

**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES***Friday, June 28, 1996*

The House met at 1.30 p.m.

**PRAYERS**[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]**LEAVE OF ABSENCE**

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, I wish to indicate that I have had communication from the hon. Member for Arima (Dr. Rupert Griffith) and the hon. Member for Toco/Manzanilla (Mr. Roger Boynes) who are unable to be in the House today. They are accordingly excused from attending today's sitting.

**BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**

**Mr. Speaker:** I also wish to indicate to hon. Members that we will suspend the House for just a few minutes. There is something that has arisen, so we will just suspend for a short while.

**1.33 p.m.:** *Sitting suspended.*

**1.50 p.m.:** *Sitting resumed.*

**ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS****Guyana Debt****(Write off)**

**18. Dr. Keith Rowley** (*Diego Martin West*) asked the hon. Prime Minister:

- A. Could the Prime Minister indicate to this House, whether writing off approximately TT \$2.3 billion of the debt which Guyana owes to Trinidad and Tobago was a decision of the Cabinet of Trinidad and Tobago?
- B. If the answer is in the affirmative, would the Prime Minister indicate the date on which such a Cabinet decision was taken?

**The Minister of Finance and Minister of Tourism (Sen. The Hon. Brian Kuei Tung):** Mr. Speaker, Cabinet by Minute No. 1249 of May 16, 1996, agreed to restructuring of the debt owed by the Government of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana to the Government of Trinidad and Tobago. This decision had been taken

given the past efforts to recover the outstanding balances from Guyana as well as the non-implementation of the debt recovery arrangements agreed to by Guyana.

**Dr. Rowley:** Mr. Speaker, permit me to congratulate my Friend, the hon. Minister, on his elevation. I would like to ask a few supplemental questions.

Would the Minister tell this honourable House whether there was a meeting between the Government of Trinidad and Tobago and the Government of Guyana prior to the Cabinet decision on the matter?

**Hon. Kuei Tung:** Mr. Speaker, I am aware that there were several meetings that had taken place between the technical team that had been put in place—which is the subject of another question—and officials of the Government of Guyana.

**Dr. Rowley:** Mr. Speaker, with your concurrence I would like to ask the Minister specifically: Was there a meeting between officials of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago and the Government of Guyana during the month of June 1996 before this decision was taken?

**Hon. Kuei Tung:** Mr. Speaker, as I said, this decision was made by Cabinet in May. I am not aware of what meetings took place in the month of June, 1996; I would have to find out the dates, places and times of these meetings because I do not have that information at hand.

**Dr. Rowley:** Mr. Speaker, is the Minister saying that he is unaware of a meeting which took place between the Finance Minister of Guyana and officials of the Ministry of Finance with respect to this matter in June 1996?

**Hon. Kuei Tung:** Yes, Mr. Speaker. I am saying that I am unaware of such meeting—that does not mean that the meeting may not have taken place, but this Minister of Finance is not aware that a meeting took place.

### **Guyana's Debt Forgiveness (Discussions and/or negotiations)**

**19. Dr. Keith Rowley** (*Diego Martin West*) asked the hon. Prime Minister:

- A. Was the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago party to any discussions and/or negotiations between the Paris Club and the Government of Guyana with respect to debt forgiveness?
- B. If the answer is in the affirmative, would the Prime Minister state:

- (i) who represented the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago at such discussions and/or negotiations?
- (ii) the details of any instructions given to our representative/s as regards the position of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago at these negotiations?

**The Minister of Finance and Minister of Tourism (Sen. The Hon. Brian Kuei Tung):** Mr. Speaker, the Secretary General of the Paris Club, by letter dated May 09, 1996 informed the Deputy Governor of the Central Bank that Paris Club creditors had agreed in principle on the treatment that Guyana would receive in respect of its debts and invited Trinidad and Tobago to participate at this meeting.

Cabinet agreed that the team to represent Trinidad and Tobago at this meeting should be: Mr. Jerry Hospedales, Deputy Governor, Central Bank of Trinidad and Tobago; Mr. Anson Rambaran, Economist to the Central Bank of Trinidad and Tobago; Miss Edwina Leacock, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Finance (Investments).

The Paris Club had agreed that Guyana qualified for debt reduction under the Naples terms which allow for:

1. official development assistance loans to be rescheduled over 40 years with 16 years moratorium at a rate of interest no higher than the original contractual interest rate;
2. the present value of the stock of debts to be reduced by 67 per cent; the remainder to be rescheduled at market rates of interest over 23 years with a graduated repayment schedule including a six-year moratorium on principal repayments;
3. the net present value of debt service on commercial debt to be reduced by 67 per cent.

Principal payments would then be rescheduled over 33 years with no moratorium on principal payments. Agreement of this option allows for debt to be repaid over 33 years with an 8-year moratorium on principal payments.

In addition, a Paris Club agreement affects the service of non-participating creditors because it requires the debtor to seek and to accord comparable treatment from those creditors. The principle of comparable treatment enjoys a strong support with the IMF, of which Guyana is also a member.

In light of this, the negotiating team was instructed to agree to the Naples Terms with respect to the treatment of Guyana's debt obligation.

**Dr. Rowley:** Mr. Speaker, is the Minister telling this honourable House that the communication from the Paris Club indicated that Guyana was eligible for such debt relief under Naples Terms prior to the concurrence of Trinidad and Tobago's agreement on the matter?

**Hon. Kuei Tung:** Yes, Mr. Speaker. Word that came from the Paris Club indicated, as shown by this statement, that Guyana would have been given that kind of treatment. As a matter of fact, when Guyana went to the Paris Club, its first reaction was that it was seeking the help of the Paris Club to have 90 per cent of the debt written off. As a result of the negotiations that took place, the eventual figure arrived at was 67 per cent of the debt being written off.

**Dr. Rowley:** Mr. Speaker, did the bilateral agreement between Trinidad and Tobago and Guyana of 1993 form any part of these discussions or negotiations?

**Hon. Kuei Tung:** Mr. Speaker, the agreement that the hon. Member referred to was never honoured by Guyana. It did not make sense rehashing something that Guyana had not agreed to maintain because the payments expected from Guyana under the terms of that agreement were never honoured by Guyana.

**Dr. Rowley:** Mr. Speaker, is the Minister of Finance saying that the Guyanese government officials, having signed that agreement, never agreed to honour it?

**Hon. Kuei Tung:** Mr. Speaker, I did not hear the hon. Member.

**Dr. Rowley:** Mr. Speaker, based on the statement made by the Minister, I am asking whether he has information that the Government of Guyana ever intended to honour the agreement it signed in 1993.

**Hon. Kuei Tung:** Mr. Speaker, I am sorry, I do not have that information as to whether Guyana did not agree to it.

**Dr. Rowley:** Mr. Speaker, that is what the hon. Minister said.

**Hon. Kuei Tung:** Mr. Speaker, I said Guyana never honoured the agreement, I did not say that Guyana never agreed to it. Having not made the payments under the terms of an agreement that was signed by the previous administration, having not honoured it, it did not make sense going back to rehash something which Guyana had indicated that it did not intend to honour. That was my statement.

**Dr. Rowley:** Mr. Speaker, is the Minister saying that since it was his view that the Government of Guyana had no intention of honouring the agreement, as a result of that view, that the agreement formed no part of the Paris Club negotiations?

**2.00 p.m.**

**Hon. B. Kuei Tung:** Mr. Speaker, I am afraid the question of my own opinion in this really does not arise. I am dealing with the facts as they happened. The facts were that there was an agreement which Guyana did not honour. Expressing my opinion as to whether Guyana did or did not intend to honour does not make any difference. The Paris Club arrangement is quite different from the bilateral agreement that was done between the previous administration and Guyana which agreement neither the previous administration enforced nor Guyana complied with. I am stating, as a matter of record, Mr. Speaker, it was not honoured. I am not stating any opinion as to whether Guyana intended to, did not intend to, or whatever. I am merely stating the facts for the record, Mr. Speaker.

**Dr. Rowley:** Mr. Speaker, I did not ask the Minister for his opinion. I was asking him whether the reason for Trinidad and Tobago not introducing the bilateral agreement into the negotiations with the Paris Club was as a result of the Minister's position that Guyana has no intention of honouring the debt.

**Hon. B. Kuei Tung:** Mr. Speaker, I tried to indicate that the Paris Club treated with this debt in a completely different manner from the bilateral arrangement that was made between the previous administration. I do not see how we could have introduced a bilateral arrangement in a Paris Club consideration when the other creditors who were there were not party to the bilateral arrangement between Trinidad and Tobago and Guyana. The Paris Club agreement was a consensus agreement between all of the creditors to Guyana and we were merely a party to that, and we agreed to be part of the Paris Club arrangement. I could not see how the team could have been instructed to introduce a bilateral arrangement when that was not under consideration by the Paris Club.

**Dr. Rowley:** Mr. Speaker, may I ask a final supplemental question. Could the Minister inform this honourable House whether the transactions surrounding this write-off of Guyana's debt are completed and the write-off is now in effect?

**Hon. B. Kuei Tung:** Mr. Speaker, there is an agreement that was signed upon leaving Paris by Guyana in which each creditor, including Trinidad and Tobago, is required to complete an arrangement whereby the rates of interest and the schedule

would be agreed to by November 30, 1996. Mr. Speaker, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago is required to have a team go to visit Guyana at an appropriate time to discuss the repayment terms and conditions of the remaining one-third of the debt.

**TANTEAK**  
**(ALLEGATIONS OF CORRUPTION)**

**The Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources (Dr. The Hon. Reeza Mohammed):** Mr. Speaker, since coming into office seven months ago, numerous complaints of corruption at Tanteak have been received by the Ministry from stakeholders in the timber industry and employees of the company. The latest complaint and request for an investigation of the alleged corrupt practices was made as recently as June 24, 1996.

Mr. Speaker, one must note that these requests are coming from the employees who are very concerned about the future viability of that company. It was also drawn to the Ministry's attention that private companies have been established by personnel occupying high managerial portfolios at Tanteak. It is alleged that these companies were established with the sole purpose of siphoning business from the legitimate company, thereby impacting negatively on its profitability and security of tenure of its employees.

Mr. Speaker, I take this opportunity to inform this august House that Tanteak owes the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources in excess of TT \$8 million, not to mention TT \$1.8 million of outstanding receivables owed to the Company by local customers, inclusive of some of the Members sitting on that side of the House. *[Interruption]* As far as I am aware, Mr. Speaker, no efforts were made by the management to recover the outstanding receivables from the local debtors. Mr. Speaker, I find it passing strange that on repeated occasions containers of wood and wood products were misplaced from shipments that were despatched to international customers. This represents only a small fraction of the alleged malpractices that have come to my attention.

