

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 19, 1999

The House met at 10.00 a.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 Arima who has asked to be excused from sittings between today and October 22, 1999. The leave that he sought is granted.

**APPROPRIATION BILL
(BUDGET)**

[FOURTH DAY]

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on question [October 08, 1999]:

That the Bill be now read a second time.

Question again proposed.

Dr. The Hon. A. Nanan: Mr. Speaker, yesterday when I spoke in this honourable House, I spoke about post primary students. I want to continue for a short while with this particular topic.

When I came into office in 1995, the top 100 post primary students had access to secondary schools. Today in 1999, 1,600 post primary students can access secondary school places. At the junior secondary level, we have the 14-plus examination and, again, there was a problem in terms of shortage of secondary school places. We are providing secondary school places for students leaving the junior secondary schools. How did we do this? We

created positions for 120 Teacher 1s for post primary centres. We also bought secondary school places. In 1996, 11 post primary centres were built. These included schools like La Horquetta North Government; La Horquetta South Government; and Maloney Government. In 1999, there was the extension to post primary centres; six existing post primary centres were extended. This included the Point Cumana Government Post Primary Centre.

The Government of Trinidad and Tobago and the Ministry of Education utilized a bifurcated approach. While providing more secondary school teachers for post primary centres, we also purchased places in private secondary schools. I

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ask this morning: why could the previous Minister of Education not do that for the students? Why did they have to wait for this administration? I will tell you why, Mr. Speaker, because under the previous administration, they were not concerned with the child being at the centre of the education system. In fact, the way the PNM went about the delivery of education, one would think that publishers, caterers, authors, principals, vice principals and civil servants should have benefited from the education system. But we have put the child, the student at the centre of the education system, and we continue to do so.

At the Pleasantville Senior Comprehensive School a wall was built in that school. It is being hidden from the public. The Member for San Fernando East is aware of that. That wall costs more than half a million dollars. The science block at that school is a priority now, as it was then, but the wall was constructed. I want to know who is the contractor? I will ask the Member for San Fernando East if it was a party supporter who got the contract for the wall. But, we will manage that situation properly. That is why we have asked Petrotrin to assist us and we will not be pushed into any confrontation, because this Government is putting the student first, our precious resource, our human resource, our jewels, our gems, our dew drops glistening on the cheek of time. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, at our A'levels, again: why was there this shortage under the previous administration? Did they not recognize that over 1,080 students in this country could not have accessed an A'level place? No, it is under this administration, that in 1999, as the Minister of Education, I can stand here and say that we have placed all A'level students who have qualified for A'level places in Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] Over 1,080 students are gaining places for A'levels for higher secondary education.

Mr. Speaker, A'level students, again, have been marginalized in terms of age. Recently, I made an announcement that I would lift the age by one year to facilitate more students doing A'levels. Why could the previous administration not do that? Of course, they would say, shortage of A'level places, but it was easy to fill that gap and provide more places. We are spending \$6 million annually to provide that facility for A'level students. We have employed 54 more teachers in our secondary schools; again we are using a bifurcated approach. We have put A'level students in existing schools and are running the A'level programme, and we are also buying places in private secondary schools. So we have filled that gap. I have lifted the age for the A'level students so more students will be able to access higher secondary education. All in the interest of Government's student-centred learning. That is what we are about.

Yesterday when I spoke in this honourable House, the Member for Laventille East/Morvant, my good friend—but he will get some blame this morning, Mr. Speaker. I will tell you why. Success R.C. Primary School was finished under this administration, apparently he is not aware of that, but I am informing you of that. We finished that, we have not officially opened it, but we are coming to open it shortly. We gave them one computer. But I want to inform this honorable House that apparently he has a lapse in memory or he probably is not aware that when I came into office in 1995, there were 152 computers in primary schools—Macintosh and the IBM Company. I wonder if the Member for San Fernando East had any kind of dealings with anybody affiliated with the IBM Company? They provided the Macintosh computers in this country, 152 computers at primary schools. Today, that former government should be condemned! If one could find ten working Macintosh computers in this country, one would find plenty, not one of those 152 computers which were delivered. No maintenance contract for all of those computers.

In the contribution of the Member for San Fernando East, no wonder he did not speak about technology, I wanted to ask the Member for San Fernando East if he is computer literate. And if he is not, the Minister of Information, Communications, Training and Distance Learning could run a programme for him. [*Desk thumping*]

In 1995, under that previous administration, not one single computer was given to secondary schools in this country. Not a single computer! Why is that? Did they not know that there is a technology revolution for the 21st Century? Who were they preparing for the 21st Century? We are preparing for the 21st Century. In 1999, we have 43 computer labs connected to the Internet and, to date, 88 secondary schools in this country are outfitted with computer labs, 10 computers or more. That is what this Government is about, preparing our students for the 21st Century.

Not only do we have computer labs; we have a training programme in place. Fifty-four secondary school teachers were trained at the University of the West Indies to deliver the CXC information technology syllabus. We are planning for that 21st Century revolution in technology.

So we have been able to put computers in our secondary schools, something that the previous administration failed to do, something which is necessary. I do not know if they were myopic or what they were looking at when they were planning for the education system in this country.

The computer revolution is under way in our schools and we are very happy to say that we have moved it further into our primary schools. Yesterday he spoke

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about one computer in Success R.C., but the Central Tenders Board awarded a contract recently to supply 21 computers in 35 primary schools. Each primary school could receive 31 computers. For my friend from Laventille East/Morvant, Rosary Boys' R.C. will receive 31 computers. Matura Government, I think that is in the constituency of Toco/Manzanilla, will receive either 12—15 computers because they are a small school. Diego Martin Boys' R.C.—a new school that is to be finished shortly, they are paving the yard—21 computers. Not Macintosh, you know, these are state-of-the-art computers we are talking about. Sacred Heart Girls' R.C., 21 computers. Belmont Government—I think he might be happy about that—21 computers.

Member for San Fernando East, I am quite amazed that in your contribution you did not even make mention of the San Fernando Anglican Primary School, apparently you forgot. But let me remind the honourable House that this administration is constructing the San Fernando Anglican Primary School. We are putting it in the constituency of San Fernando West. There is no nepotism, and I will demonstrate that here this morning. Our building programme is throughout Trinidad and Tobago, unlike theirs. I could make reference here in terms of what they did. St. Gabriel's Girls' R.C. will be receiving 21 computers shortly. San Fernando TML, again in your constituency, 21 computers and San Fernando Boys' R.C., 21 computers.

In the constituency of the Member of Parliament for Arouca South, La Horquetta North Government will be receiving 21 computers, and in the constituency of Arouca North, Five Rivers Hindu—Member, you should be smiling this morning—21 computers.

Mr. Narine: For people to thief. The school “ain't” have no doors, but they putting 21 computers. Fix the school first.

Dr. The Hon. A. Nanan: My friend from La Brea, who is not here this morning, La Brea R.C will be receiving 21 computers, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Hart: So it “ain't” have no school in Tunapuna?

Dr. The Hon. A. Nanan: Mr. Speaker, so we are busy preparing our students for the technology revolution. I do not know what the previous administration was doing. They speak about a White Paper and only plans, but we are a Government of action.

With regard to national scholarships, when they came into government in 1991 they met 50 national scholarships; when they demitted office in 1995, there were still 50 national scholarships. Mr. Speaker, to date, there are 67 national

scholarships. *[Desk thumping]* We have increased it from 50 to 67 and we intend to go even further. We are having discussions to see if we can reach that milestone of 100 national scholarships. *[Desk thumping]*

10.15 a.m.

Mr. Speaker, we have introduced, in 1998, a new grouping called the “Environmental Science Grouping” at the A’level examination. That grouping is in terms of the situation with our country and the environment. We are very concerned about the environment and we recognize that particular area is weak, so we are strengthening that area with our scholarship programme. *[Desk thumping]*

Recently, I made an announcement that we would be broadcasting video lessons for our primary school students taking their final Common Entrance Examinations. These video lessons are part of the Ministry’s revolution, in terms of bringing our students quality education. We are going to introduce video lessons to the students on January 3rd, 2000. It is all part of our thrust in broadcasting, using that opportunity we have had, but was never used by the previous administration, our great facility at Couva, where there is high-tech equipment in terms of audio, video and broadcasting. So we are going to produce our own materials to put into the education system, to enhance the curriculum.

With respect to the Caribbean Advance Proficiency Examination. We have heard talk about the Caribbean Advance Proficiency Examination and I say here that we, in Trinidad and Tobago, are holding a watching brief for the time being because there is no guarantee that students who are taking this Caribbean Advance Proficiency Examination, will have access to a United Kingdom University. Until we get that guarantee, we are holding a watching brief, all in the interest of our students. This Government is for the students in our country.

Mr. Speaker, when I came into office in 1995, there was a functional illiteracy problem. What did they do? We introduced a programme called “Operation read me now” and I am proud to say that in 1999, over 1500 adults participated in that programme. That is the kind of reach-out from the Ministry of Education and this Government of Trinidad and Tobago. What did they do?

In terms of morale and values education, Cabinet recently approved the Curriculum Officer for that particular aspect, and that is going to be introduced into the curriculum. It is part of the recommendation coming down from the total quality council. Another aspect, in terms of that area is health and family life education. I am happy to say that we have had that backing from UNICEF, for the particular project. That project is one originating at the Caricom level, in terms of

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introducing it throughout Caricom. That is all in the interest of the students. We have our Student's Learning Centre, Mr. Speaker.

Recently, I announced also that we will make results of secondary schools public, and that is in the interest of students. Again, as we move towards the 21st Century, it is time that we lift this veil of secrecy that the previous administration put on the education system. So we are going to do it here.

Another area that we are looking at is the linking of our district offices to head office, using an internet arrangement. For years, teachers and principals, from all over the country, must come to our head office for information; a loss of manpower hours and we are introducing that kind of communication bridge to facilitate teachers and principals especially in our rural areas.

I am delighted to say that this academic year we started the programme of Spanish in our primary schools. Mr. Speaker, Venezuela is only 11 miles away from our point at Cedros and 24 miles away from the North. We recognized that our Latin American neighbours are one of the biggest trading partners, and we must be able to capitalize on that particular market in terms of economic investment. So I am happy to announce here that conversational Spanish is being taught in over 53 primary schools in Trinidad and Tobago for this academic year.

With respect to our school nutrition programme, we have moved from 1996 of 76,000 meals per today to 1999, 78,000 meals. We have introduced additional meals to children from the senior comprehensive and secondary schools as well as some increased to primary and pre-schools.

As I talk about Students' Support Services, I want to speak here about the schools' transport system, and the neglect of the rural areas in this country by the previous administration. Mr. Speaker, we have had several requests from communities with respect to our school transport system. We have opened up 16 new routes in areas like Barrackpore, Tabaquite, Toco, Bonasse Naive, Barrackpore and Williamsville. *[Interruption]* Mr. Speaker, there are different parts of Barrackpore in case the Member for Diego Martin West does not know. We are facilitating the students going to our secondary schools in our rural communities. This is something that they never even considered so that our students will have the benefit of a proper secondary education—they do not have to get up in the “wee” hours of the mornings and journey to those schools in the rural communities.

Our visionary Prime Minister, the hon. Basdeo Panday, is piloting the removal of the Common Entrance Examination in this country. A significant contributor to

this particular effort is the signing of the US \$105 million loan with the Industrial Development Bank (IDB), and Government's contribution is US \$45 million. Our programme is called "Secondary Education Modernization". This particular programme is far-reaching. It spans the entire secondary school system. It will include the upgrading of science laboratories; there will be multi-media facilities in all secondary schools; there will also be curriculum changes; we are looking at putting a core curriculum in our secondary schools, and there is a new aspect, in terms of technological and vocational education and training.

