

*Leave of Absence*

*Wednesday, December 20, 1995*

**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

*Wednesday, December 20, 1995*

The House met at 1.33 p.m.

**PRAYERS**

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

**LEAVE OF ABSENCE**

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, I wish to advise that there has been communication from the Prime Minister, the hon. Member for Couva North and he is excused from attending today's sitting of the House of Representatives.

**SEASON'S GREETINGS**

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, there has also been communication from the Tobago House of Assembly wishing the hon. Members of this House a very happy and blessed Christmas.

**OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN  
(JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE)**

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, I have received communication from Sen. The Hon. Ganace Ramdial, President of the Senate, which reads as follows:

"December 20, 1995

Hon. Hector McClean, MP  
Speaker of the House of Representatives,  
Speaker's Office  
Parliament,  
Red House,  
Port of Spain  
Honourable Speaker,

I refer to your letter of December 11, 1995 and inform you that the Senate, at a Sitting held on Tuesday, December 19, 1995 agreed to the following Resolution which was moved by the hon. Attorney General.

*Office of the Ombudsman*  
[MR. SPEAKER]

*Wednesday, December 20, 1995*

"Be it Resolved that this Honourable Senate take note of the 17th Annual Report of the Ombudsman for the period January 01, 1994 to December 31, 1994 (hereinafter referred to as the said report):

And Be it Further Resolved that pursuant to Standing Order (71) this honourable Senate appoint six Members to sit with Members of the House as a Joint Select Committee for the purpose of considering the said Report and the functions and duties of the Office of the Ombudsman and to make recommendations for a more effective machinery for the office of the Ombudsman so that Part II of Chapter 06 of the Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago can be given effect. "

The Resolution is accordingly forwarded for the attention of the House of Representatives.

Yours respectfully,

Ganace Ramdial

President of the Senate

May I also indicate to hon. Members that there is yet another item which should be handled under this heading, "Announcements by the Speaker", and that would be deferred to a later stage of the proceedings.

**PAPERS LAID**

1. Thirty-eighth Report of the Salaries Review Commission. [*The Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs (Hon. Kamla Persad-Bissessar)*]
2. Report of the Auditor General on the accounts of the Industrial Development Corporation for the year ended December 31, 1984. (*Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar*)
3. Report of the Auditor General on the accounts of the Industrial Development Corporation for the year ended December 31, 1985. (*Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar*).
4. Report of the Auditor General on the accounts of the Industrial Development Corporation for the year ended December 31, 1986. (*Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar*)

*Papers Laid*

*Wednesday, December 20, 1995*

5. Accounts and Financial Statements for the year ended March 31, 1994 of the Non-Reimbursable Technical Co-operation Agreement ATN/SF-3650-TT between the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago and the Inter-American Development Bank. (*Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar*)
6. Accounts and Financial Statements for the period January 01 to August 31, 1995 of the Programme in accordance with the Non-Reimbursable Technical Co-operation Agreement ATN/SF-3388-TT between the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago and the Inter-American Development Bank. (*Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar*)

*(Papers 2 to 6 to be referred to the Public Accounts Committee)*

**1.40 p.m**

7. Report of the Auditor General on the accounts of the Trinidad and Tobago Export Credit Insurance Company Limited for the year ended December 31, 1994. [*Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar*]

*To be referred to the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee*

#### **FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT**

##### **Presentation**

**The Minister of Finance (Sen. The Hon. Brian Kuei Tung):** Mr. Speaker, I beg to present the following report:

First Report (1995-1996 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, 1995.

##### **BUDGET 1996**

**The Minister of Finance (Sen. The Hon. Brian Kuei Tung):** Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to announce that the first budget presentation of the new government of national unity will be delivered to this honourable House on Wednesday, January 10, 1996.

##### **FINANCE (VARIATION OF APPROPRIATION) (1995) BILL**

Bill to vary the appropriation of the sum the issue of which was authorized by the Appropriation Act, 1995 [*The Minister of Finance*]; read the first time.

*Motion made*, That the next stage be taken at a later stage of the proceedings.  
[Hon. B. Kuei Tung]

*Question put and agreed to.*

**FINANCE COMMITTEE (FIRST REPORT)**

**The Minister of Finance (Sen. The Hon. Brian Kuei Tung):** Mr. Speaker, I beg to move the following Motion:

*Be it resolved*, That this House adopt the First Report, (1995-1996 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, 1995.

Mr. Speaker, the Finance Committee of the House of Representatives met on Friday, December 15, 1995 and agreed to a number of proposals which included the variation of expenditure under several Heads of expenditure totalling \$45 million as follows:

Under Head 25—Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources an increase of \$9 million. Under Head 26—Ministry of Education, an increase of \$36 million. Under Head 36—Ministry of Housing and Settlements, a decrease of \$30 million and under Head 43—Ministry of Works and Transport, a decrease of \$15 million. This gave a total increase of \$45 million and a total decrease of \$45 million.

I would like to provide some details of the variations. Firstly an increase in allocation in the sum of \$9 million for the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources. This increase was on account of the Global Agricultural Credit Programme. The funds which will be transferred to the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources are to permit the Agricultural Development Bank to further disburse loans to farmers.

In 1995, the sum of \$18 million was provided in the estimates in the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources for the Agricultural Development Bank for on-lending to farmers. I would like to give an idea of some of the areas which benefited from this provision.

A total of 249 loans have been disbursed. For sugar cane cultivation there had been 125 loans; for vegetable farming, 50 loans; for agro-industries, 25 loans;

dairy farmers 25 loans; for cocoa rehabilitation five loans; for livestock five loans; for horticulture six; and fishing eight loans, a total of 249 loans.

With the new supplementary sum of \$9 million the following areas are anticipated:

In sugar cane cultivation, another 60 loans; vegetable farming 30 loans; agriculture and agro-industries 20 loans; for livestock another five loans; horticulture five loans; fishing five loans and this would require a total of 125 loans.

Next, an increase in the allocation in the sum of \$36 million for the Ministry of Education. This sum has been earmarked to enhance the Skills Development Programme which has had great success. With respect to the Ministry of Education these additional funds are needed to finance the Skills Development Programme, a programme which has been designed to meet the shortage of skilled personnel at middle management level in industry, particularly in the energy sector. There are presently 250 students enrolled full time and 300 students part time. It is expected that this programme will be increased to cater for approximately 600 full-time students and 1200 part-time students by 1997.

Of the 250 students enrolled full time, 150 students are being trained in mechanical engineering and 100 students in electrical and electronic engineering at the following venues:

**1.50 p.m.**

Technical Trade School at Wrightson Road—60 students

Petrotrin Trade School—80 students

Metal Industries Trade School (Basic training)—80 students

Metal Industries Trade School (Advanced training)—30 students.

Mr. Speaker, I am happy to advise that this programme is already one year ahead of schedule, and was accelerated in 1995 because funding was obtained through credit facilities. The sum of \$10 million was provided in 1995, but this proved to be insufficient to meet the demands of this accelerated programme. The supplementary allocation of \$36 million, therefore, is required to meet outstanding payments and keep the programme going.

Mr. Speaker, a reduction in allocation to the Ministry of Housing and Settlements of \$30 million. In the case of Caroni Village, a contract was awarded

*Finance Committee Report*  
[HON. B. KUEI-TUNG]

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on April 20, 1995 by the Central Tenders Board for the implementation of infrastructural works. However, the contractor has been unable to satisfy conditions precedent to a firm order being issued, and the Chief State Solicitor is now taking steps to have the contract determined. The Ministry of Housing and Settlements will seek to have a new contract awarded in 1996.

With respect to Edinburgh 500, delays in the laying of sewer mains have hindered the construction of the sewage treatment plant. The National Housing Authority anticipates commencement of construction during the first quarter of 1996.

With respect to Malick Phase I, this project involves the provision of infrastructure as part of the Squatter Regularization programme. A contract was awarded in September 1994 with a completion date of March, 1995. This contract has progressed very slowly to the extent that only approximately 14 per cent of the works have been completed by the end of November 1995. Steps are now being taken to have this contract terminated.

With respect to the Shelter Construction Financing Facility, this project involves the provision of loans to beneficiaries who were allocated lots at Bon Air, Harmony Hall and Couva North. Delays in the processing of applications for loans have hindered the implementation of this project, and as at the end of November, 1995 only 83 applications have been approved out of a total of approximately 1,812.

Mr. Speaker, with respect to the reduction in allocation to the Ministry of Works and Transport of \$15 million, the Road Rehabilitation Programme in the 1995 Development Programme estimated the sum of \$25 million would have been provided for the award of a contract for engineering works, mobilization and rehabilitation of roads under the Road Rehabilitation Programme. As at November 30, 1995 only design work has been completed on this programme.