I would like to read into the records part of a document which I received earlier today from the Director of Labour and Industrial Relations of the union representing the employees of Tanteak. It reads in part, Mr. Speaker:

“We want Tanteak to survive and be profitable to the country and, as such, we are making the following recommendations:

1. Terminate the appointments of the present Board of Directors;”

**Dr. Rowley:** And the Managing Director.

**Dr. The Hon. R. Mohammed:** I continue:

- “2. Terminate the appointment of the Managing Director;
3. Appoint a Tripartite Committee of Labour, Management and Government with the following terms of reference:
  - Investigate the happenings at Tanteak;
  - Redirect the Company to be a profitable and progressive enterprise;
  - Introduce a stringent auditing facility; and
  - Effectively deal with all the areas of malpractice.”

Mr. Speaker, permit me to point out that it is the employees of a state enterprise who are asking this Government to remove both the board of directors and the chief executive officer. A new board of directors will soon be put in place at Tanteak and one of its first mandates will be to investigate the alleged acts of corruption and malpractices with a view to bringing the perpetrators to justice.

**Mr. Narine:** Twenty-six cars are missing, too.

**Dr. The Hon. R. Mohammed:** To this end, Mr. Speaker, the employees of Tanteak have given a commitment to give evidence, if so required.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

#### **LEAD POISONING (DEMERARA ROAD)**

**The Minister of Health (Dr. The Hon. Hamza Rafeeq):** Mr. Speaker, recent developments have served to highlight the problem of lead poisoning in Trinidad and Tobago, particularly in the squatter settlement at Demerara Road, Arima. This statement is intended to bring Members of this honourable House and, indeed, the national community up-to-date on the situation at the Demerara Road Settlement.

Mr. Speaker, you will recall that in April 1993, lead poisoning was discovered among members of the squatter settlement at Demerara Road of whom 50 children under age 10 years were hospitalized and treated. The community comprised approximately 200 families amounting to about 500 hundred persons. It was discovered that extensive amounts of lead waste, from a battery manufacturing

*Lead Poisoning*  
[DR. THE HON. H. RAFEEQ]

*Friday, June 28, 1996*

plant, which was dumped there had been used for infrastructure development in the settlement.

As a result of the above, the then Cabinet on June 11, 1993 appointed a task force with the following terms of reference:

- (i) to identify the magnitude of the problem related to the occurrence of lead poisoning in a squatter settlement located at Demerara Road, Arima;
- (ii) to advise on the measures necessary to correct the existing problem;
- (iii) to undertake an environmental impact assessment on the neighbouring communities which may be affected;
- (iv) to identify other sites where lead is deposited and to suggest how those sites may be cleaned;
- (v) to work with Solid Waste Management Company Limited in identifying a site for the proper disposal of toxic waste.

The task force submitted its report on June 29, 1993. The main findings were as follows:

- (i) approximately half of the 500 occupants of the area were under 12 years of age;
- (ii) a major implication of lead poisoning was the long-term negative effect on all organs of the body, particularly, the brain and nervous systems of foetuses and young children, and the increasing risk with prolonged exposure;
- (iii) the contaminated site posed a risk to other communities because of the possibility of transport of contaminants through air and water; and
- (iv) the medical treatment of victims of lead poisoning incurs tremendous financial costs.

Subsequently, the task force identified lead contaminants at sites located at several different sites. There were also other sites of possible contamination throughout the country.

Mr. Speaker, the major recommendations of the task force were as follows:

- (i) compulsory evacuation of the area to be undertaken after a survey of households to establish the number of persons to be relocated;



- (ii) a legal opinion on compulsory evacuation and prevention of reoccupation of the affected area to be obtained;
- (iii) the Ministry of National Security should ensure the effective evacuation of all occupants of the site and prevent its reoccupation and further use.

**2.10 p.m.**

Mr. Speaker, the Task Force submitted an excellent report which, if acted upon, would have alleviated, to a great extent, the problem at Demerara Road. However, precious little was done to implement the recommendations of the task force.

Lead poisoning, particularly in little children, is an extremely serious condition. Children who are affected by lead poisoning suffer from many kinds of organ damage, particularly to the brain and nervous systems. This results in, among other complications, poor physical development and serious impaired mental and intellectual development.

When persons are exposed to lead contamination, the lead accumulates in the body. So the risks and damages to the individual are greater with each day that he/she is exposed. This means that every day the people at Demerara Road remain there, the risks are greater especially to the children of the community.

How could a government get a report in June 1993, which spells out in detail a most disastrous situation, and leave the residents with poisons accumulating in their bodies with each passing day? How could a government get a report in June 1993 and by November 1995 did precious little to save a generation of young people? This is a most amazing and indeed appalling situation.

The Cabinet, at its regular meeting yesterday, appointed a committee with the following terms of reference:

- i. To submit to Cabinet within two (2) weeks proposals for the resettlement of the residents of Demerara Road to Wallerfield.
- ii. To submit proposals for decontamination of the site at Demerara Road.
- iii. To submit proposals for dealing with the disposal of toxic wastes generated in the country.

*Lead Poisoning*  
[DR. THE HON. H. RAFEEQ]

*Friday, June 28, 1996*

The committee comprises representatives from the Environmental Management Authority and the following Ministries:

The Ministry of Health	Chairman
The Attorney General	
The Ministry of National Security	
The Ministry of Housing and Settlements	
The Ministry of Labour and Co-operatives	
The Ministry of Works and Transport	
The Ministry of Planning and Development	
The Ministry of Social Development	
The Ministry of Local Government	
The Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources	
A Representative of the University of the West Indies.	

The Cabinet considers the relocation of the residents at Demerara Road as a matter of urgency and will attempt to address this expeditiously. The Government has already identified 200 building lots at Wallerfield. Most of the infrastructure work has already been done and the Cabinet-appointed committee has been mandated to develop strategies to effect the relocation exercise. The decontamination exercise and other issues will be addressed subsequently.

I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

#### **INDUSTRIAL DESIGNS BILL**

Bill to provide for the protection of industrial designs and for related matters, [*The Minister of Legal Affairs*]; read the first time.

#### **LAYOUT-DESIGNS (TOPOGRAPHIES) OF INTEGRATED CIRCUITS BILL**

Bill to provide for the protection of layout-designs (topographies) of integrated circuits, [*The Minister of Legal Affairs*]; read the first time.

**PROTECTION AGAINST UNFAIR COMPETITION BILL**

Bill to provide for protection against unfair competition, [*The Minister of Legal Affairs*]; read the first time.

**GEOGRAPHICAL INDICATIONS BILL**

Bill to provide for the protection of geographical indications and related matters, [*The Minister of Legal Affairs*]; read the first time.

**CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS**

**Mr. Colm Imbert** (*Diego Martin East*): Mr. Speaker, I beg to move the following Motion standing in my name:

*Whereas* the construction sector is one of the largest contributors to employment in Trinidad and Tobago; and

*Whereas* official Central Statistical Office (CSO) statistics indicate that there are approximately 30,000 unemployed persons in the sector at present; and

*Whereas* the former Government, the previous People's National Movement (PNM) administration, had allocated resources and had undertaken the required preparatory work for a number of major construction projects to commence and/or continue in 1996; and

*Whereas* the present Government has suspended, terminated or otherwise cancelled several of these construction projects, thereby reducing the potential for employment in the construction sector:

*Be It Resolved* that this Honourable House condemn this action by the present Government and urge the Government to reactivate the construction projects which have been suspended, terminated or cancelled: and

*Be It Further Resolved* that this House also urge the Government to present to this House a credible policy for the initiation and development of public sector construction programmes for the generation of employment in that sector and for the refurbishment and/or upgrading of the national physical infrastructure.

Mr. Speaker, it is necessary for this Motion to be brought to this House at this time because of the gross incompetence of the present administration. On presentation of the 1996 budget, it was noted by the Members on this side that a number of programmes initiated by the former administration, of which I was a proud member, had either been cancelled, terminated or indefinitely suspended.

When one examines the official statistics, when one looks at employment levels in the construction sector and the document produced by the administration on the other side—I am using their documents so that they cannot quibble about the source of this information, having a tendency always to deal with suspect and bogus information which they contrive themselves—if one looks at Appendix 9, *Review of the Economy, 1995*, one sees that the total number of unemployed persons at the end of 1995—this was a projected figure—was some 89,600. If one goes to Appendix 11, one sees that the total number of unemployed persons at the end of June 1995 was 29,900 or approximately 30,000. In the same period, 1994, it was 32,300; in 1993 it was 35,000. So that there has been a consistent decline in the number of unemployed persons in the construction sector for the period under review in this document, 1993 to the middle of 1995.

This pattern of unemployment in the construction sector is not a new phenomenon. It has been in existence in Trinidad and Tobago for at least the last ten years, if not the last 15 years and the recession in the construction industry began shortly after the collapse of oil prices in the early 1980s which was the beginning of the recession in Trinidad and Tobago. If, however, one looks at the total figures again, 89,600 unemployed persons at the end of June 1995 and 29,900 of those in the construction sector alone, one sees that construction accounts for at least one-third of the number of unemployed persons in Trinidad and Tobago, according to the CSO statistics.

We, in the PNM, had a deliberate strategy which we developed over the 1992—1995 period, recognizing that development of sustainable long-term employment in the other sectors of the economy: the agricultural sector, the manufacturing sector, the services sector which includes tourism, the heavy industrial sector, and so on, takes some considerable time, and so it is all over the world. Recognizing this and recognizing it would take some years before our policies impacted on permanent employment in Trinidad and Tobago, we took a deliberate policy decision to accelerate the programme of construction in the country, starting as early as 1992.

**2.20 p.m.**

Over the period 1992—1995 we laid the groundwork for a number of projects in all sectors of the economy: roads, drainage, health, education, community development, national security, public buildings, water and sewerage and so forth. We laid the groundwork for a programme of construction in all sectors of economic activity throughout Trinidad and Tobago. We had many reasons for this

but most importantly, we did it to upgrade and replace primary school buildings and health facilities. We also wished to generate employment in the construction sector and in the industries that support and complement the construction sector—that is, the local construction manufacturing sector—in the production of steel, concrete blocks and clay products, PVC and electrical materials, mining, quarrying, local lumber and so forth.