Mr. Speaker, we are going to build 10 new secondary schools for September, 2000. These schools have been designated, using a survey undertaken by a Swedish company, so these schools are being built in areas where there is a need. When I listened to the Member for Diego Martin East yesterday he spoke about these schools, I would have thought that he would have congratulated this Government because we are building a secondary school in Toco/Manzanilla; we are building a secondary school in Matura; we are also building a secondary school in Valencia and I could go throughout Trinidad and Tobago in terms of need.

So that the Opposition should congratulate this Government because this programme cuts across, both Government and Opposition. Yesterday I said that education is the great equalizer and this programme is what we are going to use to level the playing field in terms of the improvement of our secondary education.

10.25 a.m.

Mr. Speaker, I want to touch a little on our denominational boards. This Government's policy is to deepen and broaden the arrangement between the denominational boards and the state. If you look at our Public Sector Investment Programme you are going to see new secondary schools in the Caroni district; a district that for years has been marginalized. These poor students in Caroni have to venture outside of their district, again, travelling, having to get up very early in the morning to access secondary education. So we are providing more secondary schools in Caroni to bridge that gap. There will be two secondary schools built in that area: Charlieville/ASJA Boys' and Girls' and the Caroni Hindu School.

Mr. Speaker, this arrangement is with the denominational boards and we are looking at another model, which is being worked out with Bishop Anstey Association to facilitate two secondary schools in Trincity. These are going to be on a build-only-transfer and the terms and conditions have almost been finalized. So there will be two new secondary schools in Trincity, all with the emphasis on this Government's policy that a child must be able to access secondary education. We are aiming at universal secondary education.

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The Minister of Finance in his budget speech made reference to a local school board. This will facilitate and enhance the management of our primary and secondary government schools. This local school board will also rekindle the community spirit that has been neglected or died under the previous administration. But we are going to rekindle the community spirit; we are going to bring the community back into our schools. We are very happy to engage that kind of programme where local school boards would be part of the landscape in Trinidad and Tobago.

Unification of the teaching service and delinking of the public service. I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the Cabinet-appointed committee led by the Chairman, Mr. Anthony Garcia, for their hard work, dedication and commitment in this particular exercise. They have handed in their report and it is to be submitted to Cabinet shortly, for consideration. Of course, this is a major plank with respect to improving the delivery of quality education in Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Speaker, the Concordat was signed on December 22, 1960. Cabinet appointed a committee to review the Concordat. The committee has since reported and that report is now subject to an interministerial committee, so that come the year 2000 there would be a new Concordat for Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Speaker, in terms of security for our primary schools I am pleased to announce that there would be an additional 43 primary schools on our high-risk list of schools. But the recurrent expenditure and capital costs are being paid by this Government. When I listened to the television and saw in St. Joseph, a member of staff speaking about Mr. Oliver, and that they are going to ask the President of Trinidad and Tobago Unified Teachers' Association to provide, I want this honourable House to know that the President of TTUTA is just a member of that committee. The Chairman is Mr. Latiff Gardiner who is the Manager of the Learning Resource Centre in Couva. Representations are made to that committee for schools to be brought on in terms of high risk. At the Mayaro Government School, a school that is very much in the news now, 24-hour security is earmarked.

I spoke yesterday in my contribution about this Government's thrust in terms of the security improvement and infrastructure, and I would just take a few minutes to demonstrate to this honourable House that there is no nepotism in our building programme. I want to start with the Member for San Fernando West because he is my good friend. He is in the vicinity of where I live and I am sure he is very happy to know that the San Fernando Anglican Primary School is almost completed. The students will be going into that school in January 2000.

The Member for St. Ann's East is not here but, again, the Maracas Presbyterian School is another school constructed by this administration. The constituency of Laventille East/Morvant, again, is going to have the benefit of computers. In Toco/Manzanilla we have built the Valencia South Government School. In Diego Martin West we have almost completed the Carenage Boys' Government School. In Diego Martin East we built the River Estate/Patna Primary School.

Throughout Trinidad and Tobago—and if you look at the PSIP, \$194 million is being put into its capital cost for the Ministry of Education. This infrastructure is necessary because for decades, when was the last secondary school built in this country? When we turned the sod for the Cunupia Government Secondary School, it was over one decade since a secondary school was built in this country. I ask the question: why were secondary schools not built in this country? Was secondary education not important? I know that technology education was apparently not important, but was secondary education not important? Was A' level education not important? Why do I have to ask these questions now? What was the previous Minister of Education doing in office? Did he not understand about student centred learning or is it something they just marginalized?

Mr. Speaker, this Government, over the last four years—we are coming up to our four years—has demonstrated to the national community that as we forge ahead in terms of economic development, building Trinidad and Tobago and strengthening our precious human resource, the foundation of our education system has been laid. It took some time in terms of getting the education system back on track, because it was on autopilot when I got into the Ministry of Education, but we have now put it on track. You can see with our programme as we go for the year 2000, our World Bank project is on track. We are now going to build more primary schools.

In fact, that World Bank programme is also going to build a few more secondary schools in this country. The Secondary Education Modernization Programme, under the InterAmerican Development Bank, is also going to provide more secondary schools places. It is going to provide the deshifting which is necessary, but was never approached by the previous administration. Why did it take this administration to come on board to move the Ste. Madeleine Junior Secondary and the San Fernando Senior Comprehensive to five-year schools? That was not difficult to do but apparently their agenda was something else.

The situation in San Fernando East cannot be tolerated, and I appeal to all concerned that we are looking at the situation very closely. What I saw yesterday

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in terms of injury cannot be tolerated, and the Opposition should also condemn that action.

Mr. Speaker, as I wind up my contribution I just want to spend a few minutes talking about my constituency. My constituency has had 34 years of neglect by the People's National Movement and, to date, 1999, we have had several bridges and roads repaired in certain areas. When I look at the PSIP and see that several roads are going to be repaired by the Ministry of Works and Transport, I want to say, on behalf of my constituents, a very hearty "thank you" to the Minister of Finance and the Government of Trinidad and Tobago.

I also want to speak quickly about the police station that is earmarked for Gasparillo. The Minister of Health mentioned about our refurbished health centre in Tabaquite. All that we have seen in our communities was rural neglect. We have the opportunity now to put that right, and as we move towards the 21st Century, all our infrastructure by all our ministers—if you look at the PSIP you would see that the way it is directed, there is no nepotism, it is just that infrastructure was lacking.

Mr. Speaker, it was a pleasure to participate in this debate and I congratulate the Minister of Finance for, once again, presenting another people's budget.

Dr. Keith Rowley (*Diego Martin West*): Thank you. Mr. Speaker, I look forward to participating in every exercise like this, when we deal with the national budget. But on this occasion it is with a sense of sadness that I have come here today to participate in this debate.

Mr. Speaker, when the Leader of the Opposition responded to the presentation of the Minister of Finance, we were at pains to point out the specifics in the budget with which we had difficulty, and there were numerous. We got a very interesting response from the Minister, which followed on from an attitude of an earlier time. In last year's budget, when the numbers between revenue and expenditure could not add up, and borrowings could not add up to close the funding gap, and the Minister was asked outside the House by a group of professionals, he said, "People not concerned about numbers, what they are concerned about is food on their table."

When I said in this House that one of the most important things you can expect from the people you elect, is the management of your money, my friend from Tobago East said that was mephistophelean nonsense and it was teaching young people in the country the wrong thing. I want to ask the Minister of Finance, if numbers did not matter why was he at such pains in his presentation to

deal with numbers that dealt with unemployment, inflation, debt service, foreign reserves, GDP, revenue and expenditure. They were all expressed as numbers, as performance indices.

The Minister of Finance is not fooling anybody, and among people who know better, his response is an embarrassment to him and to the country. For a Minister of Finance to say that numbers do not matter, is an admission that the job he is doing is not being properly done. It is like a doctor saying that medicine, health and healing do not matter. Because without numbers in a budget, then what is a budget? For that to have come from an accountant is the ultimate insult. [*Desk thumping*] People in this country are embarrassed when our Minister of Finance takes that position.

I do not have a lot of time this morning, but I have much to say, so I would take the time I have this morning on one or two items to demonstrate that numbers do matter.

Mr. Speaker, this morning I want you to see me, not as the Member for a constituency, but I as a witness for the prosecution, in the criminal matter of the State, namely the Government, versus the people of Trinidad and Tobago. I will use a particular action of numbers to show you what these people are doing to the rest of the people in this country.

Mr. Speaker, I do not go about boasting and quoting myself, but I think it is important for me to identify my background on this matter. The reason I have chosen to deal with this matter at some length today is because I want it put on the *Hansard*, the parliamentary record, so that when the crunch comes it must not be said that the people of this country and the Parliament, were not alerted to what this Government is doing to the people.

10.40 a.m.

Mr. Speaker, I have chosen to do it because I believe I owe this country something because this country has been good to me. I have come from a village in the middle of Tobago and there are people who had authority when I was a child and they used their authority and today I had the opportunity of graduating from the University of the West Indies with a first class Honours degree in Geography and a first class Honours degree in Geology in 1973. [*Desk thumping*] I have graduated with a Masters in Stratigraphy and a Ph.D. in geo chemistry, all with the support of the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

I served on the board of the Water and Sewage Authority during the period 1982 to 1986 so I know about the operation of the Water and Sewage Authority

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and in my professional training, I must be the only Member in this Parliament and very few in this country who have sailed the entire Caribbean on a variety of research vessels sampling its waters and its submarine materials. So I am familiar with discussions with salinity or overall environment. That is my profession.

Mr. Speaker, I sat here in amazement, in fact, I went on vacation in August and while I was on vacation, I observed that the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, through its agency WASA had entered into a contract to provide water for the people of Trinidad and Tobago by desalination. What is the story behind that?

The reason for doing that, they say, is that they will supply the needs of the Point Lisas estate from a new source, which is to desalinate from the Gulf of Paria. The demand at Point Lisas, as published, is supposed to be 12,000,000 gallons and WASA will sell that as it is doing now at \$7.50 per metre cube. If you divide the millions of gallons, 12,000,000 by 220 because it is 220 gallons per cubic metre, you will get a figure that WASA is selling—and I am rounding the numbers off so do not hold me to 5, 6, or 7—approximately 54,000 cubic metres to Point Lisas at \$7.50 per metre cube. That means that WASA has the potential of earning, or should be earning \$149 million a year by supplying from its own supply, water to Point Lisas. But this Government, in seeking to remove that supply and put it to the public, has decided to supply Point Lisas by buying the equivalent amount of water from a new supplier who will sell to WASA at \$4.50 per cubic metre, that means that whereas today, WASA has the potential to earn from its own supplies \$149 million to supply the same needs for the same price, WASA would buy at \$4.50 per cubic metre which is \$89 million so it will pay \$89 million a year to supply Point Lisas and earn \$149 million. Good business. But understand when you subtract \$89 million from the \$149 million you say WASA is making a profit of \$60 million. Good business they say.

WASA has contracted not just for that, but to buy from the supplier not \$12 million that Point Lisas needs, but \$28 million, so over and above the \$12 million for Point Lisas, the deal involves \$60 million for the public use outside of Point Lisas to be bought at the same price. So WASA will pay to these people approximately \$209 million for water and will get from Point Lisas the \$149 million but WASA will pay to the supplier \$89 million and, of course, the rest of the water is for sale to the public.