Tenders have been invited for both rehabilitation and supervision contracts. Tenders submitted for rehabilitation works were too high and could not be accommodated from within the 1995 allocation. As a consequence, no award was made and the tenders were cancelled. The Ministry of Works and Transport in conjunction with the Ministry of Planning and Development will be pursuing an alternative implementation strategy. No expenditure is anticipated under this programme for 1995.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I wish to state that the variations in the sum of \$45 million will not increase the total appropriation. They represent transfers being made between Heads of Expenditure.

Mr. Speaker, I beg to move.

*Question proposed.*

**Dr. Vincent Lasse** (*Point Fortin*): Mr. Speaker, this being my first intervention in this House, I wish to echo the sentiments of those who have preceded me in congratulating you on your assumption as presiding officer of this House.

Mr. Speaker, having known you for many years when I served my country in the United States and, again, in the United Kingdom, where you yourself were rendering your services as a legal personality to the Commonwealth, I can attest to your positive contributions in that regard. Having said this, Mr. Speaker, I am of the firm opinion that you are well poised to control the deliberations of this House.

Let me also wish you, Mr. Speaker, and Members on both sides of this House the very best wishes for Christmas and the New Year. Mr. Speaker, we on this side note, with sadness, newspaper reports concerning the honourable Prime Minister. We on this side avail ourselves of the opportunity to wish him a speedy recovery. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak on the Finance Committee Report. This seeks to authorize the utilization of any sums accruing from a reduction in expenditure under certain Heads of Expenditure for the purpose of meeting any liability incurred through the increase in expenditure under other Heads.

We on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker, have a measure of reservation, or should I say concern, with the transfer of funds from the Settlement Construction Financing facility from the Ministry of Housing and Settlements to the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources for three reasons:

- (1) The funds allocated under the heading are specific in nature and governed by an agreement entitled: Loan Contract between the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago and the Inter-American Development Bank—National Settlements Programme.
- (2) We are concerned about comments made by a Member of the UNC/NAR coalition government which, in essence, stated that there

was no need for a Ministry of Housing and that the construction of housing units should not be undertaken by the Government.  
[*Interruption*]

**Mr. Valley:** Who said that?

**Dr. V. Lasse:** The Member for St. Augustine. In short, persons should be given land to build their own units. This approach, Mr. Speaker, as history would have shown, failed miserably during the 1987/1991 period.

(3) I refer to "Housing subsidies to fall". This was based on an article I read in the Trinidad Guardian this morning.

Let me return to our first concern, and ask the Minister responsible whether this action was proper or legal; was it done in keeping with the spirit and letter of the agreement with the Inter-American Development Bank; and whether there was consultation with the IDB to transfer funds allocated for housing construction from the Ministry of Housing and Settlements to the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources?

I would like to receive some answers to these questions because we have been hearing much talk on the other side about transparency.

**2.00 p.m.**

Let me turn to the objective of the programme. I shall read from the agreement dated June 20, 1990. This is in the annex.

"The objective of the programme is to support the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago's new settlement policy of offering affordable new housing solutions to the low income population without incurring heavy public expenditures. To achieve this, the programme shall:

- (a) provide approximately 5,000 serviced lots to low income beneficiaries;
- (b) provide a construction financing facility for progressive shelter solutions, and;
- (c) implement the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago's first comprehensive policy for upgrading squatter



settlements, including the provision of approximately 2,500 upgraded, regularized squatter lots.

Very important is reference in this agreement to the second component, which states:

"The second component shall consist of construction financing and support service for the shelter solution option selected by the beneficiary.

The third component shall be to construct approximately five community centres."

From what I have quoted from the Agreement, there is a variety of programmes or sub-programmes to which funds could have been transferred—squatter regularization; construction of community facilities. Here the programme was very clear that wherever there are 400 or more lots, community centres would be constructed. Therefore, on this first point I would rest my case and seek clarification from the appropriate minister or ministers.

I turn now to the comments made by the Member of the UNC/NAR coalition Government, that there should not be a Ministry of Housing and Settlements and that probably individuals should be given land to construct their own homes. Such statements could be termed by right-thinking persons as irresponsible and also could send shivers through the spines of the hundreds of thousands of homeless persons in our society.

The last administration—and I speak here of the PNM administration—recognized that the provision of land by itself did not and could not address the housing needs of the low-income persons in our society.

Further to this, recent studies reveal that approximately 115,081 new housing units will be required during the period 1996—2005. That is why the PNM administration had put in place a strategy to construct 5,000 housing units per year for the next 10 years. We, on this side, view the construction of houses not only as a means to house persons, but also as a vehicle to create employment. So when the PNM administration put in place a strategy for the construction of 5,000 housing units per year, we were thinking in terms of the generation of employment for up to 25,000 persons per year, albeit temporary.

That is why the PNM administration, in conjunction with the private sector, had commenced a programme of accelerated housing construction. That is why also, the PNM administration had put in place a \$30 million construction programme within the NHA. That programme has borne fruit and continues to bear fruit.

The first phase of that programme was the construction of 275 housing units throughout Trinidad and Tobago, north to south, east to west. On the sale of those units, there would be a roll-on programme. What we discovered was that that programme provided an impetus for the workers of the National Housing Authority whereby persons then received a certain amount of security for not being retrenched because they would be gainfully employed in this \$30 million housing construction programme.

**2.10 p.m.**

That is why the PNM administration had carefully examined the policies of the NAR administration and had decided, very wisely, to adopt and modify where possible the workable programmes. We did not change or discard on frivolous grounds.

I can recall the Minister of Housing, in that administration, my Friend, the distinguished Member for Tobago West, on handing over to me—and I appreciated that because there was no handing over at this time—said she was happy to hand over so that there would be some continuity; because government is continuous in certain ways.

She said to me then that I have made track for agouti to run. I am to report to her today that the agouti did run. *[Laughter]* It is the first time in our short history that within such a short period of time so many houses had been constructed in Trinidad and Tobago. *[Desk thumping]*

We on this side believe it is time for the Minister of Housing and Settlements to tell this honourable House, and the nation what is the housing policy of the UNC/NAR coalition Government. *[Desk thumping]* I say this in the context of the transfer of funds from the Ministry of Housing to the Ministry of Agriculture. I think it is time that the Minister tells this honourable House, and the nation at large, what is the policy on housing; and, what were the reasons for transferring those funds.

To my mind the reasons advanced are not good enough. I am speaking here of the shelter construction financing facility. It states: “This project involves the provision of loans to beneficiaries who were allocated lots at Bon Air, Harmony Hall and Couva North. Delays in the processing of the applications for loans have hindered the implementation of the project.”

Mr. Speaker, I believe that we were all aware of the fact that the first two or three years of that programme had been more or less infrastructural works—preparing the lots—and now the time has come when there would be a flood of applications and we cannot use the fact that there was delay in processing as an excuse in order to transfer funds out of the Ministry of Housing into the Ministry of Agriculture.

I can recall that during 1995 there were about 133 houses already constructed and most of these had been done by private owners who sought finance by other means. There had been about 3,450 applications out of 4,286 lots, I believe—that was by November, 1995. Also, there were 1,889 lot-sale-agreements executed and deeds had been issued to some 756 persons. These are deeds in hand.

Today we hear that out of 1,812 applications, only 83 had been approved, and, of course, the funds have been transferred. I think what is necessary is to speed up the process of those applications.

This morning, December 20, 1995, I read in the *Trinidad Guardian* “Housing subsidies to fall”—I really hope that is a misprint. When I follow the line which was established in this article, it seems to be calling for an injection of more funds into the Ministry of Housing than a reduction in the budget. Let me quote:

“A warning has come from government that budgetary allocations to public sector housing programmes of the Ministry of Housing may be significantly reduced and that this could affect subsidies to low income groups.”

I read further in the article that:

“Minister Humphrey...”

who—

“...was still recuperating.”

and the Director of Planning who seemed to have been sitting in for him, mentioned:

“There is an increasing demand over supply in the housing market especially in the low and middle income categories.”

A contradiction. He went on to state that:

“Recent studies with respect to shelter and land development, under technical co-operation assistance through the IDB, reveal that approximately 115,081 new housing units will be required during the 10-year period 1995-2005.

He said most of the homeless in the country cannot afford any kind of adequate housing, hence the high incidence of squatting.”

And he concluded by stating that:

““ is estimated that there are over 50,000 squatters...”