Mr. Speaker, we were aware that the theory is for every job directly created on a construction site, between three to five jobs are indirectly created in the sectors that service the construction sector. It is not just construction materials, it is services in terms of air-conditioning, electrical wiring, maintenance and so forth.

We were aware that by creating thousands of jobs in the construction sector this would be multiplied considerably in the manufacturing sector. As a matter of fact, this has not been isolated to Trinidad and Tobago; a number of manufacturing companies in Trinidad and Tobago, because of trade liberalization and so forth; because of the movement towards a common market in Caricom a number of local manufacturing companies increased their exports to Caricom and elsewhere during the 1992—1995 period, again in products such as PVC, steel, cement and so forth; all a direct result of the increased activity generated by the PNM administration because we had a deliberate plan and policy to generate activity in the construction sector. As I said, it was a wide-ranging plan.

Mr. Speaker, if you will allow me, I would go through some of the programmes which we had put in place. In the road sector there were a number of major programmes, starting with a comprehensive highway maintenance programme which involved the rehabilitation of in excess of 646 kilometres of roads and construction of almost 50 new bridges throughout Trinidad and Tobago. This aspect of the road programme was estimated to cost some \$540 million and is being funded by the Inter-American Development Bank. The discussions took place during the 1992—1995 period and a number of contracts were awarded for designs for the first year's programme of road rehabilitation and all the necessary proprietary work was put in place to allow implementation of that programme in 1996. This is the theme I am going to be returning to throughout this Motion; we had put in place the groundwork for the implementation of a massive construction programme starting in 1996.

Together with that comprehensive highway maintenance programme was a trunk road expansion programme involving the improvement of intersections;

*Construction Projects*  
[MR. IMBERT]

*Friday, June 28, 1996*

involving the increase in the number of lanes in dual carriageway roads such as the Churchill Roosevelt Highway. *[Interruption]* I am hearing bleating on the other side about some other party's programme. The fact of the matter is that the negotiations with the Inter-American Development Bank were done by the PNM administration. The selection process, the comprehensive highway study was concluded by the PNM administration. The design process was done by the PNM administration; and the accessing of the financing was done by the PNM administration.

Mr. Speaker, to stop the bleating on that side about what was done by others, I would skip some programmes and go to the agricultural access road and bridges programme which was initiated by the former—what was the name of that party? N.A., what?

**Dr. Rowley:** NAR.

**Mr. C. Imbert:** The NAR; yes, the one that did not win a seat.

Mr. Speaker, there was a programme of agriculture access roads that was initiated by the former administration in the 1986—1991 period and that administration took a number of years but was unable to initiate construction because a number of pre-conditions were not met. We were able to get that programme going because we did not stop it. Unlike the present administration, when we came into office in 1992 we did not look at that IADB Access Roads Programme and say, "That was an NAR programme, therefore it must be bad", and stop everything; scrap it, review it, cancel everything.

As a matter of fact, as Minister I accepted every single road and bridge on that programme that was chosen by the former NAR administration. In Phase I of the Agricultural Access Road Programme, I accepted every recommendation of the former administration, picked up the baton, followed through with the ball, and as a result, in 1992 the first phase of construction commenced in areas as diverse as Penal, Paramin, Aranguez, Tobago, Toco and so forth.

**Dr. Mohammed:** Manzanilla?

**Mr. C. Imbert:** In the Toco/Manzanilla area. In Couva, Chaguanas and so forth. A wide-ranging programme throughout the country. That programme was then continued by the PNM and we put in place Phase II which involved \$93 million of road and bridge work throughout Trinidad and Tobago. Again, in south, central and north Trinidad and in Tobago; over \$15 million worth of work in

Tobago out of \$93 million; a disproportionate sum if one looks at it in terms of demographics, population, land mass, but we were a caring administration and we did not discriminate so we spread it throughout the country.

Mr. Speaker, I am simply demonstrating that when we came in we did not adopt the immature and childish approach of the present administration; we simply followed through with these major infrastructure programmes, enhanced and improved on them, got them going immediately, dealt with all of the problems and got construction started in 1992 following with the Phase II in 1995; \$93 million worth of roads and bridges to improve the infrastructure conditions for farmers, initiated, developed, planned and programmed by the PNM administration. I would come to the UNC/DAC vaps coalition approach to that programme in a little while. They put them to lose in those 34 seats. They knew they would lose. It was a plan.

**2.30 p.m.**

Another road programme was the extension of the Sir Solomon Hochoy Highway [*Interruption*]

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, the Member is entitled to be protected and he finds it difficult to proceed, with what he may concede as heckling. Please proceed, Member for Diego Martin East.

**Mr. C. Imbert:** Let me go back to the road programmes put in place by the former PNM administration in Trinidad and Tobago.

Extension of the Sir Solomon Hochoy Highway to Cross Crossing; construction of a connector link road to the South Trunk Road; completion of dualling of the San Fernando Bye-pass—\$150 million financed by the Caribbean Development Bank, the lead financier with assistance from the World Bank.

Now that the Member for Oropouche has awoken from his slumber, I will now indicate the execution and implementation period. The execution period for the comprehensive highway maintenance programme was 1996—2001; the Trunk Road Extension programme, 1997—2001; the extension of the Sir Solomon Highway to Cross Crossing, 1996—1998. All former governments in Trinidad and Tobago are aware that it takes between two to three years to do all of the necessary preparatory work for projects financed by international lending agencies such as the Inter-American Development Bank, the World Bank, the Caribbean

*Construction Projects*  
[MR. IMBERT]

*Friday, June 28, 1996*

Development Bank and the Commonwealth Development Corporation. We took those three years, 1992—1995 and we laid all the foundations for the programme to start in 1996.

Mr. Speaker, 1996 was supposed to be the year of construction. Another road programme financed by the European Economic Community which was earmarked for initiation in 1996 was the reconstruction of the Sir Solomon Hochoy Highway; both carriageways between Chaguanas and Couva—\$150 million. The Agricultural Access Roads and Bridges Programme that I spoke of—construction of 150 kilometers of access roads and 30 new bridges—\$250 million, was in process since 1992. This was expected to continue until 1998.

The National Drainage and Flood Control Rehabilitation Programme which involves the repair and upgrading of major drainage systems in North, Central and South Trinidad and also coastal protection along the South-East Coast of Tobago. This was a \$400 million programme.

Our first approach to the World Bank was in 1993 and we held a number of meetings with the World Bank officials between 1994 and 1995 during which time we established the actual technical work that would be done, exactly which river systems would be dealt with such, as in the north of Trinidad: The Diego Martin River, the Maraval River, the Malick River, the St. Ann's River or the East Dry River as it is better known, the Aranguez/San Juan River and going all the way up to the Toco area, Vega de Oropouche. In the Central Trinidad there was the Caroni River Basin; the Caparo River system and going further south into San Fernando there were the Marabella/Vistabella catchments together with the Ciperio River, and going further South there was the Oropouche Lagoon and Oropouche Water System.

Our national drainage and flood control programme which involve irrigation—because contrary to rumour being peddled by the Member for Oropouche, it was recognized early in the day that one needed to treat the water sector as a whole. The Ministry of Works and Transport and the Ministry of Public Utilities worked together as one coordinated unit with the World Bank for what was called “a water sector programme” involving the winning of water, the treatment and disposal of water, drainage, irrigation and flood control all together as one integrated programme. It was recognized that it was unwise to develop the drainage system in isolation because there were so many linkages to irrigation and water supply, our main rivers being the primary sources of the nation's water



supply. I hope that has debunked the myth being peddled by the Member for Oropouche. Our programme of drainage was an integrated one and of course the programme of coastal protection for Tobago.

In the health sector we had negotiated a significant loan—US \$170 million—for reform of the health sector which would have involved rehabilitation of the existing hospitals and health centers and construction of new health facilities as a follow-up to the health sector upgrade programme which was successfully implemented by the PNM administration under the stewardship of the former Ministers of Health, Mr. Eckstein and Mrs. Baboolal, where significant upgrade was done to facilities in Sangre Grande.

New facilities were constructed in Arima and new health facilities were constructed in South Trinidad, in Central Trinidad, and in North Trinidad. Considerable work was done on the St. Ann's Hospital; considerable upgrade work was done on the San Fernando General Hospital; the entire casualty department was completely refurbished. So that under the Health Sector Reform Programme which was US \$170 million, of which I would estimate approximately TT \$500—600 million allocated for infrastructure, was negotiated by the PNM administration and all the ground work laid for implementation of that construction programme in early 1996.

Here we are at the end of June—the rainy season has been with us for over a month and yet we have not seen any activity in the health sector in terms of that construction programme, as we have not seen in the comprehensive highway maintenance programme, as we have not seen in the myriad road projects, in the drainage development programme that we laid out the ground work for.

The second primary education programme negotiated by the former Minister of Education, Mr. Ramrekersingh—TT \$300 million involving construction of 50 new primary schools and four new secondary schools, well dispersed over Trinidad and Tobago; one in Tobago and three in Trinidad. This was expected to commence in the first quarter of 1996. We are at the end of June and nothing has happened.

There was in place a programme of construction for a new judicial complex for Arima, being the center of activity for East Trinidad. Again, nothing of substance in terms of construction activity has come forward.

Public buildings: The Regional Administrative Centers Complex Programme and the groundwork was laid by the former Minister of Public Administration, Mr.

*Construction Projects*  
[MR. IMBERT]

*Friday, June 28, 1996*

Gordon Draper, for the construction of a number of regional administrative centers throughout Trinidad and Tobago, the first of which is the Tunapuna Administrative Complex planned, conceptualized and started by the PNM administration—a \$25 million facility. The beginning of centralization of government facilities in regional districts, the true thrust toward decentralization of authority and power where we anticipated that we would bring together all government departments in all regions such as the post office, the wardens office, the Town and Country Planning Division, the health department, under one roof so that when members of the public wish to access government offices to retrieve data, to pay bills and so forth, that they would be under one roof in a one-stop shop, as it were.

**2.40 p.m.**

We began this process of construction in Tunapuna. Cabinet had agreed that other regional administrative centres would be built in a number of other places such as Arima, Penal, Point Fortin, Princes Town and Chaguanas. That too, has either been abandoned, abolished, cancelled, curtailed or suspended. I do not know which one. They could say what they want, but the fact of the matter is that no construction is taking place on the administrative complex on Chancery Lane, San Fernando. That was one of the regional administrative complexes.