Mr. Speaker, the price at which WASA sells water to the public now is \$3.50 per metre cube, but some bright boy in this Government has decided to buy desalinated water from Ionics for \$4.50 a metre cube and the 16 million gallons extra to Point Lisas will now have to be sold at \$3.50 per metre cube. Therefore,

you are taking a dollar per metre cube loss, so every metre—you have 72,000 metre cubes every day, you lose \$1.00 of every metre cube because when you sell to the public at \$3.50 and you have bought for \$4.50, you are taking a loss. Unless, of course, you say that loss will be taken up from the profit you made, as you should. So you sell for \$149 million, buy for \$89 million, you make \$60 million, you must now deduct a \$26 million loss from that \$60 million because you are now going to sell \$16 million cheaper than you pay for it. So your net profit on the overall deal by WASA removing itself from being the supplier and putting a new company in there—the revenue situation for WASA, instead of having an inflow of \$149 million, it now has a net inflow of \$33 million. But the \$149 million WASA was going to get, you have to deduct from that WASA's operating costs and if you assume that it is the full \$3.50 per cubic metre and deduct that from the \$89 million, you will get approximately \$70 million.

When they were supplying their own water for \$149 million, if you assume that it cost them \$70 million to produce, then they still had a net of \$59 million, but by removing themselves from the supply, and putting a company in there, buying for \$89 million, selling for \$149 million, subsidizing by \$26 million on the extra \$16 million, they end up instead of netting \$59 million, they net \$33 million. That is the scenario of this desalination. I will tell you more than that.

Mr. Speaker, I have no problem with water being supplied to Point Lisas from a different route, but look at what they have done. They will tell you that by freeing up the water that is now going to Point Lisas the water is now available to go to the public, that 12,000,000 gallons, and by taking 16,000,000 more from Ionics, that equals 28,000,000 gallons, so the public will get 28,000,000 gallons more water. But you are going to take a loss on the 16,000,000 and when you add the net loss the picture is this; WASA, by foregoing its own supply to Point Lisas for only getting \$33 million as against \$149 million direct income, it had that loss of \$116 million. The 16,000,000 cubic metres that they sell from the desalination plant will earn \$92 million, so the loss has been reduced and when they sell the other water that is now going to Point Lisas that was earning \$70 million, the net picture, if all the water is sold, the full 28,000,000 gallons, WASA would then net \$94 million. That is the best case scenario for WASA—from a position where you have \$149 million minus your operating cost, assuming there are no leaks and assuming that the customers pay \$94 million. That is not the picture.

The people who will now receive the water are currently receiving a partial supply and are paying the full price. We know it as a fact because we are told some people get water one day a week, some get two days, some get five days,

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some get 10 days. When they do get a full supply, their bill would not jump, it is the same bill they are going to be paying. All that is going to happen is that they get a better supply and there are going to be a few new customers. Therefore, the \$94 million is not realizable because your income is not going to be equivalent to the fact that you sold that amount of water. You are already gathering revenues from those people so while you improve the water supply in South Trinidad, fine. Do not expect that an equivalent arithmetical relationship would be there for your income.

Mr. Speaker, the joke about it is that while WASA has introduced this new fly-by-night arrangement to buy from this company under those conditions which I have just described, WASA itself is producing 15,000,000 additional gallons from an action which does not involve desalination and no other company. All WASA did was to award a contract for US \$20.6 million to upgrade and expand the treatment plant by the Airport which is part of the Caroni Arena system and that US \$20.6 million is to add 15,000,000 gallons more water to the supply. Look at it. You are paying \$20.6 million for your own facility to give you 15,000,000 more, but you find somebody to pay \$120 million of capital investment to buy from them. I should not say pay, they are putting out the money, \$120 million facility which you would have to pay for by way of buying the water. So for 15,000,000 gallons increase in the supply, the capital outlay at WASA is \$20.6 million. For 28,000,000 gallons at Point Lisas through desalination, the capital outlay is US \$120 million.

Look at what happens now, after WASA does the expansion at the airport, forever and ever Amen owns that plant and it could easily add \$12 million to Point Lisas because we now have 15,000,000 gallons more in the system and collect the full revenue from Point Lisas and in one year's earnings from Point Lisas, because Point Lisas in one year, buying 12,000,000 gallons, pays \$149 million and the expansion costs \$130 million. So in one year, they amortize. No, you do not do that. You enter into an arrangement where every single day of the year WASA will have to pay a certain amount of money, \$409,000 a day selling 54 metre cube to Point Lisas. It ends up with WASA having to pay \$209 million a year to buy water. So when they tell you, it is not costing a red cent; yes, the plant is not costing a red cent, but WASA will have to pay \$200 million a year to obtain the water from the plant to make it available to Point Lisas and the public. This brings us to the point: What is WASA's current gross revenue?

WASA at the moment is producing 165,000,000 gallons per day and when the plant upgrade is finished, it would produce 15,000,000 gallons more at 130

million. The current \$165 million, WASA's gross revenue is in the order of \$300,000,000 but one quarter of that is sewerage so WASA's gross revenue from water for the entire country is just approximately \$200 million or thereabouts. From where is WASA going to get this money to pay \$200 million every single year to buy 28,000,000 gallons of water? Look at this company producing its own water, (165,000,000 gallons of it and including the Point Lisas earnings) is grossing \$200 million plus for water—exclude the sewage because that is not in the equation—has entered into an arrangement where it will have, by contract, to find the money to pay \$200 million a year to receive 28,000,000 gallons.

Mr. Speaker, I have done the calculations and I can sit with anybody in here and show that the end position is that WASA's position overall is a net revenue loss in the order of \$55 million. Do you know why, Mr. Speaker, because WASA is the most economic producer of water in the country *vis-a-vis* Ionics, when you compare the cost at which WASA produces water.

10.55 a.m.

Let us take the 165 million gallons a day, plus the 15 million gallons to come and you will see that if you use the cost at which they will buy the water from Ionics—which is \$4.50—WASA then, from one plant, the Caroni Arena alone, which produces 65 million now and 15 million more to come making 80 million gallons it means that Caroni Arena should be earning \$584 million, but WASA's gross revenue for all this water is just over \$200 million. So clearly, WASA's production cost is way below that \$4.50.

If you look at WASA's entire production portfolio, they should be earning \$4 billion a year, if they sell its water at \$4.50. But no, that is not happening. So therefore, that demonstrates to us that WASA's production, as I have said, with the expansion plant is considerably less. The question is, why would a company that is producing its own supply—WASA has dams all over this country: Arima, Hollis, Oropouche Navet, Hillsborough and a series of wells all over the place but suddenly, WASA cannot produce 12 million gallons of water. The Government has to bring a company into the system and that company comes into the system and capsizes the equation.

Mr. Speaker, the current arrangement where WASA charges the industrial customers \$7.50, and sells to the public at \$3.50, the policy there is a cost subsidy. You subsidize the public at \$3.50 with the higher cost you get from the industrial plants. When they inject this company in the middle there, and buy from them at \$4.50, so that they can make a big profit, it means that the profit that should come

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from the public from what is paid by the industrial plants is being siphoned by this middle arrangement of Ionics. Mr. Speaker, do you understand!

At the end of the day, who is going to have to pay? It is the public. When WASA's revenues are capsized, the way it is going to be by this arrangement, the public will be called upon to pay more for water because currently, by paying \$3.50—which is a few cents per gallon—WASA cannot survive without substantial Government support, if it does not get price increases. That is what these people have set us up with.

Mr. Speaker, I want to find out where and when was this decision taken and by whom? We must be the laughing stock of the world. This country has an average rainfall of 80 inches per year, which is described as, wet tropical, a wet tropical country—I would not go into the floods—but with adequate rainfall across the country, where did desalination come from?

Mr. Speaker, I brought this document one of the many studies available and paid for by WASA—Water and Sewerage Authority equals Government of Trinidad and Tobago—to understand our water resources. This is Government of Trinidad and Tobago. *WASA, Caroni River Basin Study* by Knight Planning Associates-Burgess and Niple dated March, 1977.

Mr. Speaker, if you go into that document, you will see as part of the study, there is a graph here that shows production and demand of water from 1850, and at 1977 it projected it to 2000. You will see a big gap between demand and supply in 1850; by 1900 this was closed a bit and that gap continues until—if you look at the plants that came on stream. In the 1850s Maraval, St. Anns, Cascade. Then in the 1900s—at the turn of the century—River Estate, Arima, St. Joseph, Arouca, Plaisance. In 1920, Cocorite, Farrel pumping station, Morisal and so. Then you had Hollis coming on stream. In the 1940s you had Carenage, Wallerfield, Point Fortin and so on. By the time you get to the late 1950s, when the PNM came in—you heard them talking a lot of stupidity about what the PNM did not do—you will see the curves now closed, because the gap between demand and supply is closing, because they brought on stream; El Socorro, Freeport, Carlsen Field, Penal, Siparia, Sum Sum and so on. By the time you get to the 1960s there was Navet and Tucker Valley. The projection was, by the time you get to the year 2000, demand and supply would be together and that is the picture.

Today, in a country that is producing 180 million gallons per day, at a population of 1.3 million, that gives you a per capita consumption of 146 gallons per person which compares favourably with the industrial world. In the best parts of the United States of America, the consumption is 200 gallons per person. We

have a current production of 146 gallons per person, so the problem is not so much production, the problem is transmission and distribution. Everybody knows that in this country. [*Desk thumping*].

Mr. Speaker, that is why the previous government had embarked on the mains replacement programme and we had a World Bank loan in place for mains replacement. The pipes had actually started to appear here from the first part of that programme but this Government abandoned that World Bank programme for two years and restarted it later on.

Mr. Speaker, when I was on WASA Board, a study was done on the leak situation and because of the age of a lot of our transmission and distribution lines—in some areas the leak was as high as 57 per cent. Everybody knows that what WASA had to do was to change these old mains, and for every main you change, the water you are producing, more of it will get to its customers. So, as we are producing 165 million gallons today, the convention of wisdom is, that at least 1/3 of that is leaking. So WASA could have spent money using its revenues from Point Lisas to continue the mains replacement programme. But no! There was not enough money in there for the people who wanted to use the opportunity. So they went and entered into desalination to increase the production.

Mr. Speaker, this is only one study. There are the Trintoplan studies and Metcalf & Eddy study. Anyone who has anything to do with WASA will know about these things.

This Caroni River Basin—and understand that Caroni River Basin is right next door to Point Lisas—right next door. On page 156 of this document—WASA has it in its possession—it says here:

“...fifty three potential reservoir sites have been identified with a total average daily yield of 565 gallons per day.”

Mr. Speaker, in fact, on page 163, the document says:

“Finally, it is stressed that a true water shortage from a production standpoint does not exist.”

11.05 a.m.

WASA has this document that says from a production standpoint a true water shortage does not exist. [*Desk thumping*] Mr. Speaker, on page 158 it shows within the Caroni basin alone a number of potential estimated yields from the Caroni basin with a total potential yield of 565 million gallons per day. So here is this country with this study and information available producing 165 million to

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expand to 180 when the upgrade comes at the airport. What is a country with water like this doing with a desalination plant? [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, look at the maps in here. You can see from where you sit. Do you see that blue area there? That is a potential reservoir that can be created on the edge of the Caroni Swamp with a potential yield of over 200 million gallons. Do you know why? Because that is where the Cunupia River, the Caroni River and the Bejucal drain. They all end up pouring their fresh water into there. In fact, when we were about to build the Caroni/Arena Dam there were two options available at the time. One was the Caroni/Arena Dam, the other was called the White Proposal. At the time they opted for a dam but that does not mean that the water is not available there in the Caroni Swamp. So what fit of madness has caused this country to go and enter into desalination?