In Trinidad and Tobago.

We on this side are very concerned, but from what the Director of Planning said, it is clear, in our view, that there is a need for an increase in the budgetary allocation to the Ministry of Housing and Settlements.

Mr. Speaker, to conclude, those of us on this side hope that good sense would prevail in the provision of housing to the homeless persons in our society.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**2.20 p.m**

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, there are two matters which are, in fact, on the Order Paper. Both of them deal with the same subject matter, and one that is now being debated. It is the question that the House adopt the First Report (1995—1996 Session) of the Finance Committee.

What is to come afterwards is the Second Reading of the Bill on the same subject matter. What is, in fact, being done now is the question of the adoption of the First Report.

**Mr. Maharaj:** Mr. Speaker, I spoke with the Opposition Chief Whip and we had agreed—we should have mentioned to you that we would discuss both matters at the same time.

**The Minister of Housing and Settlements (Hon. John Humphrey):** Mr. Speaker, there is an old saying; if wishes were horses beggars would ride.' The

contribution of the former Minister of Housing and Settlements reminds me of that.

I am going to read from an expert report to establish what has been estimated, I think, quite accurately, as to the housing needs of the country in the 10-year period 1995—2005. In this context I want hon. Members to note that in the four years of the regime of the hon. Member for Point Fortin, he delivered 215 houses to the people of Trinidad and Tobago. I am quoting from, the Planning and Development Collaborative International Inc. (PADCO) and Laughlin & Associates Limited Report, Volume 1: *The Context for Action Proposed Implementation Strategy and Programme*.

"Projected Effective Housing Demand 1995—2005

PADCO/Laughlin & Associates estimates that 115,000 new units will be required in Trinidad and Tobago during the ten year period between 1995 and 2005. Table 1 shows new housing needs by six geographical areas, three socio-economic groupings and two housing types. Our analysis of effective housing demand shows a potential demand for about 36,500 minimum complete housing units and another 29,000 minimum core units which are unsubsidized. An additional 50,000 units, however, would require some degree of subsidy in order to be built to current standards (PEU Core House) and to be affordable to the target population."

I am not going to go through the entire table, but the enormity of the requirement illustrates, quite clearly, that the performance of my predecessor was absolutely and totally dismal.

In fact, the only projects undertaken by that Minister in that Government that have been delivered effectively are the projects initiated by the NAR Government, first, when I was Minister and when the hon. Member for Tobago West was the Minister of Housing and Settlements.

It is a great pity that I have not been able to get every bit of data, but I have got a little that I want to read into the record to indicate how effective was the management of the PNM Government in delivering housing accommodation to the population. I am going to give three projects that have been delivered.

Firstly, 28 units at Bath Street which were delivered in 1992 at a total cost of \$3.7 million; the average cost per unit was \$132,142.00. The annual revenues per unit anticipated but never collected, and never could be collected, was \$9,800.00.

Secondly, Ramdial Mahabir, Phase 1. Completed in 1994 and delivered on the eve of the election at a total cost of \$10.8 million, 48 units. Cost per unit—\$225,000.00. The annual revenue per unit was supposed to be \$16,800.00—a very large subsidy.

Thirdly, Cook Street—1995. Total cost \$6.5 million. Number of Units—23. Cost per unit—\$282,608.00. Annual revenues per unit anticipated—\$8,050.00. That indicates how effective the strategy undertaken by that regime has been and could possibly be.

Let me give you the estimates of the experts and ask the hon. Minister of Finance, to please take note.

"Assuming that full PEU..."

This is on the strategy laid out by my predecessor's regime—

"...costs are used for all housing with no reduction in standards or costs, the total housing investment required during 1995—2005 period..."

Which is the period we would be in office, in the first instance—

"...is estimated at about TT \$18.6 billion. Some 42.4 per cent of all new housing units would need to be subsidized, requiring TT \$3.5 billion."

Through you, Mr. Speaker, I ask the Minister of Finance to take note.

I recognize that there is no way on earth that we could finance that programme unless, of course, there is no other development in Trinidad and Tobago. I have argued that there is really no need for a housing ministry *per se*, for the simple reason that there is the National Housing Authority which is a statutory authority, a very large establishment that, in fact, can attend to the housing needs of one sector of the society which is the sector to which I have always argued, the state should attend.

### **2.30 p.m.**

There is a mortgage programme which has been designed and put in place. Let us look at the performance of that programme. In five years home owners have accessed a total of 1,300 mortgages from the commercial banking network of preferred lenders. Those commercial banks are given a tax concession to make funds available for home construction and a mortgage. In five years 1,300 were accessed. Approximately the same number is accounted for in the Trinidad and Tobago Mortgage Finance Company which is a company set up to purchase

mortgages to put more money into the system to encourage more mortgage financing. You can see the extent of the requirement of 115,000 new units. They delivered 210 new complete units in four years, and 1,300 accessed the mortgage facilities that were in place.

That is not all I inherited. I inherited perhaps what is the most insidious programme I have ever had the misfortune to find. Obviously, a careful analysis was undertaken of the marginal constituencies in this country, where the policy of delivery of housing units was aimed at giving the then party in power an electoral advantage. That is what I discovered. They were expediting a programme on turnkey arrangements with the private sector to change the balance of voting in certain marginal seats, one of which is called Tunapuna and another of which is called Barataria/San Juan.

A sum of \$130 million was allocated to these turnkey fast-tracking projects, that had they not been forced by one circumstance or another to call an early election, would have put them in the electoral advantage by the end of 1996 to have their own activists located in these two marginal seats. At that rate, how could the financial resources of the country ever deliver the targeted 115,000 units in 10 years? That is not all.

Let us look at the cost of delivering certain services under their programme. I think the problem is that the people who took the decisions really live more outside of Trinidad and Tobago than inside because that is where they got their inspiration and guidance. Let us look at the cost of regularizing a squatter household. If you grade the roadway with a gravel sub-base and you put earthen drainage except for culvert crossings and bridges; public standpipe for water, main water supply to lush; communal washing; bathing facilities; on lot cesspits or septic tank soak-away and electricity supply, that would cost \$10,000. That is not the standard that is being imposed on squatter settlements. The standard that is being imposed on squatter settlements requires the expenditure of \$17,000 per allotment. There are 50,000 squatter households. Multiply 50,000 by \$17,000 and see if this country could ever regularize the squatter households.

What has happened is that when that regime was in office, they were never really concerned with sheltering any of the class interests in the society. They were never concerned with providing the services to enable the middle class to have a sense of security with shelter. They must have been concerned with sheltering the super rich because we have seen several projects mushrooming in different parts of the country to accomplish that. I do not know if it was a mind

set that emerged out of their association with the super rich that made them believe that they could impose the same standards that the super rich enjoyed on the poor. The fact is that only a tiny percentile of the population could ever hope to be super rich. By imposing the standards of infrastructural development on the poor, dispossessed, landless, homeless, and squatters, it would be impossible for them to survive economically. That is why I argued that there is really no need for a housing ministry *per se*.

The mission of the National Housing Authority has been redirected because that is the agency that was forced by the decisions of that regime to try to deliver on that basis accommodation for poor people costing \$250,000.00. Obviously, they could not pay for it, so somebody had to pay for it. When 115,000 houses were needed in 10 years, they provided 210 in four years.

They talked about the groundwork being laid. The groundwork was laid in the earliest days of the NAR Government. We identified a number of settlement sites throughout Trinidad and Tobago and went in there to deliver appropriate standards of infrastructure to enable poor people to access them. If that programme had accelerated there would have been no problem of land delivery because that is far easier than shelter delivery. The resources required in land delivery are far less than in shelter delivery. In fact, land delivery does not require very much foreign exchange input. However, shelter delivery does require a great deal of foreign exchange input.

The mission of the National Housing Authority is no longer to tip the electoral balance in favour of one group or another. The mission of the National Housing Authority is now being directed to servicing the needs of those who cannot service their own needs by themselves. We are going to free the lending institutions and the Trinidad and Tobago Mortgage Finance Company to service the market that the private sector can satisfy. The National Housing Authority and the Ministry of Settlements will work in partnership with the private sector in seeking to stimulate the private sector's delivery of all categories of shelter for all classes in the society.

We have land that does not cost us anything because it belongs to the state, that is the people of Trinidad and Tobago, and a tremendous amount of expertise within our population both within the state and private sector. By this means, we will encourage provision of shelter for the middle class, upper middle class and perhaps a little below the level of the middle class, while the mission of the National Housing Authority will be redirected to providing shelter for the poor.