Fortunately, we were able to get together the first built/owned/leased/transfer (BOLT) projects. It is a new model of development by the Ministry of Works and Transport and specifically, by the PNM administration over the 1992—1995 period. The BOLT initiative was fine-tuned. In fact, the headquarters building model of the Ministry of Works and Transport is now being used by many other organizations even in the private sector for the development of construction in Trinidad and Tobago. Fortunately, we were able to start construction of that \$50 million facility on Richmond Street because for years the ministry had been without a proper home. Let me say that I am happy that my successor would inherit a fine building bringing together all the technical departments in the ministry, so that the Highways Division, the Drainage Division, the Construction Division and accounting unit could be under one roof.

This is simply another example of the vision of the PNM administration in terms of our construction programme in the 1992—1995 era. We had a City Centre Development Programme because we felt that the capital city had deteriorated over the years and it was necessary to bring back a sense of pride and presence to Port of Spain. Therefore, we embarked on a process of urban renewal in Port of

Spain and followed it up later with the process of urban renewal in San Fernando with that project on Chancery Lane. The building for the San Fernando Police Divisional Headquarters is now under construction. Fortunately, this was started by the PNM before the election, otherwise there might not have been any building. I would talk about Harris Promenade in a little while.

The Urban Renewal Programme was going on in Port of Spain. We decided to start the city centre with the Brian Lara Promenade being the first outstanding example of our successful programme. This moved northwards to the area surrounding the Red House and included the National Library Complex, the National Security and Legal Affairs Complex, the National Art Gallery and Museum and the National Performing Arts Centre which was scheduled to be located on the Princes Building Grounds. We had charged the Urban Development Corporation—about which I would speak shortly—with the development of the Association of Caribbean States Headquarters, the development of downtown areas in Port of Spain and the Port of Spain waterfront. Again, Trinidad and Tobago could boast about having a capital city that could hold its own among the metropolitan centres of the entire Latin American region. That was the vision of the People's National Movement.

Again, we used the model headquarters building of the Ministry of Works and Transport and its subsidiary or its further development from BOOT which is built/owned/operate/transfer, where a developer finances, constructs and maintains a facility and over a certain period it is handed back to the owner. We had initiated our City Centre Development Programme together with the Urban Development Corporation of Trinidad and Tobago. It was anticipated that over a period of 10 years over \$1 billion would have been expended in Port of Spain both from the public and private sectors. The ACS complex was moved into participation by the private sector where the government would lease land to the private sector and give it the opportunity to construct buildings and develop Port of Spain. That is, be a partner with the government, as it were.

What is happening with all this? We have the largest swimming pool in Trinidad and Tobago just south of this building. I do not know if it is the intention of the Government to convert that hole in the ground for the National Library Complex building into a swimming pool, but it certainly is trending towards that. The hard part about all this is that we had achieved consensus within the construction industry with the professionals in the construction industry such as the engineers, architects, contractors and quality surveyors. We had brought them

*Construction Projects*  
[MR. IMBERT]

*Friday, June 28, 1996*

together and were working in harmony to develop Trinidad and Tobago. We were achieving consensus on the implementation of projects. The hard part about this disaster which has befallen Trinidad and Tobago in the form of the UNC/NAR vaps coalition is that they have completely destroyed the momentum which was there leading to the issue of a release from the Joint Consultative Council (JCC) of the construction industry, complaining about the callous and indifferent manner with which the Government has approached construction.

As usual, rather than treat with this matter seriously, we hear the usual flippancy, snide remarks and character assassination from those Members on the other side. I am accustomed to it. I am happy that under the tenure of the PNM we were able to achieve consensus within the construction industry and move it forward. This leads to a statement in the *Review of the Economy*. I am using documents produced by them on that side, before they come in their familiar style as the Member for Oropouche who is famous for misquoting and using bogus documents. Let me quote from the *Review of the Economy*. Page 5 states:

“Within the Services Sector, Hotels and Guest Houses and Construction and Quarrying are forecast to register growth rates of 19.5 per cent and 12.8 per cent respectively. The expansion in output in the Hotels and Guest Houses subsector mainly reflects the increase in visitor arrivals in this country...”

They left out “as a result of the PNM”.

“while Construction activity was stimulated by the implementation of several major industrial and commercial projects...”

There was a 12.8 per cent growth in the construction sector in 1995 as a result of the construction development programme of the PNM administration. It would be interesting to see what happens in 1996.

### **2.50 p.m.**

In national security there was a programme of construction of police stations, the new divisional headquarters in San Fernando being one of these. If my memory serves me correct, that is a \$15 million facility. In Sangre Grande we also had a new divisional headquarters facility planned and constructed by the PNM. I believe that is a \$12 million facility. Then we had new police stations in Maraval, Four Roads, Erin, Cunupia and so forth, all part of the programme of construction of

the People's National Movement. In addition, there was the construction of a number of police posts all over Trinidad and Tobago by a diverse number of organizations such as NIPDEC, the Ministry of Works and the Unemployment Relief Programme, the most noteworthy of which was the Valencia Police Post constructed and completed by the PNM before the 1995 general elections.

We also had a programme of rehabilitation and upgrading of facilities for the Defence Force at Camp Ogden and elsewhere; rehabilitation and construction of prisons, fire stations and so forth. So, under the tenure of the PNM several hundred million dollars were expended on the rehabilitation of national security facilities be it police stations, prisons, defence force facilities or fire stations. Minister Eckstein, following his predecessor Mr. Huggins, had put in place a construction programme which would have involved significant activity over the period 1996 and beyond.

As I said, in the judiciary, we had the Arima Judicial Complex, and among other magistrates' courts, the Scarborough Magistrate's Court was started by the PNM in 1995.

Let us move now to public facilities. We have the outstanding Brian Lara Promenade. Again, this was not just construction, but a landmark for public awareness in Trinidad and Tobago. One sees the use that is now being put to the Promenade. Even today, I was glancing through the newspapers and I saw that there will be yet another exposition there of Trinidad and Tobago products. Every time I see this I am proud that I was part of that outstanding project which is now being used by citizens of Trinidad and Tobago for relaxation, recreation and also to display their projects.

We had also taken our vision to San Fernando and had developed a similar facility on Harris Promenade. The Brian Lara Promenade programme cost approximately \$12 million and would have continued to the Riverside Plaza. Having achieved the several blocks between Wrightson Road and the Roman Catholic Cathedral, it was our intention—and we had already started preliminary designs—to continue to Tamarind Square and beyond, to Riverside Plaza, so that there would have been one complete promenade from Riverside Plaza to Wrightson Road.

We dove-tailed this with the Wrightson Road refurbishing programme with the assistance of a qualified landscape architect in the Ministry of Works, who was brought to Trinidad and Tobago by the PNM Administration to enhance the skills in the Ministry of Works. He was responsible for the design, upgrading and

*Construction Projects*  
[MR. IMBERT]

*Friday, June 28, 1996*

beautification of Wrightson Road that we see now, the replacement of the port fence and pavement, and the replanting of trees and so forth along that Wrightson Road section from the market interchange to the Port. This, again, was to link with the Beetham Market upgrading which was being financed by the IDB, and which, I believe, is a \$10 million facility for the refurbishment of the Port of Spain Central Market. So the Port of Spain Central Market was scheduled to be upgraded. Work had in fact commenced in 1994 and was to continue throughout 1995/1996 to link with the Wrightson Road beautification, the upgrading of the Port and so forth.

In San Fernando, we had commissioned the Urban Development Corporation of Trinidad and Tobago to engage the services of consultants to design a promenade similar, but not exactly identical, to the Brian Lara Promenade because San Fernando is a different city with its own unique character and the promenade also has differences in elevation where one side is higher than the other so that the design had to be different in focus from the Brian Lara Promenade, which is a flat area.

If one looks at the designs for this facility done in 1995, one will see the creation of working areas and thoroughfares from one side to the other, meeting areas and quiet areas. That project, like many others, went the way of all flesh when it was functionally and constructively abandoned by the present administration.

We in the PNM knew from our experience with the Brian Lara Promenade that the promenade could only have been funded to a limited extent by the private sector. As a matter of fact, we were able to raise almost \$4 million from the commercial banks in Port of Spain, energy sector companies and so forth for the Brian Lara Promenade. The rest of the facility was funded by Central Government. Recognizing that similarly in San Fernando one could not expect the private sector to pay for all the Harris Promenade upgrading, we had allocated approximately \$4 million to start Phase I, which was put out to tender and ready for award in November 1995, and constructively abandoned by the Member for Oropouche who has now thrown the project to the wolves and told the Urban Development Corporation and the private sector in San Fernando to fend for themselves. As a result, it would be a long time before that project gets going.

This strikes at the root of the second part of the Motion where I asked the administration on the other side to present a credible plan for resuscitating the construction sector.

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

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

*Question put and agreed to.*

**3.00 p.m.**

**Mr. C. Imbert:** I thank you, Mr. Speaker and I thank hon. Members opposite for their generosity, including the Member for Oropouche who had to force to give the extension.

Mr. Speaker, the whole problem here really resides in the Ministry of Planning and Development. I do not blame the Minister of Works and Transport. The villain of the piece in this whole scenario, is the Minister of Planning and Development and I will prove this by reference to the Public Sector Investment Programme (PSIP). The Ministry of Works is an executing agency, an implementation arm. The provision of funding and the allocation of resources are the responsibility of the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Planning and Development and once the Ministry of Planning and Development sabotages the construction programme as has been done—and I will prove it when I refer to his PSIP document where he has confessed to sabotage—the Minister of Works and Transport cannot function. So I am not blaming the Minister of Works and Transport for any of the problems that have arisen in the cancellation, suspension and scrapping of major construction programmes in Trinidad and Tobago. As I have said, the Ministry of Works and Transport is simply an execution agency and once the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Planning and Development starve that ministry of funds and do not provide the allocations, the Ministry of Works and Transport cannot function. Let me make it absolutely clear that the villain is the Minister of Planning and Development.

In housing, and my colleague, the hon. Member for Point Fortin will expand on the tremendous construction programme put in place over the 1992—1995 period by the Ministry of Housing and Settlements under the stewardship of the Member involving hundreds of millions of dollars. A multifaceted, multisectoral programme including settlement and squatter regularization, provision of fully serviced lots, core shelter programme, and private/public sector joint venture programmes such as the apartment unit construction taking place in Aranguez and San Fernando and

*Construction Projects*  
[MR. IMBERT]

Friday, June 28, 1996

so forth. It is a multifaceted programme put in place by the hon. Member for Point Fortin involving all aspects of construction in those areas. *[Interruption]*

So I simply wish to say on that score that we had put in place a programme that would have seen housing development of the order of hundreds of millions of dollars in Trinidad and Tobago. *[Cross talk]*

[MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Hon. Members, the Member for Diego Martin East has asked for my protection.