Then, when the scandal is exposed, we are being told by WASA people that there are millions to be made. There are no millions to be made, there are millions to be lost. What has happened there, Mr. Speaker, is that WASA's cash cow, which is Point Lisas sales, has been given to friends of the Government. [*Desk thumping*] Imagine WASA out of its overall 165 million which it now produces—and I am talking to my friend from Naparima—from the sale of 12 million gallons to Point Lisas gets the bulk of its revenues because it sells that at \$7.50 per cubic metre. The rest of the revenue comes from the rest of the whole country. The sale of 150 million gallons from the rest of the whole country gives WASA less than half of its revenue.

Then somebody in this Government, somebody in that Ministry, decides to give that cash cow at Point Lisas to their friends and that is how this country ended up with a desalination plant. [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Member: And you are still sitting down there?

Dr. K. Rowley: When they entered into the arrangement, the people of Barbados entered into an arrangement for production of a plant a quarter of the size as the one proposed for Trinidad, but the Bajan people saw where there is a sliding scale because beyond a certain volume of production you pay less. Not so here in Trinidad where more water is being produced, there is a bigger plant but we are paying the same price for one gallon as 28 million gallons. So after you sell to Point Lisas at \$7.50, for the extra 15 million you are still paying \$4.50 but you know your sale price is \$3.50 unless, of course, they will tell us that the intention is to distribute that loss of one dollar among the paying public because to not do that is an automatic subsidy.

Ask yourself who did that? What we do know is that there are people in this Government—even as the scandal of the InnCogen deal has not subsided and will not subside because the PNM will not allow it to subside—[*Desk thumping*] what we do know is that the Prime Minister could find no one else at the Trump Plaza to spend time and to play golf with other than those people. What we do know is that the Minister—

Hon. Member: Listen to this.

Dr. K. Rowley:—suddenly has a taste for a new house. Break it down. What we do know is that of all the people in Westmoorings in my constituency, the only person the Minister could visit down there is Paladino. Every day he is down there. Mr. Speaker, it galls me to know that in England I was a student and I met and had friends from Africa. It was accepted among us that these people, from the way they spoke from what one knew of their country's behaviour, were the children of people in their country who had their hands in the till as though—in fact, in Nigeria, Abacha's family was caught with 35 suitcases of cash.

Today, Mr. Speaker, people in this country will have to pick. When I give you the facts, I am casting no motive. I want you to come to your own conclusion based on the facts. I am just the witness for the prosecution. I give you the facts and you tell me.

[MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

They will tell me, they are telling me, you know, me, that the water around Trinidad is more saline than Barbados and that is why the plant cost so much less in Barbados.

Hon. Member: Donkey logic.

Dr. K. Rowley: Now listen, if you know for a fact, as it is a fact, that it is cheaper to desalinate brackish water, Trinidad has more brackish water than Barbados will ever dream of having, right next to Point Lisas. Why then did you not choose to desalinate brackish water from the Caroni reservoir area? No. You choose the salt water and then tell me the reason why the plant is four times the price as Barbados' plant is because it costs more to desalinate salt water.

Then you look at the map, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and you see Trinidad and Tobago, especially Trinidad, sitting in the mouth of one of the largest rivers in the world the Orinoco River which flows all the way to the North Coast. I am a fisherman and when I go fishing sometimes I meet the Orinoco water north of Trinidad. One can see the dividing line. Everybody knows that. Yet you tell me

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that Barbados, which sits in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean, has less salinity than the waters in Trinidad. Whom do you think you are fooling “eh”? You took nine years to pass your law degree. I passed my exam the first time. [*Desk thumping*] You cannot fool me.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, they will have you believe that Barbados is desalinating brackish water and, therefore, the cost is that. Now you know the Barbados plant is in Spring Garden. Do you know where Spring Garden is, Mr. Deputy Speaker? Okay. They want us to believe that every single day of the year from here on into the perpetual future that little island, Barbados, has an aquifer that has a magical supply of brackish water to feed a plant every day of the year with 30 million cubic metres of water.

That is absolute nonsense. If, in fact, the key was brackish water then we have brackish water available to spare. They did not use that. It has nothing to do with brackish water/salt water. In fact, the reason why they were so bent on not looking at the economics and looking at their own interest in the matter is that when they entered into the contract to buy at \$4.50 they forgot to check the price at which they are selling to the public, \$3.50.

What madman will do a thing like that? Your business “buss” overnight. You will contract to buy a product at \$4.50 knowing that your selling price is \$3.50? But since the left hand does not know what the right hand is doing and only two fellows know what is really going on, you end up with that. So the country is now saddled with that and the end result is that WASA has very little to gain and, in fact, from a revenue standpoint WASA's water revenue is going to be severely compromised by the contract to purchase water from Ionics.

Of course, if Ionics is making one dollar in profit—let me give you an idea of how it goes. They are selling at \$4.50. If they are making one dollar in profit on that arrangement, it would mean that every single day of the year they are making \$54,000.00 in profit. Because, if their operating cost is 3.50 and they say there is one dollar profit in the \$4.50, if you say it was 50 cents, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you know what that ends up looking like? I did a profile of the potential profit arrangement.

If they are making one dollar over the life of the contract the sales would be \$4.18 billion. That is what WASA will have to pay Ionics for water; \$57,000 dollars a day. Where in God's name is WASA going to get that money from; contracted for 20 years, \$4.18 billion? If the company that is selling to WASA is making one dollar profit because operating cost is \$3.50, then the profit to that

company will be \$929 million over the period. If you say no, the profit is less, which means that your operating cost is higher—let us say 50 cents is the profit per cubic metre, then they will make a profit of \$464 million. If you say the profit is 50 cents, therefore the operating cost is \$4.00, what in God's name is WASA doing buying water from a company that has an operating cost of \$4.00 per cubic metre when WASA can produce it for less than a dollar? Why is that?

One does not have to be born in Belle Garden or in Mason Hall. My friend from St. Joseph, I know you understand this and I want to know why you accepted this! [*Desk thumping*] I know you understand this. We are on different sides of the political divide. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I know the hon. Member understands this but the people of Trinidad and Tobago will be asked to pay for this. Why would WASA? They tell you what; it is urgent? What is the urgency? It is the same urgency talk they gave us when they gave their friends the power producing plant because they had to have a supply by September. September came and went. We are still in the same consumption pattern now or even less consumption than we were in when they gave their friends the InnCogen Plant.

I told you about the upgrade at Piarco Airport? From design to completion that whole operation will take less than 18 months at a cost that is a fraction of what we are going to pay down the road. I will tell you what is in that too. When you build your own supply, like WASA has done there, the operating cost is minimal after that and you have water from God for the rest of your life because we have 80 inches per year. Down there in Point Lisas the operating cost for membranes alone for that plant is \$50 million a year.

They are going to have their dam, the power supply is \$100,000.00 a year at Piarco for the extra \$15 billion. The energy they will have to use to drive the desalination plant down there is millions of dollars a year. Who entered into this madness? When the Minister gets up I do not want to hear about the PNM. I do not want to hear about my grandmother. I want to hear about this. [*Desk thumping*] Show me the facts and different economics. Tell me you are not buying at \$4.50. Tell me you are not selling 54,000 cubic metres. Tell me you are not selling to the public at \$3.50. Tell me that what I have said is not true and then I will withdraw my mathematics.

My friend from Tobago East in his presentation talked about mathematics. Let us use mathematics. My constituent, Member for St. Augustine, he knows what I am saying and I am going to tell you. I am going to go out in the Town Hall in the very near future and stand up in front the public with a map of this country. I will show them the little streams that go into the Arena Dam, the little streams that go

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into the Oropouche and the Navet from which we get 150 million gallons of water and they will see all the other blue lines on the map where fresh water is running into the ocean every second of the day and I will sit down in front of anybody with a calculator and we will go over these figures. I invite the press to come and go over these figures and tell me where is the benefit in this for WASA? Tell me where it is.

That, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is the latest anatomy of the crime committed by this Government against the people of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] It is not too late. I call on this Government to stop this contract now, [*Desk thumping*] this minute.

11.20 a.m.

It is not too late. I call on this Government to stop this contract this minute [*Desk thumping*] and any attempt to justify this contract will further compound the provocation and the aggravation. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I say no more on that matter for the moment.

Imagine the operating—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The speaking time of the 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.

Dr. K. Rowley: Mr. Speaker, I want to go through a few of the published justifications. Well, we heard about the water being more saline in Trinidad and then there is another foolishness that in the Trinidad plant, seven times more water will be extracted from a cubic metre than in Barbados. So, when you take one cubic metre into the plant, in Barbados you extract only one-seventh; in Trinidad, you extract seven times more. If anybody had water to waste in a process like that, is it Barbados or Trinidad? Why does Trinidad have to extract seven times more from an input cubic metre than Barbados? What is the reason for that?

In Barbados, they are using brackish water so they want to get maximum from that, therefore, fine. But, what is the need in Trinidad, where the Gulf of Paria has an endless supply of water, for them to want to design a plant to extract seven times more per cubic metre to cost four times more? But, that is nonsense. It is an attempt to justify the excessive cost, because the Bajans have paid US \$9 million for 30,000 metres cube per day. Understand it. The Bajans are paying US \$9

million for 30,000 metre cubes per day; that is what their plant costs. And even though the Government is not putting out the money, by buying the water, you are indirectly paying for the plant because the plant has to be paid for by your purchase. So, let nobody tell you it did not cost you a red cent.

In Trinidad, we are paying \$120 million for 54,000 cubic metres, so roughly twice the volume in Trinidad, but we are paying \$119 million. What madness is this? But worse than that, even though the Bajan plant costs \$9 million, when the water is produced, they are going to pay Ionics Incorporated \$2.52 per metre cube. Our bright boys here have contracted to pay twice that price, \$4.50. So, the Bajans will get a metre cube of water from these people for \$2.52, but Trinidadians will get it for \$4.50 because the UNC finds that is a good price for us to pay.

Mr. Hinds: Christ man! Twice more, ah Trini.

Dr. K. Rowley: Who is getting the difference?

The Bajans have a sliding scale that says after 6,000 metres cube, they will pay less than the \$2.52; a declining cost from 6,000 metres cube onwards. These “fellas” have said we will pay the same \$4.50 for every drop of the 28 million gallons.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, listen. I kept some gems here for you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The *Sunday Express* of September 12, 1999 had WASA, with some “fellas” on the board, in an article headlined “Money flows like water”. There was one thing there.

Look at this insult. When people started raising queries, WASA took out an ad in the *Newsday* of Sunday, September 19, 1999, at great cost—MISSION 2000 WATER FOR ALL. But this particular ad does not carry WASA’s logo, but we know Mission 2000 is supposed to be WASA and the Government and they tell us, also “Not one red cent”. What it means is not one red cent for you and me! That is what it means.

Mr. Manning: Is dollars for the boys.

Dr. K Rowley: Then they had another one in the *Trinidad Guardian* of Wednesday, September 15, 1999. The company that took them for a ride has the gall; this one is putting the company's logo big and bold at the top and WASA’s down below for an inch. This company that took us for a ride with its big logo and here is what it said. WASA was telling us that:

“WASA has investigated the contents of the article and in reply to its enquiry has received the following letter from Ionics Incorporated.”