The Act vests tremendous powers in the National Housing Authority, and again this is why I say there is no need for a ministry of housing but there is need for a minister. It enables the Authority to do many things which have never been done. We are looking at two things that the Act enables us to do; to establish a home bank for the poor and an insurance to indemnify the poor. In the event of hardship or adverse circumstances, they would not lose what they have put into their homes. These things will require a tremendous amount of subsidy. There is no question about it because we would be catering for the poorest in the society.

**2.40 p.m.**

A man is poor because he has no wealth. If he has no wealth, he cannot go to the commercial lending agency and say, "Lend me money" because they will say, "Show me your wealth before I lend you some of mine." The policy is, you have none, you get none of theirs. So we have to build an institution that will avail the poor of the resources necessary to enable them to improve their conditions of shelter. That is one of the things that we are trying to put in place.

Of course, if a person has a permanent job, he can organize his life—he can budget his income, he can allocate, and he can put aside a certain amount to service his mortgage on his home. But if he does not have a job and he has no income, is it that he is no longer a human being and therefore no longer entitled to shelter himself and his family? No, Mr. Speaker. We recognize that the state must service those who cannot, on their own, service themselves. That is the mission of the National Housing Authority under this Minister. So all tiers of the market will be serviced.

Even though I have been out of active service for a while, from my nursing home bed I started working and putting in place the reforms necessary. I have already held discussions—that is when I was sick and walked out of my bed into my living room—with the representative of the Inter-American Development Bank. These discussions will go higher because the present strategy is unrealistic, impractical and cannot possibly deliver to the satisfaction of any grouping in the society. All it will do is create distortions. If we continue to build expensive shelters and give them away for political consideration, sooner or later there will be no resources to continue the process. Sooner or later we will find ourselves in quicksand where, merely to maintain the structures we have built at our own cost and to pay the taxes and the rates of utilities, will exhaust all allocations.

I must say that the representative of the Inter-American Development Bank was very sympathetic and he agreed that we must change our approach. In fact, he admitted that that regime could not deliver. This is why we see a transfer of funds. Let us face it. That regime was not interested in delivering.

"I am in power," said the Member for San Fernando East when he looked at himself in the mirror, "and I will be there until I get old and grey." What a shock was in store for him! I say, Thank God or whoever it was who was deluding him and invited him to call early elections and free Trinidad and Tobago of the burden of his leadership.

Mr. Speaker, I have had countless meetings and out of those meetings have emerged some wonderful ideas that, as Minister, I have already sought to initiate for practical delivery. The turnkey projects that I have described, that were seeking to change the balance of the electorate, have pointed the way to enable the ministry to get into the market in partnership with private enterprise, and to develop viable projects that could turn a profit and satisfy one level of the market, which would then give us that profit to invest for the poor. We have already had agreements on a couple of those projects.

I am very happy to announce that work has already started on upgrading the Savannah Villas adjacent to the Aranguez Savannah. That impacts on the Member for St. Joseph who is the parliamentary representative in that area. We will see emerge, south of the Aranguez Savannah, a very beautiful middle-class housing settlement with all of the services required for the middle-class. In that way, we will make a contribution to expanding the middle class of the society. If a society does not have a strong middle class, it cannot be stable. We recognize that.

The exercise on the project in the mountains that overlook the Mount Hope Medical Sciences Complex commenced today. This again impacts on the constituency of St. Joseph. We are upgrading those as well to market them. We will continue that strategy where the state agency, the National Housing Authority, has land already vested in it and will facilitate private enterprise. The private enterprises will source funding and will rally professional resources to deliver high density and not-so-high density units for that segment of the society.

Meanwhile, we intend to offer a mix for the poor, and it will not be long before we come to this Parliament to debate the means by which we can give security to the squatter population on state lands and find a formula whereby we

can satisfy private landowners, and achieve security for squatters on private lands as well. In this way, we will put 50,000 existing houses on the market for upgrading, improving and expanding.

If each house in that process employs one person, there will be 50,000 jobs created; if it employs two, 100,000 jobs will be created. However, we will not impose the \$17,000 cost per lot on those communities. We will seek to organize them into communities in a very democratic way with the support of the technical capability of the Ministry. We will then direct programmes like the Unemployment Relief Programme and seek to get the National Commission for Self-Help to assist in community mobilization for gradually upgrading the infrastructure of those settlement communities at relatively little cost to those communities.

**2.50 p.m.**

In that way one can then divert the financial resources which are considerable—and I wish somebody would do the calculations quickly. What does 17,000 x 50,000 work out to be? We will divert those resources to opening up more land, delivering basic infrastructure to that land and giving a mix of land service—that figure is \$2.5 billion to regularize the squatting community—which could be immediately occupied by the residents who would be encouraged to build their own houses. The Ministry will provide a service, and I am inviting all the architects to come in the new year and I am going to offer them a commission to design approaches to incremental type housing, houses that could start in small increments, and with additions over the years, expand to middle class standard, to which every human being should aspire.

We are also going to encourage the development of a sensible core, and we have had such a thing in the past. In Diamond Vale, an American company was awarded a contract to provide starter houses many years ago. They designed those houses in such a way that they could be expanded in any direction outwards or upwards. They were made out of reinforced concrete and the roof of the first unit, a habitable unit which was a starter house, was built with a floor loading and not a roof loading; in other words, built stronger. It enabled the erection of walls and framed roofs so that it could be utilized as a floor to build a second storey.

Mr. Speaker, I invite you to take a drive through Diamond Vale today and see if you could recognize any of the original core houses. Every house one examines in Diamond Vale contains one of the original core houses. That is the

kind of intelligent designing we will offer. *[Interruption]* I do not even think he was born then.

**Miss Nicholson:** Yes, he was born; he was giving trouble in Tobago.

**Hon. J. Humphrey:** Mr. Speaker, that is a good example of how to approach the starter process. We are going to develop even more innovative approaches.

I will give an example of one innovative approach which is really quite unique. This example came out of an experiment conducted almost 10 years ago by a particular architect who developed the idea that if a septic tank is designed in a certain way and it was connected structurally to a water tank in reinforced concrete, one could achieve sewage disposal, water reserve and the wet and dry core of the house, all the plumbing that could support a kitchen, laundry and bathroom, and the main electrical panel from which electricity could be taken to all parts of the house. *[Interruption]* If it is designed in such a way that one could easily connect through bolts and knots, one could start with that and expand one's house again. *[Interruption]* Mr. Speaker, I do not wish to repeat it, but I invite the hon. Leader of the Opposition to read the *Hansard*. *[Interruption]*

In the ground, I would explain how it would be erected.

One goes on the site with a simple backhoe to excavate a hole, bring components which are factory produced and plant them in the site, no foundation is required. *[Interruption]* The Member for Diego Martin East sometimes tells students at the University of the West Indies that he is an engineer, so I think he should answer that question himself. The answer to the question of how they would be lifted is, with a crane.

Mr. Speaker, when we deliver the sites with basic services, one can add a component to the house, to the services. That component gives standby water—I am sure the Minister of Public Utilities would be delighted to know that our people could, in fact, have a standby water supply, so when water is delivered to them they would use it more carefully and not run out of water.

These are the approaches, and I am inviting the architects in the new year to come forward, and since we do have the power to commission the architects to develop these designs we will so develop them. This would give us a very wide range of options which can be made available to little people who want to get started with the process of sheltering their families.

I have already had a meeting with an institution which was initiated out of the spirit of 1986, that spirit of “one love and national unity” that eluded us for a while but which we have been able to recapture again. *[Desk thumping]* We put together an institution which represents all facets of the construction industry, all the professionals—architects, engineers, land surveyors, quantity surveyors, cost accountants, large and small contractors—have come together. They now have a representative institution that is growing from strength to strength, where their officers can speak on behalf of the entire community. I have had a meeting with them and they have pledged their services as a partner with this Government in delivering the construction needs of the people of Trinidad and Tobago. We are going to continue to nurture that.

Mr. Speaker, I do not intend to take any more time on this occasion. All I can say is that the people of Trinidad and Tobago made the wisest choice when they enabled the People’s National Movement, under the leadership of the hon. Member for San Fernando East, to take the reins of Opposition *[Desk thumping]* and enabled this “one love” Government—*[Desk thumping]* We had it before, it was always there, and we have been able to recapture it and we have enjoyed a family reunion, but we have to credit the wisdom of the leadership of the United National Congress and the National Alliance for Reconstruction which has enabled this.

Mr. Speaker, before I take my seat, let me please add to the quota of congratulations and praise, and to say how happy I am to see discipline and dignity returned to this Parliament. It is because of you, Mr. Speaker. *[Desk thumping]*

Thank you.