**Mr. C. Imbert:** I thank the hon. Deputy Speaker as always.

I have outlined for you the programme of construction, the foundation that was laid by the People's National Movement administration which also included community centres which I now see are being claimed by the new administration. The first phase commenced in 1995 and a number of centres were completed in that year such as the Carenage community complex and so forth. We had sourced funding from the IADB for construction of over 20 community centres including a cultural facility in the Laventille area, a pan complex and a community facility in the area of sport. We had commenced design and construction work in several instances on multi-purpose indoor facilities and an artificial hockey surface in Tacarigua. So that our approach to construction was multi-sectoral and multifaceted and it hit every single area of the economy.

I go now to the Public Sector Investment Programme document put in place by the sabotage agent, the Member for Oropouche and let us see the evidence of his sabotage. I turn to Health on page 10 which states:

"38. The 1995 investment programme for the health services sector focused (*sic*) on the completion of the preparation of the major Health Sector Reform Programme (HSRP) to be financed by the IDB and the use of General Revenues to fund...priority improvement works at selected health facilities.

39. The sum of \$19.4 million was spent during the year to advance the preparation of the HSRP which is to be financed by the IDB."

**Mr. Sudama:** Which one, which one.

**Mr. C. Imbert:** I will get to it. This involved a study of alternative health sector financing options, redevelopment of the San Fernando General Hospital,



construction of a new health facility at Arima and so forth. It is a shame and a scandal that when one goes to page 26—because the 1995 reference was the work of the PNM—where we put in place US \$170.9 million health sector reform programme to be implemented over 6 years. It says:

"The IDB is expected to provide Trinidad and Tobago with a loan of US \$112.0 million to assist in the implementation of the programme."

Listen to this because it is evidence of the Minister's sabotage—

"Formal negotiations, which were previously scheduled for late 1995, have been delayed at the request of the new administration to permit a review of the programme."

And this document is replete with these references. I had made the point that when we came in 1992 as appointed Minister of Works and Transport, I did not stop the agricultural access road and bridges programme, I continued it, but that hon. Member, that sabotage agent from Oropouche suspended the Health Sector Reform Programme for six months.

Only recently the hon. Member for Caroni Central meekly and humbly came into this House and confessed that the Health Sector Reform Programme prepared, formulated, developed and finalized by the PNM was agreed to by the incoming administration with a few minor changes. Those were his exact words. *[Interruption]* The Member for Oropouche has a tendency to avoid the truth Mr. Deputy Speaker. I have a note written to me by the hon. Member for Caroni Central where he pointed out a newspaper article where he confessed and admitted that the programme had been agreed to with a few minor changes and if I am misquoting the hon. Member, he can get up and say so and since he would not, because he is an honourable man, unlike some other persons outside of this Chamber. The Minister of Health at least had the decency to confess that after review, he could find nothing fundamentally wrong with the PNM's Health Sector Reform Programme. Six whole months were wasted. *[Desk thumping]* The technocrats in the Ministry of Health are the same technocrats, same permanent secretary, same chief medical officer, no one has changed.

### **3.10 p.m.**

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am certain when that Government came into office the Minister was advised of the plans in place and I am sure against his better judgment he was instructed to suspend that programme. Six months went down

*Construction Projects*  
[MR. IMBERT]

*Friday, June 28, 1996*

the drain, where we could have been building health centres, the new hospital in Couva, new health facilities all over Trinidad and Tobago. The entire dry season of 1996 was wasted because of the gross mismanagement and incompetence of the administration that now forms the Government. And so it is throughout. Let us move on.

Roads and Bridges: One finds in the document that the comprehensive highway development programme is being reviewed. Another one! And at least one year would be lost in that \$700 million programme because of the sabotage and gross mismanagement of the Minister of Planning and Development who is the real villain in all of this—he delayed the health sector programme for six months; delayed the comprehensive highway rehabilitation programme for at least 12 months and maybe two years; delayed the national drainage development flood control and irrigation programme developed by the PNM for at least 12 months and maybe two years; delayed the primary education programme involving construction of 50 new primary schools by six months; gross incompetence and mismanagement.

When we went into office we found a facility in place from the former administration; a Fincor facility where Republic Merchant Bank was financing the construction of a number of public facilities involving schools, police stations and so forth. We did not stop anything, we kept on trotting. We built schools as on the programme because we understood the meaning of continuity, momentum. We understood that if one took a narrow and short-sighted view that one wanted to scrap, crush, destroy and erase from living memory everything that has gone before one, that was a recipe for disaster. But that is the approach of the present administration.

Can one imagine? There is a serious flooding problem in Trinidad and Tobago. There was the Caparo River Basin Study which took a number of years to complete. It was completed in early 1995. The recommendations went straight to the World Bank.

**Hon. Member:** The Member did nothing.

**Mr. C. Imbert:** What utter rubbish! It was accepted by the World Bank as part of Phase I of the National Drainage Development Flood Control and Irrigation Programme. A number of projects were pulled out of that Caparo River Basin Study.

You see, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the consulting firm was engaged by the People's National Movement in 1993 and given the brief to study the Caparo River Basin and to prepare detailed designs for immediate short-term work in the Caparo area. All of the works were completed; designs were completed, ready for construction in 1996. What happened? In came the new administration and decided that was a PNM programme to help the people of Caparo so they scrapped it. That is what they have done. We had accessed US \$80 million from the World Bank for that project.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar:** Shame!

**Mr. C. Imbert:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, the World Bank had also released the first bloc of funds for the designs, for upgrading of drainage systems in Caroni, the East-West Corridor, Marabella, Vistabella; all of these designs were in train. A number of designs were completed. Contracts were ready for tender.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar:** What has happened?

**Mr. C. Imbert:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, a new administration came in and abandoned the whole process.

**Hon. Member:** Contractors were to tender.

**Mr. C. Imbert:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is why in the last recital we on this side urge the Government to get off that track of myopia, vindictiveness, narrow mindedness and get the construction sector moving again.

The present administration has managed to crash over \$100 million, perhaps \$300 million worth of construction projects which were earmarked for 1996. They have managed to crash, abolish and destroy hundreds of millions of dollars of construction programmes. What has this done? This has laid the foundation for recession.

*Mr. Deputy Speaker stood.*

*[Interruption]* Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is little wonder that earlier in the year the Joint Consultative Council had to come out in public—*[Interruption]*

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Gentlemen and Ladies, I ask that the Member be heard in silence.

**Mr. C. Imbert:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, I know what the problem is, you know. This Government because of its sheer desire to destroy and wipe out everything

*Construction Projects*  
[MR. IMBERT]

*Friday, June 28, 1996*

that has happened in Trinidad and Tobago before, has shut down the construction industry in Trinidad and Tobago.

**Hon. Member:** That is not true.

**Mr. C. Imbert:** They have now come to the realization that by so doing, they are hurting every citizen in Trinidad and Tobago. They are affecting unemployment generally. They are affecting employment in the manufacturing companies, the contracting firms, the consulting firms and so forth. They have come to that realization, but too late, too late, shall be the cry. They have already wasted the entire 1996 construction programme.

A typical example is the Carenage Government Primary School where drawings were prepared, tenders were invited, tenders were received and a contract was ready for award in November 1995. Because of the hate of the Member for Oropouche, he deleted that project from the development programme simply because it was in Diego Martin. Moving along the corridor, he deleted the National Library because it was in Port of Spain. Moving along the corridor, he deleted the Arima Judicial Complex because it was in Arima.

As a matter of fact, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the only projects that are on-going now are those where tenders were awarded and construction commenced before the 1995 election. Anything else taking place is either of minor significance, or has no relationship whatsoever to the Government or any of its misguided policies. If we examine the projects underway—

**3.20 p.m.**

**Dr. Mohammed:** Like transport.

**Mr. C. Imbert:**—Ministry of Works Headquarters building, started by the PNM, underway; Patna/River Estate Primary School, started by the PNM—underway; Arima Boys' Government School, started by the PNM—underway; San Fernando Divisional Headquarters, started by the PNM—underway; Sangre Grande Divisional Headquarters, started by the PNM—underway; and a number of other projects that are on-going in Trinidad and Tobago. The only reason they are in existence at all is because it would have been a legal battle—the cost would have been too high—to scrap these projects. But I am convinced that if the in-coming administration could have stopped the projects, they would have.

**Hon. Member:** Might even stop the PNM.

**Mr. C. Imbert:** They would have stopped all these projects because of their myopia.

**Mr. Sudama:** How do you spell that?

**Mr. C. Imbert:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, when one targets a sector as large as the construction sector—where 30,000 persons are looking for work out of a total of 90,000—for sabotage, it hurts everybody in Trinidad and Tobago. Because persons who are not employed in construction have to find work elsewhere and, to the extent that they do not, this leads to social problems in the country. Persons who are not employed in manufacturing companies have to be retrenched, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The snowball effect is that a number of homes are affected; families are disadvantaged; children cannot receive their daily requirements because of this callous approach to government by the present administration.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I return to my original thesis that any government must have both a short-term and a long-term employment generation strategy. Must! They can say what they want. There is no excuse for the scrapping, suspension and abandonment of all these major infrastructure development projects. No excuse. [*Desk thumping*] These projects were spread all over Trinidad and Tobago. The Comprehensive Highway Maintenance Programme was in every county in Trinidad and Tobago—St. Patrick, Victoria, Caroni, St. Andrew/St. David, St. George East and West; the roads were in every district; in Tobago. That Comprehensive Highway Maintenance Programme involved \$700 million worth of construction; \$100 million a year.

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

The National Drainage Development Programme was in every part of the country: North, Central and South Trinidad. The Primary Education Programme, construction of schools was in every sector of the country. The Health Sector Reform Programme was in every area of the country and any government that followed through with the groundwork laid by the PNM could only have made tremendous gains by so doing. What did they do? Destroy, abandon, suspend, curtail, review, scrap, abolish! That is the language of this document, Public Sector Investment Programme.

