million, close to 100 per cent. But the Member for Arouca South told us this evening it was \$40.3 million—from \$29 million it went straight up to \$40.3 million.

Madam Speaker: The Member spoke about 40.3 per cent.

Mr. C. Sharma: \$41 million—an increase of 40.3 per cent. So in one case the Minister, through his hard work, is saving us 5 per cent on \$6 million; and in another case there is an over-run of 300 per cent. This is the kind of situation we are facing too often and it is important for us to examine. It would serve us right if we could allow, as Members on this side have suggested time and again, for much more information to be provided. This is the only way these debates can reflect meaningful contributions from both sides.

7.05 p.m.

Today's debate comes about because of the requirement of the Constitution, particularly section 113(3) which requests this particular event to take place. More than that, it has to happen at this time because it goes to the Auditor General by the end of March. So we are pressed for time. When the Minister delivered his budget on November 26 which gave rise to today's event, and we subsequently debated the Provisional Collection of Taxes Order at that point in time we felt everything was under control in terms of moneys allocated. If the budget was close to \$10 billion and the Member for St. Ann's East under his Ministry can save us 25 per cent on a particular item; if we can reduce a further savings on \$10 billion of 10 per cent, which is a conservative figure, we are looking at close to \$1 billion. Even if we reduce that to 5 per cent, we can then put into the system an additional \$500 million for development. That is the kind of contribution Members on this side are looking forward to.

The other area I want to move very quickly to is the question of the \$4.4 million allocated to the Ministry of Consumer Affairs and Social Services. How did this come about? It is very unfortunate. We must not overlook how it came about. It came about because of the McIntyre Report which was funded by the IADB, which basically said, "Listen, if you want us to make a contribution, you must also make a contribution." What the McIntyre Report found was that too many people were living under the poverty line in Trinidad and Tobago, and not enough was being done by the state. By the way, it was delayed because the Government took too long to make its contribution. Whose interest is the Government really serving? Here we have an independent report, funded by the IADB that indicates a particular situation and says to the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, "If you want us to be in partnership with you, you must make your contribution." The Government agrees and delays the contribution of \$4.4 million.

Members also indicated the question of what happens at the particular ministry. This is the appropriate time to also register our own findings. Too often

we come to this House and speak about the reports that come to our office. Each Member of Parliament sees a number of his constituents on a weekly basis, as the case might be, and matters come to their attention. We on both sides of the House have found, numerous people having to wait too long for whatever the state is providing in terms of welfare assistance. We also find that quite often there is a run-around by people going for assistance. I will tell you some of the problems.

Take a single mother, for example, whose husband has died. She goes to the social welfare office for assistance. She is the mother of two or three children, so she is given some assistance for her children. She is a young mother, 35 years old, and the men in her community make advances to her. To protect herself she seeks some protection at the home of a relative or a friend. She is not into a relationship. Do you know what the Ministry of Social Welfare does? It says she is now living with someone and cuts off her allowances. It is happening. The fact that it happens to one mother or to 10 or to 1,000, it is one too many. We cannot allow that to continue and we have brought this to the attention of this House too often.

In the case of emergency grants, how are they given out? There is absolutely no system. Many times when a person has to go they have to borrow money. Take for instance somebody living in Oropouche who has to go to Siparia where the office is—Oropouche to Fyzabad is \$1.00 by maxi-taxi; Fyzabad to Siparia is \$2.00. So in order for the person to get there and back, he has to spend \$6.00 and it is money that back not have. So we are making an appeal here this evening he does for that department to have a human face.

I want to turn to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. I, too, want to endorse the sentiments expressed by the Member for Caroni Central. I have met some of the foreign service officers and I have found them very competent, doing quite a lot for Trinidad and Tobago, but there must be a return to this country. We must see what we are getting back. Of late, we are not getting back very much. Why do I say this?