**3.00 p.m.**

**Dr. Keith Rowley** (*Diego Martin West*): Mr. Speaker, having made a very categorical statement on reflection of the circumstances that the Government or a Government in Trinidad and Tobago does not need a Ministry of Housing, I have great difficulty in understanding how such a presenter of such a position could accept a portfolio called the Ministry of Housing. Unless of course, it is to carry out the assignment of dismantling the existing Ministry of Housing.

Mr. Speaker, I raise this in the context of much of what was said a few moments ago and what was said in 1987. If you may recall when you were here another time and another place, the Member for St. Augustine was the Minister of

Housing in 1987 and as a result of difficulties he had then, either with the function or the operations of the Ministry of Housing, he took the position that left to him alone, that he will disband the Ministry of Housing and get rid of all the people who work in that Ministry. I remember that statement and I am wondering now whether—*[Interruption]*

**Mr. Humphrey:** On a point of order! He is misrepresenting what I said. In fact, he is clearly misleading the House.

**Mr. Speaker:** Gentlemen, could I have an opportunity? The hon. Minister would be advised by the Chair that when indeed you do have a point of order one would appreciate your standing and directing this to me and pointing out the relevant Standing Order that you are claiming is being infringed and I will rule on it. If it is just a question of asking the Member to give way, that is something else.

**Hon. Humphrey:** Mr. Speaker, he is misleading the House.

**Mr. Speaker:** That really would not be a point of order. Please proceed.

**Dr. K. Rowley:** Mr. Speaker, I do not hold the files of public record for Trinidad and Tobago, but I am sure if the Member is saying now that in 1987 he did not make statements, the gist of which, left to him alone he would get rid of the Ministry of Housing and his public servants, then I would withdraw that. If there is no public record to prove that point I will withdraw it unreservedly. My memory serves me quite well because I remember at that time there was a severe attack launched on the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Housing in the context of that same argument. So if it is that I am wrong and he is right, then I would withdraw the statement, but I am sure that somewhere in the public record shows that that position was taken in 1987.

Then comes 1995 and before the Cabinet was appointed we hear again whether, in fact, there should be a Ministry of Housing. Then we see him accepting the portfolio as Minister of Housing. I am asking the Leader of Government Business whether, in fact, this Government intends to follow the position of the Member for St. Augustine and dismantle and disband the Ministry of Housing.

The Member for St. Augustine, the Minister of Housing sought to give us some kind of reasoning to support a position to explain what he said about the Ministry of Housing not being a requirement in the administration of his coalition

Government. He gave us a discourse on empathy for squatters, and sought to misrepresent the existing policy, which he is yet to change, that exists as a result of the administration that just went out of office. But what he fails to tell this House is that, in fact, there were two task forces.

There was a task force to look at housing, and in recognition of the fact that squatting was a peculiar problem impacting in a certain way with respect to the provision of accommodation, there was another task force specifically looking at the problems and solutions for the squatting situation, much of which had to do with his own misguided policies at an earlier time. As a result of the exercise of the task force on housing and on squatting there exists in Trinidad and Tobago today, a comprehensive housing policy to treat with the housing needs of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

The Member in his confused state—I ascribe no malice to him, I simply say he is confused because he goes on to quote from a document which says that the country requires 50,000 units or 100,000 units over a period of time, and sought to argue the case to give the impression that the Government's housing construction programme is the sole way by which those units should be built.

Therefore, since my colleague from Point Fortin, the hon. gentleman who had the responsibility for restarting a housing construction programme within that comprehensive programme, only delivered 200-plus units, the Minister sought to give the impression that the Government had embarked on a programme of creating 100,000 units and created only 200. But I must remind the Member that if the Member for Point Fortin in his tenure, had created 215 units which were occupied in that period of time, it is 215 more than the last administration— [*Desk thumping*]—who pursued the policy of building no houses.

Of course, to further complicate his confused state he goes on by talking about the only successful aspects of the programme were those aspects that were started by him and my Friend from Tobago West. But then he goes on to use an example from Bath Street to demonstrate how that approach was in fact, scandalous; because he quoted the Bath Street project; he quoted the cost of the Bath Street units and he demonstrated that this was the wrong way to go.

May I remind my Friend from St. Augustine that the Bath Street complex was an initiative that was substantially on the way and virtually complete when the PNM came into office in 1991. Insofar as the Bath Street construction programme was the wrong direction, had the wrong cost and whatever, he cannot in one

breath say that the only successful programme was that of his predecessor, the Member for Tobago West while criticising the same project as being too expensive and going in the wrong direction with respect to public housing. What is he saying? He is entirely confused!

We have said on this side that, yes, we understand that there is a need for housing at all levels of society in Trinidad and Tobago and the figure that he quoted of 100,000 units is not 100,000 units for squatters or for low income or lower middle income, it is the requirement for Trinidad and Tobago. Therefore, when the PNM came into office and looked at the situation we embarked on initiatives to put a comprehensive housing programme in place to take into account the requirements of all, from top to bottom in society and that is why we adopted, with some modifications, the extensive programmes to deal with squatting and squatter regularization.

### **3.10 p.m**

We accelerated the programmes to deal with mortgage provision, facilitating private sector construction through their mortgage agencies. We also came up with our own initiatives in some areas where we gave tax breaks to persons who had access to finance and who were inclined to do construction in the upper income unit level, for those persons who will buy at that level. As a result of those initiatives, we saw a substantial number of high income units being constructed and bought by those who had the funds to buy them.

In the meantime those units had to be constructed by persons who were looking for jobs and a substantial number of jobs were created either in the quarries; in garages; on the construction site; and in the block yard to service that high-rise construction, with which my Friend seems to have some kind of problem. We make no apologies for the fact that as one aspect of a wider policy, we have facilitated the construction of a number of high income units in this country, because there is a demand for such units; if there is no demand, the investor will not build them. It is not to please me, nor my Friend from St. Augustine. Because you have satisfied the need of the upper income level does not mean that it is exclusive, it does not mean that you cannot supply the needs of those at the lower income level.

He went on to give the impression that only in his philosophy there is some expression of compassion for those who are less fortunate and who are seeking their own land. Nothing is further from the truth.



When the Member mentioned the programme as formulated and expedited by himself and the Member for Tobago West, he forgot to mention, in seeking to talk about this unique compassion which flows from his heart, that there was the situation where persons accessing the Squatter Regularization Programme had to pay between \$25,000 and \$30,000 for the plot of land, that was the policy. A case can be made to argue whether it is too high, or too low, but the bottom line is, that was the condition.

We understand it was being funded by moneys borrowed from a lender who had certain terms and conditions to be met if one wanted to access those funds, and the Government, prior to the Government of 1991, negotiated that funding arrangement, and as part of the package, the recovery on those lots required that the beneficiary would pay to the state between \$25,000 and \$30,000. The Member made a big song and dance about being asked to pay \$17,000 but he forgot that \$17,000 is much less than \$30,000.

When we came into office, we took steps to re-negotiate with the lender and on the basis of those re-negotiations, we were able then to get some agreement from the lender to allow the programme to go ahead with a lower recovery. The bottom line both with our policy and that of the previous Government, the NAR, was that we accepted that persons were going to benefit from the improved environment like the roads and whatever goes in there. They got a plot of land which was more valuable, their conditions of life would be improved and that there is a cost. What we were haggling over with the agency was that cost. It is the PNM Government which got a lower cost arrangement for the people, so do not come here and talk about compassion. We did that. If the bank had not agreed to lower it, we would have had to live with the \$30,000.

In many areas, \$30,000 for a lot cannot be deemed to be oppressive and in many cases the persons who were going to be the beneficiaries agreed knowing what their own needs were and how they would benefit from that. They agreed to enter the programme even at \$30,000. I can tell you in Bamboo No. 1, Maturita and elsewhere in the country, the community qualified to have regularization by virtue of the required number of persons in the community agreeing to the programme, and as a result of that, we executed those programmes, and today, if you go there you will see what has been done. The regularization has taken place, these lots are now of a much higher value, people are living in better conditions but of course, we part company with our Friend from St. Augustine who seems to think that some of his ideas are literally—

**Mr. Humphrey:** Alien.

**Dr. K. Rowley:** No, earth shattering. Certainly they are alien to us in the PNM to see housing for the public in terms of open drains and communal toilets. That is alien to us.