The other distressing point, Mr. Speaker, is that the technocrats in the Ministry of Finance are aware that the Capital Programme in Trinidad and Tobago is way below the minimum level normally associated with a country with the

characteristics of Trinidad and Tobago. If one talks to any economist from the World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank, or to any diplomat, they will tell you that our Capital Programme is way below the requirement for an emerging country like Trinidad and Tobago. We need to get up to at least three per cent of GDP, and hopefully five per cent, in our Capital Programme. We are way below that at the present time.

Mr. Speaker, when one examines the increase in Recurrent Expenditure in the 1996 budget where non productive expenditure was increased by the in-coming administration by over one billion dollars, expenditure on Wages and Salaries was increased by over one billion dollars; yet the Capital Programme was cut by nearly \$200 million.

**Mr. Sudama:** What nonsense are you talking about?

**Mr. C. Imbert:** What sort of short-sighted approach is that? Mr. Speaker, if one goes through Recurrent Expenditure one will see that in 1996—the figures are there, Mr. Speaker; the Member for Oropouche can babble all he wants.

**Mr. Sudama:** Where are the figures?

**Mr. C. Imbert:** Recurrent Expenditure in 1996 is one billion dollars more than Recurrent Expenditure in 1995. When one sees that kind of myopic and short-sighted approach to national development where non productive expenditure is increased and productive expenditure is cut; where they cut capital development; reduce opportunities for employment generation, economic activity, growth in the economy, and so forth, one realizes the short-sightedness, incompetence and simple inability of the other side to manage this country properly.

I hope that in 1997 the gross incompetence that we have seen in the Capital Programme of 1996—main architect of which is the honourable sabotage man from Oropouche—will be replaced by an increase in the Capital Programme.  
[*Interruption*]

The entire construction industry has come out in a chorus and pleaded with the Government to do something about the capital development programme. The construction industry in Trinidad and Tobago is represented by persons from all political persuasions; and certainly there are a number of practitioners in that industry who support all political parties. Therefore, to attack the construction sector is not to attack any one person or political organization—it is to attack Trinidad and Tobago! So I am asking the Members on the other side to

emancipate themselves from mental slavery, and recognize that the development of the country redounds to the benefit of every citizen of Trinidad and Tobago.

I urge the Government, therefore, Mr. Speaker, to repair the considerable damage it has done to the construction sector, and to provide opportunities for employment for our young men. One of the biggest crises in Trinidad and Tobago is male youth unemployment, apart from female unemployment as well. Young men are employed on construction sites, together with men of other ages, but it is an outlet for the energies of disadvantaged youth. I urge the Members on the other side to consider the social consequences of what they are doing; consider the social implications of their myopic and oppressive approach to national development, and present a credible plan to this House for the resuscitation and re-stimulation of the construction sector, and the creation of meaningful job opportunities within that sector.

I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

*Question proposed.*

**3.30 p.m.**

**The Minister of Planning and Development (Hon. Trevor Sudama):** Mr. Speaker, it is extremely difficult to respond to nonsense, nonsensicality and irrelevance. This Motion is ill-informed; it is based on inaccurate facts; it lacks appreciation of the fiscal realities and the imperatives which confront us and this country; it reflects an ignorance of the dynamics of sustainable employment and permanent employment generation and it is divisive and its objective is mischievous in intent.

The Member continually referred to the PNM administration. I think he was a little mistaken. It is the late unlamented PNM administration. Further proof of that is that we got word just today that we have won the Siparia regional corporation and the electorate of this country has made a resounding statement in favour of this Government.

So that let us look at the content of this Motion.

*"Whereas official Central Statistical Office (CSO) statistics indicate that there are approximately 30,000 unemployed persons in the sector at present..."*

That is not quite accurate:

*"Whereas the former Government, the previous People's National Movement (PNM) administration, had allocated resources and had undertaken the required*

*Construction Projects*  
[HON. T. SUDAMA]

*Friday, June 28, 1996*

preparatory work for a number of major construction projects to commence and/or continue in 1996..."

This is, as we have been saying on this side, the "coulda, woulda, shoulda" government that went out of office. It seems to be a lament on the other side and they cannot, for the life of them, accept the fact that they are no longer in government and they will not be in government for a very long time. They would have undertaken the required preparatory work for a number of major construction projects.

But this preamble says:

*"Whereas* the present Government has suspended, terminated or otherwise cancelled several of these construction projects, thereby reducing the potential for employment in the construction sector..."

This Motion does not say that by the so-called act of suspension or termination that employment has actually been reduced in the construction sector. It says, it reduces the potential. What I want to tell this Member who is so flawed in his thinking, in his mentality and in his stature, that the construction sector, for a start, has shown growth in the first quarter of 1996. This is reflected, and we have figures here which show that the increase in construction activity has been reflected in a greater volume of domestic cement sales which amounted to 116,000 tonnes in the first quarter of 1996, an increase of 3.6 per cent over the 112,000 tonnes recorded for the corresponding period of 1995.

So if that is a reflection of activity in the construction sector, then, of course, there is increased activity. So that this Motion is flawed. Secondly it intimates or it implies that there has been a fall in employment in the first quarter of 1996.

**Mr. Imbert:** I did not say that.

**Hon. T. Sudama:** What is the point of this Motion then? If he did not say that there has been a fall in employment in the construction sector during the first quarter of 1996, what is the point of his Motion? Why did he go on babbling for 75 minutes and wasting this House's time? What is the point in all this?

The facts are that the unemployment rate in the construction sector in the first quarter of 1996 was 42.4 per cent or 28,000 people, whereas in the respective period, last year, it was 47.4 per cent, or over 33,000 people. The Member seems unable to appreciate the fact that the construction sector comprises of activity in



the private construction sector and the public construction sector. When you take all of it together, there has been no lack of growth in the construction sector and there has been no fall in employment in the construction sector.

So let us put that to rest. Therefore I say that his presentation has been so ill-informed, so inaccurate, that it makes nonsense of the 75 minutes which we have been subjected to in this House. Furthermore, the question has to do—and if we did curtail the Public Sector Investment Programme for 1996, when I spoke in this House on the 1996 budget debate, I made two points. Apparently he either does not understand economics—he does not understand anything, let alone economics. First of all, the fiscal imperatives were such that this Government, being a responsible government of national unity, could not get into a programme which created a deficit on our fiscal accounts. Secondly, we had to create a surplus which was more than what we had planned because that government had so planned its financial affairs that in January of 1997 we have to repay a loan, which cannot be rescheduled at all, of TT \$900 million. In order to plan for the bullet repayment in January 1997, we had to make certain provisions with respect to a surplus.

Had we not been in such a constrained fiscal situation, we would have been able to have an enlarged Public Sector Investment Programme. But that is the fiscal reality that we had to face. Having done that, we made a statement in the House that we would look at the revenues for 1996, in the first six months of this year, and depending on the pattern of revenue inflows, we will review the Public Sector Investment Programme with the objective of increasing the number of projects we can bring under the purview of this programme.

So that this ranting and raving about what happens in the six months and how we abandoned things in six months, I want to tell him that the majority of the population in Trinidad and Tobago put us in power for the purpose of reviewing what they did over the last four years. They have endorsed our actions over the last six months and they want us to take our time and review, if it takes us six months, nine months, or whatever it is, they want us to review so that when we put a programme in place it will be for the benefit of the economy and for the various sectors and, indeed, create sustainable employment and development in Trinidad and Tobago.

### **3.40 p.m.**

This is what they have put us here for. I do not have to apologize to that dead administration. I do not have to apologize to them nor do I have to bring a

programme to this House to show how we are going to improve employment, create growth and so forth. I do not have to do that. I explained to the population, I do not have to explain to the Member for Diego Martin East.

Mr. Speaker, the premise of this Motion is flawed in the sense because we have had to take the opportunity to review our programmes for 1996, and those that were passed on to us from 1995; 1996 has come, but it has not gone. Therefore, for the rest of 1996, we would be putting a programme in place such as the PNM government has never done before, and are incapable of doing. When we do that we would, of course, be further strengthening and consolidating the economy of this country with the objective of creating sustainable employment in the long term.

The premise of this Motion seems to be that one should engage in construction projects for the sake of engaging in construction projects in order to create employment. This seems to be the premise here. What we are saying is that if one wants to engage in construction projects merely for the purpose of creating employment or providing relief for employment, I must tell the other side that we have an Unemployment Relief Programme of \$130 million planned for 1996 to deal with the question of short-term relief of unemployment. One should not engage in projects merely for the sake of creating relief for unemployment. We have done that already.

Mr. Speaker, what one should do is to identify infrastructure projects which, when implemented, will improve and increase production and productivity in the rest of the economy and by doing so permanent sustainable jobs will be created. When that happens there will be a spin-off effect in the rest of the economy and in that way we would get the economy rolling again.

The Member said we stopped everything; that we cancelled and terminated everything; then he named a number of projects which the late PNM administration had on stream. As I said, our job was to review, and having reviewed and made the necessary changes, we then decided that we would proceed with a number of these programmes.

Let me announce that we renegotiated the National Highways Programme with the Inter-American Development Bank—where we spoke about the problem of contracting out maintenance activity and the modalities of that process and have had agreement. It is only two days since a fax came to me saying that the Inter-American Development Bank had approved the amended National Highways

Programme and having had that we would be proceeding with road rehabilitation and reconstruction under that programme. So, it is not that the programme has been terminated or cancelled. We had to review it, we did so, and under the amended programme we would be proceeding.

Mr. Speaker, let me also say that the Health Sector Reform Programme was also reviewed because of the number of implications involved. The Minister of Health and I went to Washington and had three days of discussions and negotiations and there were certain items in that Health Sector Reform Programme which we felt was not in accordance with our own thinking. For example, the previous government had negotiated for the closure of the Caura Hospital which would have reduced the health services available to the population at large and which would have restricted access to medical services. We went there and reviewed this and got an undertaking from the Inter-American Development Bank that we would have an alternative to the closure of the Caura Hospital.

We have also had agreement on a feasibility study to be done to include a district hospital in Diego Martin under the Health Sector Reform Programme. I see the Member for Diego Martin West looking at me and he is pleased in his mind. I know he is not pleased with the Member for San Fernando East, but at least he is pleased.

**Dr. Rowley:** Where is the school?

**Hon. T. Sudama:** We have put that out for tender, I think.

A feasibility study is being done so that we can consider the question of an additional district hospital in Diego Martin to serve the people in the Western peninsula.

Mr. Speaker, we then thought that trying to compress all these activities into five years would have created problems for the implementation and for the accepted capacity of the Government and the economy. Therefore we had the programme for the health programme stretched over seven years instead of five years. This was also a subject of negotiation.