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Ionics Incorporated is the company that stands to make a billion dollars in profit. WASA was giving their story as to why it must make a billion dollars in profit. Then, he will get up here today and show us why he failed his exams nine times.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is some “fella” in Caroni called Khan. Hear what he told the media.

Mr. Manning: That is the Minister’s boy, you know, Nazir Khan.

Dr. K. Rowley: The transmission lines are “maxed” out so they cannot carry more water so they must build a plant. The most obvious answer is a desalination plant, with an endless source of supply in the sea. That was Nazir Khan saying that. But the experts, whom the Government paid, are not saying that. Nazir Khan came from Tringen and ended up in WASA. He is saying the obvious choice is desal, but the Government's document which it paid for, which guides WASA’s future, is not saying that. It is saying you have many, many reservoir sites and there are hundreds of millions of gallons of water available and it tells you where.

WASA is telling you, again, in the *Express* that if you build a dam—I do not know which one they will build—it will cost one billion over seven years. Assuming that was true, if you build a dam for one billion over seven years and you earn from Point Lisas, \$150 million every year, in under 10 years, you pay for the dam. WASA says, “No”, we will buy water at \$200 million a year; after five years you will have bought a billion dollars in water and you do not own anything. So, every five years you pay Ionics Incorporated a billion dollars for water but you would not build a dam for a billion dollars, and a dam does not cost a billion dollars because, as I showed you, they are getting 15 million gallons of Caroni water extra by spending TT \$130 million.

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Then they have this one called Gideon Hanoomansingh on why WASA went with desalination. I ask him and all the others if they are familiar with WASA’s own documents? But I do not want to spend any more time on that. I am going out there in the Town Hall or on the street corners publicly some time, to talk to all comers on this matter, because I am not leaving this so, and all right-thinking citizens in this country, wherever they are, must get up and tell this Government, “Enough is enough!” This one is too blatant; this one is stink!

But I want to spend a few moments on my friend’s contribution—the Member for Tabaquite—on education.

Mr. Manning: Para-dig-im.

Dr. K. Rowley: Yes. He had much to say this morning, but I noticed one point he was going over and over and it reminded me of Shakespeare, “Thou doth protest too much.” He made a point over and over and over of talking about, “No nepotism”, and “We are fair”, and “We are even handed”. I ask him: “Where is the Diego Martin Secondary School?”

Mr. Speaker, in 1994, the technical experts in this country looked at our education distribution and found that there were four areas in the country where children were disadvantaged with respect to places in secondary schools—Mason Hall in northern Tobago; Diego Martin; eastern in Sangre Grande and central in Cunupia. The PNM government of the day acted on that report, got a World Bank loan negotiated and we had a World Bank loan in place to build four secondary schools to address that problem as told to us by the experts. When the government changed, that World Bank loan was in place and we expected four schools to be built.

This Government took no action on those four schools and when it did take action, it built one—Cunupia. At the moment, for the Cunupia school, if you look at the figures, you will see \$9 million allocated to continue the Cunupia school. The one in Tobago that last year's budget told us in all certainty would start, not a brick has been laid in Tobago, and you will see a provision of \$10 million here this year for Tobago.

Miss Nicholson: Again!

Dr. K. Rowley: Again, and Sangre Grande, you will see \$1 million put there. But Diego Martin has gone completely out of the window. So, Diego Martin, with the largest and fastest growing population, which, since 1994, was to get one out of four schools, this Minister who got up here this morning and told us about even-handedness, his Government is building 10 more schools. So when we were building four, Diego Martin had one out of four, they are now building 14 and the Diego Martin school has disappeared from the Government's documents.

It is the same thing that happened with the Carenage Primary School and today, as the Member of Parliament for Diego Martin West, I am accusing the UNC Government of naked, outright discrimination against the children of Diego Martin, and the parents of Diego Martin and the country must take note that this is the behaviour of the UNC Government, and when anybody gets up on that side, they must tell us what has happened since 1995 population-wise or needs-wise, that the Diego Martin people must now no longer get that school. And they are

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building a school in Coryal, in Matura, in Blanchisseuse, in “o-he-o-ho”, in smaller areas.

I have no problem with schools being built in these areas because every child in this country deserves an opportunity. I know about opportunity; I got opportunity; but I want to know what has happened to the opportunity for the Diego Martin children? [*Desk thumping*]

I have a good idea what happened to it. Because, Mr. Speaker, this Minister comes here; he looks a certain way, but he is not as pious as he looks. He is a danger to this country.

Mr. Manning: A menace!

Dr. K. Rowley: He is the same Minister who, it was shown, intervened and prevented a teacher from getting a scholarship because that person had stayed home on what he called a “TTUTA” day. So, he victimized that teacher and, today, he is victimizing the children of Diego Martin by instructing that the Diego Martin school be taken off the list. It is not only Diego Martin. I tell the Member of Parliament for Arouca South that the Minister has instructed that the children of Maloney be victimized in a similar way.

Mr. Speaker, you look in the documents and you will see provision for a Maloney Primary School. A contract was awarded on July 26 for construction of Maloney Government Primary School. Up to this day, nothing has happened on the contract.

[*WORDS EXPUNGED*]

I defy him to get up today because this is not the only document I have—I am warning him—if he thinks what I am saying is not true, he must get up and say that his professional agent did not approach a contractor—

Dr. Nanan: Mr. Speaker, point of order, 36(5)—imputing improper motives.

Mr. Speaker: Standing Order 36(5) states that:

“No member shall impute improper motives to any other Member of either Chamber.”

The Minister has a valid point of order and the point should not be pursued. The words should be expunged. I so rule.

Dr. K. Rowley: I am guided by your ruling, Mr. Speaker, but I simply say what has happened with respect to the contractor, to whom the contract for Maloney was awarded, action has been taken which, to date, has resulted in the

school not being constructed and the information which I have is that the contractor has been offered a financial inducement to turn away his interest in the contract.

11.35 a.m.

I say no more. I say no more about it because every time we say anything in this House, the Government gets up and says: “No, that is too horrendous to contemplate”, then time bears us out. When we told the Government about the InnCogen scam, it was too horrible to contemplate. When we told the Government about the rice scam, it was too horrible to contemplate. We are now telling the Government about the education scam. I am still dealing with education.

At the same time, the Diego Martin school has disappeared into thin air. The Minister made a statement here this morning that the Government is building a school in Charlieville, ASJA; a Hindu school, SDMS in Caroni and an Anglican Board School in Trincity. I want to ask this Government; when did it amend the Concordat?

Mr. Manning: That is right. [*Desk thumping*]

Dr. K. Rowley: Because this matter of the construction of schools and the provision of education—state versus church—was a subject at the time of our independence. So sensitive was that subject that in 1960 the state and churches entered into a contract called the Concordat stating how education would be provided in the future. Now, we are hearing—without any discussion from the public and maybe with contact between a few people in certain religions: the Minister named three this morning—the Government has embarked on the construction or assistance of construction of schools unbeknownst to the rest of the country. Are we being told that the Concordat has been torn up? Has it been amended? Sometime in the not too distant past, the Prime Minister said that his government intended to revisit the Concordat. No problem with that. That should have required a national discussion or a national debate. When did that happen? Did it happen, or is the Cabinet of this country superior to the contracts that are binding the entire country?

Whilst the Government has taken away my Diego Martin school it cannot tell me a word about—\$1 million that is in this estimate, in violation of the Concordat. The sum of \$1 million is in this estimate to build a Sanatan Dharma Maha Sabha School in Caroni. I have no problem with the provision of schools to the children in Caroni, understand that. What is driving the Government that it

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finds \$1 million to put in the estimates to build that school? The school that has been shown to be needed, since 1994, the Government has taken it out of the estimates. The Government is now telling me that they are going to build an ASJA school and an Anglican Board School in Trincity and that I must smile. I must smile.

This Government must understand that our country is a very complex country. There are certain issues in this country that are very sensitive. It is because of that why we have a Concordat here in Trinidad and Tobago and one would not find one in Grenada. The Government is playing the fool with this country. If the Government has to make changes, there is a right way and a wrong way to make changes. If the Government is going to amend, abridge, delete or throw away the Concordat, the country must know that.

Mr. Speaker, certain things have been happening in this country. I warned this Government to proceed with a certain amount of understanding of the circumstances of Trinidad and Tobago; otherwise its good intentions might result in creating problems in our society. I want specific answers from the Government on the matters which I have raised. I want specific answers about the nature of the Government's relationship with the Concordat. The country does not only have Hindus, Anglicans and Muslims; we have other denominations that might also want to build schools.

Mr. Manning: Including the full-gospel movement.

Dr. K. Rowley: If the Government is going to say that the Concordat no longer applies—

Mr. Manning: You will see how much conflict that would cause.

Dr. K. Rowley: —it must say so to all! What is happening in our country is this: when the Government entered into the Concordat, it gave certain rights to the churches, and the Government pays the teachers and supports the schools; so building a secondary school is really a government expenditure.

When the Pentecostals go to the Government for a school—

Mr. Manning: Let me hear you.

Dr. K. Rowley:—the Seventh-Day Adventists, the Thusians and whoever else, what is the Government going to say to them? Mr. Minister, the reason why there were no secondary schools built in the country in the period which you raised—a decade—in that decade, there was a NAR Government in this country for five years, which school did they build? The reason was that the economic

circumstances of the country were such that the School Building Programme had to be slowed down. The country entered into a period of eight years of negative growth. When that was turned around by the NAR and the PNM we embarked, once again, on a School Building Programme. That is why, in 1994, we had the four schools to be built—I mean secondary schools, not primary schools—by the World Bank loan. To date, the Government has not built one school. The only school the Government has dealt with is Cunupia and the Government is only halfway there.

Dr. Job: Mr. Speaker, I do not intervene in other people's debate, but I am burdened by the implications of what I am hearing. I do not know if my Cabinet colleagues will feel "anyhow" because I state this.

Since I am in the Cabinet, I have been one of the strongest advocates. I even went at length and circulated a letter among my colleagues, supporting the idea that we should let the Anglican Board manage a school built by taxpayers fund. My reason for doing that was that even before I came into this Cabinet—*[Interruption]*

Dr. Rowley: Are you making a speech?

Dr. Job: No, I just want to make a comment.

Dr. Rowley: If you are making a speech I do not have the time.

Dr. Job: Allow me to finish.

Mr. Manning: Understand what you are saying.

Dr. Job: Let me finish. Even before I came into this Cabinet, I was at pains to tell everybody, who would hear me in this country, that the subsystem—which is the non-denominational system—has been one of the greatest destroyer of people's children and the results that you see—even CXC this year—would demonstrate that we need to have the traditional system more in the management of schools. For this reason I was supporting it. What the Cabinet is doing has nothing to do with supporting the Sanatan Dharma Maha Sabha as against anybody else.

Dr. K. Rowley: Mr. Speaker, the Member has wasted my time. I am not debating that. I am saying there exists on the table in this country, something called the Concordat and it has a meaning. *[Desk thumping]*

Hon. Member: That is what he is saying.

Dr. K. Rowley: I am not debating who should manage and who should not manage or the denomination versus non-denomination. I am asking a question:

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has the Government torn up the Concordat, or has it amended it and if so when? I am saying that any change to the Concordat should have involved the people of Trinidad and Tobago and not the Tobago East MP in Cabinet. That is all I am saying. I want that to be understood by the Government. I want an answer with respect to the status of the Concordat.