We have seen in recent times the Government having to employ the services of lobbyists and we are in total support of that. Trinidad and Tobago needs it. We are seeing more and more money spent on trade missions. We have seen the recent appointment of a particular Ambassador only for trade, and another Ambassador at large. So here we are, pumping millions of dollars into the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and we are also establishing, parallel to this organization, a number of posts which are costing us tremendous amounts of money.

When I raised it at an earlier stage the Member said, they are faxing more than phoning. Here you have an increase in telephone costs, for instance, and we have

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now introduced fax and computers into all our offices. What are the real returns? The Member for St. Ann's East did indicate that some of these moneys are now going for the children of the officers who are attending school. He is correct. Those children must be provided for. But what is our Ministry of Foreign Affairs doing for the other children of Trinidad and Tobago attending universities who are not the children of officers attached to a particular ministry? What negotiations are taking place?

Let me further that argument. What would a foreign affairs ministry under the UNC government have done? They would go into the universities; explain the situation and say, "Listen, we have moved from TT \$2.42 to your US \$1.00, to \$3.60; we are now at \$6.00. It is no fault of the students attending here who are in their second, third or final year. We want an accommodation." Many universities do it. So a provision is available for that kind of arrangement.

We have advanced that on numerous occasions. In addition to that, there are a number of scholarships available to nationals of Trinidad and Tobago as they are available to nationals from all over the world. I would like to know, through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs—and I am not saying this is the only ministry responsible; there might be other ministries, perhaps the Ministry of Planning, but the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is the one that would normally see what is available on the outside. So we need to bring back some results here. So the UNC government would be instructing all our foreign ministries, embassies and missions abroad that we want results. We are going to give them specifications, areas in which to work, and by extension, what you would suddenly see happening is that a number of our nationals would be going on scholarships. There would be more trade coming here to purchase our goods.

It does not make sense for us to send missions outside to buy goods all the time. We need to start selling more of Trinidad and Tobago's products. Again, since we are into this global village and into NAFTA, and the more recent one in the Caribbean, and Caricom, and that kind of thing, you would find that these foreign missions would have a lot more to do. I would hope that, given the moneys and the expenses incurred by our officers, we would see larger results coming.

The last area I want to quickly look at is the transfer between subheads which is in excess of \$157 million. That is what the Minister reported to us here today. Some of the subheads that are addressed here from where the moneys were moved, we are seeing savings in a number of areas where vacant posts are not filled. We ask, why? The Member for Arouca South said in Arima there was no doctor to be found nor in Tobago, but there are a number of acting posts in all the

ministries that are not being filled. One of the reasons they are not being filled is because of political interference.

7.15 p.m.

There are various reasons for the number of vacant posts in ministries. One can see savings under personnel expenditure where vacant posts were not filled. This is seen too often. One has to examine very closely why so many vacant posts are not filled.

That results in the point the Member for Tabaquite raised. When the child died—whether the child was born at 9.30 and died at 5.30—what was the Minister advancing; that it was an act of God? Our responsibility was to make every facility available to that baby. Was the Minister indicating that if a doctor was there, perhaps, the baby would not have died? We are not to play God with little babies. *[Interruption]* Madam Speaker, can I have your protection? I am being disturbed.

Madam Speaker: The Member for Fyzabad is having difficulty. Please, gentlemen.

Mr. C. Sharma: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The point is that in a number of situations where these posts are not filled, we are seeing the results. What are the results? We are seeing where people are having to go to the Ministry of Social Welfare and have a very long wait or make many trips to and from that Ministry. We are seeing where patients have to go to the hospitals and there are not enough doctors because the posts are not filled. We are seeing where people go to have their prescriptions filled and the same thing is happening.

Further, in the Ministry of Finance, for instance, there was a saving of \$35,947,562. Savings were realized through vacant posts not being filled. This is the document issued by the Ministry of Finance. It is not my own document.

The other area is the Ministry of National Security—savings there again. What we found was that due to the late recruitment of prison officers, police officers and defence force privates, and delays in the filling of vacant posts, savings were available. This Government is interested in saving money by not filling posts and by not having appointments made. But, at what cost to the national community?