Also, we thought that it was important to change the composition of the Regional Health Authority Board. Therefore, we insisted that in the Regional Health Authority Board, we would have at least two doctors represented on the board—as they are the critical personnel in the health services—and a labour representative.

*Construction Projects*  
[HON. T. SUDAMA]

*Friday, June 28, 1996*

So, we went there, and among other things, we got an undertaking, agreement and consensus on these matters. Today, we are pleased to announce that the Health Sector Reform Programme would come up for consideration of the IADB board on July 10, and we are hoping that we would be able to sign that loan agreement on July 12 when the President of the Inter-American Development Bank visits Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, the National Highways Programme: As I said, that has been approved and that agreement would also be signed, but in the meantime, we are putting things in place for the swift implementation of the first phase, and to access the first tranche draw down.

Mr. Speaker, the Basic Education Project loan was signed earlier in the year, and the Ministry of Education is in the process of putting things in place for starting the construction of the Early Childhood Centres of the various 18 primary schools and four secondary schools that we have decided to rebuild and replace. We are doing all this. I do not know why this Member is so impatient. The population is not impatient, the Member for Diego Martin East seems to be very impatient.

The Minister of Works and Transport got up in this House and indicated that plans are afoot for construction to start on the judicial complex in Arima this year. Apparently he does not hear or he does not care to hear when things are announced on what we are doing.

The Public Buildings Programme: The Tunapuna Administrative Complex is on stream to start and is continuing.

**3.50 p.m.**

Let me say something about the urban renewal. Mr. Speaker, all we have done with respect to the national library building is to suspend it to see how we could incorporate a revised plan for it and approach that building on a modular basis. That means a phased basis. When we do that we would also be considering the prospect of putting the science and technology components to that building because this is where we want to go in the 21st century. We just do not want a library complex which is not fully functional. We would do it on a phased basis and we will redesign the building and reconceptualize what, in fact, that building is supposed to do and make it more functional. This is what we are entitled to do as the new Government with a mandate which has been renewed only a few days ago.

The only other two things we have suspended—and I will deal with this at some length—is the national security and legal complex project. We have deferred that, and the question of the national performing arts center and Woodford Square restoration, we have deferred that for the simple reason given the constraints over funding and given the priorities that we are underlining.

First of all, we have to balance expenditure on social projects as against expenditure on economic infrastructure. We must create a balance. Secondly, we must create a regional balance. Therefore, one must have a national focus when one is re-prioritizing one's Public Sector Investment Programme. Apparently the Member does not read the daily newspapers, or he does not listen.

I made a statement a few months ago that this Government is going to proceed with the building of the ACS complex as part of the redevelopment of down-town Port of Spain and this will be done without the investment of Government funding and it will be done on a phased basis. We are going to put out terms of reference which will invite proposals—and we have already received, informally, a number of proposals for the purpose of constructing the ACS complex as part of a commercial complex which will be self-financing and the Government will not have to put money of its own into that project.

Harris Promenade: We are now engaging the attention of the private sector in order to get funding for Harris Promenade on a phased basis. There are three phases of that project. We have already done the designs for that project. It is only a matter of time before we go out there and put the financing in place for work on the Harris Promenade project and we will be starting something there very early.

The Member spoke about the dredging of the Caparo River to alleviate flooding in that part of Trinidad and Tobago which has been on the agenda for many years. Mr. Speaker, it was only recently through the intervention of the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources and through the intervention of Caroni (1975) Limited that we were able to dredge sections of the Caparo River to alleviate flooding. What the PNM Government could not have done in 30 years, we have done in a matter of months. Therefore, today despite the heavy rains, we are not seeing any kind of significant flooding in that area and we have done that without recourse to any funding for drainage from the multilateral institution.

The Member said that we scrapped \$300 million worth of construction projects without saying which are these projects and where they have been scrapped and scratched and so forth.

*Construction Projects*  
[HON. T. SUDAMA]

*Friday, June 28, 1996*

Mr. Speaker, I allude to the performance of the Member for Diego Martin East and his government with respect to implementing plans. When one looks at the development programme—and I am quoting from the Draft Estimates of the Development Programme, 1996—In 1995, under the Ministry of Works, the Development Programme estimated that \$121,710,000 would have been under capital works in that Ministry. Do you know how much they ended up spending? The revised estimate was \$53,967,000 and the actual expenditure was less than that. Less than 50 per cent of what they budgeted for in 1995 in the Ministry of Works could not be spent at all.

The Member talked about the abandonment of projects and the inability to implement. Let us go into some details. The Road Rehabilitation Programme estimated at \$25 million in 1995, revised estimate for 1995—zero. Under the Road Rehabilitation Programme for 1995 they could not spend a penny. They did not spend a penny!

The Member's performance under the Rural Access Roads and Bridges Programme; in 1995 the estimates was \$52,280,000, the revised estimate was \$37,269,000 and the actual expenditure was even less than that. When one looks at the estimates for the comprehensive highway, they had put an amount of \$6 million in the budget. The revised budget was \$745,000 and the extension of the Sir Solomon Highway to the Ciperio Road—\$2 million actual expenditure and the revised estimate—\$700,000; actual expenditure was less than that. If any government is guilty of incompetence, mismanagement, neglect of construction in Trinidad and Tobago, it is none other than the PNM under that Member for Diego Martin East. The records here show it and identifies it very clearly.

I want to give a little background to where this economy has reached, the reason for the downturn, the reason that we have not been able over the years to create satisfactory employment opportunities for our citizens in Trinidad and Tobago. To do that, I have to go back a bit to give an indication of how this PNM administration had managed the economies of this country and put us in the critical situation in which we found ourselves in 1986.

**4.00 p.m.**

Members will recall that there was an oil boom in Trinidad and Tobago, and that in the 1970s and early 1980s billions of dollars were received in this country to the extent that—and I am quoting from a report by the World Bank, *Trinidad and*

*Tobago Macro-Economic Assessment and Review of the Public Sector Reform and Expenditure: a Changing Role of the State*, dated March 20, 1996 to show the criminal behaviour of the PNM government in its management over the resources of Trinidad and Tobago.

“By 1983 when per capita peaked at around US \$7,000 the public sector accounted for about 50 per cent of GDP, about 50 per cent of total employment compared for example with 8 per cent in Chile and 18 per cent in Argentina and accounted for over 50 per cent of salary employee.”

Their idea was to have bloated employment in the public sector so that they could win elections on that basis, not caring about what happened with the economy of Trinidad and Tobago.

“This pattern of development was sustainable only as long as oil prices remained high. The fall in oil prices in 1982 and 1986 caused a severe economic decline and by the time adjustment measures were initiated in 1988 the economy had dissipated under a PNM administration more than US \$3 billion in reserves, and several billion dollars in development thrusts had incurred over that quite apart from dissipating that incurred substantial internal debt which the country was forced to reschedule. Income per capita fell to US \$3,900, roughly what it was in 1973 prior to the oil boom.”

Under a PNM administration it was as if an oil boom and all the revenues never entered Trinidad and we were back to where we were in 1973. The lesson in this is the way they wasted and mismanaged money. That is critical to the Motion before us. A total of \$3 billion in US reserves was frittered away by the PNM Government. When they engaged in construction activity, it was white elephants and overrun after overrun after overrun. I am not talking about the former Prime Minister of the PNM.

The judiciary complex needed rehabilitation. Did it have to cost \$299 million when it was originally designed to cost under \$100 million? Did they have to do that? That is the kind of expenditure they want this Government to get into. That is the kind of profligacy they want us to get into. The Twin Towers which was scheduled to cost \$560 million ended up costing \$770 million. Do not talk about the Mount Hope Medical Complex and Caroni Racing Complex. He is complaining about the suspension of projects. Most recently they put \$150 million down in the ground in La Brea to build an LNG plant when any schoolboy could have told them that a house cannot be built on a pitch lake, let alone an LNG plant. If we had that

*Construction Projects*  
[HON. T. SUDAMA]

*Friday, June 28, 1996*

\$150 million, we would have been able to put a number of social and economic infrastructures in place and get this economy going again.

The report goes on to lament. I want to make the point that savings and investments are necessary for growth but not sufficient. Depending on what is invested in, it is critical. During the period of the oil boom, the public sector savings and investments were very high; 30 per cent of GDP in 1981 was public sector savings at that particular point in time because of the heavy inflows. There was also substantial accumulation of reserves. Yet this investment did not produce sustainable growth nor reduce the economy dependent on oil. One of the reasons for this was the over extension of the public sector. Much of the public sector investment was not motivated either by economic reasoning or anything else, and hence it turned out to be unproductive. This is the consensus of the World Bank Report of recent times.

This report went on to say that it was because of public sector investment under the PNM regime, that we had to make the adjustment which had to bear the brunt of the decreases. Over the years when we needed to get into economic stabilization, we could only average a little over 2 per cent of GDP for the purposes of public sector investment which was grossly inadequate. This is something which was going on under the PNM regime. The effectiveness of public sector investment is hampered by inadequate implementation capacity.

When I went into the Ministry of Planning and Development I was told that under the previous regime only 50 per cent rate of implementation could have been achieved. They spent wastefully, and even so, they could only spend \$60 out of \$100 that they put into the budget. That was gross incapacity to implement. That is a key ingredient in our approach to the Public Sector Investment Programme and the investment in infrastructure, because if there is no investment in infrastructure, there can be no improvement and development, particularly in the non-oil, non-petroleum economy in Trinidad and Tobago.

Given the limited financial resources available and the need to make very hard choices, one had to increase the public sector investment gradually and selectively so that it would have the largest returns and the greatest impact on the economy overall. That is what we are engaged in doing at this point in time. The report states very clearly that the key challenge for policy makers is to find economies in government operations and expenditures in order to boost the quantity and



effectiveness of infrastructural investment and human resource development. That is where we are heading.

What does he want us to do? As a matter of priority he wants us to restore Woodford Square. Restoration of Woodford Square may be important, but not in the present situation and the priorities which we need to establish. Even the building which houses the Ministry of National Security cannot be a priority for this Government at this time. We would need to spend that money on social infrastructure, but if we put the emphasis on economic infrastructure, then we would create the framework for the sustained development of this economy in Trinidad and Tobago. Our policy is very clear as to where we wish to go.

**4.10 p.m.**

Capital expenditure which averaged 15 per cent of GDP during the boom years and 7 per cent between 1982 and 1988, was reduced to two per cent. Our plan and programme with respect to capital investment and the use of very scarce public sector resources and savings is very clear.