My friend from Ortoire/Mayaro—I was very happy to see the Member back in the fold. The Member had so many great things to say about the Government and the great things the Government did for his constituency. I am very happy for the children of Ortoire/Mayaro. I notice you said two things are going to happen in Ortoire/Mayaro, one was the refurbishment of the Mayaro Composite School and the other the Rio Claro Secondary School. That came after the Member said the PNM neglected and did nothing in Ortoire/Mayaro. I simply want to ask the Member, if this Government is going to refurbish the Rio Claro Secondary School and the Mayaro Composite School, who built them? [*Laughter*]

This reminds me of a woman for whom a man built a house and she gets a new man who paints the house and she says the second man is the best in the world. Who built the house? [*Laughter*]

Mr. Speaker, in terms of education, I am not prepared to debate with the Government PNM's record in education. We are not perfect. The country, in fact, requires immediate review of its entire education portfolio. We need to review that, because we have come so far in Phase I, we have now grounded ourselves in mediocrity, we are spending. Last year the Government spoke of an education revolution. To fool whom?

11.45 a.m.

In 1957, the budget was smaller but education was 12.5 per cent; in 1962, it was 9.7 per cent; in 1972 it was 19.19 per cent and a development programme which had 17 per cent education; in 1982, it was 14 per cent; in 1992, it was 13 per cent; in 1999, it is 9 per cent, and the development programme for 2000 is 9 per cent. So, take them very carefully when they talk as they, in effect, bleat about revolution.

This Government, on a percentage of the national budget, has allocated the least for education of all governments in this country. [*Desk thumping*] Talking about computers, computers, computers! Computers are not a solution to the children's problem in this country! It is part of the input. One has to have a policy and the policy to put computers in school was a recent one, so they are following through on that, but when they put 20 computers in a school with a rotten wooden

door, they are inviting the thieves to thief them! What they had to do first was to build a secure computer room so that when they have these thousands of dollars worth of computers in there at night, they will be secure. Rest assured that in the coming weeks and months, the news will be replete with instances of school computers being stolen, because all they are doing is throwing computers in unsecured schools, and you know what is going to happen. *[Desk thumping]*

I went with the Minister of Works and Transport to La Puerta Primary School and the teachers begged him in front of me for a secure room, the room is there, just secure the room so that the computers can be received and kept there. The Member of Parliament was present, the Minister of Works and Transport was present, and the teachers are begging to this day; a year and a half later. Nothing! But he comes here and tells me that I must smile about 10 computers here and 10 computers there. They are throwing computers at children who cannot read and cannot multiply two by two! *[Desk thumping]*

The education system is now mired in mediocrity and the country as a whole—not PNM, not UNC—has to examine our expenditure on education to see that we do something to get more value for money and turn out the kind of citizen that that expenditure warrants. So, do not come here and tell me about education revolution when, in fact, you are allocating less!

In 1972, 19 per cent of the national budget was spent on education. They are spending 9 per cent now in what they call the technology age, and they want me to congratulate them. He is talking about post primary schools. Go to Diego Martin Boys' RC now. The post primary class there has not a bench, not a chair, not a teacher! *[Desk thumping]*

Understand what I am saying. When they come inside the Parliament and talk those sorts of things they can fool themselves and their colleagues, but those of us who are out there representing people know what we experience down there. Then, of course, numbers do not matter. *[Laughter]* But 10 computers are there! Ten is a number. So many places there, that is a number. The question is, are you impacting on the problem?

They are building Carenage Boys' School now for four years, two contractors. I am looking forward to the day when the school will be opened. Whether I am invited or uninvited, I am going to be there and what I do when I get there is up to me!

Mr. Speaker, the Diego Martin Boys' RC School, construction is finished but they are dragging their feet because they did not take steps. When one builds a school, one automatically takes a decision to put furniture and teachers in there.

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Bricks and concrete by itself are not a school! After they build the school, there are certain things to be done. Do not wait until after it has been built to decide that one must now take steps to furnish it! Well, no money for that, you see.

School buses. Oh, they have rural school buses. I am glad for the children in the rural areas who have those school buses. The yellow buses are up and down the Carenage road. Since when is Carenage short of transportation? I was not aware of that. Between Carenage and Port of Spain there are small taxis, big taxis and maxi taxis by the hundreds, yet I am seeing the yellow buses up and down there. I thought they were rural transport. Carenage is not rural transport! Carenage is town! If one looks at the supply of transport on the Western Main Road, stand up there for five minutes, one will get a taxi—maxi or four-seater. The Government subsidizes the yellow buses to run up and down to impress me. I am not impressed.

Mr. Speaker, those were only two of the areas of this Government's stewardship that I touched on, and I think I have demonstrated at the end of the day that this Government has more to answer for than to be praised for. I reject this budget out of hand, Mr. Speaker. [*Desk thumping*]

The Minister of Planning and Development (Hon. Trevor Sudama): Mr. Speaker:

“for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy. [*Laughter*].

And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people: and the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying....

And they shall build houses, and inhabit *them*; and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them.

They shall not build, and another inhabit; they shall not plant, and another eat: for as the days of a tree are the days of my people, and mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands.

They shall not labour in vain, nor bring forth for trouble; for they are the seed of the blessed of the Lord,” [*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker, this is Isaiah, Chapter 65:18-23 of the original Bible.

Mr. Manning: In Hebrew!

Mr. Speaker: Order please.

Hon. T. Sudama: Mr. Speaker, this quote provides an ancient vision for our people and our country which draws its strength from the good Book. So, this

Government sets its sights on promoting happiness and reducing and eventually eliminating poverty and distress. We wish to create the condition where all shall be productive and enjoy the fruits of their labour, where we encourage creative endeavour and guarantee equitable distribution, where we stimulate enterprise and initiative and bolster independence and self-reliance. Indeed, where we germinate the seed of true sustainable development, and where we strive for inclusiveness for all in the main stream of our society.

So, Mr. Speaker, with a vision like that, we look to the future with confidence and with enthusiasm and today, I want to implore this Opposition to lift their sights.

Mr. Hart: Amen!

Mr. T. Sudama: Their sights which are fixed on the ground. Lift your sights, raise your consciousness!

Mr. Hart: Hallelujah!

Mr. Speaker: May I appeal to Members on the Opposition. Every single member in here is entitled to make his presentation uninterrupted, and if it is a concerted event to do it, it will not be allowed. Please continue.

Hon. T. Sudama: Mr. Speaker, you see, they do not want to listen to anything constructive. We heard here speech after speech of negativism, nihilism, and when I speak of the Member for Diego Martin East, neofascism. *[Laughter]* This is what we have had from that Opposition. So, I am asking them and pleading with them, in the interest of the country, to raise their consciousness, lift their sights, get involved in constructive endeavour in this society and they will find their place.

Mr. Speaker, as to the performance of this Government—we have heard so much spoken on the other side—the country will judge us by our deeds. *[Desk thumping]* And according to the latest poll, 63 per cent of the country has a favourable opinion of the performance of this Government. They will know us by our deeds!

This Opposition is merely intent on kindling anger and wrath in the population and they are propelled by envy of the performance of this Government, so they have two modes of attack, two sources. They want to instill anger and wrath in the population to create many negative sentiments out there. They are envious of what we have done in the short space of four years for this country and this economy.

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I merely wish to issue a warning to them from the book of Job:

“For wrath killeth the foolish man and envy slayeth the silly one, and the children of the foolish are far from safety and there is no one to deliver them.”

So, if they continue on the path in which they are engaged, I want to invoke the injunction in the book of Job.

Having changed the tone of this debate, having sought to lift the standards in this House, let me indicate that I want to speak first about the Public Sector Investment Programme and then I will go on to other things. What is the purpose of this Public Sector Investment Programme, Mr. Speaker? It is to increase gross capital formation in the country and we have been doing that over the last four years. It is to effect efficiency of the resource utilization in the country in order to secure socio-economic growth. Of course, we have also achieved that in the four short years where from 1996—1999 we have witnessed consistent economic growth in Trinidad and Tobago culminating in a 6.9 rate of growth in this current year.

The PSIP is intended to advance diversification of the economy and we have done so, as I will point out later, and it is intended to create jobs. We have created jobs by reducing the unemployment rate to the lowest level in 15 years to 11.7 per cent. *[Desk thumping]* Mr. Speaker, I have heard a lot spoken on the other side about this statistic. I have a report from the Director of Statistics. If they are questioning the integrity of the Director of Statistics and his department, get up and say so!

Mr. Valley: I am. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) said so.

Hon. T. Sudama: Which IMF said what?

Mr. Valley: The IMF questions the integrity. *[Laughter]*

12.00 noon

Mr. Speaker, he states that the unemployment figure of 11 per cent for the second quarter in 1999 is correct. The Labour Force Bulletin for the second quarter of 1999 is scheduled for release on Wednesday, October 20, 1999. Since I am in charge of the Central Statistical Office (CSO), they have given me a copy of this Labour Force Bulletin. The Minister of Finance tried to explain that the figures you all were quoting from are outdated figures; these are the figures as of June 30, 1999. It is very clear here. It all sets out here what the prevailing figures of unemployment are in Trinidad and Tobago. I do not want to dwell too much more on this; the Bulletin will be out tomorrow. You can look at this bulletin.

Mr. Valley: Mr. Speaker, if the Member would give way? Would you share that information with the House? Are you prepared to share it with the House?

Hon. T. Sudama: You will get one tomorrow.

Generally, the purpose of the Public Sector Investment Programme (PSIP) is to promote development on a sustained basis, and this is what we have been seeing in the last four years.

There was a lot of talk about the performance of the PSIP. Let me say this, and I have said this umpteen times in this House, that the performance of the PSIP is variable depending on certain conditions which exist at a given time. Our performance, given the record of the previous administration, has been creditable. I have said so in this House, I produced the statistics to substantiate that.

When one looks at what they have done, and let me just quote, Mr. Speaker. I just want to quote the outturn for 1996, that is the first year in office. In our first year in office, based on the performance of the PSIP:

“Total expenditure for fiscal 1996 is expected to be \$946 million or 82 per cent of the planned PSIP.”

Never in the history of this country has that level of PSIP been achieved. [*Desk thumping*] In 1997 we were in excess of 70 per cent. In 1998, the shortened year, we achieved a similar level of performance.

For the last fiscal year, let me explain what transpired. It was an unusual occurrence, that for the first seven or eight months of the fiscal year, the oil prices in this country took a dramatic downward turn. Never before, since the 1980s have the oil prices of the country fallen so dramatically in this period of time. Given that when the oil prices, which we had budgeted at US \$14, fell to less than US \$9, one had to be responsible in terms of how one was dealing with expenditures and releases. Therefore, we had to be a little more circumspect with respect to releases.

Mr. Manning: What did you cut from the airport?

Hon. T. Sudama: What this figure represents—

Mr. Speaker: May I appeal to the Member for San Fernando East to allow the Member to have his say, just as you had yours.

Mr. Manning: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. T. Sudama: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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This is what we discovered, and no responsible government could not have taken that into account and so adjusted the rate of release of funding for works which were going on and were in progress. Simply because of that backlog situation, what we had at the end of the year is that work totalling a cost of \$665 million was done and releases were made to pay for those jobs. However, because of this backlog situation, there was a total of \$102 million for which work was already done, implementation was already on the board so the processes would not have been accommodated to meet those releases within the fiscal year. But that is implementation! When we add that to the \$665 million we are faced with an implementation rate of over 70 per cent, which is creditable in all circumstances, given their performance. [*Desk thumping*]

I just wanted to explain that, because they look at these minor details and they come here to try to oppose and attack the Government. So, that is the situation; that is the reality with respect to the implementation rate of the PSIP in the last fiscal year. I do not have time. I wish I could have gone in and showed what they did in their performance.