The national community is experiencing the worst crime situation in this country. What does the Government do? It does not fill the posts of police officers, defence force privates and, further, they prevent the filling of other posts. We have to be extremely careful.

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When money was saved in this area, what was it used for? These savings were used to meet payments for outstanding utility bills; bills for gasoline, food and repairs brought forward from previous years. So they are not filling vacant posts in order to pay other bills. Does that make sense? It certainly does not. The Government has a responsibility to make available to the national community a certain number of police officers, doctors, pharmacists and so forth. It cannot go on preventing these posts from being filled.

Madam Speaker, I must emphasize the point that there are a number of reasons for vacant posts not being filled. One of them has to be political.

In the Ministry of Legal Affairs, similarly, a saving of \$1.8 million and we are seeing a number of courts that are unable to function due to there not being enough magistrates and the physical conditions of the courts.

Mr. Sobion: Madam Speaker, for the records, the expenditure on magistrates' courts, personnel and so forth do not come from the Ministry of Legal Affairs.

Mr. C. Sharma: Madam Speaker, I thank the Member for Ortoire/Mayaro for his correction. The point I am raising is that the \$1.8 million was transferred from personnel expenditure to meet a shortfall. Here is the sum of \$1.8 million transferred from personnel expenditure and the Minister gets up and says that the moneys are not paid from this particular area, but it is transferred from personnel expenditure. I am not sure what personnel expenditure under the Ministry of Legal Affairs represent.

One of the major concerns of our national community today is the high price of food and its availability. There were delays in the separation exercise involving daily-paid workers at the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources. As a result it was necessary to provide additional wages. Accordingly, transfers were made from current transfers and subsidies to meet shortfalls in the allocation under personnel expenditure and payments of severance benefits and outstanding telephone bills.

I would have welcomed if the Minister of Finance had made a larger sum of money available to the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources. Today, the Member for Diego Martin West, in his capacity as Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources presented a food and agriculture policy. This is an excellent idea in that once we can make more food available to the national community it would automatically reduce the prices. Secondly, it would allow us to feed many more people.

Many Members who spoke this afternoon indicated that for old-age pensioners there should be a consideration of an increase. I want to endorse that for the simple reason that the latest report we have is that close to 30 per cent of the national community is living under the poverty line. A number of our people are now dependent on the pensioners. While the intention was not that the pensioner should make his or her moneys available to others, the situation is such that a number of people are now living out of the moneys that a pensioner gets. Certainly, the sum is too small. We have heard today that the food subsidy is \$71 which works out I think, to \$2.25 per day. If that is spread over three meals per day one would hardly be able to buy an apple.

In the area of the Ministry of Education, resulting from the delays in the upgrading of teachers, and a reduction in the number of school meals provided, savings have been made under personnel expenditure. Here they have reduced the school feeding programme—

Mr. Ramrekersingh: Increased! It was increased!

Mr. C. Sharma: Madam Speaker, the Member for St. Joseph is advancing that there was an increase. As I have indicated, this document was prepared by the Ministry of Finance. This is the document provided for my guidance by Members opposite, I have made numerous calls for information. If information given to us is correct, then there will be no need for me to refer to this. This is the document provided to me, so I would welcome the Member's point.

Mr. Ramrekersingh: Madam Speaker, in 1994 the school feeding programme was increased, starting as early as October, 1993, from 58,000 primary school students, three times per week to 64,000 primary school children, five times per week.

Secondary schools came into the programme; 8,000 to 9,000, plus 2,500 pre-schools. What the Member is seeing is that \$72 million were allocated for the year. There would be one or two days when for certain reasons, there may be a holiday unexpectedly and there is a saving. Each day costs about \$400,000, so if there are three or four such days it would explain that. The programme was increased. The Member would do well to look at the previous years' figures.

Mr. C. Sharma: Madam Speaker, I thank the Member for St. Joseph, and I would be guided by his response. As I indicated very early, I am submitting my statements based on the document which was made available to us. This document does not carry a date. If this document gets into the hands of the media and they report this, would they be incorrect? Would they be wrong?

