

*Leave of Absence*

*Friday, October 15, 1999*

**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

Friday, October 15, 1999

The House met at 1.32 p.m.

**PRAYERS**

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

**LEAVE OF ABSENCE**

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, I wish to advise that I have received communication from the Member for Port of Spain South who has asked to be excused from today's sitting. A similar letter has been received from the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West; and they are both excused from today's sitting.

**EQUAL OPPORTUNITY BILL**

Bill to prohibit certain kinds of discrimination, to promote equality of opportunity between persons of different status, to establish an Equal Opportunity Commission and an Equal Opportunity Tribunal and for matters connected therewith [*The Prime Minister*]; read the first time.

**ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT (AMDT.) (No. 2) BILL**

Bill to amend the Environmental Management Act [*The Minister in the Ministry of Planning and Development with responsibility for the Environment*]; read the first time.

**DANGEROUS DOGS (No. 2) BILL**

Bill to provide for regulating the keeping of dangerous dogs which present a serious danger to the public; to make further provision for ensuring that such dogs are kept under proper control; and for connected purposes [*The Attorney General*]; read the first time.

**GAMBLING AND BETTING (AMDT.) (NO. 2) BILL**

Bill to amend the Gambling and Betting Act, Chap. 11:19 and for matters connected therewith [*The Minister of Trade & Industry and Consumer Affairs and Minister of Tourism*]; read the first time.

**TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO RACING AUTHORITY (AMDT.) (NO. 2) BILL**

Bill to amend the Trinidad and Tobago Racing Authority Act, Chap. 21:50 [*The Minister of Trade & Industry and Consumer Affairs and Minister of Tourism*]; read the first time.

*Betting Levy Board (Amdt.) Bill*

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**BETTING LEVY BOARD (AMDT.) (NO. 2) BILL**

Bill to amend the Betting Levy Board Act, No. 35 of 1989 [*The Minister of Trade & Industry and Consumer Affairs and Minister of Tourism*]; read the first time.

**NATIONAL RACING COMMISSION (NO. 2) BILL**

Bill to provide for the establishment and operation of the National Racing Commission and for matters connected therewith [*The Minister of Trade & Industry and Consumer Affairs and Minister of Tourism*]; read the first time.

**CRIMINAL PROCEDURE (AMDT.) (NO. 2) BILL**

Bill to amend the Criminal Procedure Act, Chap 12:10 [*The Attorney General*]; read the first time.

**LIMITATION OF CERTAIN ACTIONS (AMDT.) (NO. 2) BILL**

Bill to amend the Limitation of Certain Actions Act, 1997 [*The Attorney General*]; read the first time.

**APPROPRIATION BILL  
(BUDGET)**

[SECOND DAY]

*Order read for resuming adjourned debate on question* [October 8, 1999]:

That the Bill be now read a second time.

*Question again proposed.*

**Mr. Patrick Manning** (*San Fernando East*): Mr. Speaker, this document which purports to be the 1999/2000 budget presentation is intellectually vacuous, morally barren and nauseatingly self-congratulatory. It is short on detail, but replete with platitudes and cliches, setting new standards of superficiality and incompetence. Last Friday's presentation is totally lacking in vision and woefully deficient in the technical mastery of the economic and fiscal fundamentals. There is not even pretence of disciplined economic analysis. It had nothing to do with any sincere reporting. It was simply a "mish mash" designed to satisfy the legal requirement to present a budget by a particular date, October 31.

In spite of the smugness, glib responses and robber talk, the 1999/2000 budget presentation is not a budget at all. It is a statement of which neither the Government nor the Minister can be proud. Should they so delude themselves, Trinidad and Tobago is worse off than I dare to imagine.

In short, Mr. Speaker, in terms of good governance, the 1999/2000 budget presentation is an unmitigated disaster. But then, the vast majority of people in this country do not associate this administration with good, sober and honest Government.

Mr. Speaker, in keeping with the requirements of the laws of Trinidad and Tobago, the Parliament has provided the Government with the platform and opportunity to report to the people on the state of their affairs and the outlook for their future well-being. Sadly, for yet another year, the Minister of Finance has chosen this occasion of the presentation of the national budget to insult the collective intelligence of the population by offering up what can best be described as a poorly scripted, unfinished manifesto document from a regime which has convinced itself that it is leading a nation of fools, a nation without records and without memory.

A national budget statement is expected to contain, among other things, an honest and accurate report of the expenditure incurred in the previous financial year, a report on the outturn and fiscal measures initiated during that period with analyses and explanations for any diversions from the original projections. Following on from this, should be the basis for the advancement of new or improved measures of which projections for the coming year can be presented in the form of reasonable estimates of attainable revenue, which can then be divided up and allocated to meet the expenditure for the coming year. It should be about accountability in the most visible sense.

Instead, what we have had from the Minister is a one and a half hour long, drawn-out menu of vapid oratory, full of naked untruths, sprinkled with the now customary incorrect figures, garnished with misleading conclusions, wrapped in a total, deliberate absence of key information, along with numerous instances of crude attempts at concealing the unpleasant reality of the true economic, fiscal and social circumstances of the country. All of it, spiced with liberal doses of self-praise and genuflecting to a Prime Minister who could not care less whether the Minister was taking us all for a ride to hell.

This budget, the worst we have ever had presented by any Minister of Finance of this country—*[Desk thumping]* I say so having listened to budgets for 29 years in this Parliament, Mr. Speaker *[Desk thumping]*—is notable for its lack of honesty, clarity and relevant financial planning details. The behaviour of the Minister of Finance on this occasion has been so scandalous as to have the effect of discrediting the entire budgeting process as an essential element of Government's management of the people's business, and this could have the

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added effect of contributing to the destruction of confidence, both at home and abroad.

The data as reported by the Minister consistently call into question the integrity of our national statistical data-base—a concern only recently alluded to by the International Monetary Fund. Mr. Speaker, listen to the view of the International Monetary Fund on this matter. I quote:

“The staff has noted some deterioration in the integrity of the statistical base. Gaps and inconsistencies have emerged in the reconciliation of monetary and fiscal data and reliability of national accounts data has become a concern.”

That is the International Monetary Fund, Mr. Speaker. Article 4, Consultation, the one that they quoted from only in part.

The PNM believes that whereas the competent staff is available, and the correct data are there, it is clearly not beneath this Government to unashamedly manipulate the figures in order to try to fool the population as it seeks to take credit for accomplishments which have not been achieved. In order to protect the staff of the Central Statistical Office and the population as a whole from the effects of certain loss of confidence in our national database, the time has come for new arms-length arrangements, probably involving the use of an independent, autonomous body, such as the University of the West Indies, to be established. The next PNM government will address this matter conclusively in such a way as to leave no doubt as to the quality of the national database. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, how can one explain the fact that this Minister of Finance can stand in this Parliament and, on at least three separate occasions in his budget presentation, deliberately mislead the country and the world by stating that, and I quote:

“...unemployment has declined to 11.7 per cent by the end of June 1999, the lowest rate in 15 years.”

The Minister of Finance talking.

Mr. Speaker, nothing is further from the truth. [*Desk thumping*] The country's unemployment figures are available to the Minister just as they are published in the *Review of the Economy*. In that document the true figure for unemployment is listed at 14.6 per cent. These are the same CSO figures to which the Minister refers. In fact, in his own document laid here in this Parliament during the budget presentation last Friday, the true figures are available if you know where to look. I want to direct national attention to Appendix 9 of that document.

Mr. Speaker, I also draw your attention to Appendix 11 of *the Review of the Economy*, a document provided by the Minister of Finance. It is stated therein that the number of unemployed persons in the country stands at 82,000, out of a labour force of 562,6000. Even the Minister of Education, could compute that expressed as a percentage, this is equivalent to 14.475 per cent.

Just over a week ago, the Governor of the Central Bank was advising interested persons that the unemployment levels were in the order of 15 per cent, yet this Minister of Finance would mislead this country on a crucial matter like this and his ill-informed and equally untrustworthy colleagues sat there and banged their desks in shameless self-adulation based on a totally cynical fabrication.

**1.45 p.m.**

Unfortunately for them, the public knows that one cannot expect a dramatic fall in unemployment at the precise time that the major construction projects such as the LNG and Methanol plants are completed with no replacement activity being provided.

Mr. Speaker, in terms of unemployment, the People's National Movement strategy was for long-term sustainable permanent jobs to be created by attracting investments in the non-oil sector. In the interim, jobs would be created in the short term by a programme of construction in the public sector including administrative complexes, health centres, police stations, urban development, housing and other public sector works together with plant construction and other infrastructure in the energy sector.

Between 1993 and the present time, the following plants were built, and projects carried out which, during the construction stage, generated jobs as follows:

Atlantic LNG—3,000 jobs; Titan Methanol—1,500 jobs is at peak; ISPATT—1,200 jobs—this is the largest DRI plant in the world—Farmland/Mississippi Chemicals—1,000 jobs; PCS Nitrogen—1,000 jobs; Caribbean Methanol—800 jobs; Cleveland Cliff—800 jobs; hot dicketed iron that is—Methanol IV—800 jobs; Refinery upgrade—1700 jobs; Trinidad and Tobago Methanol II—800 jobs. That came out of our visit to Germany; NUCOR—500 jobs; Phoenix Park Gas Extension—500 jobs; NGC Pipeline to Point Lisas—300 jobs; Amoco Pipeline to Point Fortin—300 jobs; PCS Nitrogen—300 jobs, NUCOR Pier—100 jobs; Savonetta Pier II—100 jobs and Savonetta Pier IV—100 jobs for a total of 14, 800 job opportunities.

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Mr. Speaker, seven of these plants were under construction in 1998, and today all construction in this sector has come to an end. No new plants have been attracted since this Government has come to power. Not one! *[Desk thumping]* Except, of course, InnCogen, but we would talk about that a little later on.

A total of approximately 15,000 jobs has gone. Could the Minister please tell us in which other sectors of the economy these jobs have been replaced? Where I have not mentioned is that the URP expenditure had been reduced from \$130 million to \$90 million. The new Government also cut back on the programme of public sector construction. So where are the jobs? The public has simply, correctly concluded that once again, the Minister of Finance is not telling the truth. *[Desk thumping]* How sad.

Further to this, the Minister's own documents recognize that unemployment among women in this country rose to 19.5 per cent. Mr. Speaker, we know they do not speak the truth but surely they have out-done themselves with this one. In winding up his abuse the Minister emphasized two further points: one, we reduced the country's debt burden—this is the Minister of Finance talking to the Parliament in a budget presentation; that is one statement, and the other is, “we lived within our means”. Mr. Speaker, what are facts?

On the subject of the reduction of the country's debt service burden, far from having been reduced, the documents laid in this Parliament from 1999, showed that the debt service requirement has increased from \$2,753.5 million in 1995 to \$4,720.9 million in 1999. The documents showed that—made by the Minister of Finance—yet he talks about reducing the debt burden. Similarly, for the same period foreign debt service increased from \$1,759.9 million in 1995 to \$2,800.7 million in the current fiscal year. It has gone up by \$1100 million, Mr. Speaker. Local debt service doubled from \$993.6 million in 1995 to \$1,920.2 million in the current fiscal year consequent upon a borrowing spree which the Minister engaged in during those months in which, infamously, he was silent.

As for his assertion that we have lived within our means, the document before us tells a completely different story. Let us examine them. Whereas the national debt stood at \$18.8 billion in 1995, these self-congratulating managers have increased it to \$25 billion. If I am to put it in its starkest form, whereas in 1995, the size of the national debt as accumulated after many years of borrowing was such, that the per capita liability was \$14,930 per person, it has increased to \$19,549 for every man, woman and child in this country—an increase of 31 per cent. Yet they have lived within their means. All this in the short, unhappy stay of this Government, yet the Minister of Finance has the brass-facedness to

summarize his presentation by telling us “we have lived within our means”. This is the Minister of Finance talking.

It must be noted also that this dramatic increase in our public debt occurred during the same period that they sold off the methanol plant for \$800 million and they conducted a fire sale of all our best offshore potential hydrocarbon acreage for \$555 million. They did not deliver a single NHA house and they are still owing money to all the NGOs and every Tom, Dick and Harry who has supplied goods and services or has done work for the Government. They are not paying anybody. The liability is higher.

Further to this, separate and apart from the debt scenario that I have just mentioned, this Government has been funding state enterprises by encouraging them to borrow large sums of money on the basis of the provision of Government guarantees for bank loan. It is called the contingent liability. The net result is that whereas the liability of government guaranteed debt stood at \$2,484 billion in 1995, this has now doubled to \$4,898 million by 1999. When the Minister says, “we have been good managers” this is what he is talking about.

Now, you know, why he is at pains to link our public servants to his deception by lathering them with his gratuitous soapy praise and recognition. That is so in the event that his trickery is unmasked they can be enjoined and blamed, as he has been known to do before. Which of our career public servants in the Ministry of Finance would be so reckless as to sacrifice their professionalism and report an 11 per cent unemployment figure when their colleagues at the Central Bank are sure to publish the correct figure in the widely circulated Central Bank quarterly.

When this Minister is out to deceive not even the vulnerable dead is immune from his service. What would Frank Rampersad have thought about this Minister and of this budget? One thing is certain. The Minister knows when he is vulnerable and is just not prepared to let the facts do the talking. He re-invents them to paint whatever picture he prefers to have presented. The little matter of truthfulness is of no consequence to him. How else do you explain the fact that the Minister of Finance could volunteer to the Parliament that and I quote:

“Work is in progress at the Arima Judicial Complex.” [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, the truth is that this project has been inexplicably delayed by this Government for so long, that even as court proceedings were being interrupted and abandoned in Arima, the PNM was forced in April of this year to ask questions on the matter in this honourable House. To date, contrary to the falsehood told by the Minister that work is progressing, nothing in the nature of the building of any structure has commenced on the site. I repeat, Mr. Speaker.

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The only work on the spot is carried out by vendors plying their trade, and since the Minister reported that work is proceeding apace, one is left to ask whether these vending activities are the latest acquisition in his business empire. [Desk thumping] Given the nature of his record, Mr. Speaker, nothing should surprise us.

Incidentally, the early child care centre or preschool, which he claims is to be built in South Diego Martin—let me repeat that one slowly. Incidentally, Mr. Speaker, the early child care centre or preschool, which he claims is to be built in South Diego Martin in the coming financial year, is already completed and has been put to use since the reopening of the new school term last September. [Laughter] If only the Minister of Finance pays more attention to the job he is being paid to do, he would save us all the embarrassment of having to acknowledge this level of sloppiness in reporting.

One consistent complaint, which the Minister has had to endure, is that he is always short on analyses and explanations. There may be method in his self-styled brevity. Maybe he is trying to spare us more of his cock-eyed logic and questionable conclusions. Take for example the statement presented in the *Review of the Economy* that the upswing in agriculture was attributable mainly to the performance of the sugar industry. [Laughter] Mr. Speaker, you would forgive me if I repeat that one also. Not even the Minister of Agriculture, Lands and Marine Resources would have said that. “The upswing in agriculture was attributable mainly to the performance of the sugar industry.”

In the same chapter the Minister reported that growth in the agricultural sector declined from 5 per cent to 4.7 per cent. [Laughter] Mr. Speaker, decline and upswing do not go together, except when you are trying to fool somebody; they just do not go together.

In the Minister's reference documents on the domestic economy, we are told, “The robust performance of the economy over the past five years is expected to continue in 1999.” Yet on the very next page he admits that the consumption of electricity is forecasted to decline. Two issues of the Government's credibility immediately arise: firstly, where in the world does one ever have a modern industrial economy such as ours perform in an increasingly robust manner yet consume a reducing amount of electricity? [Interruption] Well, yes, unless it is solar power or wind. [Laughter]

Secondly, is this Government that is anticipating a decline in the production and consumption of electricity from existing PowerGen facilities the same one



that justified the InnCogen deal on the basis that increased electricity supplies were urgently needed by September of 1999? Is it the same government? Mr. Speaker, when we tell you that these people are not to be trusted, we do not make these statements lightly. [*Desk thumping*] They could run but they cannot hide. [*Desk thumping*] Their own documents would eventually expose them. Time and the PNM would always reveal the persistent duplicity and lack of integrity of this Government [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, this joke has gone too far! This is the fifth budget of that administration and they have all followed a similar pattern. The difficulty is that the common themes, which permeate the offerings, are dysfunctional to Trinidad and Tobago and its people. There is a marked absence or reporting on promises made from year to year; budget projections are void of realism and the capital expenditure programme has become a hodge-podge of projects uninformed by any underlying policy and now known for its under performance. Quite frankly, individual agendas and private interest are now masquerading as public policy.

While the lack of new economic initiatives over the last four years has compromised our well-being as a nation, poor financial management is threatening to undermine our economic fundamentals and we are in danger of reversing the gains of the past. What is particularly disturbing is that the actual out-turn on key economic variables is generally below the conservative projections of the International Monetary Fund done way back in 1995, based on information available at that time with respect to the plans and programmes which were then at different stages of implementation. Permit me to illustrate.

Firstly, with respect to unemployment, given what was in the pipeline of economic activity in 1995, when we were in power, incidentally, the IMF projected a rate of unemployment of 15.5 per cent for 1996; 14.7 per cent for 1997; 12 per cent for 1998; and 10.1 per cent by 1999, heading for single digits by the year 2,000. In actuality, instead of 15.5 per cent for 1996, we achieved a 16.3 per cent unemployment rate. For 1997, we achieved 15 per cent as against the projected 13.7 per cent. For 1998, the projection was for a rate of 12 per cent, but instead the out-turn was 14.2 per cent. Remember, Mr. Speaker, these projections were predicted solely on what was carded for implementation at the time. It could not and did not take into consideration any new initiative that a government, elected at the end of 1995, would have had to do to move the country further along.

Based on the loan plans and programmes, the IMF in 1995 predicted that unemployment in Trinidad and Tobago would have fallen to 10.1 per cent by 1999. The Minister is aware of these projections. Could this have been the genesis

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of his fictitious 11.7 per cent mentioned so inexplicably even when his own document, the *Review of the Economy*, reported an unemployment rate of 14.6 per cent in 1999? He knows where we were targeted to be, so since his Government did nothing to achieve the target he simply reported that the target had been met. It mattered not to him whether it was true or not.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, inflation: while the Minister boasted of an inflation rate of 2 per cent, his *Review of the Economy* at Appendix 8 indicates that for the period October 1998 to August 1999, the inflation rate was 4.6 per cent. Lying again, when you could check it! Interestingly, the IMF projections of 1995 indicated that if we stayed the course, the rate for 1999 would have been 2.9 per cent. Here too, a comparison of the projections with the actual out-turn is revealing. The 1996 projection was 3.6 per cent, actual 3.3; 1997 projection 3.0 per cent, actual 3.6; 1998 projection 3.0 per cent, actual 5.6 per cent; 1999 projection 2.9 per cent, actual 4.6 per cent.

The figures indicate that we have not met our projected targets on lowering inflation. They show that the trend is one of rising inflation. Contrary to the Minister's statement that inflation is down to 2.0 per cent; the *Review of the Economy* clearly lists it as 4.6 per cent. You cannot believe anything the Minister of Finance says. [*Desk thumping*] Are we to believe that all these misrepresentations are innocent errors? No, it is a deliberate attempt to present a picture, which is more favourable than the situation really is.

Let us now turn to economic growth. As with unemployment and inflation, the same is the case with real GDP growth. The main economic bulletin of the Central Bank records actual GDP growth as 2.8 per cent for 1996; 2.9 per cent for 1997; and 3.6 per cent for 1998. The comparable projections done by the IMF in 1995, under the assumption of no new governmental initiatives, were 3.9 per cent in 1996; 2.9 per cent in 1997; and 3.8 per cent in 1998. In other words, it is as though the economy was on autopilot. They failed to make a difference! The momentum that the PNM had left was, in fact, what they were living on.

Where were they when the energy infrastructure was being planned and implemented? I would tell you, they were on these benches in opposition to a progressive government that was setting the stage for an economic miracle here in Trinidad and Tobago, which has only been halted temporarily with the advent of that coalition of personal interest. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, economic performance has never been a chance event. It has always been and continues to be the result of vision, leadership and management.

The legacy bequeath by the PNM was not mere happenstance, but was the result of foresight, planning and implementation, qualities and attributes which are sadly lacking by those who are now temporarily in charge. Their sole concern is to see how many millionaires they could create among themselves and who could take more than whom. [*Desk thumping*] Lack of vision, the absence of new initiatives necessary to propel Trinidad and Tobago to the next level of economic—  
[*Interruption*]

**Mr. Speaker:** I draw to the Member's attention that there is a Standing Order, which deals with imputations. I regard the comment that has just been made as quite improper. It is not right and I wish it to be withdrawn; that suggestion that the Members on the other side their function is to see how many millionaires they could make and how much they could take. I do not think it is right. I would want that to be withdrawn.

**Mr. P. Manning:** Mr. Speaker, I stand to be guided by you, I withdraw it unreservedly, except, of course, that you would agree with me that it appears so.  
[*Desk thumping*]

**Mr. Speaker:** The hon. Member knows that he cannot do that. One either withdraws something or not. You do not withdraw it using a knife; please.

**Mr. P. Manning:** I withdraw it, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. R. L. Maharaj:** Do you know how to withdraw?

**Mr. P. Manning.** I would let that one pass. Lack of vision, the absence of new initiatives necessary to propel Trinidad and Tobago to the next level of economic activity is certainly a hallmark of this Government; another has been poor public finance management. Combined, these two factors have robbed our people of a higher standard of living. These have delayed the implementation of improved working conditions for poor public officers who are left to subsist on a 1983 salary structure. They have provided tokenism to the senior citizens while hundreds of millions are frittered away on projects to benefit friends and family, as individual agendas and private interest replace the national good.

Mr. Speaker, I invite you to examine with me the fiscal performance of this Government. In 1996, the overall deficit was \$208.6 million. The situations worsened in 1997 when the deficit escalated to \$636.1 million. The worsening fiscal position of the Government continued into 1998 as the deficit for the year ending September 30, 1998 was estimated at \$981.2 million at Appendix 12 in the *Review of the Economy*.

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**2.10 p.m.**

Members would note that lower in the Minister's budget statement we once see this fact noted. Critical matters of substance such as these which are the responsibility of any Minister of Finance are not mentioned as if they do not exist or are of no importance but, of course, he finds time to regale us all about the agenda of a certain number of welders. *[Laughter]*

Mr. Speaker, given the Minister's lack of candour in the past, with what credibility can we view his revised estimates for the last fiscal year 1998/1999 and his budget estimates for the new fiscal period? Revised projections for the current fiscal year are done at the time of preparation of the budget estimates for the new fiscal year, consequently, the revised projections ought to be based on reliable actual data for at least nine months of the year and this estimated projection for the remaining three months.

Accordingly, it is highly unusual to have large disparity between revised estimates and actual results. That was the norm before this Minister of Finance assumed office. What has changed, Mr. Speaker, is the inclusion of a number of items of dubious sources, amounts in the revenue estimates with no explanation of them from the Minister. We repeat there is a requirement that a Minister of Finance must signal in his budget statement the assumptions underlying any significant change in a revenue item or from a new income source. Accordingly, we do seek further clarification from the Minister on the following revenue items:

1. Profits from oil companies. The revenue realized from this source for the nine-month period in 1998 was \$144.6 million. The budget estimate for fiscal 1998/1999 was \$502.3 million, which we said was over-stated at the time. It is now revised downwards to \$462.8 million which still seems overly optimistic.

On what basis is the Minister projecting that revenue from this source may triple to \$1,485 million in the new fiscal year? Please explain. It just does not make sense. The only conclusion one could come to is that—perhaps I should not say this because you may call me to book again, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Speaker:** You know if you are wrong, I will.

**Mr. Manning:** I defer, Mr. Speaker.

2. Profits from state enterprises. The revenue realized from this source for the nine-month period in 1998 was \$99.4 million. The budget expectation for fiscal 1998/1999 was \$383.6 million at the time and, of

course, we said at that time it was overstated. It is now revised downwards to \$176.5 million.

Could the Minister kindly state his assumptions on which the projection of revenue from this same source will now increase to \$464.2 million in the new fiscal year? This requirement is especially important since the Minister has also included on those capital revenue estimates proceeds from the planned sale of state enterprises. In short, the Minister expects to get \$464.2 million in dividend income from state companies in addition to \$899.5 million from the sale of state companies. Are they the same companies? Does he expect to get dividends from the profitable companies which he would have sold? Tell us please. We need to know in straight, simple, direct language. [*Desk thumping*]

3. Share of profits from oil companies. This is a new revenue item. The Minister's revised estimate is \$300 million for fiscal 1998/1999, an increase of \$130 million from the original budget estimate. The estimate for 1999/2000 is \$210 million.

Could the Minister please tell us the basis of these projections? We do not know what they are.

4. Unspent balances, statutory boards and similar bodies. Revenue receipts under this item amounted to \$390,000 for the nine-month period in 1998. The revised projection for fiscal 1998/1999, is \$98.4 million whilst the original budget estimate was \$23.3 million.

Will the Minister please inform this honourable House which of the statutory boards will be providing these funds? We do not know.

Mr. Speaker, while the Minister now projects an overall surplus of \$55 million for fiscal 1998/1999, Members should recall that the overall surplus contemplated by the Minister was \$91 million. This was to be realized after financing a capital expenditure programme of \$781.7 million. It is important to note also, that oil sector revenues were basically realized. When oil prices declined below the Minister's oil price estimate of US \$14.10 during the first six months of the fiscal year, it recovered substantially during the second half of the period. The average price realized was approximately US \$14.50 per barrel. We are of the view that that overall surplus provision will not be realized. The Minister's history is clear. The difference between the revised projection of overall surplus in 1996 and the actual was minus \$447.1 million, the difference in 1997 was minus \$849.6 million. For the shortened nine-month period in 1998, it was minus \$475.2

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million, worsened the change for fiscal 1998/1999 after the actual results are audited by the Auditor General.

Once more, Mr. Speaker, we would see the Minister's so-called overall surplus dwindle into a huge deficit, all as a result of his fictitious revenues and over-estimation.

The June *Quarterly* of the Central Bank informs us that the overall deficit for the first nine months of fiscal 1998/1999 was \$860.2 million. Would the new fiscal year be any different? The Minister plans to raise an additional \$2,000 million in revenue ostensibly by trickling the tax takes from the oil sector and by selling \$900 million worth of your state companies while receiving \$464.2 million worth of dividend income from state companies. The same measures which he has left untouched are now expected to generate \$2 billion dollars more in the next 12 months than they did in the last 12 months. Tell us how this is to be achieved, we would like to know. We need to know, Mr. Speaker, because a lot of mythical constructing is depending on it.

Houdini seems to be alive and kicking in a tomb called the Panday Administration. [*Desk thumping*]

Is desired oil tax income a result of increased profits according to the oil companies as a consequence of profits received from the LNG project? Is it a consequence of much lower tax write-off by the oil companies? In the interest of transparency, will the Minister kindly share his assumptions with the Parliament? Where is this money to come from? I emphasize this point only to warn all those who are expecting heavy expenditure programmes in health and other key areas: "Don't hold your breath." Regardless of what the Minister has tried to portray, 1999/2000 would see the same shambles in Government finances as 1998/1999—unkept promises, unfulfilled dreams and loud disappointments.

Mr. Speaker, these unplanned deficits are stretching the Central Bank to the limit, have increased the liquidity in the financial system, and now pose a threat to inflation and the deterioration of the exchange rate. These two macro economic variables would come under increasing pressure in the coming months.

Mr. Speaker, permit me to quote from page 34 of the *Review of the Economy 1998-1999* which says:

"The persistence of excess liquidity in the system was occasioned largely by Government's growing fiscal deficit which saw an injection of just over \$1 billion into the financial system over the period October 1998 to May 1999..."

And this from page 36 on Exchange Rates, Mr. Speaker,

“Notwithstanding the relative stability of the exchange rate, the foreign exchange market continued to experience stresses as reflected by commercial banks’ excess of sales over purchases of foreign currency to the public. This necessitated the intervention of the Central Bank on the market with sales of US\$65.5 million to commercial banks during the period October to June.”

Exchange rate stability has been achieved at considerable cost to the society. It has placed a burden on all users of credit, including the Government, as can be gleaned from the revised estimate of expenditure on the item “Interest expense—Domestic Loans.” It increases the cost structure of business, which, to the extent possible is passed on to the consumer through higher prices. And of course he tells us, no new taxes.

Mr. Speaker, we are already paying hidden taxes through the effects of inordinately high interest rates. Rising inflation and depreciating exchange rates are also on the landscape in the coming season as the budget for the new fiscal year offers more of the same.

My advice to the hon. Minister is that monetary policy has always been shown to be deficient in containing a reckless fiscal stance.

Mr. Speaker, I now turn to the other major hallmark of this Government’s term in office. That is the issue of individual agendas and private interests, which they masquerade as public policy.

Despite their empty rhetoric, the Government’s record on project implementation is abysmal and a testimony to their bungling incompetence and their desire to manipulate the system to provide benefits for their friends. For yet another year, despite the utterances of the Minister of Planning and Development, the Public Sector Investment Programme has failed miserably. Out of a planned expenditure on projects in fiscal 1998/1999 of \$1,097 million, only \$667 million was utilized, or barely 60 per cent of the projected total, making the last fiscal year the worst performance in the country’s development programme by any government in the last 15 years.*[Desk thumping]*

Despite the false picture painted by the Minister of Finance in his budget speech, the Government is well aware of its non-performance. On page 2 of the PSIP document Government openly confesses and admits that because of its inability to manage the country’s resources effectively, it failed to take advantage of the change to a new fiscal year to allow acceleration of the rate of implementation of projects in the 1999 dry season.

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Thus, despite the change in the financial year, the rate of implementation of projects in the last 12 months was even less than in the first 9 months of 1998. Amazingly, before the financial year was changed, between January and September of 1998, in the height of the rainy season, the expenditure on development projects was \$781 million, or an average of \$65 million per month, whereas in the just completed 12 month-period, with the advantage of the full dry season for construction work, the expenditure was only \$667 million or barely \$55 million per month. It is less by \$10 million a month, and of course, unemployment has fallen according to the Minister of Finance.

The worst performing areas were health, agriculture, and, of course, education, which is no surprise because the Ministers in these areas are proven failures. In the health sector, out of an allocation of \$87 million for development work for fiscal 1998/1999, only \$32 million was utilized or less than 40 per cent of the projected figure. This pattern of non-performance has been a feature of the health ministry since 1996 and despite calls for the Minister's resignation, the Prime Minister refuses to act to save people's lives.

Despite this record of failure in areas where help is needed most, while they could not care less whether the lights in the Intensive Care Unit at the hospital are functioning or not, and where, for a few dollars in expenditure the lives of little people could be protected and saved, they are quite happy to squander \$4 million in a few days to destroy the Queen's Park Savannah or to blow \$130 million on a three hour beauty contest in Chaguaramas.

**2.25 p.m.**

Mr. Speaker, this is the crux of the matter. They have no interest in legitimate expenditure on the development of Trinidad and Tobago, or in following procedures designed to ensure that there is transparency and fairness in the award of contracts. They see their tenure only as an opportunity for their friends to fill their pockets at the country's expense.

The infamous Piarco Airport Project better known as the shed of shame, is a case in point. Under the previous PNM administration a new world class airport, designed to serve the country's needs for the next 25 years, was estimated to cost no more than \$400 million, inclusive of all costs including consultants' fees and start-up costs. With our Build/Operate/Transfer implementation strategy, the airport project would not have been a burden to the taxpayers of this country, since it was designed to be self-financing through the collection of landing fees and rental charges. Those in the Government today, objected that they would have



no part of any new airport. They said we did not need a new airport. That is what they said when they were on this side.

This Government of two-faced men, jacked up the cost of the project to an obscene \$900 million and it is now a direct charge on the Treasury. In addition, after accepting the findings of the Deyalsingh's, Committee which recommended cancellation of the Airport contract on grounds of collusion and corruption among the persons involved, the Government has turned full circle, and in a scandalous abuse of process has already awarded \$500 million in contracts to companies owned or associated by one of its principal financiers. In fact, through manipulation of procedure and changes to Nipdec's tender rules, out of nine contract packages at the airport, seven packages have been awarded to one beneficial interest, a major UNC financier. The Minister sits there as though these things do not happen and they know it all Mr. Speaker, yet they do nothing about it.

**Mr. Hinds:** They cannot.

**Mr. P. Manning:** To make matters worse, this sqandermania at the airport is being financed outside of the normal budgetary process and does not appear in the estimates of expenditure. It is not on the books. So years from now, when long after they have gone and a PNM Government has come into office, the tayPAYERS of this country will be saddled with a massive debt, while the UNC gang laugh their way to the offshore banks in the Cayman Islands and now of course, the Isle of Man. [*Desk thumping*] And I hope my good friend opposite is listening. [*Desk thumping*].

The maximum-security prison is another case in point. When the PNM left office in 1995, the project was virtually completed and the outstanding claims on the project were essentially confined to a dispute of the order of \$10 million, over the cost of the security gates to the prison cells. We are now in 1999, the present Government sees it fit to increase the cost of the project by \$92 million. Where this figure come from; for God knows what. They cannot even finish the project or commission something as routine and mundane as the new prison infirmary or laundry.

Mr. Speaker, we are surrounded by monumental incompetence and racketeering everyday from every angle. In Port of Spain the John John Towers; in South/Central the Solomon Hochoy Highway scandal; in the East we have the maximum-security prison and the airport. On the West Coast there is InnCogen and a desalination plant on its way. Tobago is to expect its share from the scheming ferry solution and the Toco harbour initiative. All around, everytime you turn is a new project with some kind of hidden agenda in it.