Mr. Speaker, you will recall—and the Member for Tobago East has reminded me—that some grand funding was made available by the European Commission and part of that money was earmarked, under the NAR administration, to do a road project in Tobago and because of the vindictiveness of that Member for Diego Martin East when he came into office at the end of 1991, that road programme was cancelled and all the money spent in various PNM constituencies in Trinidad. It is now our responsibility to revive that programme and we will build that L'Anse Fourmi road in Tobago. We have already started to put things in place.

**Mr. Imbert:** Is the Minister saying therefore that the EEC funds earmarked for the rehabilitation of the Solomon Hochoy Highway between Chaguanas and Couva is now being used elsewhere.

**Hon. T. Sudama:** Not at all. We have EEC funding earmarked under the National Indicative Programme of the Second Financial Protocol of Lomé IV, together with unutilized funds from the other EEC funding, which we will use to put things in place in Tobago, as we will do in other areas in Trinidad.  
*[Interruption]*

Mr. Speaker, I was on this discourse about the performance of the PNM Government and the fact that the former Minister of Works and Transport, the Member for Diego Martin East, has the effrontery to say that we are not making

*Construction Projects*  
[HON. T. SUDAMA]

*Friday, June 28, 1996*

sufficient provision for projects and capital investment in the 1996 budget. Mr. Speaker, I want to give this House some figures because the former Minister ranted and raved for 75 minutes, but gave us no figures. Let us see what they did between 1992 and 1995.

The projected construction-related capital expenditure in 1992 was \$336 million under the PNM regime. The actual construction-related expenditure only amounted to \$194 million, so they could not deliver. In 1993, the projected construction related capital expenditure was \$413 million and the actual construction related expenditure was only \$230 million. Then in 1995, the projected was \$559 million and the actual expenditure under that regime was \$317 million. Every year of their existence in government over the last four years they did not fulfill the projections that they had put in the budget, yet they come here to tell this House that the UNC/NAR Government, and particularly myself, is engaged in sabotage, is vindictive, and that I have a hate complex.

I would also like the House to note that construction-related expenditure as a percentage of the gross domestic product, in 1992, was 0.8 per cent, that is if one takes all construction-related expenditure of the Government as a percentage of the GDP. In 1993, it was 0.9 per cent; in 1994, 0.9 per cent; in 1995, one per cent. Do you know what we are doing in 1996? We have projected 1.7 per cent of the GDP on construction-related capital expenditure and that Member tells us that this Government is not engaged in any kind of rational expenditure pattern.

I think that this Motion was brought to this House, not because there was any merit to the arguments or any objective to the Motion; it was brought to this House to fill time.

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

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

*Question put and agreed to.*

**Hon. T. Sudama:** Mr. Speaker, this Motion has absolutely no merit. The Member failed in his attempt to prove what he sought to prove in the Motion. It was flawed and inaccurate. There has been no fall in employment in the construction sector. In fact, the records show that for the first three months of this year there has been an increase in activity in the total construction sector in Trinidad and Tobago. [*Interruption*]

The Member sees construction as only what could be done by the Ministry of Works, everything else, as far as he is concerned, is not construction. The fact is that he has brought to this House a flawed Motion based on false premises. He could not prove the case he sought to prove. The Motion was merely brought to fill time on Private Members' Day.

Other Members on our side will go into great detail on the plans and projects which we will initiate. The Minister of Works and Transport will speak at length. The Minister of Energy will speak at length because approximately US \$2.5 billion investment has been earmarked for the energy sector, which, when these projects get on stream, will create an added boost to the construction sector and create many jobs.

#### **4.20 p.m**

We are not saying that these jobs will be permanent jobs, but there is a multiplier effect on the economy when construction takes place. We acknowledge that, but what we are saying is that the multiplier effect should take place as a result of construction being the end results of investments rather than construction engaged in, in order to stimulate the economy. We should stimulate the economy by other means and the follow-up of that will be that there will be increased construction activity. This is the manner in which we intend to proceed in dealing with the economy and the infrastructure that is required to boost the economic development.

Mr. Speaker, it is as if he had not seen the *Public Sector Investment Programme* (PSIP) which we had put out earlier in the year and which formed part of the budget papers. If I go through this—and I would not do so in any great detail—he would see that we are under the 4th education programme. We are going to build 10 Early Child Care Education Centres; 8 primary schools, 12 secondary schools and we will commence the design for 25 primary and refurbish 8 primary schools and so forth under the education programme. We are spending \$20 million of EC grant in order to refurbish and upgrade a number of primary and secondary schools.

Under the Rural Access Roads and Bridges Rehabilitation Programme, the PSIP has included in it the rehabilitation of 72 kilometres of roads and the replacement of 10 bridges.

*Construction Projects*  
[HON. T. SUDAMA]

*Friday, June 28, 1996*

Under the Drainage and Flood Control Rehabilitation Programme, we are doing work in the Oropouche area and on five major rivers in the East-West Corridor.

Under the Road Rehabilitation Programme, the reconstruction of the Solomon Hochoy Highway between Couva and Tarouba link roads and the bridge repair works on the Uriah Butler and the Solomon Hochoy Highways. This is going to be funded by the European Union grants, European Union loan and from our own revenue to the tune of \$30 million in 1996.

**Miss Nicholson:** And I will give Central its first indoor sports hall.

**Hon. T. Sudama:** And we have earmarked this project from funding from the European Union and later next month construction will start on an indoor sports hall in Chaguanas, the first in Central Trinidad under this Government. After that, we are going to Tobago, and of course, we have already built a sports hall in Laventille and in other areas so we are distributing this equitably, justly and fairly.

I have spoken about the Health Sector Reform Programme and the Member had made much ado about the squatter regularization and the settlements programme. Mr. Speaker, I want to tell this House that we will engage in the continuation of construction of 1500 houses on 11 sites and I am sure that the Minister of Housing and Settlements would have much more to say with respect to the construction programme as it relates to housing and the infrastructure involved.

Under the Community Development Fund which we had signed a few months ago, we will commence physical infrastructure works nationwide through this national self-help commission and we will be upgrading a number of community centres and a number of self-help water projects and so forth. We are constructing and upgrading community centres under the social infrastructure programme at Barataria, Fyzabad, East Port of Spain and Black Rock in Tobago among others. At Point Lisas we are looking at economic infrastructure and we are completing the construction of container shipping facility at Point Lisas and at the port in Port of Spain.

Under the Supplementary Schools Programme we are constructing the St. Mary's Children Home, the Reform Presbyterian School and the Guayaguayare Roman Catholic school.

The construction of the Tunapuna Administrative Complex is proceeding apace, Mr. Speaker. He spoke about fire stations and police stations. We are continuing with the construction of the police facilities at the Mirror building and we are completing the construction of 5 police stations at Erin, Maraval, Diego Martin, Cunupia and St. Madeleine and we are going to construct 16 police posts. In addition to that, we are in the process of constructing and completing the construction of 16 police posts throughout Trinidad and Tobago.

Under the Road Improvement Programme of course, we are going to upgrade the road network throughout, and in health—

**Miss Nicholson:** You are giving Tobago a hospital, make sure you say that. Tell them you are building from next year.

**Hon. T. Sudama:** Mr. Speaker, I have not even spoken about the drainage programme that we had on stream, and that would be implemented as soon as we are able to finalize arrangements. We are looking at economic and social infrastructure and when all those are added together, we are looking at a comprehensive programme of infrastructural development which, when put in place will put this economy right back on track to sustainable growth and development. That is our objective.

**Miss Nicholson:** He is suffering from political tabanca, tell him that.  
*[Laughter]*

**Hon. T. Sudama:** That government that is lamenting every time they get up and say they have this plan and they have the other plan, and they should have done this and they could have done the other. They were there for 34 years and this last regime was there for 4 years. All those plans seemed to be pipe dreams and it is now for this Government of national unity to implement and to meet the aspirations of both rural and urban Trinidad and those of Tobago. This is for us to do. We take a national perspective on things, we look at the problem in a holistic manner and as a result of doing that, and as a result of setting our priorities right—having looked at what the PNM did over 34 years—we must learn from the lessons of history and this is why I quoted at length as to how they spent money in the earlier days and how they squandered US \$3 billion of our reserves when the oil boom was in full swing.

**4.30 p.m.**

Mr. Speaker, look at what they did in the past. As a result of the fact that they could not have spent money on infrastructure, our roads are collapsing, our drainage is in problem, our schools are falling apart, all because they never spent the money in a wise way in order for us to benefit and indeed to improve the infrastructure of this country and maintain it in a satisfactory way let alone to increase and add to the infrastructure.

This Motion is grossly irrelevant. I do not know why the Member brought this Motion here except to use up parliamentary time. The Motion is flawed. It is inaccurate and it has a mischievous intent about it. It seeks to be divisive.

This Motion is really a lament. There is a poem called “An eulogy in a Country Church Yard” by Thomas Gray. What we have heard from the Member for Diego Martin East for 75 minutes today is an eulogy in the PNM grave yard.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**ADJOURNMENT**

**The Attorney General (Hon. Ramesh Lawrence Maharaj):** Mr. Speaker, after consultation with the Opposition, I beg to move,

That the House be adjourned to Tuesday, July 09, 1996 at 10.30 a.m.

May I indicate—and I did indicate to the Opposition through the Ag. Opposition Chief Whip—that we intend to sit throughout the month of July on a daily basis in order to try to get through some of the legislative agenda of the new administration. We are hoping that, depending on how we get through, we may not have to sit in the month of August so that Members would be able to have some form of vacation.

We would sit on days other than Thursdays from 10.30 a.m. On Thursdays we would sit at 1.30 p.m.

We are hoping to make alternative arrangements so that the Senate could sit during that time on a daily basis. Therefore, there would be the situation where the House and the Senate would be sitting at the same time.

At the next meeting we would continue under “Bills Second Reading, Government Business”, with Bill No. 1, the Protective Services (Compensation) Bill. Thereafter, we hope to start Bill No. 3, the Patents Bill. That week we are hoping that we would be able to complete—at least in this House—Bills Nos. 1, 2,

*Adjournment*

*Friday, June 28, 1996*

3 and 4 on the Supplemental Order Paper: Industrial Designs Bill, Layout-Designs (Topographies) of Integrated Circuits Bill, Protection Against Unfair Competition Bill, and Geographical Indications Bill.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*House adjourned accordingly.*

*Adjourned at 4.34 p.m.*