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7.25 p.m.

That is why the debate must be two-fold. Both sides must present their case. I am going with what we are saying. I am guided by his comment, but I make the other point. This is not to score political points.

I also said resulting from the delays in the upgrading of teachers and I waited. I anticipated that the Minister would talk about the school meals and not tell me about the upgrading of teachers.

Mr. Ramrekersingh: It would do the hon. Member well to speak with the bargaining agent for teachers in this country to see where we have reached with the upgrading of teachers.

Mr. C. Sharma: Madam Speaker, while that is happening, thousands of school children are suffering. The responsibility is for the Government to upgrade the teachers. The bargaining unit for the teachers may have an input.

As I indicated, in the area of the Ministry of Community Development, Culture and Women's Affairs, we have seen a large allocation made for community centres and very little effort has been made to communicate with Members on both sides of the House, I suspect, about the establishment of community centres. I am raising this point for the simple reason, as do other Members on this side, that we need a number of community centres, and one of the ways to approach it is to get the communities involved to provide the labour and other resources that they may have, which will give us an opportunity to get larger centres or centres built for less money and the moneys that we may save can go towards furnishing them. That has not taken place for whatever reason.

I submit again today that the better approach is to make available the areas that are going to be serviced by the community centre, an opportunity to participate in the building of these community centres.

The final point is that the debate here today, requires much more information for all of us, in that we are given very little information. This is something that has been happening for a number of years. We have requested—and the records will show that Members on this side have requested information. In many instances the information is promised, in few instances it is delivered.

I conclude by saying to the Minister, the Member for St. Ann's East, we want to participate in this debate to make sure that more people benefit across Trinidad and Tobago. One way of allowing that to happen is to provide for us. Rather than the Minister get up to correct information that we have been provided with

by them, save us the effort by providing the correct information so we would be guided and we would reduce this debate to 10 to 15 minutes by each Member.

I thank you very much.

The Minister of Finance and Minister of Tourism (Hon. Wendell Mottley): Madam Speaker, it is not wrong information that is provided and we must put this in some context in that there is a budget of \$10 billion appropriation, and we are just dealing with less than \$200 million in transfers. These things come up in the course of normal administration. There are savings because of an additional public holiday in the school feeding programme, as I go through some of the transfers, the details of which we provided the Members.

We accelerated the divestment programme and, therefore, we did not have to spend money on auditing all those companies, therefore some saving arose. I do not think Members ought to be so concerned about details in some of these matters. Where I would be concerned as an Opposition Member, is if the percentage of these transfers in relation to the \$10 billion rose to an unacceptable figure. The mere fact that the last government, not this Government, delegated this authority for these transfers is indicative of some form of public administration consensus on these matters.

Madam Speaker, I am relieved that most of the debate centred around matters concerning the Ministry of Health. My colleague, the Minister of Health dealt appropriately with those matters and, therefore, that leaves me very little else to deal with and I, too, am under directions from the Member for St. Augustine, as far as time goes.

Let me deal with the matter raised by the hon. Member for Tobago West, on the question of Calmaquip and the matter of where are our priorities. Why, if savings arose did we not give bulldozers to the Tobago House of Assembly? The Calmaquip matter is not a new one. It has its genesis going way back into the 1980s. In fact, the claim of Calmaquip was laid at the door of the last government in January, 1991. Through a process of discussions, and even threats, the matter was finally settled as it was outlined here. It is not a though Calmaquip made a claim one Monday morning and the Government rushed to settle it next Tuesday morning.

There was also the question raised by the Member for Chaguanas about the Government's priorities, the question of the SHARE Programme and whether we have been biased in the allocations of those moneys. Madam Speaker, the hon. Member for San Juan/Barataria, in response to questions raised by the Member

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for Oropouche, provided a detailed list of the allocations to those NGOs and other agencies benefitting from this programme. The list clearly demonstrates a wide distribution throughout this country. So that there is a geographical distribution but also a wide list of beneficiary organizations that are disbursing these funds. There are churches, mandirs, mosques, village councils, St. Vincent De Paul Society, all kinds of organizations. There is a procedure by which these organizations make a request to the Ministry of Social Development and there are criteria laid out.