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Mr. Speaker, you know what could be done with \$92 million. This is the same Government that is waiting on a \$2.1 million IDB loan to buy a generator for the operating theatre at the Port of Spain General Hospital. So picture the poor patient, lying there with his chest cut open and the doctor is relying on the lights of a television camera to close him back up. Certainly, that must deserve a chaconia medal in gold. *[Desk thumping]*

Mr. Speaker, the Government's non-performance in the construction sector and its desire to embrace sqandermania, manipulation of procedure and projects of dubious merit, is not limited to the examples I have given. In every area of Government's construction one can find evidence of incompetence, malfeasance and naked, blatant corruption.

Just look at what has occurred on the Solomon Hochoy Highway reconstruction project. They refused to award the contract to the lowest bidder simply because one of their friends was associated with another tenderer. After frustrating the lowest bidder and delaying the project for almost a year, they awarded the job to a contractor who scratched about for two whole years in full view of the public, did little or no work, and caused tremendous inconvenience to the travelling public.

Yet, while it was apparent to the entire country that the contractors was not performing and should be fired, the Minister of Works took no action simply because a UNC supporter was associated with one of the subcontractor on the project. It was public outcry which forced the Government to terminate the contract. Since they were doing that they decided also to fire the contractor at the national library for good measure. It is the public purse which will have to pay for their recklessness and insensitive behaviour. Mr. Speaker, but of course, who cares? They do not care. Because they have not followed the recommended procedures to resume work, the highway rehabilitation project, which should have been completed in this year 1999, will now take another three years to be completed and will cost the country at least \$50 million in additional costs because of the Government's mismanagement, while motorists have to face a dangerous cellulite road surface and traffic disruptions every day on their way to and from Port of Spain.

They do not care because they are not affected. Even the least of their apostles is now driving a Mercedes Benz. Mr. Speaker do you know what a Mercedes Benz cost? *[Laughter]* Mr. Speaker, I am sorry. *[Desk thumping]. [Laughter].*

**Mr. Speaker:** Of course, the hon. Member well knows, that he ought not to bring the Speaker into contention because if you do that the Speaker might decide to respond. *[Laughter]*

**Mr. P. Manning:** Mr. Speaker, I was merely trying to speak to you at no man's end. I did not really mean it personally; I was just referring to you as a point of reference. *[Laughter]*

Mr. Speaker, the annual insurance cost alone on a Mercedes Benz is more than a Minister's monthly salary, this is after full discounts—after full discounts—but somehow that does not seem to matter to the Prime Minister. After all, “if the priest could play who is we,” and the chorus is “ah doh care who see”. That is the chorus, permit me to turn now to the mother of all corruption, the desalination plant. Not content with the scandalous InnCogen deal, which has tied this country to pay the short pants man and his friends, millions of dollars for electricity we may never need over the next 30 years. the Minister of Public Utilities has foisted yet another scam on the population, this time in the form of a totally unnecessary desalination plant. He believes that he has gotten away with InnCogen so he comes one better with desalination.

Mr. Speaker, incidentally, referring to the Minister of Public Utilities—my good friend—sometime ago, I had indicated that Seven Trent was not allowed to continue in Trinidad and Tobago because a Minister asked the company for a \$1 million payment and, of course, the Minister of Public Utilities jumped up and said, that I have libelled him and threatened to take me to court.

Mr. Speaker, you know it reminds me of a story: all the animals in the forest, one day assembled for a banquet. At the end of the banquet, the lion said “the ugliest man wash the wares” the monkey say “I ent' washing no wares.” *[Laughter]*

Mr. Speaker, imagine in a country like Trinidad with so many rivers and an abundance of surface water, this shameless Government has decided that we must now mortgage our children's future for the next 20 years to pay another set of foreign smartmen millions of dollars to convert salt water into fresh water. As if Trinidad is Saudi Arabia or some other desert country, where fresh water does not exist! Millions of gallons of fresh water are pouring into the sea every second of ever hour at every day, but the UNC has instructed WASA to pay \$200 million a year for desanitating sea water.

Mr. Speaker, as an old lady in Cocoyea would say, “Murder, police!”

What are these sweeteners that would cause Government spokesmen, when challenged, to publish false information regarding the difference between the

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prices offered by the company that won the contract and the lowest bidder? What are these sweeteners that would cause the Government to hide the tender documents for the project and refuse to have a public opening of the bids? How can the Government seek to justify such naked nepotism and corruption in the face of published information, where it has been confirmed that the firm of U.S Filters, which is owned by the largest desalination company in the world, Vivendi, tendered to provide water at \$3.32 per cubic metre while Ionics which won the contract tendered at the much higher price of \$4.45 per cubic metre?

**2.35 p.m.**

What are the sweeteners, Mr. Speaker that would cause the Government to pay almost \$900 million more over the life of the contract to purchase water from Ionics than it was required to do? And what can Government spin doctors and propagandists possibly say about the comparative prices of the two plants when the lowest bidder's plant is priced at US\$85 million whereas the Ionics plant chosen by the Government is costing US \$120 million and the buy-back cost of the chosen plant is double the buy-back cost of the lowest bidder?

Once again, Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister laughs silently while we observe the generosity of yet another New York City UNC supporter, this time the man in dark shades, who visited him at his penthouse suite at Trump Taj Mahal in Atlantic City in August last year while the decision was being made for this corrupt desalination contract. [*Desk thumping*] [*Interruption*] The dark shades man? Incidentally, Mr. Speaker, sometime ago I indicated that information coming to my attention suggested that Severn Trent was not awarded their contract for the reasons that I have just indicated.

In the face of the threat by the Minister of Public Utilities to sue the Leader of the Opposition, I would like the national community to know that, as of now, I have been served with no summons. This lack of action on the part of the Minister, Mr. Speaker, constitutes a rare occasion on which he has demonstrated prudence and an overabundance of good sense [*Desk thumping*] since I am anxiously awaiting an opportunity to have him cross-examined in a court of law. I wait with pique and bated breath. He wants to come, let him come, Mr. Speaker. [*Desk thumping*]. Incidentally, whatever happened to the investigation he was supposed to be pursuing with the United States agencies to expose PNM ministers who were on oil company payrolls? It has disappeared like the \$2 billion in revenues, Mr. Speaker. [*Desk thumping*] The Minister of Public Utilities.

Mr. Speaker, the Government is presently considering proposals for the Toco/Tobago port ferry project. Once again, one of their close friends who has

submitted a proposal is expected to be selected by the Cabinet. What is interesting is that the friends of this Government have purchased much of the real estate in the Toco area hoping to reap a windfall when the project gets underway. What is even more disturbing is that, should this project get underway, the persons who would be affected most by it are the people in the Toco/Tobago area. This Government has treated the people in the Toco area with scant courtesy. They have not consulted with the people. They have not prepared the people for this change in their lives.

Some of the people's property would have to be acquired by the state and there is no road development to match the talk of a ferry service. What would happen to a Tobagonian who leaves Tobago for Port of Spain and is offloaded in Toco? [*Laughter*] The Member for Tobago Affairs is amused by it. How much will it cost to send a truckload of hollow clay blocks to Toco to be loaded on a ferry for Scarborough? I want to hear the Minister for Tobago Affairs on this matter, the Member for Tobago East, whom I am advised, Mr. Speaker, knows nothing about anything. [*Desk thumping*]

The people of the Tobago and the St. David region want to know, Mr. Speaker, but the Government is not consulting with the people. They are going at a pace so that the only beneficiaries would be this Government and not the people of Toco. Currently there is a deliberate neglect of the Tobago ferry service from Port of Spain. Tobagonians are suffering and traders are mingling in Scarborough. I wonder if this has anything to do with making of a case for the Tobago/Toco ferry which is already tied up like Tobago blue water crab bound for the table of the chosen few?

Mr. Speaker, permit me now to address some other issues raised in the Minister's statement. Caroni (1975) Limited is now a national scandal. In 1992 we wrote off \$2.4 billion in Caroni debt as a major part of a plan to make the company viable. The tripartite agreement among the company, the Government and the unions involved projected viability by 1997 and profitability by 1998. The UNC Government, however, began in 1996 to use the company as an Unemployment Relief Programme, significantly increasing daily-paid employment levels followed by the Minister of Agriculture improperly directing the company to contest a froghopper infestation by using a biological agent rather than a combination of biological and chemical agents as recommended by the technical experts.

The result was that in 1999 the industry produced only 91,000 tonnes of sugar as opposed to the 130,000 tonnes anticipated by the tripartite agreement. In fiscal

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1999/2000, therefore, the state subvention to Caroni (1975) Limited, and I ask you to listen carefully ladies and gentlemen, has now escalated to \$415 million. That is what the state will give Caroni in 1999/2000; \$81 million of which will be used to service the Company's debt. It is all there in the draft estimates. This position is clearly untenable and the Prime Minister will be well advised to retire the hon. Reeza Mohammed, Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources with the utmost dispatch to the large coconut estate in Cedros, which he has recently bought at considerable expense. Let him go to Cedros and mind coconuts. [*Desk thumping*]

The Prime Minister himself has now directed the national community to the impending demise of the sugar industry, a development that would wreak havoc in central and south Trinidad where some 60,000 of our citizens depend on this industry for survival and sustenance. The People's National Movement will not allow this to happen and wishes to advocate a new approach to the industry based on:

- (a) mechanical harvesting;
- (b) automated sugar production;
- (c) intercropping of short crops in the canegrowing season;
- (d) agro processing; and
- (e) reduction in employment levels without any loss of benefits.

This approach to technology and efficiency, Mr. Speaker, will make this industry competitive in any market of the world and, while protecting the sugar industry in Trinidad and Tobago, will ensure a stable and secure future for sugar workers and cane farmers alike.

Permit me to turn for a moment to the vexed question of the crime wave, which is gripping this nation. As with everything else this Government believes that it does not have to account for its stewardship by reporting on the effects which its various policies might or might not have had on the nation's problems. If I am to remind you, Mr. Speaker, the last general elections were fought on the issue of crime. These fellows told the country that, if given the opportunity, they would rid us of this scourge. "Just allow us to buy 100 Cherokee jeeps and the criminals will be put on the run", they said.

After four years in office \$50 billion later, this is what the Minister had to say as he made reference to the spate of criminal activity and I am quoting. This is the Budget:

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“The crime situation was out of control and people lived in fear. Indeed, in 1995 alone, the number of serious crimes reported to the police amounted to 16,784.”

That is the Minister of Finance talking about crime in the country. That is it, Mr. Speaker; not a word on what the situation looks like today. He then proceeded straight on to another disaster area, the health sector, as if 1996, 1997, 1998 and 1999 never existed. Not one word about the current criminal statistics. Do you know why, Mr. Speaker? To do so would be to admit that they have failed miserably in stemming the tide of criminal activity in this country. [*Desk thumping*]

The official crime figures available from the office of the Commissioner of Police show that at mid-year 1999 murders were up 18.4 per cent above the previous year's mayhem; robberies were up 27.7 per cent; larcenies from dwelling houses were up 26.8 per cent and other serious crimes were up 18 per cent. That is why he said nothing about it in the Budget—nothing to say, nothing to say. Now you understand why the Minister was shy in reporting on the Panday Administration's record in the curtailment of crime.

Even without including the information pertaining to persons involved in scams like the InnCogen deal, the desalination obscenity, the airport and various Cabinet-directed atrocities, fraud is still reported to have risen by almost 7 per cent and we have not included all of that in it. May I remind the population that in the budget presentation of 1996, its first budget, the Government identified three priority tasks, one of which was crime reduction. Clearly they have not delivered and we see no signs that the next year will be any better.

In the face of this grim reality, Mr. Speaker, all the Minister offers is the purchase of 100 more Cherokee jeeps and promises of a few more police stations to be constructed. He admits that they got it wrong. It is not 100 jeeps that will solve the crime, it is 200. So on to the preferred supplier with the only vehicle in the police service where police radios will work, the Motorola—remember it? These fellows have absolutely no shame, Mr. Speaker.

The PNM maintains that the answer to crime never was and is not now the peddling of cheap politics and deception. The solution is manifold but a significant component in the prevention of crime is an efficient, well-managed police service. There are changes, which are required in the current arrangements if the desired objectives are to be achieved. In the light of the revelations of the Hosein Inquiry, like the rest of the country we anxiously await an appropriate response from the Government and stand ready to continue to discharge our

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obligations as the responsible Opposition that we have always been. [*Desk thumping*] We call on the Government to act in the interest of the police service and the country as a whole. Inaction is not an option and matters of this nature cannot be properly relegated to footnotes on the Prime Minister's calendar in between his frequent joyrides abroad. "That ain't good enough."

Health sector—and, Mr. Speaker, I could go on talking for the whole day on this budget. In the fiscal year 1998/1999 the health sector was characterized by mismanagement, turmoil and chaos resulting, for some of its users, in trauma, pain, suffering and, if reports are to be believed, loss of life. The following screaming headlines have become regular features in our newspaper. "Pregnant woman dies on hospital floor". "St. Ann's faces exodus of nurses". "Ventilator shortage still delays operations". "No wheels so ambulance idles as patients die." Headlines.

This state of affairs is in direct contrast to what the country anticipated in 1995 and represents a downward slide from the initiatives introduced by the 1991—1995 PNM administration. The health sector was being decentralized with the introduction of five regional health authorities. The purpose of this development was to bring greater efficiency and accountability in the delivery of health services. The Ministry of Health was being aggressively reorganized to reflect its new role of policy formulation, setting standards, monitoring and evaluation.

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

This could have been gauged from the fact that among other things, by way of infrastructure improvement, this Government met:

- (1) St. Ann's Hospital completely refurbished;
- (2) Port of Spain General Hospital refurbished;
- (3) a new wing constructed at the San Fernando Hospital;
- (4) new district hospitals constructed at Arima and Mayaro;
- (5) the Sangre Grande Hospital almost completely refurbished and the construction of a new operating theatre;
- (6) the construction of a new and the refurbishment of several health centres throughout Trinidad and Tobago; and
- (7) an expanded range of services offered from the Eric Williams Medical Sciences Complex.

Of course we were planning for a new hospital in Tobago.



Although the UNC Government met a six-year plan for the Health Sector Reform Programme starting in 1995 and ending in 2000, designed to transform a health sector consistent with our vision for the delivery of quality health care for all, they had no definite concept and policy for delivering quality health care to the population. The result was that the health services of Trinidad and Tobago virtually floundered directionless for over two years. Inevitably, deterioration set in with the disastrous consequences we see today.

The UNC did not see an opportunity to build on what they met, even though they publicly adopted the policy of the PNM. They saw opportunity for self-aggrandisement and outright bacchanal and confusion. Incidentally, does anyone know who is the latest Chairman of the Southwest Regional Health Authority? Would somebody please tell us? Could anyone say, for sure, what goes on at the hospital which the PNM built in Arima? What happened to the Couva Hospital?

The critical issues that needed to be addressed were not addressed and to this day remain to be addressed:

- (1) the introduction of a National Insurance Health System: what has happened to that? Silence. We have not heard anything about it;
- (2) the development of the Primary Health Sector to the extent that demands on our secondary institutions are reduced and they are used only as a last resort;
- (3) the rationalization of the physical infrastructure so as to enable the ministry to provide the highest level of service possible, consistent with the physical infrastructure and personnel available; and
- (4) bringing all the workers in the health institutions under one administrative authority. I have spoken to the minister about that already.

The PNM remains committed to completing properly, the remaining elements of the six-year Health Sector Reform Programme. We will review the operations of the Regional Health Authorities and the Ministry of Health to ensure that the health services are capable of delivering quality health care. We will also introduce the necessary systems to make quality health care available and affordable to all. We will identify the plight of our nurses and doctors as a high priority item to be addressed with dispatch in order to improve the quality of life and health of our citizens. We give the national community that assurance. [Desk *thumping*]

Permit me now, Mr. Speaker, to turn to education. The Government of the UNC spoke unconvincingly about a revolution in education. This so-called

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revolution appears to be taking us back to a pre-independence situation. Mr. Speaker, it is one thing to talk of change; but it is quite another to implement a policy of change. One thing we are absolutely sure of is that the current Minister of Education is a hopeless imposition. Parents, teachers and school children have all concluded that the entire education system is in grave crisis. The only two people who do not seem to know, and certainly do not care, are the Hon. Minister of Education, Dr. Adesh Nanan and the Hon. Prime Minister, Mr. Basdeo Panday.

This Government met the country in the process of remodelling its education system. Every element of this policy was documented in the White Paper on Education in 1994—2003: a project commissioned under my watch as Prime Minister. Whether it was replacement of the Common Entrance Examination by the Continuous Assessment Programme, the incorporation of early childhood centres, the decision to upgrade the skills of principals, directives for curriculum reform, the implementation of School Boards, the requirement to de-shift Junior Secondary Schools or de-linking the Teaching Service supported by the establishment of a new Education Service Commission. All of these were well thought out and presented in the White Paper. There were national consultations and the Parliament was involved at every step along the way. Then came Minister Nanan, and “the whole thing turn Nanan”. [Laughter] All we are left with now is an indecent haste in a race—not for our children and our country but—against an election date some time in the year 2000. This is not education reform. This is madness!

The PNM, with our proud tradition in education, would continue to focus on use of well-thought-out strategies that involve a system approach to change. Our vision is that of a healthy, happy and optimally educated and skilled population which drives the nation forward on to further development. Education is everybody’s business and requires seriousness and care. The PNM will provide that, Mr. Speaker. [Desk thumping]

Mr. Speaker, this Government shows little concern for the housing needs of the poor and homeless in our society. The minister, the Member for St. Augustine, is concentrating his efforts—and by extension, that of his government—in facilitating population shifts by engineering and establishing permanent squatter settlements in constituencies that the Government wishes to win in the next general elections. A typical example— [Interruption]

**Mr. Maharaj:** Valley did not write that speech.

**Mr. Manning:** Look Sudama, the Member for Oropouche, that is the man implementing it in San Fernando—through you, Mr. Speaker. He is not implementing it through you, but I am talking through you. I am sorry, Mr. Speaker. [*Laughter*]

A typical example is the squatter settlement situated at Tarouba at the end of the Solomon Hochoy Highway. This settlement symbolizes what is, whilst it reminds us of what might have been. It is a national disgrace that the John John Towers are still unoccupied. As you would recall, these apartments were built to house those residents of the area who lost their homes by fire. The Government sought to politicize their distribution of them to the highest bidder. To date the apartments are still unoccupied with the resultant state of decay because of their non-occupation.

**Mr. Valley:** Lasse was over here when he started that fight. “You ent shame?” Go ahead.

**Mr. Manning :** He is not ready, in time he will feel shame.

The Aranguez apartments have been completed some time ago and were advertised for sale on numerous occasions. More surprisingly, Mr. Speaker, the response has been poor and the apartments remain empty. It would soon come home to this Government that its policy of selling housing units to low-income earners is flawed and where units are intended for sale, the design factor must be taken into consideration from the outset.

Mr. Speaker, you would recall, last year the Housing Minister indicated that all-existing rental units of the National Housing Authority would be sold to the tenants. The Minister of Finance is now admitting that this undertaking would commence soon. We anxiously await the outcome of yet another Government-generated fiasco, which is guaranteed to bring suffering and pain to more people. As a society, we must look after the poor and destitute in our Republic. As the population ages and social attitudes change, we regard these additional services as crucial to enhancing the quality of life of many of our senior citizens.

**3.00 p.m.**

Mr. Speaker, I assure you that when the People's National Movement returns to government at the next election, we will correct the social injustice inflicted on the poor and homeless of this, our beloved country, by this hapless Government. [*Desk thumping*]

With regard to Tobago, this Government which sees the people of Tobago as pawns in its power play of survival is prepared to play cynical games with the

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lives of the people. Here we have a situation where people are not being paid moneys and are leaving the country yet, inexplicably the Government has failed to bring to Parliament financial regulations for the Tobago House of Assembly. This is a requirement of law instructed since 1996.

This Government is fast losing its moral authority and the consequences could be dire for the unitary state. The PNM is clear in its position. The unitary state must be preserved, and within this arrangement, Tobago must have the maximum amount of autonomy permissible to manage its own affairs, and the people of Tobago must be allocated a fair share of the national cake. That is the PNM's position. *[Desk thumping]* However, Mr. Speaker, the Tobago House of Assembly Act must reflect the need for accountability of all funds which fall to be administered by the Assembly itself. One cannot legislate respect, but it would help if this Government conducts itself in a manner so as to earn the respect of the population.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance has satisfied the legal requirement to present a budget by October 31, 1999 and that is it. He has satisfied none of the other requirements of a national budget. There is no reporting on promises made. Government daily-rated employees are still waiting to hear when their pension plan will be implemented, as promised last year. One will recall that this plan was to take effect on January 1, 1999.

The demoralized public service, which the Minister claims they met, is now even more so. Senior public servants whose salaries are determined by the Independent Salaries Review Commission are now no better informed about when the report of the Commission will be implemented. The Prime Minister is playing politics with the salaries of magistrates, judges, permanent secretaries and others who fall under the purview of the Commission.

Given the rate at which they are purchasing property and Mercedes Benzes, one is left to wonder whether Ministers have other sources of income. I do not know. I call on the Prime Minister to adopt the salaries report minus the politicians and pay public officials their money. We are unimpressed by their feigned pity. *[Desk thumping]*

Mr. Speaker, after closing down youth programmes such as the Civilian Conservation Corp, the youth camps at Mt. St. George and Chaguaramas, and the on-the-job training programme, by laying off 5,000 young people, the youths are now told that the Government's programme for youth is to expand the support

given to Servol and other non-governmental organizations. Obviously, the response from our young people is cynicism.

At the Youth Training and Employment Partnership Programme (YTEPP), staff work without pay for months with doom and gloom hovering over the future of the programme. As if the Government has set out to trample the flower of the nation, they proceeded to interfere with the trade centres mainly in the Laventille and Port of Spain South areas by depriving them of funds.

Mr. Speaker, the scant courtesy paid to the problems of our youth in the Minister's statement, coupled with the action of the Government over the past four years, is evidence of the disregard this administration has for our young people. Those programmes catered for thousands of young people. To whom must they now turn? What are they expected to do? What happens to the community in which they live and, ultimately, the country?

Mr. Speaker, the PNM reaffirms its commitment to the youth of the nation. *[Desk thumping]* The next PNM government will implement the following youth programmes:

1. The Geriatric Adolescent Programmer which would serve to mobilize young people to assist the elderly in putting their houses in order.
2. The on-the-job training programme would serve to find young people work experience in the working world prior to going out into the field. The purpose is to enable the young people to gain some form of experience before applying for a job.
3. The Youth Enterprise Development Programme would serve to encourage young people to start new small businesses.
4. The upgrade of the technical vocational systems in secondary schools and building new technical institutes in Trinidad and Tobago.
5. The YTEPP programme will be expanded and upgraded in order to meet the challenges of the youth today.
6. A programme for adolescent mothers which would serve to improve child-care and nutrition, low fertility rates among teenagers, reduce female unemployment and provide an integrated programme designed to educate, train and give support to girls who become pregnant while attending school. This programme would offer counselling and skills training for the baby's father and the mother.

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7. A programme to develop life and partnership skills in our youth. This programme, Mr. Speaker, will use the self-esteem approach within the school system. It would be community-based and will deal with real life issues into the health, family relations and community involvement.

While youth received a paragraph or two, the Minister's statement was silent on the very women's issues he tried to ride on last year. This is not surprising, since the Minister had nothing to report. Where is the Women's Leadership and Enhancement Institute he spoke about? Or, for that matter, when will the \$25 million be available for the training of single mothers which he promised in the last budget? [*Desk thumping*] What plans does the Government have to curb the increasing unemployment in the female labour force? The Minister's penchant for hyperbole, deceit and sleight of hand clearly demonstrates the contempt in which he holds the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

The most recent bond issue by the Government in the international marketplace is a typical example. In the last budget statement, the national community was informed that because of the country's credit rating, which was marked "favourable with a positive outlook" by Standard and Poor the Government had arranged financing of a 10-year \$200 million bond issue at a rate of interest of 8.25 per cent. One year later, with supposedly improved credit ratings and in a market in which interest rates can remain relatively flat, only the UNC government could find a way to pay an effective interest rate of 10.275 per cent for a similar issue. This, ladies and gentlemen, is a big US dollar scandal.

Further, while the Minister promises to ensure that the economic environment is conducive to sustaining economic growth—and I quoted him there—he continues to penalize the business sector, especially the manufacturing sector. Refunds now take over six months to be issued as the Minister of Finance uses these funds to meet his own cash flow needs while the business community incurs a significant cost at overdraft rates of 17.5 per cent. When the taxpayer complains, he is informed that the delay is caused because an audit is required. Since the audit department is short-staffed, this strategy effectively delays the refund for a further period, sometimes as long as two years.

Contractors are owed large sums of money by the Government and their agencies, including state companies, while their contractors struggle with their bankers for business survival. No new initiatives have been advanced to support business activity. Anomalies and inconsistencies in the Aid to Industry Act which hinder manufacturers from making favourable tax allowance claims on capital

expenditure persist, as not only has the Minister instituted no new tax, he has also failed to remove tax irritants to industry.

The retired public officer is promised an increased pension, but from January 2000, though the fiscal year begins on October 1, 1999. We hope he does not suffer a similar fate as the old age pensioner who is still being paid \$520 other than the promised \$620 with neither the Minister nor the National Insurance Board being able to explain the discrepancy or indicate when it would be corrected. Moreover, we fear that the Minister's concept of rationalizing the COLA payment may, in fact, be his euphemistic sleight of hand as happened with the increases in NIB retirement benefits last year.

And so it goes, Mr. Speaker. No fiscal measures; no reporting on the performance of the last fiscal year; nothing but platitudes. While the Minister talks of a \$55 million surplus, the June, 1999 *Quarterly Statistical Digest of the Central Bank* reported an overall deficit of \$860.2 million for the first nine months of fiscal year just ended. Why is the national community continually being subjected to these misrepresentations, broken promises and downright falsehoods from this administration? How has Trinidad and Tobago produced such an amoral group? This nation state that has produced William Demas, Uric Bobb, Frank Rampersad, Frank Barsotti, Eric St. Cyr and a host of other eminent economists now has to suffer the indignity of a Minister of Finance who is woefully incompetent. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, this charade must stop, but I assure you, deliverance is nigh. I am reminded of Psalm 37, verse 10 which says:

“For yet for a little while, and the wicked shall not be: yea, thou shalt diligently consider his place, and it shall not be.”

**The Minister of Tobago Affairs (Dr. The Hon. Morgan Job):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. Member for San Fernando East for participating in what all of us consider to be a fine democratic tradition. The Member for San Fernando East assures us that every year the Minister of Finance gets here and says similar things. If I may quote some of the things, he says:

“The Minister of Finance engages in incompetence...he has no vision...no mastery of economic analysis...a mish mash...not a budget...unmitigated disaster...insulted the intelligence of the population who they think they can lead as fools without men.”

Mr. Speaker, this very gentleman engages in prophesies of doom and gloom every single opportunity on the last four or five occasions. Please permit me to

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quote from his penultimate budget presentation. I am quoting from the *Hansard* record of Monday, October 12, 1998:

“Over the next 12 months, regrettably, we anticipate slow economic growth and perhaps even negative growth, rising inflation, loss of jobs resulting from retrenchment in the public sector and the downturn in the economy in the private sector, rising interest rates leading to decreasing investment, loss of foreign reserves...”

And he goes on like that.

If one takes the budget presentation before that, it is the same litany of prophecies of doom and gloom inciting the population into despair, misinforming foreigners, making sure that he undermines the prospects for good growth, harmony and peace in Trinidad and Tobago.

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

Mr. Speaker, that honourable gentleman ended with a quotation from the Bible, and it led me to wonder: why do we use words to deceive, instead of speak the truth, to manipulate instead of lead to wisdom? Many people who hear the Bible quoted here and the Good Lord called in to assist the Leader of the Opposition on his quest to break a record and become the first Caribbean Prime Minister to lose an election and then win a next one. I do not know how many people are willing to bet on that. I am sure somebody is going to make themselves a millionaire if they start to take odds on Mr. Manning being the next Prime Minister. But he apparently called in the assistance of Jehovah, of Allah, of Lord Krishna, or whatever you want to call him, so that this mythical dream would come to pass.

My advice to him from the Bible, I think it is from the Book of James, when James was talking in Chap. 3 about the tongue. He says that we put bridles in the horses' mouths that we may lead them and we may turn their bodies around; even a big ship, no matter how large it is, no matter whichever way the wind listeth it, it can be turned with a little helm. But the tongue can kindle a fire that will scorch the earth and burn the universe. James goes on to advise that you must control the tongue because it is a small member, yet how great a fire that little tongue kindles, it can set on fire the whole universe. Wild beasts can be tamed, but the tongue can no man tame. That is in the Bible.

I am forced to remind the hon. Member from San Fernando East that he should read his Bible and try to understand it a little more. Because his whole



peroration this afternoon had very little to do with explaining why we should make him Prime Minister again. He starts off with a whole set of figures, numbers and statistics. He quotes the IMF. I want to repeat what he quoted.

“The staff has noted some deterioration in the integrity of the statistical base. Gaps and inconsistencies have emerged in the reconciliation of monetary and fiscal data and reliability of national accounts data has become a concern.”

He goes on from here to imply that Government is in some kind of conspiracy to create problems with the data in order to better their cause of misleading the public. This statement does not say that, Mr. Speaker. It does not say that at all.

Last month I had the good honour to be one of the governors at the Annual Meetings of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. [*Desk thumping*] Mr. Speaker, that was one of the issues that the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund were dealing with in the context of the question of transparency and good governance. I think people need to understand it so they understand the mischief that is afoot over there. Trying to misconstrue what the people wrote in their report as if this Government is in some conspiracy to go into the Central Statistical Office and manufacture figures. Mr. Speaker, nothing could be further from the truth!

Let me give you a little genesis of the reason the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, at this point in time, are trying to strengthen statistical departments in countries all over the world. In Asia, it started in Thailand in mid-1997; they had a run on the banks, many portfolio investments started moving out of Thailand, and it turned out that property prices were inflated, that this quick money was in a situation where there was collusion between banks and businessmen, there was not transparency or good governance. No sooner that happened, the same contagion went from Thailand, to Indonesia, to Malaysia and later on to Russia. Then we had a global kind of meltdown, everybody was saying that we were going to have a recession worse than in 1933. It did not happen. As I speak to you here now, it is the general consensus of all and sundry that we are well past the problem and the world economy is on the go. However, the consensus also is that steps have been taken to strengthen the governance, the management, the transparency of the financial sectors and the statistical departments which feed information into the world money market, into the world capital market.

As I said, I had the good fortune and the honour to have been asked to go and represent this country there and, indeed, I did make a contribution which I will

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give you the gist of. Because it had to do with the same kind of thing, where one member—from a country which I would not name—was there regaling the G24 meeting that, in fact, the International Monetary Fund is going to use credit rating agencies to further impose new conditionalities on debtor nations. So that the banks which wait on the imprimatur of the International Monetary Fund in order to loan money to debtor countries will be in collusion with the creditor agencies to charge high interest rates to these people.

I sat there for about 15 or 20 minutes listening to this thing going on and then I said, “But, you know, I recognize an inconsistency here, Sir”. I appealed to the Chairman who was the Governor of the Central Bank of Sri Lanka. I said, “We are saying that we do not want countries who are not first countries—meaning that something did not happen in their country—we do not want these second, third, fourth countries to suffer from bad management, lack of transparency and bad statistics. At the same time, we are saying that we do not want credit rating agencies; we want people to analyze risks, we do not want people who will go and look at books and see whether the books are verifiable, justifiable, or not. The two things cannot mesh. You have to either want it or not. Eventually, there was agreement that my point was quite correct.

I am saying all this, because this mischievous Member from San Fernando East, Leader of the Opposition, is using a quotation here to substantially and dishonestly do what James, in the Bible, says that one should not do: the tongue is a small member that can set the whole world on fire, it is an unruly evil, it is a deadly poison, out of the same mouth comes blessing and cursing. I do not want this thing to be propagated in the country.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, that leads me to the next question. The Member for San Fernando East spent an inordinate amount of time talking about GNP, GDP and statistics. I have sat here and heard the Minister of Finance say—one of the things I want to do when I give a budget presentation—let me quote. He says:

“Any contrast between the Budget Presentations of the late 90s and those of earlier periods, must go beyond brevity, clarity and user-friendliness for the masses, Mr. Speaker.

The content, the strategy, the language, and the impact of the Budgets of this Administration have been people focused and people centred.”

Mr. Speaker, many people do not like to accept the truth in this country. We live in a society where you will send up 87 children for an exam, and one of them will pass mathematics. I have records from the last CXC, 1998. I am not going to

call the school. Mathematics—sat 78; passed 1. Those children are 16 years old, Mr. Speaker, so it could not be that Mr. Panday caused that. It cannot be the UNC which is responsible for that. Because they are 16 years old, they were down on this ground for a while now, most of them under PNM rule. Now, this year's CXC results, 36 per cent passed Maths, 64 per cent failed. This has been going on for generations. That is the population that the Member for San Fernando East comes to regale with statistics.

I do not know if the Member for San Fernando East has ever heard about “the standard error of the mean”, what is meant by “best linear unbiased estimator”, these are the kinds of statistical terms which are applicable to the variables that a macro economy is concerned with. I do not know if he understands that. So he comes in here and talks with certainty as if he is sure that he can give us figures and statistics that make sense. That is not what this thing is all about, Mr. Speaker.