I need very much to point out something, because the Member for Diego Martin West made a lot of song and dance about how much we were allocating to education, health, and the social sector. Well, let me look at the last PSIP and let us look at the profile of the investment pattern, let us look at the distribution of that. When we look at the PSIP, and this is not the total picture, simply because we are building some schools which are off budget, and that has to be added on to the expenditure on the total programme. When we look at the allocated distribution, you will see, Mr. Speaker, that we have changed the pattern. For economic infrastructure, we are providing 33.93 per cent but for social infrastructure, we are providing 45.7 per cent of the PSIP. So you see, what we are doing is creating this balance between economic and social infrastructure so you will have holistic development in Trinidad and Tobago. This is what we are doing.

In that context, education received 13 per cent of the PSIP; health received 10 per cent of the PSIP; and social and community services received 14.6 per cent of the PSIP. With regard to administration, because we want to improve the efficiency of public administration in this country, we want to computerize the services and so forth, and we have allocated 11.1 per cent to public administration. So you understand what we have done.

Now, let me look and see what is the record of our friends opposite in their performance. The member for Diego Martin comes here to boast. Mr. Speaker, in the PSIP of 1993, there was the big boast of how they are the great government for

education. Big boast! But this great government, in 1993, could only have provided 4.5 per cent for education; 5.5 per cent for health; 2.9 per cent for social and community services; and for administration—this is why, when we came into office, the public service was in such shambles—they had only put 0.1 per cent; this caring government, caring for the public servant. That is 1993.

Let us look at 1994. For that year, education, again 4.5 per cent—like they are stuck on this figure; health, they reduced it to 4.7 per cent; they increased social and community services a little; and administration went up to one per cent, from 0.8 to one per cent. This is their record. And they come in here complaining about what this UNC Government is doing for the social infrastructure. Well it is here in the statistics, if they care to read them. I have a lot to say and I want to move on, because I do not want to dilate too much on our performance, that is a matter of record.

Now, the question was raised, given the size of the PSIP, whether we would be able to implement it, and I said yes. It is not only that the figures of 61 has to be taken in a new light, given the fact that work was done, but releases would not have been processed in time to come into this fiscal year, where we achieved 70 per cent. But we have been implementing and we are intensifying the implementation of reform procedures so that we are going to expedite the rate at which projects are being done. We are going to look, for example, at the resource capability in the Project Implementation Unit of the respective ministries. We are going to look at streamlining the whole issue of releases of funding. We are going to see that the contracts are vetted in time. We are going to see that architects' briefs and so forth are designed and approved in an expeditious manner. We are also going to look at measures to streamline the procurement process, which has been one of the greatest sources of delay in the implementation programme. So we are going to do all this, and all this will be put into full effect during the course of this fiscal year.

So we have every hope that our rate of implementation, despite the fact that we have a much larger PSIP, would be much further advanced and we will be delivering to the people of Trinidad and Tobago like they have never seen delivery before in the history of this country. *[Desk thumping]*

So, this comprehensive development framework where we are establishing a symbiotic relationship between economic and social infrastructure will see the fruits delivered during this fiscal year and incoming fiscal years where the UNC Government will be in charge of the destiny of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Speaker, we have diversified the economy, we are on the road to a more effective diversification of the economy. When one looks at the figures and at the

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breakdown of the GDP, one will see what is happening. One will see that petroleum is becoming a smaller and smaller portion of the GDP. Whereas, in 1995, when they were in office, it was 27 per cent of the GDP, today, petroleum is 21 per cent of the GDP. What we have been witnessing is an increase in the manufacturing percentage of the GDP from what it was in 1995 to what it is today, and particularly the food, beverages and tobacco sectors.

In the services sector, where we have achieved substantial improvement—

Mr. Manning: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. Minister for giving way. Are you counting petrochemicals in the petroleum sector?

Hon. T. Sudama: Petrochemicals is a subset of the petroleum sector.

Mr. Manning: Is it?

Hon. T. Sudama: It is.

Mr. Manning: With those statistics?

Hon. T. Sudama: It is a subset of the petroleum sector.

So, Mr. Speaker, the services sector, which was 60 per cent of GDP in 1995, has now gone to 69 per cent of the GDP, and that, of course, includes tourism; financial services—where, according to the figures, we have achieved substantial progress, which is an index of the diversification—of course, construction and quarrying; the utilities like electricity and water: substantial increases there. Finance, transport, hotels, guest houses, distribution sector and so forth. When you look at it, you will see that we are getting there, Mr. Speaker, and as you know, Jerusalem was not built in a day, but we are proceeding to build the new Jerusalem.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the sitting is suspended for one hour.

12.15 p.m.: *Sitting suspended.*

1.15 p.m.: *Sitting resumed.*

Hon. Trevor Sudama: Mr. Speaker, when we took the adjournment for lunch, I was on the point of outlining how we have succeeded in the acceleration of the diversification of the economy, giving some indicators as to how that has been taking place. We are aware that there is still a way to go but I think in the last four years, this Government has done, creditably, with respect to diversification of the economy, and putting the economy on a more sustainable footing.

I was giving some examples and I also want to indicate that one of the purposes of the Public Sector Investment Programme is to stimulate greater capital formation, and when we look at the investment that this country has been able to secure, and we look at the foreign investments that we have been able to induce in Trinidad and Tobago, one will see that over the years, 1996 to June 1999 we have been able to secure for this country well over US US \$2.4 billion in investment.

In 1995, it was only \$295 million of foreign investment. In 1996, it shot up to US \$356 million; in 1997—\$999.6 million; in 1998—US \$731 million, and up to June 1999—\$288 million of foreign investment. So that has supported the growth thrust, but in terms of diversification, if we look at the figures for the tourism industry, which was one of the areas of focus for diversification—we have, between 1996 and July 1999, approved 36 tourism projects. We have established 1,557 additional hotel rooms; we have created 2,015 permanent jobs with a capital expenditure investment in the tourism sector of \$1,259,000,000 since 1996 to June 1999.

Now if that is not performance, I do not know what is. Because what has the previous government done in the 34 years to boost the prospects of the tourism industry that we have been able to do in four years? Mr. Speaker, and of course we are also attempting to stimulate local investment and savings; we have brought into being, the National Enterprises Limited; the Energy Holding Sector; we are reforming the pension's system and all this with the objective of increasing the level of domestic savings and finding investment opportunities for those savings.

While we are doing that, we have not forgotten the distributional aspect of this growth and we have had, from time to time, in this honourable House, related that distributional aspect: how we are spending more money on social welfare expenditure; on social welfare programmes and projects. We are doing that, at the same time, in our capital investment programme, we are spreading the benefits throughout Trinidad and Tobago. If I may just give some examples of what we are doing in that regard. I am talking about the equitable distribution of resources and I want to—because the issue of school's establishment has been raised here in this honourable House and I want to indicate to you, since this Government came into office, what we have been able to achieve. If you look at the spread—I am only going to indicate the schools which we have either completed or are in the process of construction in PNM constituencies, never before as they have been such a widespread school's building programme to deal with all areas of Trinidad and Tobago.

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We have completed the Cedros Primary School; we have completed the Valencia South Government School; the Beetham Government Primary School of which we are particularly proud. Because after 34 years of PNM Government, it took a UNC Government to build a primary school in the Beetham Estate. [*Desk thumping*] After 34 years of PNM! Billions, and billions of dollars of revenues passing through that Government who has so much concern about the people of Laventille and the Beetham, it took a UNC Government to do what they could not do in 34 years.

Construction is ongoing at the Aripo R. C. School; Malabar Government; San Juan R. C.; Santa Rosa Heights Government; Sobo Village Government; Nelson Street Boys' Government Primary School. These are new construction to be undertaken. Construction is in progress at the San Fernando Girls' Government School; River Estate/Patna Government School; Carenage Government School; and that would be completed shortly. May I say a word about Carenage Government School.

We have had here in this honourable House, protestation after protestation from that Member for Diego Martin West—I see he is on talking terms with the Member for San Fernando East now, but apparently for four years in that Government, he could not get a school built in Carenage; being a Cabinet Member of that PNM Government coming to complain here, but is the UNC Government that would build and complete the school in Carenage. [*Desk thumping*] In those days he was not on speaking terms with the Member for San Fernando East, so he could not get anything done in Diego Martin West—but we will build the school and it will go down in history that a UNC Government would build a school for the pupils of Carenage.

1.25 p.m.

There is construction in progress at San Fernando Girls' Anglican School, Diego Martin Boys' Roman Catholic School, Moulton Hall Methodist School, Western Boys' R. C. School, Erin R. C. School, D'Abadie Government School, we are closing the accounts there. In secondary schools we are completing Vessigny and Tranquillity.

Mr. Speaker, do you know what amazes me is that when you do things in their constituencies they come to the House and complain that you are trying to seduce and buy their constituents. If you do not do anything in their constituencies, they say you are discriminating. How do you please these people on that side?

As I said, I do not want to go into any long discourse about our distributional perspectives or accomplishments as a UNC Government. If there ever was a

government of inclusiveness, it is this Government of the United National Congress. [*Desk thumping*] I want to make that absolutely clear.

Mr. Speaker, let us see what we have done under the National Commission for Self-Help. This is a programme funded from the Community Development Fund, which comes under the responsibility of my ministry. Look at what we have done. I am going to relate some constituencies and the kind of expenditure we have approved for them: Diego Martin East—where is he, he is not here; he only loves to come here and bad mouth and engage in foul language, and when the time comes for him to listen, he is nowhere around. Since we came into office we have approved 31 projects to the value of \$852,000. In Laventille East/Morvant, 22 projects to the value of \$708,000; Laventille West, 19 projects to the value of \$262,000. So that in the area of Laventille we have been able to provide just under \$1 million for projects in that locality. Of the total I have here, that is well over 8 per cent of the total we have allocated under self-help since 1997 to now, merely in one area, Laventille. Then they talk about discrimination.

In San Fernando East we had seven projects there, \$670,000. I was particularly careful to say that whatever applications come from San Fernando East it should be accommodated, because we want the Member for San Fernando East to be there, to feel happy and, therefore, he ought to be accommodated. San Fernando West, eight projects, \$405,000; St. Ann's, 36 projects, \$750,000; Toco/Manzanilla, 26 projects—where is the Member for Toco/Manzanilla—\$1,328,000 approved out of a total expenditure of \$18 million.

So that when you understand what we are doing, and you see the range of areas on which we are focussing, you will understand that this Government is committed to the issue of equity as no other government has been in the history of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Hinds: I am most grateful to the Member for giving way. Mr. Speaker, is the hon. Minister suggesting that when a community group applies to the Self-Help Commission for a project, that is a credit to the Ministry of Planning or the Government? The very philosophy of self-help projects is for communities to benefit and develop with their own effort and their labour. What does that have to do with the Minister?

Hon. T. Sudama: Let me explain, Mr. Speaker. The Ministry facilitates the approvals and the execution of the project. [*Interruption*] It facilitates the approval of the amounts, and the execution is facilitated through the work of the officers of the National Commission for Self-Help.

Mr. Speaker: Order please!

Hon. T. Sudama: In fact, there are hundreds of applications and those applications are approved on the basis of availability of funding.*[Interruption]* But we have been fair to the PNM constituencies.

Mr. Speaker: Order please!

Hon. T. Sudama: Mr. Speaker, then we have a grants window under the Community Development Fund and that is where you try to assist NGOs and CBOs and give them a grant for a project dedicated to the alleviation of poverty, training programmes, empowering them and so forth.