**Mr. Imbert:** That is what he wants—shacks all over the country.

**Dr. K. Rowley:** I have no problem with that being his position, but I want to know if that is the position of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago today. What we heard here this afternoon is the same kind of talk we heard in 1987, except that they have gone one better now. The last time we were hearing about earthen drains and outhouses. Today we heard a thesis of a possible sewer and water tank in the same tank. *[Laughter]* I am waiting to see how that one would work because I know that the Minister of Health will have a difficult task. I watched him and I noticed his eyebrow went up because he knows where cholera comes from, and he knows how far raw sewer should be from drinking water. But my Friend from St. Augustine has these fantastic ideas; when he is not printing money, he is putting sewer and drinking water in the same tank. *[Laughter]*

Understand me very clearly. All I want to know from my colleagues on the other side is, is that the policy we are to expect? We are in no position to say to you—we have heard you saying to all and sundry that you intend to follow the PNM's policy. I want to make it quite clear that that has nothing whatsoever to do with any PNM policy. *[Desk thumping]* I want to make that abundantly clear. The first time this Government gets up and enunciates any policy for this country, it is a policy that is causing great concern to us on this side.

The Member for St. Augustine has his ideas but when those ideas become Government policy, we have to take note and determine whether, in fact, they are in the interest of the people of Trinidad and Tobago. We are not advocating at all any creation of earthen drains and communal toilets. We are also not advocating any public policy to do with any concrete tank where there is drinking water on one side and it is bolted up and there is sewer on the other side.

Mr. Speaker, I might not be an architect, nor an engineer but I am most certainly a geologist and I know that at least 40 per cent of this country's population live in areas where the soil is largely clay or soft sediment and I know if one puts any kind of tank in the ground anywhere south of the Caroni River, it is likely that some time in the life of that tank, because of earth movements and settlements and so forth, the tank could tip or lean. Imagine what is going to

happen—not to mention it could crack. Even if the tank does not crack, it could shift in the ground and I need not say what will happen to the contents from one side to the other side. I want to put my Friend from St. Augustine on notice that we are going to have great difficulty with these innovative ideas.

There is something else on which I wish to touch, very briefly, and it has to do with the ideology of my Friend from St. Augustine with respect to state lands. I know he feels a certain way about state lands, but when a Minister of Government gets up and refers to state land as "free", I have a problem with that. State land is not free. It is that kind of interpretation that sends the wrong signal to certain people in the national community who believe that they can then enter upon any parcel of state land because it is supposed to be free.

We have gone through much work in the last few years, starting with the NAR administration and the PNM administration, seeking to put in place a comprehensive land policy which would assist the state of Trinidad and Tobago to better manage the land resources. The one thing we do not want to be injected into that exercise which has now been completed, and a policy which exists as a result of years of study and hard work by experts—not politicians—is any concept of a freeness of state land. All that will do, Mr. Speaker, is to recreate the squatting explosion that took place in this country between 1987—1991. Every time that happens, we are no nearer to solving the problems of squatting, but would have gone back years.

We have documents in front of us which I do not intend to go into today, but at another time at a later date we can discuss it at length. I am quite prepared to engage anyone on the other side on that because it is where the country needs to address this problem. The work has been done, there are clear paths laid out in public documents as to how the state should manage its land resources.

We do not have to re-invent any wheel on that matter to prove any point, but what we can most certainly do is to reverse all the progress that we have made and put the country in a position to create a general slum from Toco to Fyzabad. Some people seem to have no problem with that, Mr. Speaker.

### **3.20 p.m.**

I do not believe that the average person in this country aspires to that. We want to talk about orderly development within the ability of people to grow and progress. He talked about core houses. Yes. What is new about core houses?

Aided Self-Help Programmes started way back in the 1960s—core houses in Diego Martin. What is this new innovative idea about calling in architects to give you a core house design? I suspect it is going to happen, and I hope it does not happen again, because the last time he called in engineers and architects, we ended up having to change a law here, retroactively. So I am hoping that does not happen again.

We do not have to re-invent any wheel. If the Government's policy is to go back to building core houses, then say so. But you see he cannot say so because he has said publicly that the Government has no business building houses. We differ on that. We are saying, yes, there is a role for the Government in housing construction in some area of the national programme, especially with respect to urban redevelopment. He might not agree with that, but that is his prerogative.

There are people who are accessing mortgages and building their own houses; there are people who have their own finances and building their own houses; there are people who are accessing their family's plots and building houses; there are people who are accessing state-provided lots and building houses—all kinds of programmes for housing. In that spectrum there is a place for the state to construct units. If he is arguing that the construction cost is too high, that is different; and if he can bring to bear possibilities to deliver units at lower cost, then more power to him. I will support that, but do not get up and argue 'from both sides of your mouth' without clearly stating what is the Government's policy.

Insofar as he sought to give the impression that there was no cost recovery and that we were building houses and giving them away, I am not in the mood, this afternoon, to enter that debate. We can debate that at another time, because I want to get to a point that he made very early; and to categorically deny that the PNM Government sought to use its housing policy to gain electoral advantage.  
[*Interruption*]

**Mr. Humphrey:** They have always done that.

**Dr. K. Rowley:** What utter rubbish! What are the facts, Mr. Speaker? He was over in his sick bed—and I am glad that he has recovered because I look after all my constituents and I wish them all well, so I am glad that he has recovered. But I get the impression that he has not spent much time in his Ministry, so he is jumping to conclusions and thinking the worst. How could he come here, today, and seek to put on the national record that the previous government sought to build houses in marginal constituencies to gain electoral advantage? In one breath

we are building houses in marginal constituencies to gain electoral advantage; and in the next breath we are calling a snap election before we build the houses.

But, the point I want to make is this. If we go down the list of locations of where the PNM housing construction is, I want my Friend from St. Augustine to think on these things and determine which of the constituencies there are marginal. You see, for those who do not have the facts, they might believe what he said, because it sounds good. It sounds political and feasible. But what are the facts? With your permission, Mr. Speaker, let me indicate to you the location of the housing projects engaged in by the PNM Government between 1992—1995: Strikers' Village; Point Fortin. I would like my Friend to indicate at another time which of these locations are in marginal constituencies.

**Mr. Humphrey:** How many units?

**Mr. Manning:** Relax man, you had your time.

**Dr. K. Rowley:** Strikers' Village; Bon Air in Arouca; Buen Venue in La Romain; River Estate, Diego Martin.

**Hon. Member:** That is marginal, you know.

**Dr. K. Rowley:** Charlieville, La Horquette in Glencoe; Nadine Street—

**Miss Nicholson:** That is NAR's programme.

**Dr. K. Rowley:** NAR's programme? NAR built houses in Glencoe? NAR built houses in River Estate? Come on!

**Hon. Member:** They had no programme.

**Dr. K. Rowley:** They built no houses.

**Hon. Member:** That is the NAR programme.

**Dr. K. Rowley:** High density programmes. Almond Drive in Morvant. That is supposed to be marginal. The said Ramdial Mahabir lands, Laventille. That is marginal.

**Mr. Imbert:** That is real marginal.

**Dr. K. Rowley:** Cook Street in John John, marginal. Alexis Street in Morvant, marginal. Those are areas where there were parcels of state lands. We did not create those lands, the state had parcels of land in those locations, which were approved for housing construction. So insofar as our administration agreed

that the state should construct units to contribute to the requirement of the overall package, the state sought to construct units where it had lands. So there was land in those areas and there were demands in those areas—so you construct.

That was not the only aspect of the policy. There was another policy of a joint venture arrangement between the state and private investors; and where were those projects located? Mayaro [*Interruption*]

**Miss Nicholson:** He still lost his seat.

**Dr. K. Rowley:** Rio Claro, Debe, La Romain, Palo Seco, Point Fortin, Sangre Grande and Belle Garden in Tobago. Marginal.

**Miss Nicholson:** You met that. You met Belle Garden.

**Dr. K. Rowley:** Another aspect of this overall, comprehensive policy of the PNM administration had to do with building of houses on parcels owned by private developers.

**Miss Nicholson:** I am the person who put down Belle Garden—me!

**Dr. K. Rowley:** So, the first units I mentioned were state-owned parcels where the state actually built. The other units were state parcels where we had the private sector building on those parcels. The other aspects of the policy were where private owners had parcels of land which were approved for housing, and they entered into an arrangement with the state to do the building, and there is effective cost recovery as the units were sold. And where are the locations for those? Aranguez, Tunapuna and Champs Fleurs. How in the name of tarnation, in the face of that fact—in the face of locations of this nature—could the Minister come here this afternoon and, quite emotively, make a presentation that he has made this discovery—what was the word?—"insidious" action of the previous government, seeking to give itself an electoral advantage by building houses in marginal constituencies?