So that, when my Minister of Finance comes in here and says that he wants to talk to the people in language they can understand, not about variance and variables and means, I think he was doing the right thing and I support him in that. So that the Member for San Fernando East went on with these things and he never proposed alternative solutions, never said what he intended to do about corruption or about anything else.

Mr. Speaker, on the matter of corruption, I am quoting here from a paper that is entitled *The Other Face of Business in Latin America*. It goes on to say that all over the world, in particular in Latin America—I do not know if this fellow did not like Latin America—you have this problem of corruption all over the place. They are discussing now many Presidents, Prime Ministers and people of high authority in Latin America, Brazil. It also says that:

“The change in attitude throughout the region started largely with the 1992 corruption scandal that brought down Brazil's President Fernando Collor de Mello and was followed a year later with the impeachment of Venezuela's President Carlos Andres Perez, also on corruption charges.”

It goes on:

“At the December 1994 Summit of the Americas, 34 heads of state from the Western Hemisphere agreed that the signing governments would establish conflict-of-interest standards for public employees, and stiff penalties...”

Corruption undermines the legitimacy of public institutions and strikes at society...”

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And it goes on country by country.

This Government has, in fact, brought legislation: an Integrity Bill, an Equal Opportunity Bill. We did the Constitution (Amdt.) Bill which was passed by Parliament and which had to do with parliamentary committees and exposure. A Freedom of Information Bill was passed. You cannot deal with corruption, Mr. Speaker, as I am trying to tell you, unless you deal with culture, with understanding.

The mischief of the Member for San Fernando East is no way as exposed as when he talks about crime and education. I will connect for you, Mr. Speaker, so that you can understand the country that we are living in is not at all well informed by the Member for San Fernando East when he is pretending to do good service by quoting these things. He talks about how he is going to give people self-esteem classes so that the girl children would not want to get the urge and get pregnant. I just heard him say that. That is not the way you deal with it, Mr. Speaker. The problem starts much earlier than that. I am looking for the section in this report which he would have had a copy of, *a Report of The Cabinet Appointed Committee to Examine The Juvenile Delinquency & Youth Crime Situation in Trinidad and Tobago, January, 1994*. He was the Prime Minister then. It says here that most of the young people getting into crime, you could have discerned that from primary school they did not have proper parenting—I want for the benefit of the national community to expose the Member for San Fernando East to his own words, because this is a Cabinet Appointed Committee, not a UNC Cabinet. The date here is January, 1994. Mr. Panday was still in opposition, I would assume. I want to quote verbatim:

“The role of the Education System as the major secondary agent of socialisation is widely recognised. Education has traditionally reinforced and complemented the role of families in the socialisation process. Thus from pre-school level onwards, the school system provides students with an additional emphasis upon social and moral values...

The Committee observed that...Today more children are considered to be at risk for developing anti-social behaviours than ever before. Many of these children are living and developing in neighbourhoods where there are limited positive role models for appropriate social behaviour. Frequently, the only adults they see who are making a ‘decent’ living are ‘making it’ at illegal activities. The resultant problems due to student frustration, unrealized expectations and low self-esteem are visible within the nation’s schools. Similarly as indicated in other sections of the report the family environment

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(teenage mothers, poverty etc.) may lead to children being disturbed with consequential problem behaviour in school reflecting their frustration and low self-esteem.

...low verbal skills and behaviour problems in primary schools are the factors most highly associated with later delinquency.”

All these things are here. Mr. Manning’s Cabinet set up this committee, they reported in January, 1994. He comes here in 1999 to presume that the PNM Government had this noble tradition and that he had a plan to reform education.

Mr. Speaker, nothing could be further from the truth! Most of the problems that we are dealing with now, like those 16 year olds who cannot pass Maths and English, were generated by the PNM administrations of the past. There is a book by Dr. Michael Alleyne. I cannot remember the title of the book. I am not going to malign Dr. Michael Alleyne, I met him in Washington when I was up there last month, and we even discussed the section in the book where he said that the PNM expansion of education in the 60s was a political project, but they knew as a matter of fact that it was undermining the quality of education and destroying children, but it was a successful political project. Dr. Michael Alleyne has written this in that book. I did not tell him to write it! I am not his friend!

I have here in my hand a speech given in this very august Chamber, Friday, December 1, 1978. I am going to quote for you what I know to be fact. The *Hansard* reporters are there, you can go look it up and see. The then Prime Minister was admitting that he understood that. So he set up a committee of the following people: Dr. N. Masson; Dr. C. V. Gocking; Mr. V. Bruce; Mr. F. Rampersad—now deceased; Dr. A. St. Clair King; Sr. Francis Xavier; and Dr. Beddoe. This committee was to look at the wastage in the education system and I am quoting from the statement here:

“But it will be useful to review the situation of both the Junior Secondary and Senior Comprehensive Schools and take such corrective action as needed.”

In pursuit of this, he set up the committee. It goes on:

“In addition to the above new and specific measures, the following areas are earmarked for consolidation:—

- (i) improvements to the qualitative, as distinct from the quantitative, aspects of the educational system.”

You want a greater admission of guilt, that they knew what they were doing? Confirmation of what this Dr. Alleyne is saying. It is clear. Mr. Speaker, when

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you destroy a child, you destroy him for life. You can turn around a business, you can let it go bankrupt, but when you destroy a human being, you end up with a situation like we have now, that the Member for San Fernando East is coming into this House and trying to tell people that this Government is one which is causing crime to increase.

**3.30 p.m.**

All these people who are killing each other; all these men who cannot take a horn; they are not four years old. That psychology, that social pathology did not develop since Mr. Panday had become Prime Minister. And there is nothing Mr. Panday can do—even if he wills it—to change the kind of mind-set that was evolved and developed under the PNM regime that is manifesting itself in brutality and horror day after day. Nothing! nothing! nothing! you or I or anyone can do.

These things have a genesis, Mr. Speaker. They have an origin, a culture, a kind of etching in the mind that comes from the position of birth, the location and the circumstances. Just what you have to deal with. He comes in here and says he is going to have a programme where he is going to teach girls not to get pregnant. *[Laughter]* He has arranged that when he becomes Prime Minister he is going to file a writ to reduce the urge among little girls to get pregnant.

Mr. Speaker, nothing the Member for San Fernando East does can ever achieve such purpose. We, as human beings, are impelled by millions of years of evolution to want to have sex. It is a very enjoyable thing. It has been designed by nature to ensure that the specie procreates itself. Can you imagine what it would be if some of us did not enjoy sex? But the Member for San Fernando East would find a way to reduce that urge. *[Laughter]* No such way.

Mr. Speaker, do you know what we have to do if you want to help the problem? Many of the crimes have a basis, an origin in cultural determinism. It is not a genetic thing. There are criminals in all countries, in all ethnic groups, at all times. I have said in this honourable House before that the first crime in the Bible was when Cain killed Abel and both of them had owned the whole world. According to Genesis, Cain and Abel, their mother and father owned all the oilfields of gold, diamonds and everything. They were living alone in the Garden of Eden; the whole planet was theirs and one fellow looked at another fellow and got jealous and killed him. I do not know how our Prime Minister, Mr. Panday is going to stop that kind of wilful, human imperative to be mean and beastly.

The Member for San Fernando East needs to understand these things, and when he understands these things he would spend more time thinking about how

he would nurture a better environment for children to grow up in. This is what the PNM never gave, because they were concerned about getting people to vote for them. They were concerned about a certain idea of dependence; a certain way for Government; a certain culture of paternalism; a kind of peronsism. It is a kind of neo-fascism, in fact, where the state became mother, father and director of the lives of individuals and we were cultured and nurtured to believe that the state was a repository of wisdom and guidance. You know, the great leader, the PNM, the balisier was the banner, or the symbol of all that was good and beautiful and it all turned out to a mess of pottage. And they still do not understand it.

Towards the ending of his contribution he said that the Government, to which I belong, has abandoned the youths. Mr. Speaker, nothing could be further from the truth. Find out what the Minister of Energy has been doing in terms of Skills Development Centres. They are training people in modern technological skills to get employment anywhere in the world. This is done in connection with people from Germany, and we would build one of those centres some time soon in Roxborough, I hope, this year. Thousands of youth have been trained in these Skills Development Centres as far as I understand. We have increased the moneys allocated to the small business company; we have increased the asset-value threshold for qualification as a small business by the Small Business Development Company from \$500,000 to \$1.5 million. This has led to an additional 72 small businesses qualifying under the facility. We increased the limit of the loan guarantee level of the Small Business Development Company from a margin of \$150,000 to \$250,000, with additional persons benefiting from that.

Approximately 1,100 persons have been trained in the areas of carbon steel welding; advanced welding and industrial, electrical installation with more than 80 per cent of these graduates having been placed in lucrative jobs; some have even gone into private enterprises. Approximately 4,921 secondary school principals, teachers and students have been provided with computer literacy training. All these things have been done.

More importantly, is the misunderstanding of the Member for San Fernando East about the technological backwardness and the kind of intellectual bankruptcy and obsolescence that has driven this country where it was, under PNM; and this Government is trying to emancipate it from that. You see we have to deal with ideas. This is why the Budget Speech is such a cleverly crafted document. It does not have all these bogus things about GNP, GDP, foreign exchange rate and arbitrage and all like that. I know that. I spent years of my life studying these things.

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I used to teach the subject, so I understand that. So when one comes into Parliament, one does not come in to confuse people with ideas that they do not even understand. A little learning is indeed a dangerous thing. Mr. Speaker, like somebody said, if you think a little learning is indeed a dangerous thing, try ignorance. I saw manifestation of the meaning of that parable here today. Too little learning is indeed a dangerous thing. So you come and spend an hour, trying to talk about things you do not understand. Things that the average man-in-the-street would never understand because you set up an education system where you send up 100 children to do maths, and one passes.

This has been going on for the last 30 years and these are the people you come to talk to about this figure, that figure, real this, real that and interest rate. What do you know about the relationship between exchange rate, interest rate and macro economic variables? Ask me to lecture to you on that and I might charge you a fee and still teach you. *[Laughter]* Do not come in Parliament with an abundance of ignorance and try to bamboozle me. That is it. A kind of con-man. Fooling the people. This is a con-man's paradise.

Many people take advantage of the innocence, the gullibility and credibility of people who do not understand. My purpose is to prevent you from using language, vague and insignificant words, abusing language and passing it off as knowledge; misappropriating phrases and seeming to be wise, to be erudite when, in fact, your phrases are a prescription, a label and a symbol of a profound ignorance and folly. That is what it is. That is what we have to deal with. I am not going to stay in this Parliament at any time and allow the Members Opposite to continue this charade.

For instance, he is talking about unemployment. We had an hour and we did not hear anything sensible about unemployment. No recommendation! Nothing coming from that Opposite side that said that they understood the relationship between unemployment and macro-economic management. No understanding of the relationship between the markets for labour and what you have to do as a government to get unemployment going.

Mr. Speaker, there is a big problem in Europe that we need to understand and talk about. In Europe, as I am speaking to you here now, there is what you call structurally rigid unemployment, and it is important that this Parliament and the people of this country understand the mischief that is going on over there. They do not understand these things and if you ask them to explain they would not know. Why is it that between 1970 and 1999, non-government jobs in the United States have increased by 70 per cent, while in Europe they have increased by a



mere 3 per cent? As I speak to you now, in the United States of America unemployment is less than 5 per cent. In Europe, for the last 30 years, it stuck above 15 per cent in some countries. Is that not so?

**3.40 p.m.**

These are the issues in which a wise man attempting to become Prime Minister of this country would engage his mind and the country. The Member does not do that, because his purpose is not edification, but to use language to mislead and deceive; to quote the Bible the better to cover, to put a veneer over that empty, shallow, charlatan way. That is what he is here for, not to educate people. So he does not have time to talk about what is going on in the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

Mr. Speaker, permit me, these are recommendations, this is what the Member should have said. He should have said things having to do with, “Okay, I want to reduce unemployment in Trinidad and Tobago and the Minister of Finance and the UNC Government,”—or the UNC/NAR government, whatever you want to call it, the Panday Administration, I do not really care, we are dealing with a Government over here—“When I become Prime Minister this is what I would do; I would set macro economic policy on a course to grow; I would have my macro economic variables such that they would be both encouraging to growth and in conjunction with good structural policy, which would make growth sustainable; what I mean by sustainable growth is non-inflationary growth.”

Mr. Speaker, it is a very deceptive thing when you say “sustainable, non-inflationary growth”. In the Caribbean, too many people—in Jamaica, Guyana, Trinidad and Tobago and in Grenada, this is the 16th anniversary of Bernard Coard’s madness in Grenada, we must take time to think about these things, because it has to do with that intellectual inertia riveting these people to the past. They are always talking about “PNM culture”, “PNM policy” and “PNM strategy”, but that policy has been part and parcel of the same set of ideas that ruined Jamaica and Grenada and gave life and sustenance to some variations of Bernard Coard and all of their ideas: state enterprise, imperialism, as I said.

So, Mr. Speaker, we need to link all those things in the mind of the audience to let them understand that you do not solve unemployment by big government. You do not solve unemployment by expanding Developmental and Environmental Works Division (DEWD) and Unemployment Relief Programme (URP); no question about that! There are more mathematicians, economists and statisticians registered in Hamburg or Dresden, than there are in the whole

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Caribbean, and they are stuck in France, Spain, Germany, all over Europe. Why? Because they tried to solve unemployment by the measures the Member is recommending. That is the explanation. You do not need to do an experiment. All over the world we are seeing examples of this, in the United States of America right next door we can see it. He should have been talking about that.

One important issue that missed him completely is the question of the technological shift in the world today. He stood talking from 1.40 p.m. to long past 3.00 p.m. or whatever, and not one single time did I hear the phrase “technological shift”.

**Hon. Member:** He is a dinosaur!

**Dr. The Hon. M. Job:** He does not belong to the future! He does not understand it. What is happening in the world today must concern all of us, because this idea of a new kind of economy based on the technological shift, the innovations which have to do with information technology, Internet and computer chips is changing policy. It is making governments, in some ways, irrelevant; it is exposing children to a different curriculum that is outside of the control of the Ministry of Education. Many children’s learning is taking place on television and video. They are learning from calypsonians and dub singers for more hours, more intensively and in ways that attract them more than any classroom! What are we talking about? Not a single word, because he is ignorant, lacking in understanding. The man is bogus! He wants to have a bogus Prime Minister in 2001, an impostor, and a deceiver. That is what he is going on.

The Member never talked about making wage and labour costs more flexible. You do that by creating the environment for more bargaining between the agents that are inside here. Employment security and the incentives that it sets up, all these things, not a word about that. But he wants to talk about reducing jobs. You cannot do it! When the Minister of Finance was on his feet, he talked about all these things. He linked them up in ways that you cannot understand—[*Desk thumping*] [*Laughter*] I said ways that you cannot understand, not in ways that I cannot.

Mr. Speaker, you know what has missed them? George Bernard Shaw made a very subtle and important statement. I think I saw it in Naipaul sometime too, “we get from art what we bring to it; we get from life what we bring to it.” You understand things because you bring things to understanding it. If you did not bring the right concepts to understanding, you cannot understand. It is like a language, if I heard someone speaking Chinese, I would not know what they are talking about because I did not bring any Chinese phrases or syntax to that understanding.

These people over there are irrelevant to the understandings that the Minister of Finance has in this document; that is what I meant when I said because “you cannot understand.” They cannot understand because they are not intellectually prepared to understand. What they need to do is prepare themselves, then they will understand and become part of the solution, instead of part of a litany of animated rhetoric, a chronology of figures and numbers that, by themselves, mean nothing, and put together mean less. That is what they are doing. I am sure when they look at that speech, or read it in *Hansard*, or when people try to analyze what the Member said about the exchange rate and unemployment, it will not mean anything. There is not analysis. He accused the Minister of Finance of lacking in analysis, but analysis is totally lacking from his presentation.

Mr. Speaker, let us get back to the substance of the contribution of the Member for San Fernando East. He talked about project implementation and contracts. I do not want to spend much time on that, because he went on from there and said something that I find so embarrassing. When I came here this afternoon I took a note that if I had to speak I would focus on charity and compassion. The budget statement of the Minister of Finance was structured in that mode. Let us try to make sure that Trinidad and Tobago incorporate, unite together to include everybody so we could challenge the world and do the best we can for ourselves.

I did not come here to think about adversarial relationships, but then I am hearing these kinds of things that are prompting and provoking, almost impelling me to start to fight with someone. “If the priest could play who is me?” “Ah doh care who see!” As if to say—

**Mr. Manning:** That is how you are all behaving!

**Dr. The Hon. M. Job:** —as if to say that this budget statement by the Minister of Finance on my side, has no concern for the old people and for the challenged, as people like to call them these days; they do not like to say that people have one eye or one foot again, they say challenged. I do not know whether these euphemisms mean a lot to these people, suffice it to be so. “If de priest could play, who is we; I doh care who see!” Immediately, my mind went to a calypso that Kitchener sang: “If dey say ah tief and carry meh money in Miami is meh damn business.” I am sure you remember that calypso, at the height of the Sam P. Wallace affair and all these multifarious scandals.

We have had a culture in this country where from the highest executives in the land there is more toleration and nurturing of corruption than at any other time in the history of this country.

**Mr. Bereaux:** Right now.

**Dr. The Hon. M. Job:** The question that comes to my mind when I hear “If de priest could play who is we”—David Rudder sung another calypso, “I going to Panama,”—Mr. Speaker, do you remember that one? They were not sung about the UNC Government. It is said, “who in glass houses should not throw stones,” but I am not saying that in the sense of pleading guilty. I am saying, why do we not get together, as this report which I quoted from said that corruption is a worldwide problem; Nigeria, India, anywhere you go, but we have to deal with it by law, not by coming into Parliament and accusing, but by seeking to build up the kind of institutions and appreciation for culture. Get the schools to work better; get all the systems that must come together to keep the society transparent and clean. That is what we need to be doing. Instead we come in here pelting stones at each other and not really addressing or attending to the problem.

The substantial contribution of the Member for San Fernando East, while it was democratic, had much to do with grandstanding, with deceiving people with figures, with trying to mischievously mislead, instead of analyzing and saying what he proposes to do.

The Member talked about Tobago; let us deal with Tobago. He talked about how the Government is mistreating and abusing Tobago. I want to make it quite clear that when I came into this Government in 1997 and until now, I have not discerned a single intention or ambition on the part of this Government to abrogate the Tobago House of Assembly Act in any little way; in any way at all.

Every situation in politics is an evolving situation. There are, in the older nation states of the world, situations that are analogous to the situation in Tobago. When Tony Blair came to power in England he allowed elections to take place in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. They are evolving in terms of their management of the State called the United Kingdom, in the context of regional diversity and regional demands for autonomy. In fact, in France there are Corsican liberationists shooting and killing people. In Spain, there is the Basque who still do it. Regionalism is not something to be denied to the people of Tobago, and the legal apparatus and the relationship, in terms of politics, that are appropriate to these evolving relationships, are not sometimes easily discerned in the near term.

We in Tobago, in our relationship to Trinidad, are still moving in a good direction. I do not know that the problems coming out of Tobago should be any indication that there should be a repeal of the Tobago House of Assembly Act. I would not be in Cabinet if I thought anybody here was thinking that or if they

wanted to convert their thoughts into action, I certainly would not remain in the Cabinet. I could say quite fairly that there is no such intention or ambition, no such desire to manipulate the Tobago House of Assembly Act in order for the UNC to put up candidates. That is so absurd, preposterous and ludicrous a thought, but that is the kind of propaganda that people are carrying all over the place, that the UNC wants to get a foothold in Tobago so that they try to undermine and destabilize Tobago. Nothing could be further from the truth!

I want to make it quite clear that all the insinuations that have come from the Member for San Fernando East concerning secret political ambitions on the part of this Government, in terms of undermining the integrity of the evolutionary process of devolution in Tobago, are absolutely without any foundation whatever. To use his own words, fraudulent, capricious, insubstantial, shallow, malicious, evil, poisonous. [*Laughter*]

**Mr. Imbert:** That sounds just like the UNC!

**Dr. The Hon. M. Job:** Mr. Speaker, this gentleman, the Member for San Fernando East stood on his feet and said that this Government does not care about young people. I used to have a radio programme and because I lived all over the world and read many books, I became firmly possessed of the opinion that if you teach children music it would help them in many ways. It does not mean that if you listen to Mozart you would immediately get bright. But if you understand the question of statistical relationships, you would understand that in a certain cultural situation a child would be involved with a different behaviour if he were in a disciplined context.

I read from a report here which said that many children grow up in an environment where the only people they see doing anything to make a living is doing something illegal. I want to make it quite clear that the children in Trinidad and Tobago who get into crime and dysfunctional behaviour are not genetically predisposed to be like that. They come to be that way because of the circumstances that are beyond their control. I myself might have been one of them if I did not have the kind of parents I had. I was lucky to have the mother and father I had, because I was also from a poor background.

I think it is because of the burden of that understanding that when I was on the radio I kept on saying, why do we not have programmes appropriate to giving children from poor areas some of the same advantages that middle class children have, or what we call middle class in Trinidad. I meant people who had a little money and could afford to send their children to learn to play the violin, flute and piano.

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I have always said, why is it that these people from the other side—the Member for San Fernando East—all they want black people children to know how to beat is pan. I was not against steelpan, but I find that it was wicked and evil to use the steel pan in that kind of fascist way, when, in fact, if Albéniz only understood piano and Mozart only understood the piano, they could not write the kind of music they did.

These people had to be in the environment. When you listen to a lot of Albéniz's music, it is kind of tailor-made for the guitar but he was a virtuoso pianist, but he grew up in an environment around flamenco guitarists so he got a feel for the sound, the life, the soul of the instrument. So a child who grows up in an environment where there are more instruments than pan, is very likely to end up a better pannist than one who did not have that advantage.

**3.55 p.m.**

In fact, in terms of the evolving music world—

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, the speaking time of the hon. Member for Tobago East has expired.

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

*Question put and agreed to.*

**Dr. The Hon. M. Job:** Thanks to everybody who said “aye” and also to those who did not say “aye”.

Mr. Speaker, as a consequence of what I am saying, when I got into the Cabinet, one of the first things I did was to start working on developing this idea to the point where I can ask the Government to give effect to it, and I quote from the Minister of Finance's Budget Statement on the Tobago aspect.

“Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, Government has approved a project to introduce music, drama and fine arts in the schools of Tobago. The Ministry of Tobago Affairs, in collaboration with the THA and the Ministries of Culture, Community Development and Education has developed this project. Beginning this year, schools in Tobago will be equipped on a phased basis with musical instruments such as steel pans, violins and guitars.”

As I stand here speaking to you, for the past six months we have been working on acquiring competent music teachers, people who are trained, world class standards, and this kind of thing. When Cabinet discussed this project, it was

approved as a pilot project for the whole country of Trinidad and Tobago. It is not a Tobago project, this is the pilot and we are going to learn whatever the things we need to, so that we can expand this project throughout the length and breadth of Trinidad and Tobago.

They had 34 years, and they never thought about it, not for Trinidad nor Tobago. They even said they were going to put pan in schools and they never put one; and they come in here talking about deception and how people are promising and do not deliver. They made pan the national instrument and said all schools in Trinidad and Tobago would have pan and they do not have it as yet, as I speak to you. Not a pan anywhere. I am raising this matter to refute in an unambiguous and clear manner that malicious invective that came from over there; trying to suggest to people that this Government is so careless of the welfare of children and young people: that we are only about converting our own private interests into public policy and using the taxpayers' money to promote our own agenda. That is not true. It never was true, otherwise this project would not be financed by the taxpayers.

We go to Tobago and they are saying the Government is doing nothing for Tobago. Mr. Speaker, as I stand here, I can say that I have had sundry discussions with the Minister of Finance concerning the ferry service, and it is not true to say that the project concerning Toco is one to create opportunities for disbanding the ferry service between Port of Spain and Scarborough. That cannot be a sensible supposition. Scarborough is the capital of Tobago and Port of Spain is the capital of Trinidad. You cannot fly everything into Tobago from Piarco to Crown Point and then transport it all over Tobago. That ferry service will always be needed, but there is no necessity to say that because you will always need that ferry service, you can bridge the Galleon's Passage with another ferry service and improve the roadway from Sangre Grande to Tobago, so that you can facilitate more development of that area. They are the ones who abandoned the people of Sans Souci, the people of Toco, the people of Rampanalgas. Have you ever been to those areas?

**Mr. Assam:** My mother was born there.

**Dr. The Hon. M. Job:** Your mother was born there, so you know up there. They have abandoned and depopulated those areas by executive neglect. Once the people come into the urban areas they become problems because they have abandoned them.

This Government is trying to make sure that they develop, as much as possible, all over the country. So we are going to put out tenders, bring in our

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reports, a transparent process. What should we have done? The thing is going on, there are the people who preferred bidders or bidders have been screened or are being screened and hopefully we are going to have a ferry service between Toco and Scarborough. What is wrong with that? You are coming now to say the people of Toco would be disadvantaged. You do not want the ferry service then?.

They do not want it, so leave them backward, leave them in the bush, just like they have left them for generations. One hundred children go up for mathematics, one passes and you come in here talking about the average of this and the price of that. Everything that you do not understand, they cannot understand because you have left them in perpetual ignorance. Unable! As I said, I have a press release; when I write the press they do not print the things I say.

Mr. Speaker, we have a crisis in this country. These people have created an institutional framework which has evolved to land this country at a sad and sorry pass. We are talking about millennium and new millennium, but the kind of systems that we inherited from the legacy of the PNM have prepared people and are preparing people for the 15<sup>th</sup> Century, nothing like the 21<sup>st</sup>. I am telling you! One hundred children go up for mathematics and one passes. Where are you going? Not to the 21<sup>st</sup> Century of course. Never!

You go to Silicon Valley in the United States, there is no racism there. If you go to Silicon Valley the people who have developed there are Chinese, they are Orientals, they are Indians. You used to work there, so you know that.

**Mr. Valley:** I know that.

**Dr. The Hon. M. Job:** You said you know Silicon Valley so you know what I am saying is the truth. If you go to Silicon Valley and you are bright, they want you there. *[Laughter]*

We have a problem in this country where as I stand speaking here, everybody is talking about racism and, indeed, if you read some of these budget speeches of the gentleman over there, he is always insinuating or making innuendoes about racism—I read it last night—how in this country there is more racism now than ever. That is not the truth.

What is happening Mr. Speaker, as I said in this Parliament and I really want the country to know that every time I am in an international forum I make the point. I made it clearly when they had the CPA conference here some time ago and I am saying we should never talk about “race” because “race” is a vacuous inane word. He copied my word and comes here talking about “vacuous”. *[Laughter]* What we should really talk about, Mr. Speaker, is “ethnicity”.



If you go to Rwanda or Burundi you could not tell who is a Hutu or who is a Tutsi. They all look the same way. If you go to Nigeria, these people at Rivers State who right now are killing each other and the other tribes around them look the same way. It is not “race”, “race” is not the problem. India and Pakistan, you think you could have gone up to the Himalayas last month when they were shooting and massacring each other and tell by how they look who is a Pakistani? Some of them look like Mr. Panday and they are on the Indian side. The rest look like Mr. Panday and they are on the Pakistani side. They look the same. *[Laughter]* So race is not the problem. It is that thing you call ethnicity that comes from one’s ancestral origin, language, religion, the region in which you live. All these things make a difference that is why in Tobago there is an ethnic group called Tobagonian. Mr. Hochoy Charles is a Tobagonian. There is an ethnic group called Tobagonian which is different from people who look like Hochoy Charles and live in Trinidad. The same way you have all these people, so called “Indians”.

I remember last year Christmas I denounced a group of people who were talking about “I am Indian” and the Government “ain’t” being Indian enough. I say I am in a Cabinet where the Prime Minister is a Trinidadian and Tobagonian Prime Minister, with Trinidadian Government, whose ancestors came from India. Stop this dotishness about “I am an Indian”. You are a Trinidadian of Indian origin. We must talk about ethnicity.

I go back to Silicon Valley now. These people, all of them who are working there from India, Nigeria or wherever; who cares about their hair, or how their eyes look? They are qualified and they are as bright as a bulb. That is what the world needs and we in Trinidad and Tobago on this Government side recognize that if you abandon the PNM system of keeping people ignorant and “dotish”, and make all of them bright as bulbs, they would not have time to worry about who name Frank and who name Kissoon. *[Desk thumping]* Everybody busy making a living. Do you understand what I mean? Nobody busy focusing on his or her hair. So who cares if Kuei Tung is a hakwai. You are busy making a living. You are going ahead doing the best you can. Do you understand? All this foolishness about douglarisation. If you understand what is going on in Silicon Valley, you will understand the solution to the problem.

Educate everybody, make sure they are competing for opportunities that they can acquire because of their brilliance, and they would not want to divide each other because of how their hair looks and who has kinky hair and who has straight hair and who name Maharaj and who name Singh. Rubbish! That is the legacy of the PNM.

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This Government is trying to include everybody and abandon that. You know they are vexed! They are vexed because if you do that they would not have any way for you to appeal to people by ethnic group and, therefore, they will become obsolete. It is so simple to understand. If I am a Hutu leader in Burundi, I do not want anybody to unite with me from Tutsi because how I am going to be their leader? I am a Hutu leader, so I have to have Hutus to lead. If I am a Tutsi leader, I do not want anybody to eliminate Tutsi because I am a Tutsi leader. I have to lead Tutsis.

The problem Mr. Speaker, might sound like a big joke but it is very fundamental to the future of this country. Understand what I am saying. We in Trinidad and Tobago have to go past ethnicity or the burdens of ethnicity and why I say that. Never ever believe that I mean you must homogenize the population, because I also believe that beauty is unity with variety.

What would the United States of America be without Indians and Algonquins and the Blacks and Europeans from different parts, Japanese? All those people who are there have contributed to make the United States of America the great country that it is. The Jews and all; Satchmo Armstrong, Dizzy Gillespie all of them; Duke Ellington and nowadays Tiger Woods, the great golfer, and the basketball players, sportsmen, poets, Serena and Venus Williams and all of them. It is arguable. I have studied in the United States of America at the University of California and Purdue where I did my Ph.D, and there are black professors. You go into the submarines, they are there programming nuclear submarines. Go into the Airforce fighter bombers, they are there. Opportunities have opened up. That is what a great country is like. We want to make it so in Trinidad and Tobago that anybody could be the Governor of Central Bank. But when some dotish man starts to say that he glad this one is the Governor because he is a Hindu fella, I will say he is talking rubbish.

We want to pass that stage. Who cares whether the Governor has a name like Dookeran or a name like Job? Why worry over that? It is a Trinidad citizen who has risen to eminence as, indeed, we must provide the opportunities for it to be like that. That is what this Government is about. They do not want that. They do not want it at all.

Mr. Speaker, I have to be very concerned when you take up the *Sunday Guardian* of October 10, 1999 and some Richard Young, Scotia Bank's Managing Director says:

“Government is now seeking to do what every government should be doing. That is dealing with crime, health, education. The Budget is more social

though, there is little in it for business. I am happy to see the (Finance) Minister selected a conservative US\$16 per barrel oil price.”

Favourable comment.

Dr. Ronald Ramkissoon, favourable comment. Dane Darbasie. Stanley St. Omer, President of the Trinidad and Tobago Manufacturers’ Association, says:

“A national folk theatre is long overdue. A national sports centre, the four stadia (for Youth World Cup 2001), great. We love these things.”

**4.10 p.m.**

We agree with these social measures. Kerston Coombs:

“Our farmers will no doubt welcome the disaster relief fund of \$15 million...”

To see about natural and agricultural disasters. You go out in the road and talk to poor people, Mr. Speaker. There are people from all walks of life who do not really want to hear about statistics and, especially, that kind of deceitful twisting of the statement from the IMF report. They want to hear what a government is doing to benefit them. This is what a budget speech must do. It must do something to the people in terms of their confidence, vision and understanding of how the Government is, setting up the stage and putting things in place, so that their future will be better secured.

This is what this budget tried to do. This is what the people over there do not understand. They think this budget is about numbers and figures so they come in here, forging numbers and figures with a calculator and talking about this per cent and that per cent, and they do not understand what they are talking about. How much time do I have?

**Mr. Singh:** Fifteen minutes.

**Dr. The Hon. M. Job:** Mr. Speaker, in the real world, one of the important issues that is going to separate the 21<sup>st</sup> Century from the 20<sup>th</sup> with respect to economic management is, a battle that has been going on since the 17<sup>th</sup> 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Century. We have what you called the physiocrats in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century Mercier de la Rivier is a name I remember. What is that?

**Mr. Manning:** Say that name again.

**Hon. M. Job:** The physiocrats a group of economists in France, okay. They were known to David Hume and Adam Smith and they built on their work. All of them were there arguing about what is the role of Government in an economy?

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When Adam Smith talked about—read his book: *An enquiry into the nature and causes of the wealth of nations*. Note that! *An enquiry into the nature and causes of the wealth of nations*. He spent a lot of time talking about Government and, in fact, a lot of people misinterpret Adam Smith to say, that Government should not have anything to do with economics. Get the Government out of it. Smith, Mill they never said that!

As a matter of fact, the first case in European literary history that you will see a demand that Government provides public goods and services is, in Adam Smith's work. It is the same current consensus that what we need is not no government; we need good government to mind its business to do those things which government can do and do them well. That is what we need. PNM never understood that. So they wanted to do those things that mother, father, uncle, tanty, nennin and grandmother should do and they messed up everybody. They still do not understand that.