Independent teams investigate the *bona fides* of these organizations and after the allocations are made, there is a system of reporting back so that we can track the expenditure of these funds to see whether an organization continues to meet the requirements of the state in the respects laid out by the Ministry of Social Development. We are not saying that the programme is entirely foolproof, but we are attempting to modify it, shape it and keep it a responsible programme of social distribution.

In addition, the Member for Chaguanas talked about the Government not carrying out its mandate as far as generating employment and so forth. Madam Speaker, the day is past when the Government took on the primary role for creating jobs directly under the aegis of the central government or its agencies. It cannot do that. It does not have the funding to do that. In a new system of economic management that role has been delegated, largely to the private sector, but the Government has profound responsibilities in that pact. It has created the macroeconomic climate under which that can happen and furthermore it is creating the institutional framework, the changes in legislation; then it has taken that final step and gone out there and is actively promoting investments, whether through NGC, TIDCO or otherwise and assisting successful business to break through into new markets in Venezuela, Columbia and so forth, under the aegis of the Ministry of Trade and Industry. The Government has responsibilities. It is not as though the state just said to the private sector, "Look it" and walked away from the responsibilities. It has responsibilities and it acknowledges them and it is discharging them. That system is working and the hon. Prime Minister drew reference to the fact that the unemployment rates were coming down.

We are seeing that the construction industry is picking up steam. It is true that construction jobs are not in any single construction event a permanent job. But the level of construction activity can be shown to be sustainable over fairly long periods and construction workers are accustomed to going from one job to the other, and are capable of sustaining livelihood over a lifetime of fairly high-paid

employment, to the point where, at this stage, we are having some concerns about shortages in certain sectors and certain trades in the construction industry, especially for high skilled welders.

7.35 p.m.

Apart from that, the Government, at the time that it won its mandate had published a document about its role in the short term in getting employment quick-started, while this business of private sector encouragement was on the way. We discharged that mandate. The URP programme has been running at a well-funded steady level. We are not playing games with it. In addition, we talked about concepts such as the Civilian Conservation Corps; we implemented and funded it. It is recruiting in a very transparent manner and it is running right across the country with a bias towards rural unemployment. The Civilian Conservation Corps tends to deal with forestry and projects which have a rural bias.

Further, there is the whole apprenticeship programme, and increasingly we are providing more and more funding towards apprenticeship programmes. These are issues we talked about when we put out our manifesto and we have discharged those responsibilities. As the apprenticeship programmes have gotten roots, we are now getting more and more sophisticated, spreading it into techvoc, but also taking it to the upper echelons of trade in which we are getting the German Fitzwerne Institute to train our trainers in the high end of the skill market in response to some of the very sophisticated skills that are required.

It is absolutely untrue to say that the Government is blind to the concerns of the unemployed. Rather we have followed a very structured programme, short term, medium term and towards the longer term in discharging these responsibilities.

I do not think that there was any other major matter that was raised from the other side. Therefore, with these words, I beg to move.

Question put and agreed to.

Report adopted.

FINANCE (VARIATION OF APPROPRIATION) BILL

Order of second reading read.

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

That the Bill to vary the appropriation provided for by the Appropriation Act, 1994 and to authorize the utilization of any sums occurring from a reduction in expenditure under certain Heads of Expenditure for the

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purpose of meeting any liability incurred through the increase in expenditure under other Heads, be 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 Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley): Madam Speaker, I beg to move that the House do now adjourn to Friday, March 31, 1995 at 1.30 p.m.

I wish to inform Members that on that day the Government would be debating the Public Sector Arrears of Emoluments Bill, 1995. This Government also intends to debate the Sugar Industry Control Board (Repeal) Act on that day.

Question put and agreed to.

House adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 7.40 p.m.