You see, when one does not get the facts, their story sounds good, but what are the facts? I mean, if the gentleman is as honourable as I know he is, when he sees me privately outside this evening, he will apologize.

**Mr. Imbert:** He always does that. Every time he does that. But not inside here.

**Mr. Humphrey:** I am not sorry you lost, you know. I am delighted you lost! Nothing to apologize for.

**Dr. K. Rowley:** Mr. Speaker, we ask this afternoon for the Government to outline its policy on housing. We had a discourse from the Member for St. Augustine, Minister of Housing. That discourse has not enlightened us. In fact, it has raised more questions than it has provided answers. It seems to follow a pattern which, while the tenure of the Government is short, the pattern seems to be developing where the Government seems to think that what it has to do is, appeal to any kind of public sentiment, whether it makes sense, or not, and that is policy.

**3.30 p.m.**

What has been the attempt at outlining policy here this afternoon for housing, fits squarely in the same vein as the attempt to outline policy for providing water. We heard before in a similar attempt to explain policy that people are literally being asked not to pay their water rates and that would give them more water. "Do not pay your water rate" in a situation where the problem is funding for the agency. So in due course we would find out how the water would be provided without funding. But at the end of the day, we, on this side, know for sure what is going to happen. While we talk about helping the little man to get water; when we remove the source of funding, all that we expect to happen is that more little men would get less water. That is all I expect to happen. But more of that in due course.

So this afternoon I simply wanted to put on record that the Member for St. Augustine who is the Minister of Housing of Trinidad and Tobago, is opposed to the Ministry that he heads; he is opposed to the idea of public housing construction; he is opposed to his own portfolio in such a way that he cannot reasonably articulate any government policy that makes sense; is confused in his thoughts with respect to providing public housing, and insofar as he is providing innovative ideas to deal with housing units at the lower income level, it is a danger to the health of the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

On that score, I ask my colleagues on the other side to examine very carefully any proposal he brings to the Cabinet to ensure that Trinidad and Tobago gets a proper housing policy. In fact, insofar as he has spoken about policy, the best thing he can do for himself and the people of Trinidad and Tobago is to follow the PNM policy. *[Applause]*.

I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Minister of Finance (Sen. The Hon. Brian Kuei Tung):** Mr. Speaker, as I rise to reply, let me indicate to this honourable House that this particular matter that is before us, the first report of the Finance Committee, really deals with the capital or development programme, and that the Ministry of Planning and Development is the ministry that is responsible for managing the development or capital programme, as it is called.

The Ministry of Finance in that respect works in very close collaboration with the Ministry of Planning and Development in monitoring very closely the implementation of the development programme. This matter that is before us really came about because of a review that started as early as June 30, 1995, in which it was realized fairly early that there were certain ministries incapable of implementing the programmes which required moneys which were made available to them under the Appropriation Act, 1995. Therefore it was in the interest of trying to ensure that those who were succeeding at implementing their capital programme continue to do so—even though they themselves may have run out of money—to ensure that those who are incapable of implementing their own programme would have had some funds transferred from their heads to other heads which had a much better success rate at implementation.

This review, which as I said was done as early as June 30, 1995, began to indicate that the two ministries under consideration, namely the Ministry of Housing and Settlements and the Ministry of Works and Transport, indicated that the sums that were allocated to them would not have become necessary by the end of the year 1995. Instead, ministries which had already demonstrated very strong success patterns in implementing their own capital programme needed some additional funds and so would have been able to continue their impetus that was started by them.

There really seems to be very little to which I should respond in terms of matters of the finance or the development programme. There is one small item that caught my ear to which I would like to allude, and that is that the Member for Point Fortin had criticized the very poor or lame excuse that I offered this afternoon for the fact that they had not spent any money with respect to a project called the Shelter Construction Financing Facility. This facility, you would recall, as I said, involved the provision of loans to beneficiaries who were allocated lots at Bon Air, Harmony Hall and Couva North. I did indicate that we have already received applications for 1,812 loans and that as at the end of November 30, 1995, only 83 had been approved.



I accept that I feel very badly coming to this House to offer such a lame excuse. The reason I found it strange is that the Member for Point Fortin seemed to have forgotten that he was presiding over that ministry and therefore I can understand him criticizing his own performance during the year, wherein he was able to see an administration approve 83 loans out of 1,812. I accept it was a lame excuse.

Really, it is the hope that the new Minister will ensure that the applications for loans for this will proceed much faster and on behalf of this Government I would like to indicate that we will attempt to ensure that we do not come here with these lame excuses in future.

As I indicated earlier, this programme is merely a matter that can be considered as an accounting entry. It transfers funds from two heads to another two heads in the total sum of \$45 million. I would therefore ask that this House support this measure to ensure that the succeeding ministries which have indicated success in their capital programme be allowed to continue with their good work.

I beg to move.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Resolved:*

That this House adopt the First Report (1995—1996 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, 1995.

**FINANCE (VARIATION OF APPROPRIATION) (1995) BILL**

**The Minister of Finance (Sen. The Hon. Brian Kuei Tung):** Mr. Speaker, I beg to move,

That a Bill to vary the appropriation of the sum the issue of which was authorized by the Appropriation Act, 1995, be now read a second time.

In view of the fact that this Bill is really a reflection of the matter that was under the First Report of the Finance Committee, I beg to move.

*Question proposed.*

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Bill accordingly read a second time.*

**3.40 p.m.**

*Bill committed to a committee of the whole House.*

*House in Committee.*

*Clauses 1 to 5 ordered to stand part of the Bill.*

*Schedule ordered to stand part of the Bill.*

*Question put and agreed to, That the Bill be reported to the House.*

*House resumed.*

*Bill reported, without amendment; read the third time and passed.*

**DAME NITA BARROW**

**(Death of)**

**The Minister Extraordinaire and Adviser to the Prime Minister (Hon. A. N. R. Robinson)** Mr. Speaker, it is with a sense of profound sadness that I beg leave to address the honourable House this afternoon on the very sad event of the passing of a distinguished Caribbean person, Her Excellency Dame Nita Barrow, Governor General of Barbados, who died last night after a short illness, bringing to a culmination her long and outstanding career of service to the entire Caribbean region and the international community.

Dame Nita begun her life of service early, initially in the field of nursing with training in Barbados and here in Trinidad and Tobago. Her academic training included studies at Columbia University, the University of Toronto and Edinburgh University. Her nursing career included service as a Matron of the University College Hospital of the West Indies in Jamaica, in its earliest days, and subsequently as Principal Nursing Officer of Jamaica and as Nursing Adviser to the entire Caribbean for the Pan American Health Organisation. During this period she increased her familiarity with all the countries of Caricom and very many people in public and private life benefited directly from her personal leadership and guidance.

Subsequently, she moved to Geneva for the next stage of her life, serving as Director of the Christian Medical Commission of the World Council of Churches, eventually also becoming President of the World YWCA. Throughout her life Dame Nita gave dedicated service to the people of the region and the international community with commitment and also to many non-governmental organizations. At the call of the Commonwealth, Dame Nita extended her contribution by

serving on the Eminent Persons Group which visited South Africa and assisted in bringing apartheid to an end.

Subsequently, she also assisted the United Nations System in the areas of environment and sustainable development. Dame Nita embarked on a diplomatic career as a permanent representative of Barbados to the United Nations in New York serving with distinction. She became a rallying point for Caribbean people when she contested the presidency of the United Nations General Assembly in 1988. She was defeated by a major diplomatic campaign waged by one of the larger Latin American countries in favour of the Foreign Minister of Argentina in an expensive campaign.

Dame Nita took that defeat with all the grace that characterized her tenure as Head of State. That year also saw her honoured with the Caricom Award. She was the second Caribbean person to be so honoured. Although Dame Nita was the elder sister of the first Prime Minister of Barbados, the late Errol Barrow, her qualities were such that she was honoured by the Government of Barbados even when it was headed by a different party.

At the culmination of her life, Dame Nita served as a Head of State, never losing her touch with the ordinary people of Barbados and the rest of the Caribbean. She has come to Trinidad and Tobago on many occasions, one of the last being to assist the YWCA community in commemorating one of its major anniversaries.

Despite the eminence of her life and the distinction of her status, Dame Nita always manifested an abiding sense of humility. She was a treasured personal friend and extended acts of immeasurable kindness to me and my family, particularly, in our time of greatest need. She remains an outstanding symbol for men and women of the Caribbean of what an individual can achieve by way of a life of dedication and commitment to service of others.

Dame Nita will always be remembered by the people of the region as a shining example of a truly distinguished and worthy human being.