So the jury has come back. When I used to tell people in the 60s and 70s—a long, long time ago—that the Soviet Union will come to grief; I have been reading this from Schumpeter, Barone and Italian economists—people like Karl Viarl Menger and Stanley Jevons and all these people. I did the mathematics and was understanding it, that socialism internalizes fraud. The people who make decisions as Government, bureaucrats, they never understood that rent seeking is the necessary and ineluctable imperative of a socialist organization, power lust and state enterprise government. They never understood that. That is why I speak of the jury has come back. They have done their work. That is why all over the world, they are struggling to find a way to modernize the welfare state; modernize the weaning and to allow people the freedom to depend on themselves and not the Government.

This is why I told you between 1970 and 1999, private sector employment in the USA increased and jobs which have contributed to reducing unemployment which went down to 4 ½ per cent or less than 4 ½ per cent in the United States in the same period. Private sector employment jobs in England, as in Europe—not England because after Thatcher, England has a profile somewhat like America, but in continental Europe—have only gone up by 3 per cent with the consequence, that for most countries, unemployment has stayed at a rigid 20, 19 and 18 per cent. In Sweden, as an extreme case, something like 60 per cent of the gross national product is taken back in taxes. Sixty per cent of the GDP goes into taxation. Mr. Speaker, these are the matters that these people should be focussing their minds on, when they come into Parliament, so that they can lead people into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century into that whole era of technological education.

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Mr. Speaker, I brought this book from Washington, produced by—I think is the IFC or something like that. *The book of Knowledge*. I want to put this on the record because it is important that people know these things. This is where we are going. We are not stuck in the past. They come and talk about “you did have ah”—what the thing he talked about—education plan, something they had—some White Paper. Well they had this White Paper and the paper probably get brown by now and you did nothing with it. *[Laughter]* You had this White Paper and never did anything. Had a chance and never did anything. Now, a lot of the white paper has been overtaken by events and circumstances.

Hear this, we are talking about the United States and a lot of what I am saying here, is evident in Trinidad:

“Nearly half of all high school graduates have not mastered seven grade Arithmetic;

One-third of 17 years old cannot place frame on a map of the world;

Only about one in 10 high school graduates can write a reasonably coherent paragraph;

Approximately 50 per cent of the students entering California State University System are not ready for college level English and maths;

Forty-two million adults in this nation are functioning illiterates.”

When I used to be talking about illiteracy in Trinidad and Tobago, the Member from San Fernando/East closed down the programme. He did not want me to talk about that. *[Laughter]*.

“Illiteracy cost United States business about \$250 billion per year in loss productivity.”

In Trinidad you will have a comparative figure or higher—economy for economy. Illiteracy—people cannot read.

You know, like I used to make a joke on my radio programme and I say because of illiteracy, some of these people are dangerous because if you put up a no entry sign, they cannot read it they will go in and the place will blow up and kill them. You understand! That is what they mean here, lost productivity—cannot read and the comparable thing is not being able to reason and they cannot do mathematics either.

In the modern world, you have to be able to do these things. You have to be able to punch in data, and at least to do that you must be able to read numbers and

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all of that. You understand! If you want to live in the modern world you better get a better education system that is appropriate to the matter.

“Ninety per cent of prisoners cannot read”

Mr. Speaker, I know as a matter of fact, that the same situation exists in Trinidad and Tobago. A lot of the illiterate people are in YTC. You go to the Courthouses in the morning, much of these young people are getting into mischief because they are illiterate and they cannot read. They have low self-esteem and lack of self-confidence. A lot of young girls are into promiscuity and all these kind of devious and dysfunctional kinds of behaviour because of their culture. They were not born to be like that. They cannot read. These are the kinds of things. This text is all about dealing with what education would be like in the years ahead. The kind of market for private sector education for all those innovations in teacher training and classroom work.

Mr. Speaker, these people over there were arguing about textbook —and I think it is an appropriate time I must talk about it—, and they came talking about that there again today. What they should be really talking about is, forcing the government to start talking about, when it would giving a laptop computer to every schoolchild. [*Desk thumping*] No they do not want to do that. [*Desk Thumping*] They just want to talk a lot of "commesse" and confusion because their minds are riveted in the past, and when they move their minds away from the past, they are gazing at the corridors of power. That is what they are about, getting into power animated by a vulgar and bogus ambition to execute executive power; not by the necessity to have an understanding of what is appropriate to the 21<sup>st</sup> Century or appropriate to the needs of the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago today. Not a word!

They spent two hours talking not a word about all these things. What is the Government doing in terms of training people? What are they doing in terms of using computer technology to teach people trigonometry, calculus, topology, groups and rings? I know about all of that. I spend years studying it and I wish more people had done what I did and can do it. I want to know, how do I get more people, who like myself have come from humble beginnings and origins to be like Morgan Job in these regards. [*Desk thumping*] That is what they should be thinking about. Instead of coming here and talking a lot of foolishness.

Mr. Speaker, I do not know. I have stood up here and heard this inane litany of just confused ramblings about what the Minister of Finance does not know about numbers. He does not know this about numbers. He does not know that

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about numbers. He does not know the other about numbers. The substantial intellectual analyses that should have gone into the question of explaining to the people why do you want to be Prime Minister? You have not done that yet. I mark you zero. *[Laughter]* *[Desk thumping]* You have not done that yet. Why do you want to be Prime Minister. You had one chance.

You know, they used to teach me in school, there are four things that come not back—the past life, the spoken word, the spent arrow*[Inaudible]* and the lost opportunity. They had four and a half years—as a matter of fact, five years to put their stamp on this country. Do you know what they used it for? To fire Ralph Maraj on television.*[Laughter]* That is what they will remember them for. They used it to go to Hong Kong and fire the Ambassador in Hong Kong and say they are firing him to give him a better job. Has he got the higher job yet? They used it to go and lock up Occah Seepaul and put the whole country under house arrest. This is what people remember them for. They are coming back here now—once they had the opportunity to absolve themselves from the past misdemeanours and errors. Instead of coming and standing up with the kind of panache and grandeur, and putting their stamp on the Parliament and the country, they come in here with a lot of stupidity about numbers and figures that they do not even understand. Wasting people's time. *[Desk thumping]*.

What about the scholarships for sport that we have given? Brian Lara's scholarship worth about \$250,000.000 and Ato Boldon's scholarship. So many things have been done. Look at the roundabout by the savannah. Do you remember that? People used to go miles and miles. They want to go to Cascade, they are right near Cascade and can even see Cascade. Yet you had to go all the way to Woodbrook and St. James before you get to Cascade—simple things! How much does that cost about \$20,000.00? *[Laughter]*

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

They could not think about it, right. Do you understand what I mean? I can go on and on with these simple little innovations and ideas. Look at the Caroni Bridge. Every morning do you know how many thousands of people and millions of man-hours were lost every day? They could not think it through because they are not about these kinds of innovations to help improve the welfare of the people. They are about enjoying the corridors of power and “gallerying”.

You know, Vidia Naipaul wrote a book *The Suffrage of Elvira* that describes all of them very well.

**Hon. Member:** What does it say?

**Dr. The Hon. M. Job:** Go and read it. Do you want to borrow my copy? Mr. Speaker, I am very grateful for the opportunity given to me to stand here and say things that I think are germane and relevant for an understanding of what we should be doing in this Parliament instead of really “mauvais languing” each other and saying things that are not leading people’s minds.

We are at a very critical juncture in this country where we have to demonstrate to the world that Trinidad and Tobago is a place where, as I said at the Commonwealth Conference, we have something to show, we are a model, we are a symbol of how people can live in harmony and how anybody can be Prime Minister, anybody can be Minister of Finance and anybody can be Attorney General. [*Interruption*] I do not mean anybody, I mean ethnically. You know what I am talking about. And notwithstanding that, that we cohere. We have done so. When the Government just came into power they were predicting doom and gloom as usual, “It will fall apart in six months, you wait.” Four years after we are still here and he is still hoping to be Prime Minister in 2000. I do not know who wants to bet on that.

Mr. Speaker, I think I have substantially gone over the substance of what I wanted to say and I say that the Member for San Fernando East did not make a case to the country that he should be Prime Minister again. I say based on his presentation here this afternoon he has failed to convince anybody that on the run-up to a next election he should be seriously considered as a candidate. I do not even think he should fight a seat. I think he should retire from politics. After 27 years if that is the best he can perform maybe he brought so little to the 27 years of experience that he can not be improved.

Mr. Speaker, that leads my mind on to another thing. You know, the Kaiser once had a soldier come up to him and say, “Boss I would like to speak to you, Sir”. So the Kaiser said, “Well, stand at ease, stand at ease”. So the soldier said, “Boss I have been in the battle of Schleswig-Holstein, I fought with Austria, I fought against Denmark, I have all these medals and I am still a Corporal”. So the Kaiser says, “Look on that hill over there. What do you see there?” The soldier said, “A mule, Sir”. He said, “Well it is still a mule, you know. It fought in all these battles too but it is still a mule”. Maybe you should consider that you will not be fighting again. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. [*Desk thumping*]

**Mr. Jarrette Narine** (*Arouca North*): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to come into this debate at this early stage, however, I must start by congratulating the Member for San Fernando East on his presentation this afternoon. [*Desk thumping*] As political leader of the PNM we



are much—and I am certain that everyone who heard his delivery on television today would have been proud to know that we have someone waiting to be Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] What has happened is that I just browsed through the newspaper this morning and I saw on page 3 of the *Guardian* a headline saying: “Job: I’m told little”. Apparently he knew little of this budget and he went through rhetoric and he wafered himself for the entire 75 minutes. I am certain that Sprangalang and Tommy Joseph, if they were in the gallery this afternoon, would have enjoyed the free concert that we had here this afternoon. [*Desk thumping*]

However, Mr. Speaker, I am going to address some of the points raised by the Member for Tobago East. I am also going to read part of that International Monetary Fund Staff Report for 1999 and I quote from paragraph 58 on page 20 of this report:

“The staff has noted some deterioration in the integrity of the statistical base. Gaps and inconsistencies have emerged in the reconciliation of monetary and fiscal data, and reliability of national accounts data has become a concern.”

Mr. Manning was not saying that the Minister of Finance gave us wrong figures here, not even by looking at the other documents, but the IMF and the staff were saying that it is a concern.

“The authorities recognize the extent to which these shortcomings affect the quality of the statistical data produced by the central bank and other statistical agencies...”

This is the point, the quality of the statistics.

So that, when people work on one “ten days” for an entire year and you quote the Minister of Local Government as saying, “We employed 70,000 persons, to work one ten days a year”, that gets into the statistics of Mr. Kuei Tung saying that there is 11 per cent unemployment in Trinidad and Tobago. Those are false statistics [*Desk thumping*] because when I work one “ten days” for the year and have nothing else to get and people are driving around in their Mercedes Benz and going on television and saying the salary that I am working for in the URP Programme in Mausica cannot even buy gas for my vehicle so that I will put out some Independent candidates to help the UNC in the Local Government elections; nonsense!

The people who work one “ten days” cannot be a statistic for the Minister of Finance and I say that we need really to improve this. If I continue here you would realize that they are saying that:

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“...staff supports the authorities’ request for an assessment mission from STA to assist in identifying areas in need of development and preparing an action plan which could involve possible follow-up technical assistance from the Fund. In response to this request, provision for such a mission is included in the STA regional allocation plan for fiscal year 2000.”

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, the sitting is suspended for half an hour.

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

**5.03 p.m.:** *Sitting resumed.*

Mr. Speaker, the Member for Tobago East, was blaming the Leader of the Opposition for the crime situation. He said over the last four years, the UNC did not develop the crime situation, but there was always crime in Trinidad. We are not saying that is not true. What we are saying is, in 1986, the UNC came to the public and said that they had a plan: a master plan to solve the crime situation in Trinidad and Tobago. Yet today, after four years, they are waffling over the crime situation in Trinidad and Tobago.

We have heard the Leader of the Opposition’s statistics: how crime has risen in Trinidad, and everyday if you take up the newspapers some heinous crimes are taking place in Trinidad; which have never taken place before. Conning the nation, in 1986, to say that they have a plan for the crime situation in Trinidad: by buying 100 Cherokee vehicles which only Motorola radios could have fitted in those vehicles. Now they are saying that they have to buy another 100 Cherokee vehicles because the computerised system, maybe, can only fit in those vehicles. That will not solve the crime situation in Trinidad.

Part of the problem in Trinidad—my colleagues would deal with that—is the social problems. I have not heard the Minister of Finance say anything about the social safety net. We are going to deal with that in this budget presentation, and not stand here like the Member for Tobago East—a stand-up comic—for 75 minutes just talking about Burundi and these other nations, we are Trinidad and Tobago. We know that we are Trinidadians. We accept the reality that we have a government that does not care about the people in Trinidad and Tobago.

This week one minister stood in a town meeting and said that they are a caring government. The next day he fails to meet with the blind people. This is the kind of caring ministers we have in Trinidad and Tobago. This is what we are saying. There was a plan for crime—he was not part of that because it is only in 1997 you came through a by-election, but you are part of this UNC. He is probably the most independent Member of Parliament on that side, because he does not belong

anywhere. I am saying today, he has alluded to the situation that—the Member for Tobago West—he confesses that he taught children that bogus thing they call the “GDP”. Could you imagine that? He stood to talk about the Government’s fiscal measures for the year 1999/2000 and said “GDP was bogus” and he taught that to children of this nation. I am surprised, because I know for a fact that he is one of the bright young people that came from Tobago when Dr. Williams transformed the education system in Trinidad and Tobago. Although he did not finish paying off the Students’ Revolving Loan, we have no problems with that.

**Mr. Valley:** Yes we do!

**Mr. J. Narine:** He comes here trying to say that he would like children to get educated the way he got educated. Yes they have been educated like him.

Mr. Speaker, people who do not know the history of the Member for Tobago East—I was born and grew in Arima. I knew his mother who had a farm on the train-line in Wallerfield—he went abroad and studied. He came back as an Agricultural Economist. His mother handed that area to him and “he run down that farm”. Imagine an agricultural economist run down a farm in Wallerfield, and coming here to talk about children today should be educated like himself. I would not like my child to be educated like him. [*Laughter*]

Today, the Member for Tobago East spoke about “UNC foothold in Tobago”. Member for Tobago West, did you hear that?

**Miss Nicholson:** Do not trouble me.

**Mr. J. Narine:** Foothold in Tobago. The only foothold that they have in Tobago is the Grafton Beach Hotel and probably the Prime Minister playing golf at Mt. Irvine, no other foothold will take place in Tobago.

**Mr. Valley:** That is right.

**Mr. J. Narine:** Because they know that in Tobago they are probably more educated than some of the people in Trinidad, in that the UNC got a parcel of land from Jaglal in Tobago and they cannot build an office on it as yet. [*Laughter*].

Mr. Speaker, he spoke about the ferry service from Toco to Tobago. The Minister of Finance’s plan started way beyond 1986. When we heard about the Pearl of the Americas. [*Interruption*]

**Hon. Member:** 1996.

**Mr. J. Narine:** In 1992 we had a plan that the Minister—who was a then Minister of the PNM government—brought to us and said that they were going to

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transform the east coast of Trinidad into the Pearl of the Americas. Eco-tourism would have taken place from Balandra Beach Resort down to the Amazon and Orinoco Rivers and they were going to build casinos, out there, to bring the people from Tobago; Grafton Beach Hotel and other areas, by ferry to Toco, Balandra and those areas.

**5.10 p.m.**

When I spoke about that in your elections campaign, the people of Tobago were very worried that tourists would have to leave Tobago to travel to Trinidad to see rain forests, to gamble and partake in other water sports in Trinidad. Can one not see the plan of giving \$52 million to Maritime Insurance to pay off the debts to that Balandra beach resort that WINSURE placed there? Thank God for the PNM and our Chief Whip that it did not happen—they did not get the amount of money, but the lands are available. Those were assets left there by the WINSURE group of companies so, they have the lands.

It is amazing! Two weeks ago I heard that the Minister of Finance and a former Minister of Finance were spending every weekend in Matura where one financier of the UNC has bought 750 acres of land—a whole estate. I felt that they are friends and there is no problem with that, but when I heard the delivery of the Minister of Finance last Friday, the former Minister of Finance was on television and everything that the Minister of Finance could not answer, he was answering. This amazed me. I thought to myself that I now know why they were spending those weekends in Matura at Mr. Galbaransingh's residence. We need to link up these things, and this is what is happening.

I am saying, Mr. Speaker, that if one is to put a ferry service from Toco to Tobago, we have already made the arguments that the population of Trinidad and Tobago starts from Arima. We are 15 minutes away from the Piarco airport and half an hour away from Port of Spain. So, they are going to put a ferry service from Toco to Tobago and I am going to spend one and a half hour to get to Toco when I can get to the airport in 15 minutes and get to Port of Spain in one hour. Am I going to spend that amount of time to take the ferry service to get to Toco and to Tobago?

I am saying that this is just another plan to take those funds and spread them among the financiers of the UNC because, obviously, this budget is a blueprint for corruption, human development and sustainable growth for the friends and families. *[Laughter]* We know that! This is what is written here, as far as I see it.

The Minister is speaking about the Appropriation Bill 1999—2000 and I am seeing here over \$14 billion to be spent. We are saying that because there are the

documents that say income and expenditure and the recurrent that one will put towards the public service and to run the local government authorities and so forth, the taxpayers of this country are entrusting the funding of \$14 billion and more to a government that has no track record of spending the public's purse in a diligent way. We have seen that for the last four years.

Budget after budget, we come here and have deficits. Budget after budget, we come here and the figures are wrong. Budget after budget, we come here and, we said in 1996 that he placed the country on automatic pilot. Automatic pilot meant business as usual, and 1997, 1998 and 1999 have proven that what we said way back in 1996 is certainly true, because in some cases, what I have seen in the Revenue and Expenditure book is that a little slip of paper marking the year 1999—2000 was stuck on that document and, I am certain that if I had removed it, I might have seen 1998—1999. It is actually the same thing! We are not doing anything different.

The people of Trinidad and Tobago, in the last Local Government elections, have sent that message to this Government that time has come for them to report honestly to the nation and, if they cannot do that, we will be ready in very short time to get rid of them. I cannot go through all the documents. The Minister of Local Government knows full well. He asked me earlier if he would have to speak today, because in the last budget debate, he was waiting for me to deliver and he would then come after and make all sorts of statements to cover up what he has done wrong in his Ministry over the years. The Swami is now giving him his blessings, but I know what goes on with that. When a fella does something wrong, he goes to the priest to help him, but no priest could help the Minister! *[Laughter]*

**Mr. Manning:** He is beyond redemption!

**Mr. J. Narine:** The Local Government Ministry this year will get approximately \$654 million for salaries and expenses by the Ministry. Then, for the development programme, the Ministry of Local Government will get \$20,698,000. The local roads and bridges under the Public Sector Investment Programme (PSIP) will get \$33,505,000. The Road Tax Fund will be cut into two. The Ministry of Works and Transport will keep \$25 million and the Ministry of Local Government will get \$25 million.

Over the last four years, we have not had any reports here on that Road Tax Fund. When our Minister of Works and Transport, the Member for Diego Martin East, brought that Bill to Parliament, even those on that side who were then on that side with us will understand that because of that Act, every six months the

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Minister of Works and Transport is supposed to report to Parliament about where this money was spent.

The whole point about it is that we on this side have constituencies and we have not had one single road paved in the last four years! I can speak for Arouca North. In the last Local Government elections, they went into Lopinot to campaign. They got somebody to come out with a maxi-taxi to watch the Minister “wine” all over Trinidad on platforms, and he paved a little piece of road, seven and a half miles up into the Lopinot Valley.

**Dr. Griffith:** You just said nothing was done!

**Mr. J. Narine:** That was only done recently. That is why you get 7—0 in Arima! You told the Prime Minister that you would win all seats in Arima. Nobody wants to see you in Arima! You are a traitor beyond recognition!

Mr. Speaker, when that road tax is disbursed between the Ministry of Local Government and the Ministry of Works and Transport, they are supposed to come to this Parliament, according to law, and say how that tax fund was spent. Over the last four years, we have not had a single report. So, I can report that in Arouca, the landslide victory is because they spent nothing of that road fund over the last four years. By giving the people in Tunapuna/Piarco pressure or throwing powder or “wining” would not win him elections, and there is more money now for chutney.

Apart from that road tax, there is \$130 million for the Unemployment Relief Programme which is placed under that Ministry—and this is about two years now. He started well by getting the 14 corporations to spend that URP money and, although it was not equitably distributed, the corporations made good sense out of it until they took it away from the seven corporations run by the People's National Movement. Why did they do that? It is because the Minister of Local Government had an independent party for elections to split votes. Imagine that! Licks like fire! And he will get more licks again in the General Elections! The Local Government elections is just a prelude to the type of government we have and, after four years, the people are disenchanted. They do not even want to hear the UNC anywhere.

Under these statistics, while I am going through them, I have seen nothing for the purchase of new vehicles. I have seen a column with new vehicles: nil, nil, nil. The 14 regional corporations will get no new vehicles, and there is a reason for that. One will have to get contractors to come in and it will be handled by the Ministry of Local Government. We have had letters coming to us which are stating that in order to get a contract we must be prepared to pay 15 per cent. I have the letter here! I am not making allegations.

When I get further down, I will read it, because people have confidence in the PNM and they figure that the PNM is the only hope for Trinidad and Tobago. Most of my colleagues and myself get telephone calls at home, we get letters, and people speak to us on the street. They are afraid. They are telling us that they called the Minister and said that they owed them—the contractors and the suppliers—for goods and services, and the Minister told them not to talk to him because he could be making money all that time they are wasting talking to him. They are owing the people since 1995, and up to now they cannot pay those people. When those persons have businesses that go through, it affects the economy of the country! Do they not understand that?

We are in a position, Mr. Speaker, where the Minister of Finance read the budget, and the Minister of Finance, as stated by the Leader of the Opposition, spoke about the judicial complex for Arima. The judicial complex for Arima, the Member of Parliament for Arima will tell you, never started. Not even sod was turned there. I went all over Trinidad, and there are other projects that Dr. Rowley will tell you in Diego Martin West—I was there on Saturday—that the preschool that was supposed to be built is already built, and children are attending that school. Are they going to build another preschool in the same area? The people in the community built the school with subventions from other areas.

**Dr. Nanan:** *Inaudible*

**Mr. Narine:** He cannot talk about that. He cannot even fix a toilet in a school!

Mr. Speaker, we are in a situation where the taxpayers of Trinidad and Tobago are going to put money in this Government's hand with a past record of not spending it properly for another year. Thank God this is the last year, but I will still indicate to them. I am speaking about matters that have been raised in Parliament this year. This year in Parliament, we raised matters and questions were asked, answers were given, and I never had the opportunity before now to reply to those answers given by the Minister.

**5.25 p.m.**

So that, a question was asked here in Parliament on Monday, April 26, 1999 and it was about contracts given out in the Couva/Tabaquite/Talparo Regional Corporation. The question was:

- (a) Would the Minister list the contracts awarded to Jogie's Contracting Services Limited in the Couva/Tabaquite/Talparo Regional Corporation for the period July 1997 to December 1998?

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- (b) Would the Minister list the cost of each such contract?
- (c) Would the Minister indicate whether the Central Tenders Board awarded the said contracts?

In replying, the Minister alluded to the fact that Jogie Contractors had received 29 contracts from that corporation and listed them according to agreement number, particulars, contract price and so forth.

May I inform you, Mr. Speaker, because of the way questions are asked in Parliament, I was not able to ask supplementary questions that would have brought out the facts that are placed here in this document from the Minister.

When you look at agreements numbers 19959, 19960, 19961, 19962, 19963, and 19965, they all belong to the same construction project and the contractors got the contract which should have gone to the Tenders Board, which went over \$100,000, they broke it up in those contracts to keep it under \$25,000. So neither the Central Tenders Board, nor the Ministerial Tenders Board, nor the Regional Tenders Board—I understand that the material they used there was material that the Unemployment Relief Programme had left on Railway Road in Couva and they used that material and still charged the Ministry of Local Government these sums of money for contracts there.

When the Minister was quoting, actually, he quoted some wrong figures, because I have the contracts here, Jogie's Contracting Services Limited. I have copies of the contract, believe it or not. Because people are fed up of the way that people run their Ministry and trying to use the system and gain money out of the system. If, a minister cannot control that and, as a matter of fact, he is telling people that the Prime Minister told him that he has to do that. So that you are sitting in a situation where these things are happening.

I will quote some of these things. Because, for Agreement No. 19960, Couva Car Park, the Minister came into Parliament and said \$19,182. The Jogie Contracting Services Agreement has \$22,060. It goes on and on.

Agreement 19959 is the Couva Corporation front yard. One will understand, Mr. Speaker, Couva Corporation front yard, Couva Car Park, Couva Promenade, Children's Play Park—which we had done before; Ministry of Works and Transport—Triangle. All that is in one area, Mr. Speaker! The Minister said that contract, No. 19959, was \$20,460.00. Jogie's Contracting Services is saying \$23,529. So you understand what is taking place. It is not me; I am not trying to say that the Minister is corrupt. I am not saying that!



I am just saying that when he reported in Parliament, he did not quote the right figures. Because I had the contracts even at that time. I have copies of the contracts here. I can go on and on. All these are Jogie contracts. All!

So you are in a situation here—*[Interruption]* I do not know. Maybe in Ramayan and so, I really do not know. Because the small people in the Hindu faith who cannot afford to have prayers at home join other people, and those who have a little more cash in hand will have a one day prayer. Then, people who have made sufficient in the last year or so would have a nine days Ramayan. Then, the people at Fen Mohammed will call me and say, “The Minister bought two pots here for his Ramayan”. One pot costs \$5,000! And he bought two pots at Fen Mohammed to put flowers in for the Ramayan. It is also said—and I understand the Member for Arima spoke one night and insulted the Minister at the Ramayan. I would not get into that now. From what I have been told, it is said that the Prime Minister emptied his pockets. He had no firearm, but he did not empty here. So that he knows what he is doing, and going by the Swami from India to get blessings. I am telling you, brother, it would help now, but it would not help for the next year, unless you decide to put your hands on your Ministry and make sure that these things do not happen.

You have been entrusted with the public money. I am saying that you must be very vigilant when you are controlling your Ministry. I do not know why so many discrepancies come up in one Ministry. Everyday you can hear something in the Ministry of Local Government.

I am just going to ask a question with regard to Agreement No. 2609—McBean Recreation Ground, to construct clubhouse. The amount of money quoted here, again, was less than what was actually spent. But the quotation here was \$21,957. I will tell you something, Mr. Speaker. I visited that area. It is a 15 by 20 clubhouse. It is a very small area considering the amount of money that was spent there, and also the materials used—and it was not through the Central Tenders Board, because it went way beyond that.

I am saying that you are going to give money through the Ministry of Finance to Local Government and here it is that you keep getting documents from regional corporations like Couva/Tabaquite/Talparo where, when you ask a question here, the Minister quotes a figure, and when you get the documents—because I am not going to ask a question here unless I know the answer, and I had these documents

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in my possession before I asked the question. So I knew that from the time the Minister got up here and quoted those figures here in his answer—I had it. I kept it, because these are figures that probably, we may use when we get into government, I do not know. I am very much displeased with this type of thing.

It went on. You had a situation where the next question that I asked on that very day was about recreation grounds in Chaguanas. You would remember, Mr. Speaker, recreation grounds in Chaguanas were 36 in number and the Minister indicated that they shortlisted three companies to make quotes to fix those 36 recreation grounds for the 1999 cricket season. What has happened there is that they had a contracting service called PR Contracting, Marks Con. Ltd.—which we cannot find, we cannot find those two at all—and Seereram Brothers. But it is common knowledge to us who have been in government and local government before, that Seereram Brothers do not brush cut recreation grounds. So that they shortlisted Seereram Brothers and they did not send a quote. Which means that they did not have the three quotes in order to give out the contracts.

So hear what went on, Mr. Speaker. A real con game went on here, you know. Marks Con. Ltd. estimate for the 36 grounds was \$1,139,550. I am quoting correct figures here, because this is from the Chaguanas Borough Corporation, Tenders for Recreation Grounds, Summary of Quotations Received for Recreation Grounds 1999 (with VAT).

[MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Hear what is happening! Two quotes, not three, so that it was illegal to award any contract at that time. The contracting firm PR Contracting tendered \$357,520. Imagine that, you have one out of two contractors tendering: one is over \$1.1 million and the other is \$357,000. The Chaguanas Borough Corporation made an estimate as to how much it will cost to do these grounds. And the total cost was \$271,815. These are the authentic documents from the Chaguanas Borough Corporation. PR Contracting Firm got the contract. But that was not all.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, would you believe that little park in the back of the market in Chaguanas, Saith Park, which I will cut in two hours time with a lawn mower, cost \$10,419 to brush-cut? That was the cost to cut Saith Park! It is written here in the documents. Do not watch me as if you do not know! You know exactly what went on!

Let me say, at Munroe Road, they broke it up into three: Grounds 1, 2 and 3. One cost \$8,119; Munroe Road Recreation Ground, again, \$10,350; Munroe Road Recreation Ground, \$7,314. All this is inside this document here. And what they

got the contracts for was to supply earthfill to spread and roll, and when I visited those grounds some of them had potholes in them! Big potholes! The Munroe Road Recreation Ground was rolled and it was filled. Maybe the Member for Chaguanas was very vigilant there because he had to play cricket there, so they did it.

But there are other grounds there and I will call the grounds which were rolled: Charlieville Recreation Ground No. 1; Pierre Tahadille Recreation Ground; and Esmeralda Recreation Ground. But let me say this, these small recreation grounds, like Saith Park, all cost over \$10,000, Mr. Deputy Speaker! The overburden that comes from Ravine Sable is very, very cheap.

I am saying that what has happened there is that there was a construction company which nobody knew about and which had no credibility. I worked in local government for eight years and we dealt with people who deal in brush-cutting, rolling and filling of recreation grounds and not one time during that eight years have I ever come across these names: PR Contracting, Marks Con. Limited and all that. So I am amazed how this happened and it will continue to happen! I am certain that by now, they would have started to make up tenders for the same amount or even more to do the same grounds for the opening of the cricket season.

**Mr. D. Singh:** That is the Council's decision.

**Mr. J. Narine:** The Minister reported here! Are you like the Prime Minister? When something goes wrong in the country, he says, "Ask the Minister of Works and Transport; ask the Minister of Local Government; ask the Minister of Education". At no time in this country could anything happen and the Prime Minister knows about it! I suppose that is because he is never here, he is flying all about, but every time he is asked that question—We talked about the address recently made by the Chief Justice, "Ask the Attorney General". The Attorney General ain't here, the Attorney General flying too. *[Laughter]* So you are in a situation where these things will continue to happen.

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

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

*Question put and agreed to.*

**5.40 p.m.**

**Mr. J. Narine:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There are so many things I have to talk about that I have to move at a pace now.

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With respect to the Chaguanas Market, a question was asked here to the Minister whether:

- i. the Town and Country Planning Division of the Borough Corporation had approved the plans for the new market;
- ii. a contract has been awarded and if so, whether the award was made by the Central Tenders Board;
- iii. if the answer to (ii) is in the affirmative, could the Minister provide:
  - (a) the names of the contractor;
  - (b) the estimated cost of construction of the market?

Mr. Speaker, I will tell you that the market started without any plans—as reported here by the Minister. The Minister, in reporting, said that the construction of foundation and work site commenced on February 15, 1999 through the Corporation, that is, the Chaguanas Corporation Unemployment Relief Programme—remember this, the Unemployment Relief Programme. Final approval is being awaited from the Town and Country Planning. So one starts a programme to do a foundation and has to wait for Town and Country Planning's approval, for plans which have been developed by the division—planning guidelines issued for the Chaguanas market.

No contracts have been awarded and since the above was in the negative, he did not have to answer the rest of the question. But I could not have asked at that time, what feasibility study was done in order to make that market user-friendly. I know that when I was Parliamentary Secretary in that Ministry, the Market Vendors' Association met with us. They did not have any plans, one Mr. Hosein, just had some little drawings and we felt we should have sent our planners to talk to the people in the market to make sure the place was user-friendly. According to this document there were no tenders. Over \$2 million was being spent to build the market but they were using URP so that anything could have been done.

We did not have any designs chosen to go to the Town and Country Planning. *[Interruption]* Mr. Speaker, in order to get a plan passed one has to get approval from different agencies. One must get approval from the Ministry of Works, the sewer system must be approved by WASA, with respect to the health area—which is very important—the health department must give their approval according to the plans. What has happened is that they had someone in charge who pilfered \$100,000 in materials and then he was transferred and the whole job stopped just before the Local Government elections. Do not hide your face! These are facts!

This is what took place! So you have Chaguanas Market, same thing. Do you understand, Mr. Speaker? *[Interruption]* I am not in that. Please.

Apart from that, you had a situation in the Siparia Regional Corporation where a letter was written to the hon. Prime Minister, and L. Arky is the writer of the letter. He was complaining here of corruption in the Siparia Regional Corporation. We had all these things here—the Siparia Regional Corporation, I have some original documents here—where the Minister went and opened some road down at Grant Trace, I think it was, and spent \$18,000 for the opening. *[Interruption]* Look, it is in the documents of the Siparia Regional Corporation! I am saying and may I read:

Farley Sankar	Rental of 2-20x20 Tents etc...	1,200.00
Celia Solomon	Supply of drinks and deserts	3,000.00
Linley Parahoo	Supply of artistes and Entertainment	3,000.00
Hansham G. Singh	Supply of 100 photographs	800.00
Rajdeo Mohan	Supply of programmes, etc.	900.00

Nine hundred dollars was spent on programmes which could have been done by the regional corporation.

Mr. Speaker, the point is that this corporation spent more money to open that road than they spent on the road, I understand. *[Interruption]* How could one spend \$18,000? You could have developed another road for that. Eighteen thousand dollars to go and “wine and jam” down in Grant Trace and I understand some councillor lives inside here, so that you gave the approval for it. Is that true? *[Interruption]*

So that when you spend the public money like this it is our business on this side to come here and speak about it especially when we have the written facts on it. *[Desk thumping]* The statistics that were read out today by the Leader of the Opposition—all factual—no one can answer and you get the Member for Tobago East to stand and “gallery” for 75 minutes, saying all kinds of things. I am telling you that these are facts. We are in the position where we have been getting reports from all over Trinidad on this matter.

One would understand why the Chief Executive Officer of the Siparia Regional Corporation reported a death threat. Mr. Speaker, can you understand why it took so long to have the election in the Siparia Regional Corporation?

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Somebody had to clean up the acts in case, with the lotto system, the PNM had won the Siparia Regional Corporation. So they had to take some time to clean all these things. I understand, at one time, there was a permanent cadre where junior workers' siblings and so on, got on that permanent cadre. This is the Chief Executive Officer that noticed it and took the Memorandum of Agreement Report, and removed them from the permanent list and put them on top of the casual list, much to the annoyance of the Minister of Local Government. So that one has to understand why she got that death threat. I understand he sent the police to remove her and so forth.

A past Siparia PNM Councillor called for better accountability, this was there long, long time. *[Interruption]* You are seeing what is taking place here, Mr. Speaker, and we are still handing money over, with the same people in charge of these areas, and imagine they are going to get more money to spend in this financial year.

With respect to the Arima Corporation. I started that recently but did not complete—where the Town Clerk was telling the Minister that there was corruption going on in the Unemployment Relief Programme in Arima and he wrote many letters, yet nothing was done. Then the Auditor General went in and this is the report dated February 26<sup>th</sup>, 1999. *[Interruption]* Authentic. Listen to what went on—the audit of the accounts and financial statements of Arima Corporation Unemployment Relief Programme for the period ending September 30, 1998. I would not want to read the entire report because I am sure that I have to address certain problems in my area. It simply says here; “Wages: the rate sheet showing the daily rates of pay for the different classes of employees was not certified by the Ministry”.

**5.50 p.m.**

Mr. Deputy Speaker, can you imagine that?

“Kalamazoo Cards were not maintained for recording details of wages paid to workers.”

That is the kind of Ministry that this Minister is running. He does not have time to see about the people's business. Then you go down the road and find that the brother, some Emerson Denalli, supply of transport and:

“Central Tenders Board procedures were not followed in the award of contracts.”

This is what the Auditor General was saying:

“Purchased orders were not seen for the award of the undermentioned two (2) contracts:”

Those two contracts were for Joseph Wong. The Member for Arima would know who is Joseph Wong. If he does not know then it means that he was not born in Arima or did not grow up in Arima like myself. That is a Denalli person, a common law wife.

Emerson Denalli, a brother, \$1600 and \$600, cheques numbers 000571 and 00624. [*Interruption*] Argue with the Auditor General, do no argue with me. This is the report of the Auditor General. The Auditor General also said:

“3.3 There were some instances where invoices were not certified for proper completion of the job although payments were made to contractors.”

So you paid and still the authority for payment was not made but people got money.

“3.4 A Contract Register was not maintained for recording the award of contracts.”

Under “Remittance Register” it states:

“4.1 The undermentioned cheques were not recorded in the Remittance Register:”

There are three cheques here: one for \$15,000, one for \$23,000 and another for \$15,000, not recorded in the register, yet cheques went out. I wonder who is collecting the cheques because I understand that somebody in the Ministry goes with the cheques to some of the contractors. They do not have to employ anybody. I understand they are delivered to them so they are very thankful for that. [*Crosstalk*]

There was a situation where a UNC councillor in Arima was given travelling expenses. He was not working with the Unemployment Relief Programme but he got travelling expenses for \$660 and \$770. Fortunately for Arimians, they are honest people so they got rid of him in the last local government election. [*Desk thumping*] So this councillor, who was a UNC councillor at the time, was collecting travelling money and not even working with the programme.

Mr. Speaker, “doh” talk about the Auditor General talking about materials and supplies, the health surcharge, wages and emoluments, it is all written here; outstanding commitments, special projects; all illegal as far as the Auditor General is concerned. So we are putting money into someone’s hand that has

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continuously done illegal things throughout the last four years. It is only because we got some of these documents that we could talk about them. What about what we do not have? I would shudder to think what is happening.

Reports are that there is work going on in Laventille Regional Corporation, but Chaguanas is doing the payments for those projects. Chaguanas is handling everything for it. So that the people from San Juan/Laventille Regional Corporation are saying that the Minister has centralized corruption in local government, instead of decentralizing local government, and centralized it in Chaguanas. All the projects are going on from Chaguanas. I understand that the supervisor in the Chaguanas market is from the Pointe-a-Pierre constituency. Persons in Chaguanas who cannot get employment have been calling me and saying that this is going on. I have no problem with that; I receive the calls but when the time comes for me to say something, I would say it.

Recently, I wanted to know what happened to the steel from the Marabella market. If the Minister would tell me I probably would not say what they told me. They told me that the Minister built a shed in his yard that could hold 100 vehicles. [*Crosstalk*] I do not know. This is the report I got. We are in a situation, and all these things are here.

This is a circular to all Members of Parliament, I would only read a couple lines: “Do you know that the hon. Dhanraj Singh, also known as, ‘the Sheriff’, is known as the 15 per cent Minister?” I am not going to read any more of this. [*Crosstalk*]

[MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have heard here today, and before now, that in the last financial year the URP allocation was \$130 million. They got \$90 million. I do not know how much extra they got for the local government elections. [*Interruption*] Like the war chest break down or what? The war chest gone. If we got \$90 million and the programme closed down about three months and more—during the National Alliance for Reconstruction time between 1986 and 1991—the PNM had the URP allocations and expenditure; actual expenditure was \$120 million. I am speaking about 13 years ago. When they got into office in 1986, in 1987 it started to go down; \$10 million a year. So by 1990, the allocation for the URP, which was Developmental Environmental Works Division (DEWD) at the time, then changed to Labour Intensive Development Programme, was \$60 million. When you put that amount of money, which is supposed to reach the underprivileged in the society to put food on their tables, you will understand



what happened in 1990. That attempted coup and the confusion that took place was because people were under pressure.

The Minister of Finance has a right, not only for the \$130 million, which he may not give to the Ministry of Local Government—*[Interruption]*

**Mr. Sudama:** Are you condoning the coup?

**Mr. J. Narine:** I am just giving you an answer as to what took place because of the funding. You cannot defend that government. You spent one day in that government. Your Prime Minister probably spent a year, he might say something about that, but you spent one day as Minister of Finance. *[Crosstalk]* I am saying that because of the reduced funding, it put people under pressure and they had to go to a certain place to get a meal. They ended up here.

So I am saying to the Minister of Finance, that this financial year, make sure that if he has allocated \$130 million for unemployment relief, then I am certain that we should get the full amount for that programme. There should be more money for the Unemployment Relief Programme because most of it goes to other places and the people in our area do not get any work. There was not a single construction done in Arouca North over the last four years.

When the Minister went up there for local government, to cut ribbon, he was shocked to know that it was a little box culvert they were carrying him in Lopinot to cut a ribbon. He refused to do it, but that is all that was done. That was done by Councillor Paul Guerra when they controlled the URP programme. There are sanitation gangs all over the place taking over the work of local government. The URP is to benefit people. The Minister answered a question here. Most of the people under training in the URP now are School Leaving Certificate people; some come with their O' levels. This week, the Prime Minister was somewhere opening some school and he said that URP should be used for training.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the URP has always been used for training, and I can say this without any doubt. I ran that programme for four years and the best tradesmen came out of DEWD. They were trained on the job. It was the best set of tradesmen. Ask the Minister from Chaguanas; the building he is now using for his Ministry was built by URP, the head office for URP down at Sea Lots. So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you tell me, who has to be trained now? Training what!

Even in our four-year period, graduates from the University of the West Indies came as engineers and some people came in as surveyors. We had lost about six of them to the Ministry of Housing and Settlements and the Ministry of Works and Transport, because as a graduate it is difficult to get work, but after staying

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with us for a couple of years they got better jobs with more job security. The URP is really about unemployment relief; you are not employed so you would be employed there as a relief until you get something better to do. So there were persons coming out of the training centres in Trinidad and Tobago, like John Donaldson Civic Centre in San Fernando, which came out at one time with junior builders and now there is some other programme they use for technical training for engineering assistants, and those persons moved on too.

The surveyors who came out, got the experience from the Unemployment Relief Programme, they got their licence and went on to do their own work. So talking about training for the URP programme is telling lies to the nation. The URP has always been about training and also always had training.

When you look at the Unemployment Relief Programme, the Minister said that he does not interfere. I have letters that the Minister wrote to one Mr. Anthony Ramkissoon, Programme Manager, Unemployment Relief Programme, Siparia Regional Corporation, Fyzabad, indicating to him, in all these instances, what to do and where. How can you give a corporation to run a programme? The Minister's letter states:

“You are to commence work on the following projects.

Murray Trace Cultural Centre

Standard Road Pavilion

Small Trace Water Projects

Roots Avenue Water Projects

San Francique Hindu School...”

The dictatorship would not pay, and this is what is happening. This is the one where it talks about URP manager being school-leavers. I would not go into the nepotism in the programme, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

May I turn quickly to address certain areas in the Arouca North constituency. I have a letter here that I wrote to the Minister of Works and Transport in February 1996, asking him about incomplete projects in the Arouca North constituency, which he should address, either through the URP or his Ministry. I would read the reply that I got from him:

“March 27, 1996

Mr. Jarrette Narine  
Member for Arouca North,  
199 Eastern Main Road,  
Arouca.

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Dear Sir:

Re: Completion of Projects

I have been directed by Senator the Honourable Sadiq Baksh, Minister of Works and Transport, to acknowledge receipt of your later letter dated January 05, 1996 on the above subject.

The Honorable Minister wishes to thank you for the sentiments expressed and to inform you that the Ministry would do its best to complete the projects stated and that he would make arrangements to visit your constituency at the end of April.

With kindest regards,

Yours faithfully,

.....  
Executive Secretary.”

I cannot make out the signature here, but I think it was Miss McDowell. What happened there, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that the Minister never came and all those projects four years old are still there.

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

I had asked a question about the Mausica Folk Performing Theatre. The Parliamentary Secretary did the reply here in Parliament the very year, 1996, and said that it would be started on the following URP programme. We are in 1999, and it is still there, but that is the kind of treatment that they will get for election when they treat my people like this. I am saying that would continue to happen.

**6.05 p.m.**

Mr. Speaker, I am saying that day before yesterday—and I am addressing problems in the Arouca North constituency—I had a delegation from Bon Air North East, a squatting area which, when we discussed the bill for the regularization of squatters it was on that programme. On October 13 of this week, 15 houses were broken down. Furniture was on the side of the road, foodstuffs were left in the rain and the people who lived in those houses were physically removed.

I am sorry the Member for St. Augustine is not here. He has been a champion of the poor people long before now and I am inviting him to visit with me and stop his Gestapos from breaking down the buildings which the people erected.

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Most of them were there before January 1, when he named the cut-off date. Three persons were arrested for trying to defend their children who were being soaked after their houses were broken down. Inhumane kind of treatment to the people! One of them who had two charges, was charged \$100 for obscene language in court yesterday and they dropped one of the charges.

I am appealing to the Minister that this situation must be in keeping with his policy in the ministry and the people of Arouca North and other areas which are controlled by the PNM must not suffer. They told the people they did not get sufficient votes for the local government election. That is why over the last two or three weeks their houses had been broken down. I notice an hon. Senator here whom the people went to and she promised to help them. She told them if they had voted for the UNC their houses would not be broken down. If I am wrong, say so.

Three to four weeks after the local government election which we won by a landslide in Arouca, they started to give eviction notices. I am saying there is now a regularization programme for Windy Hill based on what was discussed here. Where is the letter of comfort? I understand that people in your area got letters of comfort and people in our area have not received any letters of comfort. They have received nothing. They are getting eviction notices.

What surprised me when I visited there yesterday is that when they were filling that area for the Piarco International Airport, they bought earth fill from the By-pass Road in Arima. Do you remember the situation with the dust bowl? They bought earth fill from a UNC activist and in turn they made 96 lots of land available for that person from Arouca to sell. I had all the facts here before. *[Interruption]* You do not know what is taking place in Arima, you only spending your time in Pinto Road. I will tell you something. "Yuh tanty up dey get licks, she cyar even come out the house yet, Leroy Morris wife." I am telling you, Mr. Speaker, that the earth fill from that area could have been taken out at that time and sent to the airport which was very close, but they bought earth fill on the Arima By-pass, mash up the road way up there, created a dust environment where the children at Holy Cross College could not go to school, and people on that road could not cook their meals. I am coming to the end of my address so let me not get so mad.

The Member for St. Augustine went to Couva and talked about a foreign firm coming here to make Couva and Chaguanas cities. I have never heard of so many cities in Trinidad. He comes like the hulk when he gets annoyed, he gets crazy. *[Laughter]* And you know the Prime Minister and the Attorney General are supporting him in that.

Now that the Member for St. Augustine is here, I am appealing to him that the houses for the squatters in Bon Air North East should not be broken down. We built houses in Carapo when I was a councillor, Mr. Speaker. The Member was the Member of Parliament for St. Augustine and Jarrette Narine helped him build back houses. I have not been able to do all these things now, but I am saying if he continues to do it, Jarrette Narine will certainly have to help them build the houses.

Mr. Speaker, thank you very much, but I want to address one more problem. Lopinot had a nice festival on Sunday and all the Ministers who were invited failed to turn up, probably their cars were too new to ride on that road. There are 23 corners on that road, and the road is terrible. Mr. Courtney Walsh came to receive a medal from the President, he was up there, and he too, complained about how bad the roads are. We had a gala time but I am saying there are landslips on that road which would maroon the people of Lopinot very soon. I am appealing to the Minister of Works and Transport to have that road paved. There was an IADB loan to do it and when this Government came, they removed the money.

Thank you very much, it has been a pleasure addressing this House. I hope that what has been said here today, with the amount of funding that would be given to the Minister of Local Government, that it would not be wasted as it was in the last four years and put to corruption.

**The Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry of Local Government (Mr. Razack Ali):** Mr. Speaker, I am deeply honoured to present my contribution on the 1999/2000 budget in this august Chamber as the people's representative.

I wish to congratulate firstly, the hon. Minister of Finance for presenting yet another budget which will continue to impact on the lives of the people of Trinidad and Tobago in a positive and meaningful way. Of course, I support this 1999/2000 budget, not only because my party which is in Government has presented it, but moreso, because of the great positive impact the last four budgets, under this Government, have had on the Ortoire/Mayaro constituency, as indeed Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Speaker, before I continue with my prepared text, I want to deal with the contribution made by the Member for Arouca North. The Member's contribution was so boring, that it could not even prevent the hon. Member for San Fernando East, the hon. Member for Diego Martin Central, the hon. Member for Diego Martin West, the hon. Member for Diego Martin East, and the hon. Member for Arouca South from sleeping throughout his contribution. *[Desk thumping]* I am sure they dreamt UNC and URP because his entire contribution was actually centred around URP.

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Mr. Speaker, the Member spoke about us boasting about being a caring Government, but I want to remind him because I am sure he is well aware of the fact that the constituency which I presently represent, Ortoire/Mayaro, is one of the largest constituencies, one of the richest constituencies and yet it was one of the most neglected constituencies under the PNM. Only after the coming of this caring Government of national unity—*[Interruption]* Mr. Speaker, I will not be taken aback with what they are saying, but I can tell you that the democracy is there and this Government, and my party put people first, party second, and ourselves third. That is why I have the democratic right to speak out on behalf of my people because we put people first. While it was the richest, it was also the most neglected and they know about it and I will prove it as I go along.

I have been hearing today and in past debates that the PNM did so much for this country, so much for the economy of this country, so much for employment, and the economic footing on which this country was placed. I am wondering today as I had wondered in the past, if they did so much for this country, why is it—in 1995, I believe they had 21 seats—with such good management and magnificent performance, they received 17 seats? What was responsible for that? Was it magnificent performance or non-performance?

Mr. Speaker, the Ministry of Local Government under the PNM of which my friend for Arouca North was the Parliamentary Secretary, while I am aware that he did nothing, I recalled his coming to the Mayaro/Rio Claro Regional Corporation and we actually beseeched him to make some type of representations as the Parliamentary Secretary since the then Minister, the hon. Colm Imbert, is it Diego Martin East, because he had two portfolios, he was the Minister of Works and Transport and the Minister of Local Government, and even that he could not have done. He did not do it. It was under this Government that we were able to give to the Mayaro/Rio Claro Regional Corporation 16 acres of state land whereby they are now preparing to establish their own garbage disposal dump.

The Member spoke about the 5 per cent road improvement tax and about reports. Mr. Speaker, under the PNM, there were discrimination, favouritism and nepotism even in the 5 per cent road improvement tax. So when they came here on many occasions accusing the hon. Member for Pointe-a-Pierre, of seeking approval to utilize \$16 million to repair roads, and all the roads are in the UNC areas, they failed to tell you that it was because of that type of discrimination and favouritism. They were not repairing roads in those areas and they became impassable. They were in such a deplorable state that the \$16 million had to be used on those roads. It is a fact and they must accept it.

All over Trinidad as you go about, you would see the physical evidence where roads and traces are being repaired, general maintenance being carried out and hundreds of kilometres of roadways are being resheeted. They know this. So to say nothing has been done about roads, and the 5 per cent road improvement tax is being wasted, it has not been properly used—

**6.20 p.m.**

**Mr. Speaker:** To allow the Member to make his contribution, particularly, when Members are sitting just below him and are interjecting all sorts of things, it is very difficult and offsetting. You will all have an opportunity of speaking, if you want to.

**Mr. R. Ali:** Mr. Speaker, thank you. I am accustomed with this every Friday, because the truth always hurts and irks. If somebody like my friend from Arouca North, was making a contribution, there was not going to be any grumbling because nothing was going to hurt but I am presenting the true facts. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, \$16 million was spent in each constituency. I am sure my Minister will address some of those matters, but I will try to touch on some of the points raised by the hon. Member. Inadequate URP allocations to the PNM-controlled corporations. You give them a few million dollars and they have infighting all the time in those corporations. The most ghost gangs we have discovered through the Ministry of Local Government is within the PNM-controlled corporations—mismanagement, Mr. Speaker. If they cannot manage \$2 million, we cannot give them \$5 million.

Mr. Speaker, under the URP, we can boast of meaningful projects and productivity. There is no favouritism in employment. I come from Ortoire/Mayaro and I was born there. I know what was happening with URP under the PNM. One had to get a party card. Even if you “mamaguy” them, but you must get that party card to get a “five days.” I do not want to call some of the people’s names that are not present, because it is the custom of the PNM Members to call people’s names who are not within this hallowed Chamber to defend themselves. I will not call their names but I know they have assigned people to take names—their own personal register—and employ people because they were PNMITes.

The UNC is not about that. We have recruitment officers and people go to these offices and register their names. They are employed according to their needs and not according to how they are registered. The books are always open for inspection at the URP sub-office.

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Mr. Speaker, the hon. Member touched on the question of training. We have trained people in more meaningful skills than they ever attempted to do in their 30 and four years in Government. We have trained people in welding, fabricating, carpentry, woodwork and there have been women's training programmes in numerous fields. We have in the Ortoire/Mayaro area— likewise in other areas— training programmes in tourism because we are placing emphasis on tourism. In the Mayaro and Guayaguayare areas we have carried out several training programmes and at the commencement of the URP programme in 1999/2000, we are going to continue to train people in tourism.

*[Mr. Hinds rose.]*

Mr. Speaker, let me be kind enough to give way to him, Sir.

**Mr. Hinds:** Thank you very kindly, Member for Ortoire/Mayaro. Two questions if you would like to address them. Could the Member say whether his Minister is willing to spend some of that 5 per cent on that road between Chinapoo in Morvant and St. Babbs in Laventille—a road that has been deteriorating? Secondly, do you train people in steel works and fabrication as well?

**Mr. R. Ali:** I am sure that the Minister will answer that question when he is responding. Presently, we are assisting a certain gentleman in Mayaro with the expansion of his workshop and so on. We are going to venture into that type of training shortly.

Something that was mentioned here again today, is the question of corruption. Every week, every day and every month if we are sitting here, is the question of corruption. It is corruption and corruption. But that was the pastime of the PNM and it seems they keep dreaming of corruption.

I recall again, when the Member for Arouca/North was the Parliamentary Secretary, and the hon. Member for Diego Martin East was the Minister of Local Government, and the PNM was in control of the Mayaro/Rio Claro Regional Corporation, I kept writing the hon. Member for San Fernando East, who was the then honourable Prime Minister, reporting corruption on several occasions that was taking place at the Mayaro Rio/Claro Regional Corporation under a PNM-controlled council and nothing was done.

After one year, when they saw that I got through by representation to force the hands of the PNM controlled corporation, that we should not carry out an internal audit but an external audit and the Auditor General should come in, immediately after they agreed, they realized that they have made a mistake. One week later, the Mayaro/Rio Claro Regional Corporation administration building was destroyed



by fire. When the PNM responded to me, they told me the investigation was hindering them because the building was destroyed by fire. In addition to that, when the documents were removed to be re-housed at Mayaro, some of the documents got lost. I do not know if they took it on a truck and the wind blew away the documents, or what happened, if they burnt them or what. So when they are talking about corruption—I am just giving you one example, that they are talking about corruption in local government and they did nothing when one reported corruption when they were in control.

Mr. Speaker, in addition to that, local government would have been a thing of the past if the PNM had won the last general election. The vehicles they are talking about that we are not purchasing, in every corporation the garage was a graveyard for vehicles. What they are not telling us is that last year, a number of corporations purchased things like wheel tractors, trucks, backhoes and other types of vehicles. They are not telling us that.

Mr. Speaker, prudent management has shown that these same people, because of the type of training we are carrying on and the type of consultation we are undertaking with the municipal corporation, they have become very intelligent. What they are doing is not buying new vehicles for hundreds of thousands of dollars but refurbishing the old vehicles. I do not know about the PNM-controlled corporations, if they are doing it, but if you go to the UNC controlled corporations, they are repairing their vehicles. In other words, they are buying one or two new vehicles and all the vehicles they had in the graveyard, they have now refurbished them and we are not giving out so many contracts.

I do not know about the PNM-controlled councils. We are taking that money and utilizing it and creating new projects and so on and the corporation trucks are doing the transportation of vehicles, thereby saving money under Goods and Services.

Mr. Speaker, the Member for Arouca/North keeps talking about the award of contracts. There are several types of contracts. I did not hear him mention the type of contracts, but I forgive him if he did not learn. He spoke about sub-dividing the contracts. There is the CEO's award, the municipal corporation awards, the ministerial committee awards and the Central Tenders Board awards. If they look into it carefully, they will see that we are an advanced board in the award of contracts under the Ministry of Local Government. They must understand where the responsibilities fall and under whose portfolio the awards would be made.

Mr. Speaker, what the Member does not know is, there is something called labour contract. If you have an estimate for \$100,000.00 the corporation is well within stride—and if the corporation does not have the amount of funding, it can

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give out the labour in contract and bonded contractors will supply the material. Sometimes they have to wait a whole year. They were alleging here this morning that we owe a number of contractors and we cannot pay.

But because of our good relationship with the contractors they will work, they will wait for the money, but we render the services to the people of the various electoral districts.

**6.30 p.m.**

Mr. Speaker, I would like now to turn to my contribution otherwise and to show, although I know and I am sure my colleagues on this side will agree—because all of us are colleagues here as far as I am concerned—all the budgets, inclusive of this one, have impacted upon the lives of the people of Trinidad and Tobago, but more so they have impacted on the lives of the people of Ortoire/Mayaro, a forgotten and neglected constituency although it remains one of the richest constituencies. When one compares only the physical infrastructure improvement in Ortoire/Mayaro of the last four years, as indeed Trinidad and Tobago, against 30 years of PNM rule, one could have no other conscience, inclusive of the PNM, but to support this budget.

With your kind permission, Sir, I wish to demonstrate the facts relative to my opening comments. Page 21, Mr. Speaker, of this sustainable growth document, tells me that Tableland of my constituency will benefit from a new secondary school in this fiscal year, something which was promised for 34 years but it never happened. [*Desk thumping*] The 93-year-old St. Mary's Government School in Moruga will be rebuilt and the Mayaro Composite School will be rebuilt. This makes me very happy. The people of Tableland and Moruga and Mayaro in Ortoire/Mayaro will be happy, just like my people of Guayaguayare were happy in 1966 when they got the Guayaguayare R.C. School.

In other words I say, Mr. Speaker, with your permission, that the budget impacted on the lives of the people of Ortoire/Mayaro as indeed Trinidad and Tobago. So prior to this budget and during this budget debate we will see that they continue to get amenities. In 1996 they got the Guayaguayare R.C. School. That school was rebuilt, it was closed for five years from April 1991—1996. The constituency was then represented up to 1995 November by the then hon. Attorney General, Mr. Keith Sobion. In the same way the five-and-under child population was happy when they got the Guayaguayare Kindergarten School. I do not know if my colleagues on this side, the PNM Members, know about all this development work taking place in Ortoire/Mayaro, so they had better start working a little harder.

Page 20 of this document tells me that my people in Mafeking, which is the borderline area between Ortoire and Nariva, will get an early childhood care and education programme centre established in this fiscal year. I am happy, Mr. Speaker, because my people are happy. My support for this 1999/2000 Budget is without reservation. During which four-year period in the history of serving people in this beautiful country has a government built three educational institutions in the constituency of Ortoire/Mayaro? *[Interruption]* I am talking about what was built already.

Oh, Mr. Speaker, did I forget to mention that the Rio Claro Junior Secondary School is also up for rebuilding? Yes. *[Desk thumping]* Today, to see that a new secondary school is intended for Tableland and also an early childhood centre in Mafeking for 1999/2000 brings joy in the hearts of the people of Ortoire/Mayaro. In this four years of governance my Government will be completing five educational establishments in the constituency which I represent.

Mr. Speaker, the constituency of Ortoire/Mayaro is the womb from which the PNM was born. I want to repeat that. The constituency of Ortoire/Mayaro is the womb from which the PNM was born. *[Interruption]* No matter how you pronounce the word I pronounced it very honestly and since you can correct me you understand it is “womb” I want to say. My Government has given more educational establishments in four years than the womb bearers. Can you believe this?

Even with all the adverse comments you would have heard across the nation, every time this Government has presented a budget for the last four years, the fact remains that the constituency of Ortoire/Mayaro would have gained five educational establishments. So I am happy, Mr. Speaker, and my people are happy and my support for this 1999/2000 Budget is filled with Ortoire/Mayaro constituency happiness. This is only four years of improved educational systems in my constituency.

Wait, Mr. Speaker, let me tell you about improvement in other areas of concern within the Ortoire/Mayaro constituency. Page 19 of this document tells me that a new health centre will be constructed in Moruga and the Rio Claro Health Centre will be renovated in the 1999/2000 Budget. What kind of news is this for me, Mr. Speaker? What kind of news is this for my people of Moruga, poor people, people who endured for so many years? What are we going to have? They are going to have a full complement of doctors, nurses, pharmacists, eight-hour-a-day service and five days per week. This is music to the ears of the poor people of this area especially if miles separate them from major town areas.

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I have gone into exhaustive representation for this improvement to the lives of the people of Moruga and its immediate environs, Mr. Speaker and today with the proper facilities, doctors, *et cetera*—Moruga will get its long deserved health centre. Page 7 of this document tells me that Guayaguayare, Moruga and Mayaro will benefit from the ongoing salt-water project which has already started, projects that will improve the water supply for such areas. For decades Moruga suffered for a pipe-borne water supply; for decades residents of Mayaro and Guayaguayare bore the stench of a foul-tasting, discoloured, unreliable water supply and within four years of this 1999/2000 Budget such an improved supply will reach completion.

How can I compare four years with 30 years? How can I not support this 1999/2000 Budget? Mr. Speaker, four and a half miles of new transmission system has been laid from St. Mary's Village to Poui Trace, Moruga, in the last four years and this improvement work is continuing. Would you believe that work on a particular water improvement transmission system which is at present taking place in the San Pedro area from Tabaquite will satisfy the water needs for residents of Libertville, Rio Claro, Fonrose and other districts within the environs of Ortoire/Mayaro constituency?

What I am trying to say is that in the present budget, there are a number of facilities or projects that are going to be implemented to the joy of the people of Ortoire/Mayaro. They have been benefiting only within the last four years. *[Interruption]* No, Mr. Speaker, this is not magic, this is good, prudent management. *[Desk thumping]* I will not neglect to mention some progress, though small, for my constituency from the last four budgets and the impact it created on the lives of my people. Basseterre Community Centre, La Lune Community Centre, Libertville Community Centre, Marac/Moruga Community Centre, all neglected over the last 30 years. All these community centres will be completed through the 1999/2000 Budget. Remember, they all commenced within the last four budgets.

Page 25 of this document tells me that the multi-purpose facility will commence within this 1999/2000 Budget in the Ortoire/Mayaro constituency. Sir, next to where this facility will be established with a modern pavilion now stands the Mayaro Regional Recreation Ground. Extensive works will be taking place in upgrading the outfield and the pavilion. These things are taking place all within the last four budgets and, in the same breath, the Marac Recreation Grounds, another PNM stronghold neglected for 30 and 4 years—*[Interruption]*

I say 30 and 4 because I am speaking in biblical terms. Maybe you cannot understand the spiritual language. Note please Marac Recreation received an A-

type pavilion after 34 years. Let me pronounce it as she likes me to say it. For 34 years they did not have a pavilion but it is now under construction. [*Interruption*] Yes, yes. With your permission, Sir, I am answering through the Speaker. Yes, work has started so you could go and look at it. What achievements my constituency has gained from the last four budgets of this Government, Mr. Speaker! You will marvel but, remember, I want to repeat it, it is not magic in the four years, it is prudent management by this Government.

On page 18 of this sustainable growth document one will see where Rio Claro in the Ortoire/Mayaro constituency will have its police station completed through 1999/2000. Mind you, Mayaro and Moruga will also gain police station facilities in this budget. Let me also mention, within the last four budgets we have had a police post established in St. Mary's Village, Moruga and functioning with good administrative competence. For 34 years Moruga could not have gotten a police post. That is the caring—[*Interruption*—30 and 4, however you like to hear it, but you understand it is 34.

For 34 years in Moruga they could not have seen the wisdom in constructing the—they needed it because there was always the same problem but it was the total neglect. Do you know why, Mr. Speaker? It was because the PNM felt that they had a deed for Ortoire/Mayaro until the coming of this Government. [*Desk thumping*] Can you imagine how this 1999/2000 Budget makes me feel, with a new police station in the Ortoire/Mayaro constituency, with computers and other modern crime-fighting accessories, for example, an E-999 Rapid Response System, Mr. Speaker? Happy, real happy.

To speak and neglect mentioning bridges will be like betraying the natural water system that empties into the Atlantic Ocean. In the Ortoire/Mayaro constituency two superstructures have been completed, that is the Ortoire Bridge and, continuing on the Manzanilla Road, three other bridges have enhanced the safety of our travelling public from Sangre Grande to Mayaro. At present under construction at Gill Street, Mayaro, is another superstructure bridge which will link up Gill Street and Brumont Road, a project, Mr. Speaker, neglected for over 30 years, all this within the last four budgets. [*Desk thumping*] The 1999/2000 Budget will also see continued improvements on bridges. For example, work will commence on the Poole River Bridge B, one in 20. This bridge is located in Ortoire/Mayaro, another one-lane bridge, another neglect for the last 34 years.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I would like to touch a little on the Ministry of Local Government.

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**6.45 p.m.**

Mr. Speaker, the Ministry of Local Government, of which I am Parliamentary Secretary, is emphasizing for the year 2000, the rebuilding and repairs of the L'Anse Mitan and La Ruin Bridges in Moruga, among other bridges—those are two major bridges neglected for 34 years. We are emphasizing that we will do something to it: rebuild the bridges. All these bridges fall within the Ortoire/Mayaro constituency.

We heard the former Councillor, Mr. Lee Sing making a lot of noise but not telling the people that those bridges were neglected for 34 years. Mr. Speaker, the history of these major bridges carries years of neglect and lack of maintenance. For decades only minor repairs were effected that caused deterioration to the actual structures. Hence, Mr. Speaker, the cause of this Government of four years to rebuild six bridges along the Manzanilla Road and one in Mafeking Village.

Mr. Speaker, my contribution on this 1999/2000 Budget specifically deals mainly with my constituency and its amenities over the last four budget readings. There is so much that I have to omit, especially the social aspect improvements for my constituents—[*Interruption*]

**Miss Nicholson:** Why? You have plenty time. Why?

**Mr. R. Ali:** And of my senior comrades—[*Interruption*]

**Miss Nicholson:** Why? You have plenty time.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order please!

**Mr. R. Ali:** I am sure my other ministerial colleagues with the portfolio will deal with these. I will emphasize the social improvement structures like:

(1) the increase on old age pension;

I do not have to emphasize and go in depth into it. We all know that is one of the things we did.