On behalf of the Government and people of Trinidad and Tobago, and on behalf of Members of this Parliament, I extend to her family and the Government and people of Barbados, heartfelt sympathy on the untimely passing of this great citizen of the Caribbean.

May she rest in peace.

**3.50 p.m**

**Mr. Kenneth Valley** (*Diego Martin Central*): Mr. Speaker, the Members on this side of the House join with the Government in offering condolences to the Government and people of Barbados on the passing of their Governor General, Dame Nita Barrow. One sees from her history that Dame Nita achieved greatness not by talk but by action. Not only was she a Caribbean person, but she was recognized internationally for her community service and her work with respect to apartheid. We join with the Government in paying respects to this great Caribbean woman.

**Mr. Speaker:** Honourable Members, I, certainly join both sides of the House in mourning the passing of her Excellency, the Governor General of neighbouring Barbados, Dame Ruth Nita Barrow, GCMG, DA.

It is, perhaps, an understatement to say that Barbados, and perhaps, the Caribbean have lost a distinguished, articulate and outspoken voice of one of its most eminent daughters. There is obviously so much in the life of the late Governor General which could be emulated by not only women of the Caribbean, but by people everywhere.

The international community whose corridors she walked in so many capacities and with such humility and distinction, would surely be saddened by her sudden death. In accordance with the feeling of the House, an appropriate message of condolence will be sent to the late Governor General's relatives and to the Government and people of Barbados on behalf of the Members of this honourable House.

I now ask hon. Members to stand and observe one minute's silence in her honour.

*House stood in silence for one minute.*

**INSTITUTE OF MARINE AFFAIRS (AMDT.) (No. 2) BILL**

*Order for second reading read.*

**The Minister of Planning and Development (Hon. Trevor Sudama):** Mr. Speaker, I beg to move,

That a Bill to amend the Institute of Marine Affairs Act, 1995, be now read a second time.

This is a very simple piece of legislation that we are proposing to the House. The effect of the Bill is to transfer power to the President. Under the existing legislation, section 21 is vested in the Government to grant exemptions from taxes, customs duties, levies and fees in respect of any equipment or materials and

supplies which are imported into Trinidad and Tobago by the Institute of Marine Affairs. Therefore, by making this proposed amendment, the President will be vested with that power to grant these exemptions, and will have the authority to delegate, merely by order, to the relevant persons to effect the grant of this exemption.

Mr. President, the Institute which was established by an Act of Parliament, No. 15 of 1976, was allowed exemption from the payment of certain taxes for equipment, materials and supplies imported into the country which have been deemed essential for its operations. These customs exemptions have always been granted by the Comptroller of Customs and Excise Division in accordance with the provisions of section 17 of the Act. However, what has transpired recently is that the duty-free entries submitted by the Institute of Marine Affairs have been queried by officers of the Customs and Excise Division on the ground that the interpretation of section 17 of the Institute of Marine Affairs (Amdt.) Bill, 1990 allows a discretionary provision because that section uses the term, "may" and it does not use the imperative term "shall" as was the case in the original Act. Therefore, it is for the Government, in its discretion, to decide on a case by case basis whether the articles which were imported will, in fact, be allowed exemptions. What this has incurred is a lot of delay in the clearing of articles and equipment that have been imported by the Institute of Marine Affairs for its development programmes.

It was thought that in order to deal with that problem that the institute should continue to receive exemptions on a very timely basis for the importation of equipment and materials but the arrangements should be changed. There was the need for delegation of the authority vested in the Government in a way that the Comptroller of Customs and Excise would be facilitated in granting these exemptions. This is the reason that we have brought this amendment to the House. It is, in fact, to transfer that power to the President, who then by order, will delegate that power to the Comptroller of Customs and Excise with a view to having a more expeditious importation of materials and equipment by the Institute of Marine Affairs to be facilitated. It is rather a very simple measure, and without further ado, I recommend the Bill to the House.

Thank you.

*Question proposed.*

**4.00 p.m.**

**Dr. Keith Rowley** (*Diego Martin West*): Mr. Speaker, the Member for Oropouche and Minister for Planning and Development has very accurately portrayed the difficulties which arose with respect to managing the importation of items for sole use by the Institute of Marine Affairs. It was in recognition of these difficulties and the need to rectify and clarify the position that the officers were acting on behalf of the state at the points of entry, that this bit of legislation was drafted by the previous administration. That being so, on behalf of my colleagues on this side, I have absolutely no difficulty in indicating that we support our work fully.

I never thought I would have lived long enough to hear my Friend from Oropouche say this Bill is a simple matter. [*Laughter*] He is quoted in *Hansard* on numerous occasions as saying that no Bill is a simple matter. In fact, I am sure that today he will agree with me that sometimes it is necessary to introduce a Bill by saying, "this is a simple matter."

Thank you.

**The Minister of Planning and Development (Hon. Trevor Sudama)**: Mr. Speaker, I have never heard the Member for Diego Martin West being so brief in this House, and secondly, complimenting me. I think his changed position has made him see the light.

We have unanimity with respect to this proposal before the House.

Thank you.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Bill accordingly read a second time.*

*Bill committed to a committee of the whole House.*

*House in committee.*

*Clauses 1 and 2 ordered to stand part of the Bill.*

*Question put and agreed to, That the Bill be reported to the House.*

*House resumed.*

*Bill reported, without amendment; read the third time and passed.*

**Senate Amendment**

**The Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs (Hon. Kamla Persad-Bissessar):** Mr. Speaker, I beg to move,

That the Senate amendments to the Immigration (Amdt.) (No. 2) Bill listed in the appendix be now considered.

*Question proposed.*

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Clause 2.*

*Senate amendment read as follows:*

In paragraph (a)-

- (i) delete sub-paragraph (b)(i) and substitute the following:
  - "(b) comes into, remains in or attempts to leave Trinidad and Tobago by means of:
    - (i) a passport that has been tampered with, or a false or improperly issued passport, visa, medical certificate or other document".
- (ii) Insert the word "any" immediately before the word "other" appearing in line one of sub-paragraph (b)(ii).

In paragraph (b)-

- (i) Delete the first two lines and substitute the following:
  - (b) by deleting the word "or" occurring after the semi-colon ";" in paragraph (h) and adding immediately after paragraph (i) the following new paragraph.
- (ii) In line one, of paragraph (j), insert the words "remains in" between the words "into" and "or".
- (iii) Delete the full stop "." at the end of paragraph (j) and substitute a comma ",".
- (iv) Add a new paragraph (c) as follows:
  - "(c) deleting the words "one thousand", "twelve months", "two thousand" and "eighteen months" and substituting

therefor the words "fifty thousand", "three years", "one hundred thousand" and "five years" respectively."

In paragraph (h)-

- (i) Delete the word "or" appearing at the end.

In paragraph (i)-

- (i) Delete the comma "," at the end of the paragraph and substitute the words ";or;".

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar:** Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that the House doth agree with the Senate in the said amendment.

*Question proposed.*

*Question put and agreed to.*

#### FELICITATIONS

**Mr. Ramesh Lawrence Maharaj** (*Couva South*): Mr. Speaker, before the motion is moved for the Adjournment of the House, on behalf of the Members of this side of the House, may I take this opportunity to wish you and your family a Merry Christmas and a bright and prosperous New Year.

On behalf of this side of the House, may I also take this opportunity to wish the Members of the Opposition and their families a Merry Christmas and a bright and prosperous New Year.

We would also like to wish the staff of Parliament and their families; the members of the police service and the security personnel who have been engaged in this Parliament over the year and the members of the public, a Merry Christmas and a bright and prosperous New Year.

Thank you.

**4.10 p.m.**

**Mr. Kenneth Valley** (*Diego Martin Central*): Mr. Speaker, I thought we had gone through this custom last week. However, on behalf of Members on this side of the House, let me, once more, wish you, your family, the Members of Government—especially the Member for Couva North, whom we wish a speedy recovery, and the ability to enjoy the good tidings of the season—the Clerk and officers of the Parliament, the Press, who are our windows to the world, and to the regulars in the public gallery, sentiments of the season.



*Felicitations*

*Wednesday, December 20, 1995*

To all members of the national community, we say a Merry Christmas and a bright and prosperous 1996.

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, on behalf of my family and I, and the staff, I wish to acknowledge the kind sentiments expressed by both sides of the House. I wish to be associated with the good wishes and glad tidings which both sides have wished to the several classes of people.

Motion made and question proposed, That the House do now adjourn to Friday, January 10, 1996 at 1.30 p.m. [*Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar*]

*Question put and agreed to.*

*House adjourned accordingly.*

*Adjourned at 4.14 p.m.*