(2) the historical increase for government pensioners;

To my knowledge it is the first time a government has shown some care and concern for government pensioners.

(3) social welfare improvement;

(4) programmes for battered women;

(5) laws on domestic violence;

- (6) reduction of the unemployment rate from 17 per cent to 11 per cent and so forth.

I know, Mr. Speaker, of so many senior citizens who came to my home at Gill Street, Mayaro to say thanks to my government for increasing their pension.

Mr. Speaker scores of people came to me to say thanks to our Government for implementing the Rural Transportation Service. The PNM knows how happy they are because the people in Moruga had no rural transportation, nor did the people of Mayaro and Guayaguayare. They cut it off. The PNM cut it off, not the UNC; we reintroduced it.

Mr. Speaker 1999/2000 budget that deals with the National Highways Programme, Tabaquite Road, Naparima Mayaro Road, Manzanilla Road, Guayaguayare Road and Moruga Road—main roads—are featured for re-sheeting. I am sure the work would be undertaken and completed. This is an achievement that I pride myself in.

Within the last four budgets, Rochard Douglas Road, after decades of neglect, has been re-sheeted; all 7½ miles of it. At present 10 kilometres of PNM stomping ground—if that is the correct word—Marac/La Lune Road, neglected for 34 years; the road has become impassable. I want to tell you that work has commenced on 10 kilometres of that roadway. People are happy. [*Desk thumping*] They are only talking about this Government: that they will support this Government in any elections to come.

To mention the vast number of roads re-sheeted with hot asphalt pavements. Under the Local Government in the Ortoire/Mayaro constituency, hundreds of kilometres of roads have been re-sheeted, repaired, general maintenance and so forth and the same number earmarked for improvement work under the new budget.

Mr. Speaker, I have a document in my possession dated September 24, 1999 that tells me—as a matter of fact I was invited to this meeting—AMOCO is presently doing a feasibility study to determine the need for a Skills Development Centre in the area. That is after representations have been made and the communities of Mayaro and Guayaguayare had been adopted by AMOCO Energy Company. In a short time we will have the Skills Development Centre in operation.

The youths that were neglected in that area will be happy. When we look at what is happening in those areas, where a substantial percentage of the national economy is coming, those people stand on mornings and look at bus loads, van loads and car loads of people coming from as far as San Fernando and Point Fortin and so forth; coming to do the skilled work in Mayaro and Guayaguayare. That will be a thing of the past within a few months, thanks to this caring Government.

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Mr. Speaker, so much is done in my constituency. Can I not support this 1999/2000 Budget? I am sure that those with a heart and those with a conscience—my PNM colleagues, only for what has been done in Ortoire/Mayaro which they neglected—should support this budget.

**Miss Nicholson:** You should say: “they will”.

**Mr. R. Ali:** Okay, they will, “teach.” I would not support it if I am not in good conscience. I will offend my people of Ortoire/Mayaro if I do not show a sense of responsibility, Mr. Speaker.

The largest tourist resort area is within Ortoire/Mayaro constituency. So you could imagine the developmental spread that is located within the 1999/2000 budget. Not only tourism wealth but black-gold wealth blesses this constituency of Ortoire/Mayaro. The vision of any government to develop my constituency is a vision of God.

My parliamentary comrades are eager to conclude this debate, I am sure, so that we can quickly go about our business of developing our beloved country: our beloved Trinidad and Tobago. I hope that my contribution has shown the Ortoire/Mayaro constituency as a beneficiary of good, caring governance; as indeed Trinidad and Tobago, and by the year 2000, my constituency would have developed tremendously more.

I am proud to be the parliamentary representative for Ortoire/Mayaro constituency under a new millennium Prime Minister.

I thank you, Mr. Speaker. [*Desk thumping*]

**Mr. Roger Boynes** (*Toco Manzanilla*): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to take part in this debate. If I may indicate immediately, the speaker that went before, the Member for Ortoire/Mayaro, took me a bit by surprise; simply because I could not understand all the buttering-up he is buttering-up the other side because I know he does not like them. [*Laughter*] It is strange to hear him—that is why everytime he says, “it is a caring government”, if you notice, he chokes. He chokes on his words. I am not surprised, Mr. Speaker. I am not surprised at all. I have news for him too: they do not like him! They have already found a replacement for him. It is too late. Too late, too late shall be the cry. He is not going back, and they do not want him to go back. So much so, Mr. Speaker—The Member for Nariva, is awfully quiet. Member for Nariva, I have met someone who is earmarked for your area as well.

Mr. Speaker I now wish to deal with the substantive issue at hand: he 1999/2000 budget statement presented by the hon. Minister of Finance. Let me



say, immediately, when I heard this statement by the hon. Minister of Finance I could not believe it, I left this Chamber disturbed and concerned.

I went home the night of Friday, October 8 and read this document inside out, and I am ashamed of this document because this, basically, is just old talk. While the Minister is “ole talking” and while the Member for Pointe-a-Pierre is “wining”, the blind workers in this country are up in arms.

**6.55 p.m.**

**Mr. Bereaux:** They are taking advantage of them!

**Mr. R. Boynes:** This is the first time in this country that we have blind workers locking themselves in and not eating, yet “ole talk” is going on in these hallowed halls and Dhanraj is “wining”. Mr. Speaker, we have to be serious. We are here as representatives of the people. We are here to do our job. Let us not play games and “ole talk” in this Chamber, but let us provide for the people in a responsible manner. Normally, it is said that in Parliament we are “kicksing”. This is definitely a case where we are “kicksing” in this Parliament.

When we look at some of the troubles taking place within the trade union movement, the division, it is alleged that those on the other side are trying to break up the trade union movement. We are asking them, if they are doing so, to desist from so doing, because as part and parcel of our democracy, we need to have a unified trade union movement.

I read in the newspaper that the teachers in Tobago are marching for their salaries; they cannot get paid. Could you imagine, Mr. Speaker? I find that this is very alarming and disturbing, simply because the teachers are the ones who prepare our young minds for the future. They are the ones who prepare the future members of parliament. The teachers prepare for the speakers, prime ministers and presidents, and when they fail and refuse to pay the teachers and have them marching throughout the length and breadth of Tobago, we are concerned. Then he comes with a grin on his face “ole talk” on Friday evening. We have a problem with that. Not only do we have a problem with that. I am not going to remind the public about the same teachers being called criminals; the same teachers being referred to the Director of Public Prosecutions because they stood up for their rights trying to get security for the schools. [*Desk thumping*] My colleague, when he comes to talk about education will do that very well.

I saw the police walk out of the administrative building a couple days ago—I believe it was Wednesday. They walked off the job! I saw on the television, staff, police, “toute baghai” outside. They could not go inside because the air-

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conditioning was broken. I heard Mr. Williams say that there are billions of roaches in that administrative building. He said he might have been exaggerating, but billions of roaches is plenty. I cannot understand why we have allowed things to reach this level whereby the police have to walk off the job.

Mr. Speaker, I go to my constituency. At the Sangre Grande Hospital, the nurses and the staff of the extended care unit walked off the job too. What is going on? Why are people walking off the job in this manner? It is because when we come here and are not serious, these people have to take the law into their own hands. They say that enough is enough and they walk off the job. That is what is happening throughout this country: a certain amount of instability! *[Desk thumping]* If we are not careful, it will keep going down further. We are going over a slippery edge and we have to hold it down in the best interest of our beautiful twin island state.

Mr. Speaker, I have seen time and time again the medical staff from the San Fernando General Hospital protest. They walked off the job, and I cannot remember in the history of Trinidad and Tobago where there have been so many protests throughout the length and breadth of this country. Look, for instance, at the Member for St. Augustine who got on the television and said that protest is good. He said, "If you want to get something done, protest!" I see a lot of burning of tyres throughout the length and breadth of this country. They started to burn tyres in Turure Road in Sangre Grande and I had to go and say, "No. This is not the way. Forget what the Member for St. Augustine said". There has to be a certain order in this country and that is what we on this side are for. *[Desk thumping]*

Mr. Speaker, concerning the demonstration that took place in front of the Minister's home, we are not for that. Understand this. We are not for that! We on this side are saying that it is wrong and should not be allowed. We understand that it is the other side which advocated it, but we are saying that is not right and should not be allowed.

**Mr. Hinds:** Especially by glass houses.

**Mr. R. Boynes:** Mr. Speaker, we also want the Government to look at the situation with the T&TEC workers. I am so sorry that one of the employees had to be injured so much so that he is now undergoing an operation. We want calm in this country. We want order. We on this side are for the preservation of law and order. *[Desk thumping]*

We are calling upon this Government to pay the senior public servants their moneys. Do not pay us as parliamentarians! They could not pay us. It is okay! Pay

yourselves even, but leave the Opposition. Do not give us one red cent, but pay the senior public servants. This is what they have to do. That is why the state attorneys have recently threatened to walk off the job. The Magistrates are uneasy. They are threatening to strike. Could you imagine what would take place in this country if the Magistrates were to strike and the state attorneys refuse to come out and work? Prisoners and criminals would be jumping for joy!

Mr. Speaker, I come now to the next point where, in all of that taking place, the Attorney General and the Chief Justice are wrangling. The Chief Justice came out and stated at the opening of the law term that the independence of our judiciary is being compromised and he gave six concrete examples of the manner in which it is being compromised. What is very surprising is that today, October 15, 1999, the Member for Couva South is unreasonably, strangely, worriedly quiet, as though he has been struck dumb! [*Desk thumping*] What is going on? He has to respond, yet he has failed to do so.

**Hon. Assam:** Dignified silence.

**Mr. R. Boynes:** That has the country very concerned, because the man in Toco wants to know what is going on. He understands that the executive and the legislative arms are inextricably linked and the preservation of our own democracy rests on an independent judiciary. He wants to hear from the Attorney General. He hears him a lot, but strangely, he is not hearing him now. Strange articles are appearing in the newspapers bashing the Chief Justice. I am saying that as a responsible Attorney General, we are calling upon him to make a statement and make it now! [*Desk thumping*]

I also read an article in the newspaper where it is alleged that the independence of a constitutionally protected department—the DPP—is also being threatened and I, Roger Boynes, the Member for Toco/Manzanilla, am calling upon the Attorney General to respond to that as well. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, it is surprising that I did not hear anything about the credit unions which, as we all know, have membership that make up approximately one-quarter of our population. Most of us, if not all of us have, in some way, benefited from credit unions throughout our lives. I, myself, have benefited from the credit union movement. My father was a police officer and, as a result of that, we were able to go to school through the credit union movement. Hats off to the credit union movement of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

We are here saying thank you to the credit union movement and we will ensure that when we get in governance we will work closely with them and help

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them to be very successful, to go from strength to strength. With this in mind, I wish to indicate that what was promised in the last budget, as it relates to the credit union movement, I did not see materialize.

The promise was made that credit unions would be on-lending agencies for the Trinidad and Tobago Mortgage Finance Company (TTMF). So much so that the credit union members would, through the credit unions, be in a position to access the low interest loans from TTMF. I heard the Member for St. Augustine also say that squatters would be in a position to access low interest loans from the TTMF. It is on that basis in the last budget that it was mentioned that the credit union members would be in a position to access those loans via the credit union. However, since that last budget to today, credit unions have been trying to have this situation implemented and regularized. I have to say that this has not been put in place and maybe the Member for Nariva and, also, the Minister of Finance could use their good offices to ensure that that which was promised in the last budget becomes a reality because it has not been implemented. We in this country have a problem with that side when it comes to implementation. Oh yes, they will "ole talk" now until the end of time, but we on this side are here to ensure that implementation takes place. This is what parliament is for.

So we could draw it to the nation's attention, and that we could come and fight for the rights of the people. We are asking, let that be implemented forthwith.

**7.10 p.m.**

Mr. Speaker, I will not go on to mention the amendments to the Co-operative Societies Act, simply because as of Sunday gone, the consultant for the Inter American Development Bank came into the country and they are looking at the picture from a macroperspective. They are taking not only the amendments of the legislation, the Co-operative Societies Act, they are also looking at the incorporation of prudential standards, and they are looking at the wider picture. So we are not here to simply criticize. We want to give that an opportunity to blossom. We understand that by the end of October, the end of this month, a framework would be in place for the movement to view and look at and by November things will be in place to try to bring to Parliament so that we can take it a step further. We are not here just to criticize for criticizing sake, if some things are being done in the proper manner we will leave them alone and see that things are done according to how they should be. So we are monitoring that situation and we wish it well. Also, we know that the funding from the Inter American Development Bank, the \$6 million, that is on target. So we are looking at the situation, monitoring it and wishing it well.

I now wish to focus a bit on the constituency of Toco/Manzanilla as it relates to the budget statement. When I look at the whole aspect of health, I can only pray and hope, and I can only stand here and demand that the Eastern Regional Health Authority is given more moneys than before. Because, as I mentioned sometime ago, what happens is that the Eastern Regional Health Authority limps from budget to budget owing the “marish and the parish”. They probably still owe over \$3 million in unpaid debts, Mr. Speaker. On the last occasion when I brought this matter to the attention of this House the Minister did, in fact, give certain indications and moneys, in fact, were passed to alleviate some of the debts.

But what I am saying is that as it stands today, there are significant debts that are not paid and I hope that more finances could be put in place at the Eastern Regional Health Authority so that, once and for all, they can come to terms with the payment of most or all of their debts; so that, I would not have to beg a T&TEC van not to cut electricity while somebody is undergoing surgery! You understand, Mr. Speaker?

I must say that the Sangre Grande Hospital has recently gotten a surgeon, he is from St. Vincent and he is a very good surgeon. I spoke with him while he was in St. Vincent and he was concerned about coming to Sangre Grande. I was able to convince him that, “Look, Sangre Grande needs help, we need a surgeon” and, as a result of that, he decided to come to the Sangre Grande Hospital and he is there presently.

You see, we are Members of Parliament and we are also responsible for our constituency, you know. The Sangre Grande Hospital services people from Matelot to Valencia, Manzanilla, even Arima, and as such we have to do what we can to solve the problem. That is why, rather than tell the doctor, “Do not come to Trinidad and Tobago. Do not come to Sangre Grande”, I implored, I beseeched him, “We need your help, Sir”, and he is here today.

**Mr. D. Singh:** *[Inaudible]*

**Mr. R. Boynes:** I know I am not paying him, but you are not paying him as well! It is the taxpayers who are paying that doctor. The money is not yours! It belongs to every citizen of Trinidad and Tobago!

I want to indicate that in the Sangre Grande area, we are still facing problems there. We are still owing several persons. They are still complaining to me. I am asking the Minister to use his good office to ensure that, first and foremost, the Eastern Regional Health Authority pays its debts. Let the Eastern Regional Health Authority square off T&TEC, so its electricity bill will not come up during the

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middle of the year. Ensure that the telephone bills are paid. Ensure that the persons who are providing goods and services are paid. Ensure that the person who provides oxygen for the ambulance is paid. I do not need to reiterate the several problems that were reiterated to this honourable Chamber on the last occasion, suffice it to say that there are still outstanding debts and a debt is a debt that must be paid.

**Mr. Narine:** In cash.

**Mr. R. Boynes:** In cash! I remember on the last occasion saying that \$7,000 was given by the Friends of the Sangre Grande Hospital towards the purchase of blood; that was not so. It was given by the Friends of the hospital to pay for the testing of blood. That problem, in fact, is still there because persons from the area have to pay for the testing of their own blood. I do not know if this is a policy of the Eastern Regional Health Authority, that persons have to pay for the testing of their blood, but I would like the Minister to shed some light on this. I would like the Minister to ensure that if this is not the policy, at least let the Eastern Regional Health Authority clear all its bills, so the people of that region could then have proper medical care. That is no privilege! It is their right!

The nurses from the Health Centre and Hospital in Sangre Grande have come to me and asked me to mention in Parliament—and I am doing so—that they need their pool money, they need their salaries on time! They are not paid on time, Mr. Speaker. They have mortgages, they go up in arrears when they cannot meet their commitments on a timely basis. They are asking me to ensure that I make this statement because they are leaving *en masse, en bloc*, they are going to other pastures where the grass is greener. We cannot be training our nurses and have them leaving our shores! It is a brain drain, Mr. Speaker! So if we are serious and if we want to keep our nurses happy, let the environment be happy so that they could be in a position to serve our population and the public well. In short, I want to make sure that their shoe allowances are paid to them, and the nurses that I mentioned, and the staff from the extended care unit walked off the job a couple days ago. I am asking that the Minister—the Member for Caroni Central—use his good office to ensure that proper management takes place at the Eastern Regional Health Authority as it relates to the hospital in Sangre Grande.

May I mention also, that if the Minister could sit with the Eastern Regional Health Authority and make sure that some of the expenses that came from the Ministry during the setting up and establishing of the Eastern Regional Health Authority are sorted out one way or the other. Because with this new money for the administrative staff, \$2.5 million comes out of the allocation for the Eastern

Regional Health Authority every year. On top of that now, they have some additional expenses—electricity, telephone and some of the other bills—on their back, for which they did not cater. The two sides need to meet and sit and ensure that the debt owed by the Eastern Regional Health Authority is paid once and for all, so I can stop getting telephone calls in the night; so that I can stop having delegations at my home. I am not working at the Ministry of Health. So I want the Minister to deal with that as soon as possible.

Mr. Speaker, if I may just deal with the whole aspect of sports. I heard the Minister mention the four stadia that are to be built in Tobago, Arima, Central, *et cetera*. But, when I listened to the Member for Ortoire/Mayaro, which is the largest constituency; when I look at my friend from Nariva, his constituency is fairly large from a geographical perspective; I look at Toco/Manzanilla, it is very large from a geographical perspective. We all make up practically half of the island of Trinidad. And yet, it is also to be noted that some of the best sportsmen have come from Toco, Manzanilla, Nariva and also Mayaro. Some of the footballers that come from the Cumuto area are some of the finest that this country can see. *[Interruption]* That is not my constituency, but based on the fact that I am into sport, I know where the talent from the East comes. It is strange and surprising that we have absolutely no allocation whatsoever to put up any stadium in that region. None whatsoever! Arima has the Velodrome already, you know. While I recommend and praise Arima for getting the one at Malabar, I am saying that let one come into Sangre Grande as well. This is the point I am making. Sangre Grande is the gateway for the East. The East does not stop at Arima. And yet, there has been no provision whatsoever for any stadium. But it gets worse, Mr. Speaker.

I understand that there is an office in Sangre Grande, the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs has an office in Sangre Grande. That is the most well-kept secret in the whole of Toco/Manzanilla, you know. Nobody knows anything about that office, you know. That office does not function. They have a Super 5 Project that is going on and it is my team that runs the Super 5. My team! I have a youth team, Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs. I have a youth team that runs all the sports from the length and breadth of Toco/Manzanilla. Every single sport that takes place in Toco/Manzanilla, that team of young people, about 75 of them, runs all the sports throughout the length and breadth of Toco/Manzanilla, and we do not know anything about the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs.

You know the strange thing about it is that, when we look at our recreation grounds—we brought the media, we went from ground to ground throughout the

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length and breadth of the region and, you know, I would not mind us not getting a stadium in Toco/Manzanilla, or even in Nariva, but once the recreation grounds are to a standard that we can have football playing on the carpet, or have cricket playing. We had a turf wicket in the North Eastern Regional Complex and for four years, not a ball has been bowled on that turf wicket. Not one ball! Why? It is in a state of total dilapidation for four years now. You understand, Mr. Speaker? That is what is going on, and that is what is taking place in Toco/Manzanilla.

I will tell you, we got the businessmen together and we upgraded the ground in the North Eastern Regional Complex to an extent. We begged the Regional Corporation to lend us their roller so that we can roll the grounds, so the football can play on the carpet.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar:** *[Inaudible]*

**Mr. R. Boynes:** I do not know if the Member for Siparia understands that jargon. We in the football world understand what that means, so the ground will be a level playing field.

**Mr. Hart:** She ain't know about that. She know 'bout Chutney.

**Mr. R. Boynes:** Do you not know that two footballers got their feet broken? One is a police officer. Mr. Speaker, where are we really going?

**7.25 p.m.**

Throughout the length and breadth of Toco/Manzanilla, the recreation grounds are in a state of disrepair. *[Interruption]* It is a fact! It is a fact! And you know we have been getting promises, promises, promises from that Member. That is the man there! From the "winer boy". That is the man! We are getting promises from him, Mr. Speaker. I remember coming to this Parliament and placing a Motion on the Adjournment. We spoke about the Cumana Pavilion and the grounds and the Minister said that it will be done as soon as possible. That was about two years ago! To this very day the Cumana Pavilion is still not repaired. It has not been completed! This is the problem. *[Interruption]* What is the problem? The place was as beautiful as can be. Mr. Speaker, this Cumana Pavilion has not been completed. It has been promised by the Member for Point Fortin and no work has been done on it.

Since the last time I spoke in Parliament he has done nothing on that particular ground. And, Mr. Speaker, you know the sad thing about it is that Samuel Stafford came from that very same village. He was at one time the World's Karate Champion! Thirty-three years Japan did not lose that crown, and a boy from



Cumana Village came and won. Do you know why? Because sports was a big thing in Cumana then, but it is no longer, because all the recreation grounds are in a state of disrepair.

Mr. Speaker, the Toco area has produced Ian Bishop; has produced Mervyn Dillon; it has produced a lot of the Bishops: Renrick Bishop and Roger Bishop. The reason for that is simply because it was a big thing when the recreation grounds were beautifully cut and nurtured. It was a beautiful thing for the families to come out and see the young talent of the region. The Toco area was well-known for having some serious pace bowlers. That is a fact! But now the young people are playing cards. They are no longer going in the recreation grounds, they are playing cards now because the recreation grounds are in a state of disrepair.

Mr. Speaker, as the Member for Toco/Manzanilla, I will talk until I lose my voice, and every time I get up anywhere, in any forum, I am going to talk for the recreation grounds of that area to be fixed. And I ask the question: What are we doing for the young people, really and truly, in Toco/Manzanilla? We closed down the Civilian Conservation Corps; the Unemployment Relief Programme in the Sangre Grande area is like a permanent job now because the same people have been rotated fortnight after fortnight after fortnight. Do you know what are the young people doing? The young people are on the streets “liming” and we are trying so very hard, every week, in the Member of Parliament's office, to get programmes for the young people. The office is full every week because we are training them in computer literacy; we have teaching classes. We have all of these things in the Member of Parliament's office, trying to encourage young people to come off the streets. That is what we are doing!

And I am saying that if we are serious about education—I hear in this statement the Minister mentioned three new secondary schools in the area with which I have absolutely no difficulty. I encourage that, because North Eastern College has produced some of the finest minds in this country. But I have a difficulty with the new Valencia Government School that was recently constructed. The Member for Tabaquite tried to prevent the Member of Parliament from speaking at the opening of that school—do you remember that, Mr. Speaker—a Member from his own team told me that the Minister said he does not want to speak on any platform with this Member for Toco/Manzanilla. That is what he said! So much so that on the invitation, my name was scratched off the programme. That is what the Member for Tabaquite has done. Coming inside the constituency of Toco/Manzanilla, in the area of Valencia, and not having the protocol or the respect for the people. Mr. Speaker, it is not Roger

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Boynes who is the Member of Parliament for Toco/Manzanilla you know; Roger Boynes represents the people of Toco/Manzanilla. *[Desk thumping]* That is the problem. So you do not want to hear the people. That is why they “carried on” throughout the length and breadth of the Minister's speech because they did not want to hear him too. He disrespected the people of Valencia.

Mr. Speaker, he did not even want to hear about the new Valencia Government School sewer system. The sewer system that the school has, is linked up to the sewer plant, and the sewer plant cannot take the load from that sewer system in the school. It cannot take the load! Mr. Speaker, do you know what is going to happen? The waste would now have to run into the river and the Valencia residents are totally annoyed about that. That is what he did not want to hear.

Mr. Speaker, he also did not want to hear about the drainage made around that school which is fit for a house, not for a school. That is why when a little rain fell last week the entire school flooded. He did not want to hear that! And I am saying that the other schools that are being built, please ensure for me, this time, that they are done properly. That is what the people want to say.

I am also saying that we need to be vigilant and ensure that the companies are doing the quarrying in that Valencia region, because we have some of the best raw materials in the entire Caribbean in that area. The companies that are doing the quarrying, ensure that their techniques comply with the Environmental Management Authority (EMA) standards, because many of them are not complying with the EMA standards. That is why when it rains a bit, the entire village of Vega de Oropouche floods. *[Interruption]* Yes, because the silt goes into the river.

Mr. Speaker, I want to ensure that the relevant authorities deal with the situation as soon as possible because the people of Vega de Oropouche are poor people; they are farmers, they depend on their crops to send their children to school. They are poor people and the flooding, really and truly, destroys their chances of treating their children in the way that they ought to be treated.

Mr. Speaker, I mentioned earlier that all the residents of Tureure were demonstrating and protesting—they burnt tyres and that sort of thing. I went as the Member of Parliament, and I convinced them that is not the way. Do you know I convinced them that I will write a letter; I will meet with the Minister of Works and Transport; I will meet with National Quarries? I sent letters to them, I spoke with them and to this very day I have gotten no response whatsoever. But do you know what the people said, "Mr. Boynes, we know you have tried your

best." I brought it to this Parliament; I brought the people here to listen. Many games were played that evening and do you know that up to this very day that road has not been fixed.

Mr. Speaker, about 90 per cent of the people's houses come from inside that road. National Quarries! That is the entrance to National Quarries. The roads are being destroyed on a regular basis. The road is in a total dilapidated condition; with the trucks passing and the sand blowing into the nostrils of the people. The babies are suffering; they have to go to the hospital on a regular basis, but nothing has been done to alleviate the people's problems. Do you know why? Because those people are solidly PNM and they would never change. [Desk thumping] No matter how many problems and how much pressure they undergo, they will still be PNM, and they are going to wait until their government comes into power so that they would be able to be treated as equal as they should be. One of the things we, of the PNM, would do when we come into governance, is to make sure that the pie is shared equally for every citizen of Trinidad and Tobago [Desk thumping] regardless of colour, creed, race or religion. That is exactly what is going to take place.

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

I keep on hearing the Member for Pointe-a-Pierre like a mosquito in my ears. Mr. Speaker, do you remember when I brought a Motion on the Adjournment in Parliament and it related, in fact, to the misspending of public funds at the Sangre Grande Regional Corporation with respect to the opening of the Monte Cristo Park? That is when they had "ham, lamb, jam", wild meat, rum, scotch flowed like water and Dhanraj was "wining".

I mentioned to this honorable House that over \$91,000 was spent. He got up shortly after and said that was not entirely correct. He said that \$34,000 was spent and the businessmen in the area supplied the rest. Mr. Speaker, "yuh hear lie, that is lie!" [Desk thumping] Because I have all the payments slips which show that \$94,000 was spent on rum, scotch, wild meat, "ham, lamb and jam"; \$94,000. So I am profiling a question to you in Parliament, Mr. Minister, and you would be dealt with accordingly.

Do you know what really happened, Mr. Speaker, when he called the former chairman, his partner? The former chairman said, "Boy, is \$39,000." He took that figure and came in this honourable House without getting the facts. [Interruption]

**Mr. D. Singh:** "What yuh want meh to do?"

**Mr. R. Boynes:** Yes, "what yuh want meh to do!" I know it is that. He does not have his facts, but yet he comes to this Parliament as though it is the back of

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his yard, or his home. He comes here and just lies. Yes, this is a snackette, he just comes here and says anything he wants. But this is a serious call and we shall not tolerate any lies in this Chamber.

I came here to this Chamber and also spoke about the fact that the former chairman got a cheque for \$25,000; \$6,000 of which he used to go to New York on a private enterprise. Mr. Speaker, do you know that the former chairman is going from rum shop to rum shop boasting how much money he got from the corporation? This is what is taking place in Sangre Grande right now, yet the Minister is “breaksing” for him. He stood on the platform, when the hon. Member was there with the Prime Minister and the whole of Sangre Grande, drunk as a fish and said that his mother was getting a pension of “\$620,000” a month. They are calling him “\$620,000”; that is what they are calling him. The Minister is “breaksing” for him.

We cannot tolerate Members of this House coming and not doing their research properly and giving inaccurate information to this Parliament. As a Minister, the Member has a duty to gather his information properly.

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, the speaking time of the Member for Toco/Manzanilla has expired.

*Motion made,* That the hon. Member’s speaking time be extended by 30 minutes. [Mr. P. Manning]

*Question put and agreed to.*

**Mr. R. Boynes:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and Members who supported my extension.

There is a bright light that shines from the east, and we do have a new councillor in the Sangre Grande Regional Corporation from the area of Sangre Grande north. He is a young man. He is a national basketball player, Mr. Richard Mungroo, a sportsman and he is presently working with the young people in the area. Also, the councillor for Valencia is a young man. He runs all the leagues in Valencia. They have been working with the other councillor for the Toco area and with their Member of Parliament, and we have been using the National Self-Help Commission, the embassies and several NGOs. We have been doing well in that area.

[MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

**Mr. Sudama:** Under the UNC Government!

**Mr. R. Boynes:** We are working to ensure that we service the needs of the people. As representatives, whether you are in government or not, you have a

responsibility to represent the people and service your constituency as much as you can. So if you are not getting funding from any government you have to use all the sources available to you to bring some sort of assistance to the people.

We have been able to attract several jobs to the people through the security firms. We have also been able to get approximately 500 jobs in security companies for persons in areas as far as Matelot, and this has gone down very well with the people of that region.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we also wish to indicate that as persons who are in touch with what is happening in the constituency, we have looked at the budget and the draft estimates, and under the Minister of National Security, page 45, we have not seen where the police stations of Matelot, Matura and Manzanilla, are provided for. We have been lobbying for the past three years for these police stations to be, at least, repaired. It has reached such a deplorable state and condition that bat droppings drop into the food of the police officers in Matelot. It has really reached a deplorable condition. Matura is very bad and Manzanilla is worse. I am asking, in fact, I am demanding—*[Interruption]* Do you know why? Simply because the policemen in that area have sacrificed long and hard to provide service and to protect the people in that area.

Whenever I am passing on that Toco Main Road, they are doing all sorts of road checks; they are working very hard. They pay taxes, and there is a need to accommodate and house them in proper facilities. I cannot see how computers could go in those police stations. We have to ensure that we upgrade these police stations. I welcome the computers in them, but we have to upgrade those police stations, they are sadly in need of repairs.

I am also very concerned when I look at the area of Matura. Approximately three months ago I saw about 75 trucks moving from the Matura area, more particularly in Orosco Road and environs, taking the material from there to the airport. So mining is taking place in that Matura area. I do not know if there was any licence granted for it. I did my investigations but I did not find any licence granted, but it seems as though *[made sneezing gesture]* and “de boys and dem”, were, in fact, mining; taking materials from the Matura region to the airport. They destroyed the road in that area. Mr. Deputy Speaker, do you know what is 75 trucks up and down every day and every night for months? This took place and the residents are very upset about it because of the damage done to their road. We need to have the road repaired.

At this point, I wish to congratulate—and I saved it for this point—the Member for San Fernando East, for his delivery this morning, for his great

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contribution to this debate, for his response. It was telling this afternoon, direct, on point, accurate and the country loved it. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker, one of the questions that he raised and threw to the Member for Tobago East, was when he indicated that he wanted him to answer about this Toco to Tobago port ferry service. But throughout the length and breadth of the Member's contribution he stayed away from that. Do you know why, Mr. Deputy Speaker? He does not know anything whatsoever about that. As a matter of fact, he does not know anything at all about Tobago.

When was the last time he went in his constituency? What does he know? I listened to him speaking on *Morning Edition*, he was waffling. He does not know what is going on in Tobago! And he admits it! He is the Minister of Tobago Affairs; he is supposed to be the person ensuring that there are good relations between Central Government and the Tobago House of Assembly. He is supposed to make sure that everybody is happy. He is the main man. "Dey doh talk to him." He has to be the one to encourage dialogue, that is his function and responsibility. Nobody has to talk to him; he has to talk to them.

Do you know what has to happen? He has to go through the length and breadth of his area. He has to be the one pushing development, making everybody happy. But he sits there and does not know what is going on in his constituency, in the whole of Tobago. But see him at the tea room, first man in line! Sorry about that, Mr. Deputy Speaker. [*Interruption*] I humbly apologize for that last one.

**Hon. Members:** Low blow!

**Mr. R. Boynes:** I wish to mention the aspect of the Toco/Tobago port and ferry service. That particular project has been out for some time. Approximately six persons have placed in proposals for that particular project.

My understanding is that approximately three of them have been forwarded to Cabinet so that a decision can be made as to which one the Government is going to go with.

**7.50 p.m.**

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I also wish to indicate that the project is approximately US \$50 million, it is a "BOOT" project, build, own, operate and transferred later on. That project was mandated that each of the persons who applied for that project consider the road from Toco to Valencia. However, not one of them considered the road. They found that it was not feasible and did not include the road.

An estimate was done by the Minister of Works and Transport for upgrading the road from Toco to Valencia and it came up to US \$14 million. I want to find out whether or not these proposals—one at least—would be granted without due consideration for the roads. This is one of the points the people want to find out. Initially, when the entire project was being considered, the development of the road was a critical aspect. Could you imagine someone leaving Toco and reaching Port of Spain and the roads remain in that condition? The feasibility, to an extent, of that project depends on the upgrading of the road and so far, there is no mention of that.

I would like to find out at least if the roads are being taken care of one way or the other. I also wish to indicate that we on this side are not opposed to change. We are saying that the change must be done in a proper manner so that when the ferry service and this port project come to Toco, if it is coming, we want to ensure that the people are the main beneficiaries of that project, not the boys, the people. That is why a very long time ago, I have been telling the people not to sell their lands. I told them to keep their lands so that they will be able to have value for their dollar. Save your lands so that you will be, in turn, the recipients of the boom in the real estate market.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, what is taking place there, however, is that it is projected that there be a marina, a ferry service from Toco to Tobago, a customs port, and a fishing port. There will be oil storage facilities. There is projection that approximately 3,000 tourists would be coming to the Toco area on a weekly basis. That is what one of the members from the task force indicated to me.

I met with the people from Toco, Cumana, Rampanalgas, Salibia, and Matura, throughout the length and breadth of that area. Do you know the strange thing about it? They indicated to me that they are in a state of confusion. Nobody has spoken with them. And when we are trying to get documents to find out exactly what is going on—because at some point in time, the people must be consulted with because the people are the ones whose lands may be acquired by the state. The young people would be the ones who would be affected when the tourists come to Toco, that quiet, lovely, peaceful town will no longer be the same. Their lives may turn upside down and they need to prepare the young people for that. Perhaps when some of the tourists come in their “poom poom” shorts, the young man needs to be calm. *[Laughter]* So he has to be trained to maintain his composure.

So much so, if there is an influx of perhaps even illegal drugs, the young men and women need to be educated to refrain from that. We need to be in a position

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to tell the young people to reject that. We need to tell them they need to develop bed and breakfast facilities so that they will be the true beneficiaries of any development in that area. This is what we are saying on this side. The people need to be consulted because we have to see what is the impact on the environment, and the environment means the persona of the people as well as the physical infrastructure. So much so that if development has to come, it should come in such a manner that the pristine beauty that becomes Toco maintains itself. This is what the people are saying so that they would be able to benefit, so when the tourists come to Toco on the ferry service, we need to ensure that Tidco upgrades the beach and puts facilities to match up Maracas.

**Mr. Assam:** They have started already.

**Mr. R. Boynes:** They spent a couple thousand dollars. I am saying the projected amount of money that they have to spend in that area is not enough. They are going to spend approximately \$700,000 there and if we really want to develop the place in any major way, we have to pump some money there to develop the beaches. Not only in Salibia, in Toco, we have to develop each village, because the beauty of the North/East Coast is not just the Toco village. It is Toco, it is Cumana, it is Rampanalgas, each with its own beauty. Salibia is where the ocean meets the river, it is very beautiful. It is where we have one of the best waterfalls in this entire country. Tourists throughout the length and breadth come to see it, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

We are saying if we are to go with this project, liaise with the people and let them be involved with it as well; let the people be involved in the process. Neither the people nor their MP knows what is going on and that is the difficulty we have. It is a big secret, but it is going a mile a minute. It has reached the point now where a developer is to be chosen and the people do not know what is going on.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when we held the meeting with the people, they thought we came to ask them whether they want to go with the project or not, but from our understanding, that stage has long gone. It is not that they do not want the project, but they want to be involved in it. They want to be the recipients of it to protect their interests.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I can go on and on, but I know the night is far gone and suffice to say, we in that constituency are very concerned about any proposed development in that area and we want to ensure that the people are at the forefront of any development in that particular area. We are saying that we from that area—it does not matter that we are from the “country”—are entitled to share in the national pie just as much as any other area.



I hear Kitchener sing about the Toco band. You all will be hearing about Toco every time you come inside this Parliament. I will be reminding you that Toco is alive and we need to make sure that development takes place there in an orderly, managed, manner whereby the people would be at the forefront and be the beneficiaries of any development in that area. *[Desk thumping]*

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

I am saying, Mr. Speaker, that with the help of God, we want our fair share of the pie and now that we are not in Government, we are still going to ensure that we work hard and ensure that we build that area. Yes, we can do it so that every single creed, every single race, everybody of whatever political or religious persuasion could come into the Member of Parliament's office in Toco/Manzanilla and they would be well-served and feel comfortable about that.

Mr. Speaker, with that aim and objective, with that will the people have, we know the next borough density would be in that particular area.

Thank you.

**The Minister of Labour and Co-operatives (Hon. Harry Partap):** Mr. Speaker, I crave your indulgence this evening to make a brief intervention in this debate on the Bill, an Act to provide for the service of Trinidad and Tobago for the financial year ending the 30<sup>th</sup> day of September 2000. Before I do so, let me congratulate my colleague, the hon. Minister of Finance, for presenting a budget that will benefit all the citizens of this country.

Contrary to what the distinguished Leader of the Opposition has said, this is one of the best budgets delivered in this House since I have been listening to budgets 40 years ago. *[Laughter]* And those opposite who seem to want to criticize the budget, some of them cannot even build a good wall. *[Laughter]*

Mr. Speaker, the hon. Minister of Finance has been presenting budgets since 1995, which are always clear in intent, simple to understand and provide the vision as we enter the new millennium. The hon. Minister of Finance must be complimented for removing the mystique of a budget. Clearly and correctly, he did not set out to impress the layman with fancy drafts and figures.

**8.05 p.m.**

Mr. Speaker, the 1999/2000 budget was not wrapped in any mystery. It was not. It is the kind of budget presentation that the ordinary people of this country can identify with.

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Mr. Speaker, the budget did not impose any new taxes nor did it increase VAT, import duties, excise duties, licences or fees. Instead, the hon. Minister of Finance increased benefits to the government retirees, who have not received an increase since 1987, and he projected a vision for education, health, physical and social infrastructure for agriculture. This has been a budget with a soul, a social conscience and one that is people focussed.

I want to just make some comments on some of the points raised by the hon. Member for Toco/Manzanilla. He is my good friend and we serve opposite constituencies and meet from time to time here. We are very good friends, but I do not know who he was trying to impress this evening. I really do not know.

**Mr. Singh:** I know.

**Hon. H. Partap:** If it is the Member for San Fernando East, let me tell you he did not do anything in Toco/Manzanilla. I said so and I mean it. Had it not been for the hon. Minister of Works, I think most of the infrastructure in that place would have been the worst thing we have seen, because the PNM had been in power and Toco/Manzanilla has always been in Government and it has been one of the worst served constituency in Trinidad. *[Interruption]* Well, I will tell you about Nariva just now. I will tell you.

So all that he is saying; I am glad that he did not refer to any of the infrastructural development that has taken place in Toco/Manzanilla, because he cannot lay claim to it; he cannot. Had it not been for the honourable Minister of Works and the honourable Minister of Local Government, I think the people there would have suffered badly. But this is a Government that is all-inclusive. It caters for everybody, therefore, we were happy to be part of that process in building Toco/Manzanilla. *[Interruption]* Well, do not let the local government elections fool you because we are coming for you. *[Laughter]*.

Mr. Speaker, I want to just touch a little on what has been achieved in the constituency of Nariva, under a UNC Government. But before I do that, I want to say Mr. Speaker, that Nariva had been under the PNM for three conservative terms—15 years—and then it went under the NAR for five years and they got something under the NAR. Let me be honest, they got a number of things done under the NAR, but under the PNM they got absolutely nothing.

What is most revolting is that the Member for Toco/Manzanilla had been chairman of the regional corporation there, and when I went into that place, the grounds were bad. He comes here Friday after Friday and wants to say all what he has done for sports and this man has done nothing for sports in the area.

But I will tell you. I will go on to tell you the kind of wickedness the PNM inflicted on the constituency of Nariva and I believe—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order please. Order please.

**Hon. H. Partap:**—it was a sense of discrimination because Nariva went into the opposition, when we had it when we were in Opposition, and then it was totally neglected. Well, I am glad to tell you that 7.5 kilometres of waterlines—the Minister of Public Utilities—in Cumuto; that is an area where you had small lines and people had all the amount of trouble in this world to get water.

**Mr. Manning:** No, that is not true.

**The Hon. H. Partap:** No, now they have new lines and they are happy for it. They are happy because they can get water in all the side roads on the Cumuto Main Road.

When the PNM were in government they really never worried about poor people and children. They come here today making all kinds of sweet promises about what they would do for children. There was not a single secondary school in the constituency of Nariva all the years they have been in Government 30 and 4 and never built a secondary school.

Mr. Speaker, let me tell you this, the children of Four Roads Tamana used to vote for the PNM and they had to travel from Four Roads to Toco. Well now my dear friends, there are three secondary schools that we have built in Nariva: one in Coryal that will take care of those children who have to get up at 2 o'clock in the morning and make their way into Toco and they are talking about they care about people. They do not care about anybody. They care about themselves. There is going to be one in Manzanilla—

**Mr. Singh:** Take that!

**The Hon. H. Partap:** Another one in Manzanilla will take care of the children in that Manzanilla area who have to go into Mayaro.

*[Mr. Valley on his feet.]*

**Hon. H. Partap:** No, I am not giving way. You will have your chance and you will reply to me then. *[laughter] [Interruption]*. No, it is not uncharitable but I want to finish fast.

**Mr. Speaker:** The Leader of the Opposition knows that is not allowed. Honourable Members the sitting of this House is suspended until 9.20 p.m.

**8.13 p.m.:** *Sitting suspended.*

**9.05 p.m.:** *Sitting resumed.*

**Hon. H. Partap:** Mr. Speaker, when we adjourned I was telling you about the construction of three secondary schools in Nariva. I want to go on and tell you, Sir, that we had two new primary schools constructed as well in the constituency and we are expecting one new one according to the budget. We are expecting as well two early childhood centres.

We have already had almost 30 kilometres of road repaired both by the Ministry of Works and Transport and the Ministry of Local Government. Repair work has also been done on five bridges on the Manzanilla Road, two on the Cunapo Southern Main Road and these were dilapidated bridges for a number of years. We had water and electricity extended to several areas in the constituency and now almost all the villages in the constituency of Nariva are hooked up to the telephones. These are achievements under this administration within the short period of three years and 11 months.

Mr. Speaker, we come to community centres. We have a number of community centres at which we are looking. The Cumuto Community Centre had been left abandoned by the PNM for 11 years against the background of the fact that Cumuto had been a Best Village winner for a number of years under the PNM but they simply neglected to do a simple thing as putting a centre for these people to practise and from which to operate. They worked under people's homes. We are, through the Minister of Community Development and self-help, hoping to have that centre built.

Then way up in the Guaico/Tamana area—some of you may not know where this is but it is really in the real rural country—the PNM had built another centre there 11 years ago and that centre did not have toilets, it had no kitchen and it had no chairs for 11 years. Thanks to the Minister of Community Development they are getting these things now. After 11 years we get them. Then we go down to Biche, a community centre built under the PNM which the Member for San Fernando East had opened as Prime Minister, which cost \$1 million and it does not have electricity.

So we are now doing this and hoping to have it with the co-operation of the Minister of Community Development and the Minister of Public Utilities. So this is the kind of neglect that those Members opposite had inflicted on the people of rural communities. It was as if Trinidad and Tobago ended on the East-West

Corridor or north of the Caroni River. However, Mr. Speaker, we are redressing these now and the country can expect equal development.

Mr. Speaker, I want to now spend a few minutes to bring to the attention of the Parliament a few of the major activities in the Ministry of Labour and Co-operatives during the last financial year and over the period of the four years during which we have been in office. What we have been concentrating on during the period that I have been at the Ministry of Labour and Co-operatives is developing the core competencies of the Ministries and we had done that in order to better serve our stakeholders. We had to do this because the Ministry was, as the Member for San Fernando East said, on autopilot during the period of the PNM administration. I am glad to tell you that is no longer so.

Mr. Speaker, I want to exempt the period when you were a Minister of Labour because the Ministry had reached its peak during your period but I am afraid it just simply declined after you left. When I went to that Ministry there was a management audit done by a reputable management consultant firm through the previous administration, but the recommendations were kept in abeyance for a long period. When we went there we put those recommendations into operation and today we can say that the Ministry is now customer friendly, it is customer focussed and it is ready to serve the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

The restructuring that we had done had been part of a strategic plan that the Ministry had prepared and which is now influencing the changes at the Ministry. I just want to touch on a few of them before I take my seat. I want to turn to the manpower section because the manpower division had been one of the core competencies in the Ministry and from what we have done the manpower division is now fully computerized. When we went in there it was manually operated with everything being done by hand and recorded in big ledgers. Now we are fully computerized and it is user friendly to the unemployed.

We interview people, we counsel them, we instruct them on how to write applications and to prepare resumés. We also do matching of qualifications with experience in order to secure jobs and now we are thinking of a faster turnaround period at the Ministry so that the unemployed will be offered some measure of relief in the shortest possible time. The figures that we have tell a story of a trend of improvements at the manpower section. As soon as we get people coming in and they begin to understand that we are matching experience to job and the turnover is faster, we know that more people will come to the Ministry for assistance.

The other very important aspect at the Ministry at the moment is the national human resource management information system. We now have the consultants

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on board and we are almost there in having that system in place. Now I want to tell you that the national human resource management information system had been one of the main pillars of those opposite, the previous administration, in helping to resolve the unemployment situation but they took that decision way back in 1992 and between 1992 and 1995 absolutely nothing was done to put that in place.

Today, I am happy to tell you that we have the consultants on board and they are now completing the operations so that we will have information on the pool of workers in Trinidad and Tobago. We also will be able to provide trends in employment and unemployment. We will be able to locate this in terms of occupation, industry attachment, gender, age, earnings, housing condition, educational attainment, training, location and a series of things that this system will be able to provide. It will be able to generate the data that will assist in manpower planning. This is a very important project and it will be very useful both for Government and private sector planning, so we are almost there with it. We have one of the most up-to-date systems now and very soon we will be launching it here.

Mr. Speaker, this evening the Member for Toco/Manzanilla made some remarks about co-operatives. In fact, do you know what he said? He said, "When we get in governance we are going to work closely with them". That means the credit unions. He is saying that when those Members opposite who are vying for office—they want to come back into the corridors of power, but it is way down the road—come into office then they will work closely with the credit unions. I really cannot understand that.

In fact, I do not know whom the Member for Toco/Manzanilla is fooling because it was under the PNM administration that credit unions in the co-operative sector floundered. They were not given the kind of assistance that they needed in order to make them accountable and protect poor people's money. They did nothing at all. In fact, we have the experience now where the Co-operative Development Bank is in receivership and many poor people will lose their money because of the negligence of those opposite. They did not take an interest in the co-operative sector and the credit unions and now they are saying that when they get into governance then they will work closely with the credit unions. We say that is an empty promise. It was never done before and I am sure they would not do it again.

What the Ministry of Labour and Co-operatives has done since is stabilize the co-operative sector and the credit unions. I am glad that the Member for

Toco/Manzanilla had, in fact, alluded to that in his discourse, that we have had that kind of success in stabilizing the credit unions and the co-operatives. As you are aware, Sir, and it was mentioned by the Member for Toco/Manzanilla, the Co-operative Societies Act is now being revised and it is going to be revised in such a way that it will protect poor people's money and the interest of the ordinary man who will join a co-operative. We are on full stream in the institutional strengthening programme for credit unions with a grant from the Inter-American Development Bank; the consultants are here and we are putting that in place.

Mr. Speaker, you remember that in 1997 when we had removed the tax break for credit union members there was a hue and cry from those opposite about how the credit union movement would disintegrate. I want to tell you—[*Interruption*] Well, you said that they were going to suffer badly and you made a hue and cry about that but I want to tell you that has not materialized and that is not true at all. In fact, between 1997 and 1999 the membership of credit unions grew and the asset base has also improved significantly. In fact, at the moment the asset base of the credit unions—and they got no help from the previous administrations, so do not pat yourself on the shoulder. You did not do anything. In fact, if they were dependent on you they would have all gone into liquidation.

The point I am making is that we have stabilized the credit unions and now they are a source of comfort to those poor people. [*Interruption*] No, I mean, I am telling you facts. I am not making up this. The total assets of the credit union movement is now \$2.5 billion and we have now 175 active ones. I am sure that the Credit Union League is very happy with what is taking place because they can now boast of a stabilized environment for credit unions.

**9.20 p.m.**

I am a little worried that the Member for Toco/Manzanilla is saying “when they get back into office, then they will work closely.” They should have been working closely with the credit unions and the co-operative sector. The co-operative movement in this country did not progress under them. Yes, they helped to put it into place. I am not going to deny them that. The fact is afterwards—perhaps when the credit unions could not serve them—they just did not help the credit union movement. The credit union movement and the co-operative sector are now in good hands. As I told you, there is no decrease in membership; there is an increase in membership; there is no decrease in assets; in fact, there is an increase in assets. We are happy that this poor-man's organization is surviving.

Mr. Speaker, we have done a number of legislation—[*Interruption*]

**Mr. Hinds:** Would the hon. Minister be kind enough to say exactly what the Member has done to bring about the situation that he has described with respect to credit unions? What specifically has he done?

**Hon. Member:** But the man is the Minister.

**Hon. H. Partap:** What we have done? When we went into office, we saw many of these credit unions in dire trouble. What we did was, we entered into the fray. Using the law, we went in and we helped them to catch themselves, through the efforts of the Co-operative Division of the ministry. There are a number of things that we did. What I am telling you is, you said: the credit unions were going to decrease when we removed the \$2,400 tax. That is what you said. I am telling you that membership increased, assets increased. Who did it? It did not come from the sky. No! I allowed the Co-operative Division of the Ministry to do their work. That is what you did not allow them to do. The former Minister of Labour and Co-operatives did not allow the Co-operative Division to do its work. That is what I am telling you. We did it. We allowed them to do their work. I am happy to see the results. We will continue to give them that kind of autonomy so that they do their work. Too much politics was involved.

[*Mr. Hinds rose*]

I want to finish quickly. We have done a number of legislation as well in order to protect workers and employers.

The Maternity Benefits Bill that we piloted in this House is now bearing fruits. Mr. Speaker, I just want to refer to a story that appeared in the *Express* newspapers of Tuesday, October 12, 1999. A woman was employed in a factory, when she became pregnant her employer decided he will send her home—in fact, he sent her home.

**Hon. Member:** He fired her.

**Hon. H. Partap:** He fired her and she took it to the court. She brought it to the Ministry and we handed it to the court. She received compensation to the value of \$10,000. [*Interruption*] Yes, I am not denying that Miss Clothil Walcott had been a friend of the Ministry, she worked closely with us. What you all did not give her, we gave her. We asked her to come in and she worked with us. But you all kept her at bay. You did not want to assist her. Now we are looking at the legislation to see how we can further assist Miss Walcott in protecting the vulnerable in the society.

**Hon. Member:** How many cases are there?



**Hon. H. Partap:** That is one of a few. I think there are only five. [Laughter] Because their employers are following the rules and they are obeying the laws. If there were not any rules perhaps they may not have. The point is that they are following the rules. I am happy to tell you that the employers are following the rules and they are doing things, as the law requires. [Interruption]

**Mr. Speaker:** Order please!

**Hon. H. Partap:** I want to thank them; both at the level for maternity benefits as well as for minimum wage. We are happy that they are complying.

Mr. Speaker, these are some of the things that we are doing. There are many others but I would not want to further complicate the matter this evening. I would not want to bore you. What I want to tell you is that the Ministry is working at all levels and we are hoping that in this new term, the Occupational Safety and Health Bill will come to Parliament. It is long overdue—25 years, overdue. We are hoping to bring it. There are several other pieces of legislation which we will bring that will protect workers and employers, because we are looking at both. We have deepened the tripartite process at the ministry. This is why between 1995—1999 we had only one strike and one lockout. Between 1995, that is when we took office, to the present time, one strike, one lockout. It is because we were able to deepen the tripartite process. We had both the employers and the unions working with Government to resolve matters.

Mr. Speaker, you know as well as I do and those opposite, there are laws governing the workers and employers relationship. Once we obey the laws, once we follow the rules I am sure things would go well. [Interruption] Once you access the laws, once you make the laws work, things would be dealt with in peace.

I can tell you that there is industrial stability in this country. We will continue to work with the unions. The Member for Toco/Manzanilla said that we were against unions. He said we were trying to “mash up” unions. That is not true at all! If you observe our history over the past four years you will see we have strengthened trade unions. We have been having dialogue with them and we will continue to do that. But I want everybody to understand that there is a legal framework under which we must operate. Once we operate within this legal framework I assure you that we will continue to have good relations at all times.

Mr. Speaker, again, I support the budget. I commend it to the other side and tell them that there are many things in it for the people of Trinidad and Tobago. I therefore end by thanking you and tell you that I would continue to support the budget. [Desk thumping]

**Mr. Barendra Sinannan** (*Fernando West*): Mr. Speaker, the Member for Nariva's contribution was perhaps not as colourful as his shirt and tie. To me, it was discoloured by his constant reference to what he perceived was not done by the PNM. I have sat in this Parliament for approximately four years and we keep hearing references to the PNM. I do not know why the Government continues to look always at the PNM, may I suggest that you look and examine your own shortcomings and inefficiencies; you are in Government. [*Desk thumping*]

**9.30 p.m.**

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to participate in this, the last budget debate of the Century. On listening to the Minister of Finance, I could not help but think that he was enjoying his finest hour. Perhaps, who knows, it could well have been his final hour as the Minister of Finance! [*Desk thumping*] I say this because the Minister was particularly generous in his expression of goodwill to Members of both sides of the House and to the people of Trinidad and Tobago and, even to the press—something that is not common among Government ministers. [*Desk thumping*] He also thanked those numerous individuals and organizations who contributed to an informed budget. He said this is their budget, obviously implying that it was not his or entirely his so, when the blame is to be shared, perhaps they will take it and he will escape unscathed. [*Desk thumping*]

The Minister spent some considerable time giving an account of his stewardship and spoke glowingly of his achievements as if to telegraph that, "Well, this was my contribution to the country. I have done well." Mr. Speaker, is that really so? The Minister was in the fortunate position to be the inheritor of sound economic policies and planning by his predecessors and, in my view, was the benefactor of their work. [*Desk thumping*]

When the Minister states that the role, the sole function of economic policy, is to deliver results which contribute to a better life of every man, woman and child, and that Government must create the economic capacity to change the circumstances of the population for the better, who is he fooling? Yes, that is the theory of it, but under this administration, those noble ideals benefit a few in the society. A few who could be identified through friendship and bloodline.

The people in the streets of Couva, Chaguanas and Laventille have not been the recipients of any benefit flowing from these noble ideals. When the Minister talks about the time his government has spent in office and with limited financial resources, having succeeded in meeting the needs of the population, again, Mr. Speaker, I ask, whom is he fooling?

This Government has enjoyed better financial resources than the two previous administrations and it has enjoyed the benefit of the hard work and good governance of the past PNM administration—I am sure that the Member for Naparima can attest to that. This Government has enjoyed the benefit of a mini gas boom. Do you remember, Mr. Speaker, it was not too long ago that all and sundry were commenting on our mini gas boom? Those were the days when the Atlantic LNG Plant was being constructed, several projects at Point Lisas were in the construction stage, all resulting from the initiative of the previous PNM Government. So, let us not talk about limited financial resources being put into productive use when, to a small extent, that was value for money. We can talk about large sums of money being misspent where there is little to show for the expenditure and large sums of money being paid to a few favoured persons.

To say that this Government has alleviated poverty to any great extent is simply not true. There is obviously no poverty among the circles in which the Minister moves. As a matter of fact, it would be correct to say that they are no longer rich, but have become filthy rich and mostly by uncompetitive means and questionable tendering processes. [*Desk thumping*]

In reviewing the period 1995—1999, the Minister claims that unemployment stood at 17.2 per cent when his Government took office. Mr. Speaker, this was demonstrated this afternoon to be totally untrue. The figure was more in the region of 15 per cent, and while unemployment did fall below 15 per cent last year, this was as a direct result of employment opportunities created at the LNG Plant and those petrochemical plants that were constructed at Pt. Lisas. These plants are all now completed and it will be interesting to see where the unemployment figure will go in the next six months.

Mr. Speaker, again, when the Minister talks about putting people at the centre of the development process and ensuring that the greatest good comes to the largest number of people, the majority of people in this country will laugh, because the greatest good comes only to a small number of people; people, as I said before, identified by their UNC connections.

The Minister says that his Government embarked on strategies to arrest the crime situation; improve the ailing health system; provide more reliable services such as water and electricity; improve the education system to produce a workforce which can contribute to a modern economy; address the shelter needs of the population; reduce poverty and make the cost of living more affordable. Mr. Speaker, it is my respectful view that in all of the above, with the exception,

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perhaps, of a little better water supply, the Government has failed miserably.  
[*Desk thumping*]

When we look at the budget, Mr. Speaker, and the Public Sector Investment Programme (PSIP), one would see that most of the money allocated will go to crime, health and education. Is this not an admission that despite its best or worst efforts, these areas of governance are worse off today than four years ago? The Minister does admit that there are no short-term and no quick fix solutions to these problems, but then he attempts to paint a picture completely different from what he has just admitted was a failure on the part of the Government.

When we look at the imperatives for the 1999—2000 year programme of the Government, one will understand that what they attempted to do in the first year of their governance and continuing thereafter is still not done. They are placing heavy emphasis on what should have been accomplished, certainly, in 1996 and 1997 in their last year in office. In other words, Mr. Speaker, when this Government came into power and formed platitudes, look at health, crime and education. In those three basic areas, the Minister of Finance is admitting total failure. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, in his budget statement in addressing crime, that is stated as the Minister's first area of concern. Could one imagine, Mr. Speaker, a government which campaigned on the promise to reduce crime in 1995 saying four years later that crime is its first area of concern? The Minister is admitting failure in this regard. This is what he says:

“Mr. Speaker, the incidence of serious crime continues to be a threat to the safety of the individual, the business sector, especially the small entrepreneur, and the security of the nation overall...There is a pressing need for innovation to curb the crises in many communities.”

We told the Government that 100 Cherokee jeeps was not the answer. While it would improve mobility, it was not the cure. The problem of crime, as we all know, cannot be solved by 100 Cherokee jeeps. It has to do with meaningful employment opportunities, family life, police service reform and setting a better example from the top. When I say the top, I am talking about the Government setting a better example. It has to do with adult education, and so forth.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister, in his presentation, spoke about offering \$10 million to the police to acquire some computers. This is what Mr. Hilton Guy, the Commissioner, says in the *Express* of Wednesday, October 13, 1999:

“Plenty promises but we need the money.

Top cop: I won't hold my breath.

The article written by Alva Viarruel says, and I would quote some parts of it:

“Budget 2000 is full of promises for the Police Service but Commissioner Hilton Guy is not holding his breath.

“A lot of what was said has been requested for a number of years. At the end of the year, check me to see if I get the money,’ was Guy's cool response on Monday.

And Insp. Stephen Williams, president of the Police Second Division Social and Welfare Association, said the Budget ‘has barely scratched the surface’.

Finance Minister Brian Kuei Tung announced a \$10 million allocation to computerise the Police Service.

The request for the computer network and the Automatic Fingerprint Identification System (AFIS) had been in the pipeline for three years, senior officers said.”

You see, Mr. Speaker, they have been requesting this for three years, and the first priority, according to Minister of Finance, is crime. It continues:

“One administrative officer complained, ‘The problem is allocation of the funds. The figures are always in the Budget but we don't get the money. I might as well read a comic and laugh rather than read [the Budget] to make me sad, so I leave the politics to the politicians.’”

Within the last decade, and perhaps more so in the last four years, politicians in this country have lost a lot of their reputation and much of the people's goodwill. People outside there, John Public, do not have the feeling and the respect for politicians in this country.

The article goes on:

“Williams said the association was ‘very saddened by’ the Budget.

‘We have so many buildings in need of repair and the Government has not stated anything about this. What are you going to do, put the new computers under a leaking roof? The Government needs to address the accommodation for police officers urgently.’

Two new stations will be built but 19 are in a state of disrepair, Williams said.

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We were looking forward to a positive statement on the upgrading of station facilities.”

Then he spoke about wanting to arrange a meeting.

Mr. Speaker, we are talking about crime. When the PNM left Government in 1995 we had the infamous maximum security prison complex at Golden Grove. Earlier on, the Leader of the Opposition and Member for San Fernando East spoke about that. Here I am again quoting, a different article on the same page of the *Express*:

“The prison, which has been plagued by problems since it was unofficially opened three years ago, was built by Keystone Property Developers, a subsidiary of Maritime Holdings, in what was supposed to be a \$200 million fixed price contract.

As the project neared completion towards the end of 1995, former Works Minister Colm Imbert haggled with Keystone over a \$2 million increase in the cost for installation of high-tech automated security system.

That \$2 million figure has ballooned to \$92 million with the coming of the new administration which agreed to allow Keystone to complete the job.”

Mr. Speaker, up to now, the kitchen, the infirmary and the main gate of this maximum security prison are still not complete. Here is evidence of an admitted failure by the Government to address crime, bearing in mind that crime was their big election platform.

I am sure that there are more serious crimes committed today than in the last four years. Look at the seemingly unstoppable avalanche of domestic violence that is taking place in the country. What is this Government doing about it? Where is the meaningful dialogue in the society between the Government and others concerning steps to be taken to control this spate of domestic violence?

Mr. Speaker, the violence espoused and practiced by this Government is synonymous with the uncontrolled domestic violence that has engulfed the country. We have passed in this House the Domestic Violence Bill, and what has occurred since is an increase in the very Act that the legislation is attempting to curb. The Government should now attempt to enforce all the laws that have been passed since it has come to power and also those laws that have existed prior thereto. The Government should step back and take a serious look and undertake a careful examination as to the reasons for the breakdown of law and order in the country. The very fabric of our society is at stake. The Government has certainly failed the citizens in this regard.

**9.45 p.m.**

Mr. Speaker, I now come to a topic which I have to speak about and I do so with a little regret, simply because the hon. Minister involved is such a nice guy, but one sometimes finds it very hard to say anything wrong, not necessarily about him, but about the Ministry of which he is in charge; I am speaking of the Ministry of Health. Mr. Speaker, the Finance Minister apparently had two first priorities: one was crime and the other—according to him in his statement—health.

**Mr. Manning:** Health is a crime.

**Mr. B. Sinanan:** The Minister is talking about access to quality health care. He says that Government's first priority is to provide the necessary infrastructure and support services to achieve this objective. Again, this is an admission of total failure. You ask anybody what are the two worst Ministries in this Government and you are sure to be told the Ministries of Health and Education and, Mr. Speaker, not necessarily in that order.

The Minister said that capital works would be undertaken at the San Fernando General Hospital to provide at least 60 additional beds. What capital works is he talking about? He certainly did not say. Is he talking about a new wing? Is it that the Ministry will acquire 60 additional beds and fit them into an existing space? It sounds nice to talk about capital works to provide for 60 additional beds. What does that mean? Does it mean that he is going to provide a new wing in the hospital and put 60 beds? Or does it simply mean that he is going to buy 60 more beds? Mr. Speaker, capital works gives the impression of a contribution on a massive scale when, as I have indicated before, all it simply means is the acquisition of 60 beds. Yes!

How often have we heard in the last four years about the design and the pre-construction works of the Point Fortin and Scarborough Hospitals. I recall distinctly in the last budget debate having to speak about the situation at the Scarborough Hospital. Here it is, one year later, we are still in the design and pre-construction stages. I said then and I will say now—again, we are talking about tourism, my good friend and Minister of Tourism, the Member for St. Joseph—yes, we are promoting tourism, and you are promoting tourism with your main destination being Tobago. If there is some catastrophe in Tobago or some foreigner falls ill and he or she goes to that hospital in Scarborough, that tourist would not get the service and the attention that he or she expects. One article in any tourist magazine will shatter all the plans that this Government has put in place and continues to put in place with respect to tourism.

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Mr. Speaker, I can assure you that these hospitals, both at Point Fortin and Tobago, will be designed, constructed and properly staffed and operational, perhaps as soon as the year 2002 when the PNM government takes office [*Desk thumping*] I say to people of Point Fortin and Tobago, take it from me, it is only a matter of time. [*Desk thumping*] Be patient. The end of this Government is near. Salvation for the society is around the corner. We will take care of you.

The entire population has read the newspapers about the sad state of our major health institutions. People are dying from a lack of medicine, equipment, and no doctors. Mr. Speaker, I am sure you remember the story about the ventilators. Headlining the *Daily Express*, Friday, September 24, 1999, "Promises, promises while dad still dying for dialysis". "No wheels so ambulance idles as patients die". "Ventilator shortage still delays operations". And here we have the Mount Hope Hospital saying, "Sorry Gemma, we were wrong". Mr. Speaker, to say that the Health Ministry and health situation in our country is in total shambles is to put it mildly.

We all remember the situation at the Port of Spain General Hospital when there was an outage and the generator failed to kick in and a television crew happened to be on hand and was fortunate enough to be in the theatre of the hospital where an operation was taking place. Had it not been for that television crew, that patient may or may not have survived. To me, what was galling was the comment of the Chairman of that Regional Corporation. He was more concerned about how that television crew got past the security. He was not concerned about the fact that the television crew and the light they had, saved a life. He was concerned about how come that television crew passed the security. Mr. Speaker, to me this says it all for the total lack of concern. To me, it was typical of the Government's attitude when they are caught wanting.

The budget statement indicates that the Government plans to build several health centres and the Minister has said lately that these centres would be open five days a week and be staffed by doctors and nurses. If this can be achieved it will certainly take the burden off the general hospitals. There is absolutely no reason why this cannot be achieved once the proper remuneration for the staff is settled.

For the last three years and ten months the situation at the San Fernando General Hospital has been far from perfect. We have a constant battle between the President of the Doctors' Association there, the Hospital Administrator, and the doctor in charge of the hospital. The San Fernando General Hospital serves perhaps all of south, and most of the east towards Princes Town and as far as Rio



Claro and Mayaro. Mr. Speaker, I am appealing to the Minister to solve the situation at the San Fernando General Hospital. We have a new chairman, Mr. Ronnie Bissessar who is the Chairman of South West Regional Authority. I think he is a very capable person and I am sure that together with the hon. Minister, between the two of them, Dr. Chattergoon and the others, we need to put our differences aside and look towards providing proper care for the citizens.

A system should be put in place whereby patients within a district health facility can only go to a general hospital on referral from the health centre. We do have a situation where many people leave the health centres and go to the general hospital and there is no reason. It puts a tremendous and terrific burden on the general hospitals. If the health centres are properly staffed—and we graduate about 30 doctors a year in this country—it is a question of money. Pay them properly; make sure that they work at the health centres; provide the necessary staff in terms of nurses and medicines; we will take a tremendous burden off the general hospitals. As I said, some method, some arrangement must be put in place whereby we can only go to the general hospital—certainly within the times that the health centre is open—on referral by a doctor from the health centres.

What about the national health insurance? I am hoping that the Minister, when he speaks, will give us some information on this.

The crisis in the health system is further exacerbated by the fact that a large number of our trained nurses are migrating to greener pastures. We read the newspapers every day and you will see advertisements for opportunities for our nurses to go abroad. Again, it is all a question of money to a large extent. It is unfair, really, to the citizens of this country and even to the Government to have our trained nurses migrate, but the solution, obviously, is in the hands of the Government. We have heard it often enough that if you are sick in this country and you cannot afford a private doctor or a private health institution, you are perhaps as good as dead.

I wish to comment a little on education. It is fair to say that the Ministry of Education is experiencing its worst nightmares. Again, you ask anybody, ask John Public what he thinks of this ministry, one will hardly hear anything complimentary. I will leave this ministry, to some extent, for my colleague, the Member for Laventille East/Morvant, to deal with. However, before I do so, I wish to impress upon the Government that with the massive school building exercise being projected in this fiscal year, that it ensures that the schools being built are built properly in accordance with the highest engineering standards. Too often, we have seen newly built schools showing visible signs of poor

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construction. All these new schools will require additional teachers and these teachers will want to be properly compensated; not only properly compensated, they will want to be properly protected.

Mr. Speaker, could you imagine the shock of citizens when they opened the *Daily Express* today and read an article entitled, "Teacher raped in front of her charges". This is what is happening in this country. I am just quoting from an article in today's *Daily Express*. It talks about a teacher being raped in a kindergarten school in East Trinidad about 2 p.m.

**Mr. Partap:** Private kindergarten.

**Mr. B. Sinanan:** It does not matter!

Mr. Speaker, again, in today's *Trinidad Guardian*, on the front page, "Asbestos alarm. Protests at three schools as teachers seek answers. Students' health in jeopardy. Sewer problem at law school closes senior comprehensive. Sewerage messing up education". Mr. Speaker, whilst I complimented the Minister of Public Utilities on providing a little more water, may I suggest to him to look at the other aspects of WASA, and that is the sewer disposal.

As I said before, the budget statement talks about building a fair amount of schools, it also talks about teachers. Whilst we know that there is a great migration of nurses, to some extent, we have seen in this country advertisements for teachers to work in our Caribbean islands and further afield. There has begun a process of migration of teachers to greener pastures. For too long, teachers have not been adequately compensated. They have asked to be protected at their workplace, we have students beating teachers, parents beating teachers; all sorts of things going on in this Ministry of Education.

I am suggesting humbly to the minister that he works with TTUTA, work with his staff, certainly what is left of them, because one continues reading in the press that people leave his Ministry at an alarming rate. Lately, I think the public relations person has left. Mr. Minister, I am appealing to you to attempt to work with the staff, attempt to work with TTUTA, attempt to work with the principals and the secondary schools board and so forth, so when you leave the ministry, at least there will be something for the next PNM Minister of Education to salvage and put right in the shortest possible time.

**10.00 p.m.**

Mr. Speaker, I move now to housing. We all know that the stated policy of the Government, particularly, the Minister of Housing and Settlements and the

Member for St. Augustine, is to provide service lots. This is all well and good, by and large, I think the Government is doing a reasonably good job in providing service lots, with a couple of visible, to me, exceptions, one of which is at the Tarouba North project.

The Minister said that the contractor was fired, and that, to me, was over one year ago. One can see that place lies abandoned right at the end of the highway. When rain falls all the material is being washed away into that river and it is causing that whole bypass area to flood. All the material—the stone, the gravel and what have you—is washed away into a river that comes across and passes under the bypass and every time it rains there is a massive flood there. I hope the Minister would do what he has to do to get this project on its feet again.

As I say, it is all well and good to provide service lots. There are, in fact, a fair amount of our citizens who can afford these service lots to either purchase a house, built by the National Housing Authority, through a private arrangement with contractors, or to build their own houses. But what about those poor citizens in our country who cannot afford to purchase a service lot or to build a house? All governments owe a duty to our poorer citizens. We have a situation where this Government is not maintaining the existing National Housing Authority apartments throughout the country. Most of them are in a state of dilapidation. They are not being maintained, simply because the Minister is saying that the rents paid by these poor citizens are not economical. It cannot be used, it is not sufficient to afford remedial works and repairs to these buildings. Mr. Speaker, I think this is certainly the wrong attitude to adopt. When there are people living in squalor conditions, all sorts of ills emanate from a situation like that. There is a criminal element that grows up; there is a breakdown of family life and all sorts of things which leads to the decay of our society.

So I am appealing to the Minister and the Government, certainly in the short term, to please do something about those NHA apartments. They are really in shambles. You know we can find a lot of money: we hosted a Miss Universe show at Chaguaramas; we are building an airport; we are spending a lot of money, but our poor citizens are not the benefactors of any of this. Mr. Speaker, I am appealing to the hon. Minister to certainly do something about providing shelter for the poor citizens in our country.

I remember last year the Minister made a song and dance about selling tenanted NHA apartments. I told him then and the Minister of Finance is admitting now that that is but a maze. I do not think the Minister of Housing and Settlements thought out the process. It just came to him that they are going to sell

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NHA apartments. He so wants to rid himself of the responsibility of these NHA apartments, he wants to sell them. Mr. Speaker, it is a complicated legal process to sell those apartments. I am sure that the Ministry has a competent batch of legal personnel who can attend to this, but for one reason or the other, it has not been done.

The Leader of the Opposition spoke about the disgraceful situation with respect to the John John Towers apartments, and it is amazing that after four years the Government is leaving those apartments empty and they are decaying. It is taxpayers' money that is going to waste there.

There is the situation at Aranguez—when one passes on the Priority Bus Route, one will see all these buildings totally empty. They were advertised for sale some time ago. No buyers. It is there. It is locked up. It is going to waste. I am happy to see the Minister recognizing the difficulty suffered some years ago by some of our citizens who invested in Southern Finance. This was a Finance Company. Mr. Speaker, do you remember after the fall-out of the economic boom, a fair amount of finance companies went bust and had to be bailed out by the Deposit Insurance Corporation. Southern Finance had most of its depositors from the South and I am happy to see that the Minister has recognized that these people have suffered over the years, and is directing the staff of the Ministry of Finance to work with the Central Bank to determine some *ex gratia* payment. All I can ask the Minister is to do that very quickly.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to give praise where praise is due and to recognize the increase in the pension of government employees that the Minister of Finance has afforded public servants that have retired. Nothing big!—well, it is not even sufficient but he has made an attempt to alleviate the situation, and for that, I wish to thank him.

Mr. Speaker, I have a particular likeness for Tobago. I go there, perhaps, once a year, and Tobago is changing, as we all know. It is becoming a tourist destination. We have a lot of flights coming into Tobago. I alluded to the fact of the problems at the Scarborough Hospital, but look what has happened to the relationship between Trinidad and Tobago, and you ask yourself, why? Let us be honest. What has happened? Tobago provided the opportunity for the UNC, under the Member for Couva North, to form the Government. Because of that, perhaps for two years, the Government did not look after Tobago in the way it ought to. It allowed the Tobago House of Assembly to do its own thing.

**10.10 p.m.**

Now that things are not good between the Tobago House of Assembly (THA) and the Government, we have a conflict of opinions between the Chairman of the THA and the powers that be in Trinidad. Look at what has become of that relationship, when just a matter of three years ago Tobago was responsible for putting this Government in office. Mr. Speaker, I am hoping—we have two Members here from Tobago, one is in Government and one is not; I would really like to see the situation in Tobago improve. Again, we need to dialogue and forget the fact that “I was criticized by the Chairman and the Chairman criticized me and so forth.” I think that we need to harmonize our two island states. We do not need to create a situation where, because of indifferences and hardened attitudes, we have the people of Tobago, and certainly the politicians, talking about secession. Mr. Speaker, if that were to happen it would be a very sad day in our republic. So I am appealing to all parties to put their differences aside, let good sense prevail and bring back Tobago into harmony with Trinidad. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, I want to now refer a little to certain aspects of the Public Sector Investment Programme. When you look at the opening statement in the document provided to us, “*The Public Sector Investment Programme, 1999/2000*”, you would see that during the last fiscal year the programme had allocated to it, \$1,097.1 million. Of this amount, there was a total expenditure of \$667.5 million, or 61 per cent of planned investment. How well do I recall in 1996 and 1997, the hon. Minister of Planning and Development lambasting the PNM for not being able to implement and spend money. Here it is we are seeing progressively, or certainly over the last three years, that very thing he complained about, he is unable to have his ministers do. Money is allocated and cannot be spent.

This year we have a massive figure being projected for the fiscal year; three times, certainly the amount that was spent, and 50 per cent more than was budgeted for the previous year. We ask ourselves again, would this money be spent? Mr. Speaker, we know that an election year is perhaps next year, I am only hoping and appealing to the Government, please, if the money is available, do not waste it, spend it wisely and make sure you get value for your money. Too often governments spend money in election year and do not get value for it. It is wasted, and this Government is noted for wasting and not getting value for money.

**Mr. Sudama:** To which government are you referring?

**Mr. B. Sinanan:** Here is what page 2 of the Minister’s document says:

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“The rate of utilisation of resources allocated for the 1998/1999 PSIP indicates that the change to a new fiscal year has not had as significant an impact as expected on the overall rate of implementation. While the change allowed for physical progress on some projects to be accelerated during the dry season, January to June, its overall impact was offset by impediments to implementation which some executing agencies continue to experience, in particular insufficient project management capacity, lengthy delays in procurement of goods and services and in difficulties experienced in the funding situation, particularly in the earlier part of year.”

When you listen to platitudes of the other side, how they are good managers, this statement certainly belies that fact.

**Mr. Speaker:** The speaking time of the hon. Member for San Fernando West has expired.

*Motion made*, that the hon. Member’s speaking time be extended by 30 minutes. [Dr. K. Rowley]

*Question put and agreed to.*

**Mr. B. Sinanan:** I thank you, Mr. Speaker, and hon. Members on both sides of the House for extending my speaking time.

I wish to refer to page 8 of the PSIP document under the heading “Drainage”. We all recall the Caparo River and the flooding that took place. I distinctly remember the publicity attending the Minister of Works and Transport when he undertook the massive dredging of that Caparo River and he boasted then that flooding was a thing of the past. Lo and behold, the heavens opened, rain fell and the whole of Couva, and moreso Chaguanas was flooded out.

Then we had the Minister of Public Utilities and I think the Minister of Housing and Settlements; they went in, again flooding was a thing of the past. They spent money, two weeks after rains fell and the place flooded out again. On the first occasion, I distinctly recall the Prime Minister saying to the people there—I cannot recall what he said but he made some trite remark about looking at the view, while he jetted off to play golf in Tobago.

Mr. Speaker, let us talk about roads. When we talk about roads we can talk about the Solomon Hochoy Highway—certainly I talk about it—the South Trunk Road, Mosquito Creek, the airport, the library, and the road at the end of the highway near Tarouba and at the technical institute. We can also talk about the loss of the San Fernando City Corporation to the UNC, and this is one common

thread in all of this: that is the hon. Minister of Works and Transport. To say that the Solomon Hochoy Highway project is a total disaster and a national disgrace, is to put it mildly.

Here we have had a highway being constructed, Members of Parliament, certainly the Minister of Works and Transport is one of them, the Member for Naparima, the Member for Tabaquite, the Member for Pointe-a-Pierre, and the Member for Couva South all travelling on that road. Do you know what this document talks about? It talks about poor materials. Imagine that! All of them passing on that road day and night seeing the material, and it took them two years to stop that project. All of us and moreso those who are in charge passing there. [*Interruption*] You do not have to be an engineer. There were articles in the press by all and sundry talking about the earthfill and the wrong material being used for the construction; all of us. [*Crosstalk*] But the Minister of Works and Transport is passing there everyday. [*Interruption*] Even if he is not an engineer he has engineers in the Ministry. Two years before he stops it!

Mr. Speaker, do you know what he has done now? He has patched the road, and you notice, any time they are found wanting, there is no big fanfare. The road was opened—

**Hon. Member:** Like a thief in the night.

**Mr. B. Sinanan:** Less than a thief in the night. They opened that road very quietly, because it is certainly an embarrassment. It is a total embarrassment and shame on this Government for having to put citizens travelling on that road through two years of dire hell.

The *Express* newspaper of Thursday 17 states:

“Re-opened highway rough but usable.

Works and Transport Minister Sadiq Baksh, who gave this assurance, said the Government had decided to re-open the entire stretch of highway. This would make life easier for motorists who have had to face massive traffic jams for more than a year...”

I think it was two years.

“while that section of the highway was under repair.

There will be full flow of two-lane traffic in both directions without any hindrance,” Baksh said.

But Baksh conceded that there was still a lot of work to be done on the multi-million-dollar highway.

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‘It will be a bit rough but it is usable and that is what the people want.’

It took him two years to figure that out: “It is rough but that is what the people want.”

Here is what he said:

“This highway is too important for us to allow delays and wastage.”

Can you imagine that! After two years of delays and wastage, millions of taxpayers' money down the drain, he has now discovered that the best thing to do is patch the road and open it.

**Mr. Bereaux:** The statement of the year.

**Mr. B. Sinanan:** Mr. Speaker, the South Trunk Road—the Minister of Works and Transport, and my good friend from Naparima, would know the stretch, right at the interchange going down to Kentucky. That road was resurfaced, big fanfare. Do you know that within the span of about three months, the whole thing had to be dug up and repaved? Poor work! The Minister of Works and Transport is doing cosmetic work throughout this country. If those on that side are honest enough—they are now putting it on the Minister of Local Government. He has now taken over roads and, in this regard, I would like to thank him because I have asked him to do certain roads in my constituency and he has done them. [*Interruption*]

In fairness to him, he has done certain roads in my constituency, particularly in Gulf View [*Interruption*] If I did not ask him to do it he would not have. I begged him to do it and he did. I am calling upon him today; there are two other roads, which I spoke to him about in Gulf View: Daniel Avenue, and Windy Drive. Well, “doh” talk about Palmiste, Mr. Speaker. Would you believe that the Minister of Works and Transport is supposed to be living in Palmiste?

Mr. Speaker, I am the Member of Parliament for that area. I have written to the Minister of Works and Transport and I am now writing to the Minister of Local Government. That is an area in which they have a lot of support, so I ask, why do they not fix the roads? The roads in Palmiste are the worst! I recall a good and famous San Fernandian, Minister Ralph would know him, Bunny Dieffenthaller, saying to the honourable Prime Minister, “Do you remember when you used to walk these roads in Palmiste? Perhaps you would be walking those roads soon.” But I know that the Prime Minister would not be walking those roads soon again, at all; not those roads.

Mr. Speaker, the roads in Palmiste are deplorable, and when you look at the number of people living in that housing development and contributing to the road



tax, Mr. Minister of Local Government you know the problem, you have seen it. I am challenging you, before the next election, to fix all those roads in Palmiste. [*Desk thumping*] I do not know that you are going to fix them, but I am challenging you to fix them.

**10.25 p.m.**

Mr. Speaker, we are talking about roads. To get to the South, to the Atlantic LNG Plant, to Trinmar, one has to come down the Solomon Hochoy Highway, make a loop and come through the road by the technical institute. I do not know when last you were in the South, but we have Ministers of Government, important visitors to the country having to travel that road, and when you reach the end of the Solomon Hochoy Highway and you are making the loop, it is a disgrace.

Mr. Speaker, we are talking about a piece of roadway that is perhaps 300 feet at most, and it has never been repaired in three years and ten months. There is a little gravel being put. Do not talk about the road in front of the technical institute. It is a good thing we only have one female Member of Parliament who travels that route. I am speaking of the hon. Minister and Member for Siparia. Let me not get there, Mr. Speaker, but if one is in labour and has to pass that road, one would certainly have her child before she reaches the hospital, because that road is totally hopeless. Again, I am appealing to the Government. This is a road that links Port of Spain to San Fernando and we are talking about 300 feet of roadway. Please, if the Minister of Works and Transport cannot do it, put the action man, the "Sheriff" to do it. Let him do it.

**Mr. Bureaux:** Let the waist do it.

**Mr. B. Sinanan:** The Government Members have admitted it, they are only not saying it, but the Minister of Works and Transport is a total failure. He failed them in the last election, but they would not tell you that. Ask them. Promised San Fernando, lost; promised Arima, lost. That is why I am telling him to fix the roads in Palmiste. He is going to increase my majority if he does that, and I will thank him for doing it.

Mr. Speaker, Mosquito Creek, and I see the Member for Couva South is enjoying this. I do not know why. Mosquito Creek, big fanfare, big opening. They dredged one side of the road, again millions of dollars and the place is still flooding. They now realize they have to extend the height of the wall. This is what I am talking about. A lot of money is budgeted to spent under the PSIP; I am begging you for the country's sake do not waste it, do not splurge it. Make sure you get value for money. Please do not throw away the money because this country and this society will not forgive you.

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Look at the situation at the airport. Again, the Minister of Works and Transport; the library project, the Minister of Works and Transport. I can now see why the burden is so heavy on the Minister of Local Government. You all have written off the Minister of Works and Transport—you all must say so, do not be afraid to say so. If you notice, Mr. Speaker, you hardly see him in the press. One would recall the first two years in Government, he was all over the place. I said to him; “Minister, the way you are moving, you are going to get a heart attack, slow down.” All over the place doing nothing. Cosmetic job. Many of us have experienced the lack of support by the Minister of Works and Transport. I am sure the Member for Barataria/San Juan has experienced that.

Mr. Speaker, I have alluded to sewerage. In the schools we have problems with the sewerage system, in Palmiste, and in these residential areas, in Orchard Gardens. The system in Palmiste has not worked for years. I know you visited there some time ago and promised the residents to fix it. You said then you were waiting for some loan and I hope that you will keep your promise. It is there, we have it documented in the PSIP and in the Minister’s statement that the sewerage system in Palmiste will be repaired. I am calling upon the Minister to fulfil his promises.

Mr. Speaker, under Communication in the PSIP document—as Members of Parliament, we have all enjoyed the facility of free postage, now with the advent of Trinidad and Tobago Post, I am told that this facility is withdrawn. As Members of Parliament, we do not enjoy the privileges of putting our MP stamp on correspondence to our constituents. I would hope that the Government would address this. For years, Members of Parliament have enjoyed the privilege of free postage, this is now withdrawn and certainly you are talking about service to our constituents. It is a heavy burden to put on the Members of Parliament to pay for postage.

Mr. Speaker, San Fernando Waterfront. We have heard this as a form of election gimmick. “Fool San Fernandians”. It has been there, I am told it has been approved and still there is no San Fernando Waterfront. No taxi hub. I am appealing to the Government, please get started on the waterfront, get started on the taxi hub.

Mr. Speaker, a little on taxes. In this country it is said that we pay too high a rate of income tax, 35 per cent corporation tax and I think 35 per cent personal income tax, and we have to pay VAT at 15 per cent. Mr. Speaker, you take the average person, middle class family, buying a piece of land to build a house. If that land exceeds \$400,000 in value, stamp duty is charged at 7 per cent. He then

has to pay VAT on purchases of the material to build that house and yet he is paying income tax at 35 per cent. The taxes are too high in this country.

If you take a residential property, if it exceeds \$500,000, the tax rate is 10 per cent. Could you imagine that? If one were to purchase a house between \$300,000 and \$400,000 it is 5 per cent, between \$400,000 and \$500,000 it is 7 1/2 per cent and over \$500,000, it is 10 per cent, so you are talking about \$42,500.00 in stamp duty. You are not necessarily helping the poor because there are ways and means of getting around that, what you are doing is encouraging people to squirm around it. Say they are buying a house for \$800,000, they will tell you they are buying it for \$300,000 or \$400,000 to lower the stamp duty. People do it, because the cost is too high. I am appealing to the Government to look at stamp duty, it is a heavy burden on the population.

Mr. Speaker, I see the Minister telegraphing to the country, I do not understand why he did not do it in his budget presentation. He chose an audience at the American Chamber to indicate that, perhaps in the next budget, he will be reducing income and corporation tax. Perhaps this is an election gimmick. Waste money—in this coming year, he may be lucky that the oil price may remain as high as it is now—and then attempt to fool the other section of the society by saying he is going to reduce taxes. I am appealing again to the Government, it has budgeted \$1.5 million in the PSIP and I am saying if you have the money to spend, please spend it on things that are needed by the society, spend it prudently and make sure you get value for money. It makes no sense wasting all the money and at the end of the day, you have no value.

In closing, there was an article in the *Sunday Express* which really took me aback. You see, I like to quote the *Express* Harry, perhaps you had a hand in it. It is dated September 26, and written by Raffique Shah. The article is headlined *Waiting to explode*". You must read it. He talks about Members of past PNM administrations and Members in this present administration. It is there, it is a fact. You all always throw that at us. In every administration if you get clean hands throughout, it is a miracle. It happens all over the world, we are not perfect. All he is saying here is that some are "thieving" more than others. You cannot fool the people. Everybody knows that. It would be instructive. I will give you a tip. Instead of travelling in your fancy cars you must take public transport and listen to people. Disguise yourself and listen to what people have to say.

**Mr. D. Singh:** You "does" do that?

**Mr. B. Sinanan:** Yes, I do that and I can tell you that all is not easy in your constituency, they are talking about you. I heard that in a taxi.

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Mr. Speaker, I commend this article because the journalist is comparing past PNM administrations to the present administration and is saying what everybody in this country is saying; that some members of past PNM administrations—to put it in the vernacular—“tief”. What he is saying about the present administration is that it has surpassed everybody. And he is not saying anything that John Public is not saying, John Public is saying that. I do not understand why it has to be like this.

Mr. Speaker I would quote a few paragraphs where he talks about the InnCogen power plant. It says:

“The InnCogen power plant, which has quietly eased into generating power that is presumably being bought by T&TEC, was meant to have been a co-generating plant. That is, its primary purpose was to supply power to the Innercob industries and sell the excess to T&TEC. Well, the power is on, T&TEC is buying, taxpayers are paying for it...

Those industries, incidentally, that the Prime Minister had primed up sugar workers to prepare themselves to man, his gift to them to escape the sugar cane fields.

But Innercob/InnCogen is just the tip of a very scandalous situation. Over the past few weeks, in my capacity as a journalist, I have done some work on the proposed desalination plant.”

#### **10.40 p.m**

The award of that contract, believe me, stinks. And it’s not just the question about whether or not we need desalination in a country that floods every time a dark cloud floats in from the East. It is the way the authorities decided that they needed such a plant, and, having done that, the obscene manner in which they sealed a deal with Karamath Engineering/Ionics. Since my position on desalination is clear (I see no need for such a plant), I have no interest to serve or defend. Still, I cannot sit idly and see citizens being taken for a billion-dollar-ride...

In the worst days of PNM banditry, you could not tell the scrunting people of Laventille or Carenage or Morvant that they were casting their votes for bandits. Today, if you mention corruption in relation to the UNC Government, diehard party supporters will tell you: ‘De PNM t’ief too!’ Or worse, ‘Why yuh didn’t open your mouth when de PNM was t’iefing?’ If I were to reply that Basdeo Panday, George Weekes and I stood on platforms and savaged the PNM for corruption, it won’t make a difference. So I don’t waste my breath.

But the seething anger my friend referred to, that feeling that the Government is taking the entire nation for fools, is what bothers me. Many people insist that one day the masses will just rise up and take things in their own hands. If that does happen, it won't be the first time that the oppressed will have exploded into violence. Only this time around, having learnt from the mistakes of 1970 fools like me, they won't balk at bloodshed. And those who expect to 'wake up when it's over' may find they will never wake up at all. That's scary."

**Mr. Sudama:** And the man is preaching violence.

**Mr. B. Sinanan:** But I do not know. You are saying that he is preaching violence. To me, I think Raffique Shah is putting this whole nation on alert. *[Interruption]* No! He is only echoing what is being said outside. This is what is being said outside.

When this honourable House was stormed in 1990, nobody thought that it could happen and we sit and carry on in this country as if it cannot happen again, and I am telling you that it is the easiest thing to happen. Are you all living in Trinidad? Are you all so consumed in your activities that you are not studying good governance?

Mr. Speaker, as I said, I read this article and I was taken aback. When citizens read an article like this they are frightened. Investors—there are people coming here and seeing something like this. They are seeing what is happening. You know, let me say this and it is the truth. It is fair to say—and I have been told this—that when this Government came into power, it came with a fair amount of goodwill even from PNM supporters. That is a fact. And in a short space of time this Government destroyed the best opportunity it had to unify this nation. That is true. You all must admit it. You have squandered an opportunity, right! Many people will tell you that they were happy to see the hon. Member for Couva North be the Prime Minister of this country. I was told that and what has he done?

Mr. Speaker, I recalled reading one sentence from a chap called Robert Ramsamooj, and to me, this says it all. He talks about the Prime Minister playing golf in designer outfit and he says: "Sugar workers take that!"

Mr. Speaker, I thank you very much. *[Desk thumping]*

**The Minister of Trade and Industry & Consumer Affairs and Minister of Tourism (The Hon. Mervyn Assam):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank you for the opportunity given to me to join in this debate on a Bill entitled "An Act to provide

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for the Service of Trinidad and Tobago for the financial year ending on the 30<sup>th</sup> day of September, 2000.”

Mr. Speaker, we have had a number of presentations this evening, beginning with the Leader of the Opposition, the Member for San Fernando/East and we had from the Member for Arouca North, Toco/Manzanilla, and the Member for San Fernando West just took his seat. There was a common thread in most of the presentations, except for the URP specialist, the Member for Arouca North who spent most of his time dwelling on the subject of URP. But there was really a lot of repetition with respect to the presentation of the other three Members.

What was interesting, however, the difference between the last speaker and the others is that the last speaker—I must say in the four years that he has entered this house—has in fact grown as a debater and as a parliamentarian [*Desk thumping*] because I remember his first two speeches were extremely brief and very disappointing, but he has certainly grown and evolved into a debater and parliamentarian. He does make some very interesting and meaningful contributions from time to time, and for this I think he should be congratulated.

The second difference in terms of the presentation where he departs from the others, he has demonstrated a sense of *noblesse oblige*. It does not matter what this side does. It does not matter what we have achieved or accomplished, you will never hear a Member on that side admitting or congratulating any Member on this side. It is very reassuring that we still have human beings in Opposition, who can speak the truth and be honest and who can say that the Member for Point-a-Pierre, the hon. Minister of Local Government has done this for me, and the Member for-so-and-so has done that for me and I think for that, I wish to congratulate him—not only for his *noblesse oblige*—but for his courage to stand in this House and say so. I think that is a very good sign that politics is maturing in this country. [*Desk thumping*].

The third point of departure is when he read the article written by Raffique Shah, because for years this country has been alleging and accusing the PNM of corruption and how they have raided the Treasury and engaged in banditry. It is the first time, outside of an admission during the election campaign, when one of their members admitted “all ah we t’ief.” It is the first time that I have heard a Member of the PNM, admitting publicly and in the Parliament and agreeing with a journalist that, in fact, the PNM were a bunch of bandits and they had engaged in widespread corruption. It was just a matter of degree. That is interesting because they say open confession is good for the soul— [*Interruption*]

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. Order.

**Hon. M. Assam:** —and I am sure that you will go home tonight fully cleansed because I intend to absolve you—*absolvo te peccatis tuis*. [Laughter] Yes! I absolve you from your sins and you will go home tonight fully healed. [Interruption] All of us are priests if you do not know that. I must remind you of the Bible: we are all priests. You do not understand it and you say that you are a born again Christian?

I think it is a very good sign to have the Member for San Fernando West demonstrating these qualities although, unfortunately, his sojourn in this Parliament might be short-lived and we may not have the continuing benefit of that kind of person in a leadership position in the country.

**10.50 p.m.**

However, you know, he made a few errors as he went along and—of course, to err is human and I forgive him for his errors—decided to attack the budget on the basis that it did not have substance, it did not do this and it did not do that. You know, I am amazed that for a budget that is a non-issue, as they have described it, a non-document, a non-everything, every one of the Members on that side who spoke took almost 75 minutes to comment on a non-issue, a non-event and a non-document. I am amazed!

I remember when I was at university there was a professor who taught me developmental economics and he had to do a book review on a book written by one of his peers. Do you know in the book review how he described it? He said one line, “This is a non-book”, and he signed his name. That is what you should have said. You should have got up and said, “This is a non-budget, it is a non-event, it is a non-issue” and, like my good friend in his maiden speech in this Parliament, the Member for San Fernando West who said, “Like the former speaker, I have nothing to say”, and he sat down, that is what you should have done. However, it merely shows that this is a provocative document. It has to be a provocative document for all of you to engage in debate for 75 minutes and yet to describe it as a non-issue, a non-event and a non-budget.

Another criticism of the budget was that it did not contain all the details and, therefore, it was hidden, it was vague and there was no explanation. But what is the purpose, Mr. Speaker, of having *Draft Estimates of Revenue for the Financial Year* where every bit of revenue and its derivatives are explained in the document? What is the purpose of the *Medium Term Policy Framework*— [Interruption]

**Mr. Speaker:** Order please, order please, order please!

**Hon. M. Assam:**—which informs the underpinnings of the budget? You say the budget has no philosophical underpinnings but you have the *Medium Term Policy Framework* which is there. What is the purpose of the *Review of the Economy* which tells you exactly what road we have travelled and how we got there during the last financial period? So, really, I do not understand, Mr. Speaker, all of the very unfortunate criticisms levelled by the four speakers here this evening.

However, you know, the Member for San Fernando West fell into another trap. He said that taxes in this country are too high. When the NAR got into office in 1986 to 1991 that government began to revolutionize and reform the tax system of the country. They were the ones who introduced VAT, they are the ones who said they want the country to move in a certain direction and they reduced income tax and corporation tax and introduced the indirect tax system.

Do you know what happened, Mr. Speaker, when that government came into office in 1991 to 1995 with their so-called brilliant Minister of Finance who is now a great beneficiary of a lot of this Government's work? Do you know what this government did, his government, the government led by the former Prime Minister, Member for San Fernando East? They immediately increased income tax. They immediately increased corporation tax and they brought in some of the most nuisance taxes that the world has ever seen.

Do you know what they did? They imposed a six per cent tax on general insurance premium. They introduced a transaction tax where, whenever one went to the bank to buy a draft or to get a letter to do anything, one had to pay a transaction tax. They introduced all kinds of taxes that were of nuisance value in order to collect a little \$100,000.00 here and another \$150,000.00 there, without realizing that when one begins to impose taxation one must look at the cost of administration and the convenience of administering that tax. That is what the brilliant former Minister of Finance did under the leadership of this former Prime Minister, Member for San Fernando East.

It is amazing that you can come here this evening and say that our taxes are too high when your Prime Minister, the fellow who leads you now, with his Minister of Finance increased all kinds of taxes notwithstanding the fact that 15 per cent VAT had already been imposed by the NAR administration. [*Interruption*] Yes, go ahead.

**Mr. Manning:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. Minister for giving way. Just for the record, the Minister is quite right that in our first year we did, in fact, increase



taxation but that was in a particular circumstance, and we were committed to reducing tax and indeed announced a regime of taxation in 1995 to which this Government has not adhered. Perhaps the hon. Minister would like to tell us why.

**Hon. M. Assam:** What the Member for San Fernando East said is not correct. For every one of the four years that he led that government they increased taxes in one form or another. They introduced a business levy. He seems to have a short memory. I was going to say maybe he is looking at the Member for Diego Martin East. For every year of your administration during which you led, your Minister of Finance, under your leadership increased taxes or introduced a new tax, so do not come tonight and say differently. I have done the research and I am on solid ground. [*Interruption*]

Oh, I do not have to bother with you, man. You are a waste of time. The point is, Mr. Speaker, do not come here this evening and accuse this Government of a high tax regime when, in fact, you were the ones who reversed the whole tax philosophy of the NAR and set us on the path of higher and new and increased taxes during the four sorry years that you led this country.

**The Attorney General (Hon. Ramesh Lawrence Maharaj):** Mr. Speaker, I am indebted to the hon. Member for St. Joseph for giving way and interrupting his contribution in order for me to move the adjournment of the House to Monday, October 18, 1999 at 10.00 a.m.

Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this House do now adjourn to Monday, October 18 at 10.00 a.m.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*House adjourned accordingly.*

*Adjourned at 10.58 p.m.*