We have approved 37 projects, so far, since this grants window has been established. Of that 37, we have approved seven projects in Port of Spain, one in Toco, two in San Fernando, one in Morvant, one in La Brea, one in Laventille, one in Tunapuna. Almost half the number of projects we have approved have been in PNM constituencies. Yet they come here and go on and on about discrimination and how this Government is against the people of the PNM constituencies. Rubbish! *[Interruption]*

Dr. Rowley: Where is the Diego Martin R.C. School?

Hon. T. Sudama: Mr. Speaker, let me explain. We have made a commitment to do away with the Common Entrance Examination in the year 2000. In order to do that, we have to, among other things, provide secondary school places to accommodate all the people who graduate from primary school.

We approached the InterAmerican Development Bank and secured a loan. After we put our counterpart funding we are going into the tune of almost US \$200 million. Part of that money would be used to build 20 secondary schools in Trinidad and Tobago. The first ten that we have identified is what we are going to build in the first phase. In the second phase, the Member for Diego Martin West will see that a secondary school will be constructed in Diego Martin.

Let me explain—*[Interruption]*

Mr. Speaker: May I appeal to the Member for Diego Martin West to restrain himself.

Hon. T. Sudama: Thank you. Let me just explain, Mr. Speaker. The location of these schools were not determined by the UNC Government. This was done on the basis of a study commissioned, and the InterAmerican Development Bank insisted that we go on a rational basis for the distribution of these schools to complete. *[Interruption]*

Mr. Manning: I thank the hon. Minister for giving way. Is the hon. Minister saying that the Government has adhered to the recommendations of the technical experts in respect to the siting of schools in all cases, that it has not deviated from the recommendations made? Is that what the Minister is saying?

Hon. T. Sudama: Siting with respect to location; now, of course, it may be if one site is, perhaps, a little less favourable, we go a little further down and take another site. But the general location is determined on the basis of a study done. A Swedish firm did the study and it was accepted by the InterAmerican Development Bank. We cannot, under a loan programme, build schools willy-nilly without the approval, the “no objection”, of the InterAmerican Development Bank. They are not going to give you a “no objection” if they know that you are going outside of the schedule. Let me put this matter to rest with these gentlemen.

Concerning the Mason Hall Secondary in Tobago, we have been having enormous difficulty in trying to formulate a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Tobago House of Assembly. We had the difficulty with the health sector reform programme because the way the loan is structured, the bank recognizes the Government of Trinidad and Tobago as the agent, which is responsible for the loan. But since the Act says that the honourable House of Assembly is responsible for education and construction, then we must have a Memorandum of Understanding with the Assembly because of the law. *[Interruption]* It took us over a year to get an MOU signed with the Tobago House of Assembly for the Health Sector Reform Programme and that is why the construction of the Tobago Hospital was delayed, because we could not do anything without the MOU having been signed in the first place.

Similarly, we are having difficulty with an MOU for the education sector. It has been over a year now. There has been back and forth legal arguments as to who should sign and what should be the terms of this agreement. Finally, I think we have that behind us and, as a result, the Mason Hall Secondary School will be in progress in the coming few months. We are going to start work on that. So it is not the fault of the Government that we are not getting the cooperation of the Tobago House of Assembly in effecting the Memorandum of Understanding, whether for the Health Sector Reform Programme or the Education Sector Reform Programme.

I want to spend a little time now in dealing with some of the wild accusations of corruption, which have been levelled by the other side. Time does not permit me to deal with the whole gamut of corruption charges which are coming from that side, simply because that is all they seem to know and focus on. That is all

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the fabrications and so forth they can garner on the issue of whatever this Government is attempting—there is corruption motivating that issue.

I want to spend some time to talk about the Solomon Hochoy Highway project, and here is what my friend from Diego Martin East had to say; a man who is an expert at distorting the truth and fabricating where there is nothing to distort; engaging in sheer fabrication. I just want to quote him and then outline to this honourable House what the facts are with respect to that project.

He said in his contribution:

“Cubiertas had tendered approximately \$127 million. The Government went to Cubertus and said: “Chop it down to \$105 or \$110 million.” Cubiertas, of course, said, “No. I tendered on this job at \$127 million, why am I going down?”—I understand it is \$120 million—“Why am I taking \$7 million off my price, what for...” Cubiertas quite rightly said “No” and left, paving the way for the Government to start bidding with the second bidder, Comylsa-Lain, who was, however, associated with a well-known friend of the UNC: one of their favourite contractors.”

Who, may I ask, is that? Do they have the gumption to indicate his name to the House? [*Interruption*]

This is what you are saying? Well, if you do not know the name then you are telling a falsehood to the House; that is all I can conclude.

Mr. Imbert: As if you do not know.

Hon. T. Sudama: He continues:

“Of course, a typical pattern flows. The Government did not give Cubiertas the contract at \$127 million but they negotiated with the second bidder for the same figure or a higher figure, for less road.

The Government sat and watched Comylsa-Lain fool around on the north/south strip for 24 months. The international agencies do not allow things like this to go on forever. The European Development Fund is not going to allow a contractor to be there doing 10 per cent of the work in 100 per cent of the time.”

Mr. Speaker, let me tell you what the facts are. The tendering for this project started under that regime. On June 15, 1995 that PNM regime was in office.

“On June 15th 1995, International Tenders were invited for the reconstruction works and the call for tenders was published in The Trinidad Guardian and the Official Journal of the European Community.

The lowest bid was submitted by Wimpey Construction of London, UK...”

The lowest bid was \$216,315,297, Wimpey Construction. Trinity Asphalt Pavers, TT\$261,848,076.

Mr. Speaker, they do not understand, they are implicating the integrity of the Central Tenders Board when they make these accusations that the UNC Government interfered and decided to whom the contract should be given. This was all done by the Central Tenders Board. But moreover, they implicate the European Union because every time you take a loan or grant from the Union, then every step you take has to get a “no objection” from the European Union.

So whatever we do we must get prior approval. Are you saying that the representatives of the European Union in Trinidad and Tobago are corrupt? Is this what you are saying?

1.40 p.m.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the speaking time of the Member for Oropouche has expired.

Motion made, That the speaking time of the hon. Member be extended by 30 minutes. [*Hon. G. Singh*]

Hon. T. Sudama: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I would have to go a little quickly because I want to put a lot on the record with respect to the distortions coming from the other side.

“By letter dated October 18th 1995...”

So October 18, 1995 they were still in office, Mr. Speaker.

“...the Central Tenders Board voided the offers received from Trinity Asphalt Pavers and Wimpey Construction Limited.”

Not the UNC Government. The Central Tenders Board during the tenure of the PNM government voided these contracts.

“This occurred when it became evident that instead of the four most important local road contractors (Coosals Limited, Seereeram Limited, Dipcon Limited and Junior Sammy Limited) seeking alliances with external contractors and submitting separate bids, these firms joined with the only international contractor represented at the site visit/information meeting. Further, there was a belief that the bid amount was exaggerated; given that the local contractors were among the sources consulted for the estimates.”

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Under a PNM government.

“There was also a suspicion that Trinity Asphalt Pavers had acted merely as a runner for the Wimpey led consortium, since the firm could not have attained the eligibility criteria on its own—namely a minimum audited annual turnover of ECU15 Mn over the previous three years and the successful completion of at least three highways construction or rehabilitation each with a contract value in excess of ECU10 Mn during the previous seven years. Therefore Wimpey’s bid was the only one which could have been evaluated.

In light of the lowest bid being 85% higher than the Engineer’s estimate a short term contract was entered into with Alatec Nicholas O’Dwyer to reevaluate the Engineer’s Estimate and prepare the required documents for the tender re launch of the Works Contract.”

A second invitation to tender went out in 1996. I am trying to tell the Member the process. He is accusing corruption and I am asking him where is the corruption.

Mr. Speaker, in the second tender.

“All five tenderers post qualified and proceeded to financial bid evaluation. However based on corrected tender sums in excess of the Engineer’s estimate and the available budget finance, three of the five post qualified tenders were eliminated from further detailed technical analysis. The two lowest tenders proceeded to the detailed analysis, and after appropriate adjustments and eliminations were carried out on the lowest tender to revise the scope of the contract award sum in range with the available budget finance for the project,...

The European Commission was not going to approve any transaction which exceeded the amount they had allocated. This has been funded by loan funding, grant funding and some resources by the Trinidad and Tobago Government. They were not going to, they had made that very clear, therefore they insisted that the scope of works be brought within the budget figure. As a result of this,

“...it was recommended that the revised tender of Cubiertas Y Mzov S.A./FCC Joint Venture in the net amount of TT \$101,519,832 be considered for the award of contract.

“By letter dated November 18th 1996, the Central Tenders Board awarded the Works Contract to Cubiertas Y Mzov S.A./FCC Joint Venture, outlining the changes which were made to tailor the project to the available finances.”

This was done in conjunction with the European Union.

“This letter of award was acknowledged by Cubiertas, but the firm subsequently raised queries regarding the excision of a percentage of the road length and provisional works in the Bill of Quantities. Eventually Cubiertas Y Mzov S.A./FCC Joint Venture refused to sign the prepared Works Contract, and the firm was held in breach.”

All along, the European Union was consulted in every step of this project. If you want to tell the representative here to relay that the European commission is corrupt, you can inform me and I would relay that information that the Member for Diego Martin East and the PNM government is accusing the European government’s representative of corruption in this exercise. *[Interruption]*

Mr. Speaker: Order please.

Hon. T. Sudama: It goes on:

“Based on this development, the next lowest tendered price was considered for the award of contract, and on May 9th 1997, the Central Tenders Board awarded the Contract to Comylsa-Lain Joint Venture in the revised sum of TT \$115,197,778.31, plus TT \$6,911,666.70 VAT. The Contract was signed on May 23rd 1997...”

And works were supposed to commence in January 1998. At each step as I said, the European Union was privy to this, they said they were not going to increase their grant funding or their loan funding above the figure which was decided upon.

Mr. Imbert: I thought I heard the Minister say the first contractor would execute the contract for \$101 and the second one was going to do it for \$115. Is that what you said?

Hon. T. Sudama: The second lowest tenderer was given after the first tenderer was awarded and he refused and, therefore, he was in breach of contract. The second lowest tenderer—that was what the European Commission advised, that you go to the second lowest tenderer—and they went to that bid—*[Interruption]*

Mr. Speaker: May I remind the Member for Diego Martin West and East that whether or not you concede, or agree with what the Minister is saying, this is not the way to do it. If you have already spoken and exhausted your time and he will not give way, pass it on to one of the other Members to ask, or to raise, but you cannot, while he is making his presentation, have dialogue going with him. It cannot be done this way and I ask you to desist.

Hon. T. Sudama: Mr. Speaker, this is consuming a fair amount of my time. I would wrap up this by quoting and saying that from the time the contractor took up the job we were having difficulty. They sent people here who could not speak English, they spoke only Spanish. They were not workers according to specifications that were laid down by the consultants. Execution was commenced in January 1998 and proceeded to be behind schedule.

I would read the report which we had submitted in February 1999 which outlined what happened.

“In November 1998, the Contractor proposed an alternative design for completing the project. The Client indicated that any proposed alternative would have to be equal or better than the contract design with no increase in costs before any consideration could be granted by the Client. The Contractor also stated that until their proposal was approved or rejected the original design would be in force and that work would proceed accordingly.

During the first week of January 1999, CLJV submitted 8 alternative designs in sketch form to the Consultants in Madrid omitting details essential to an evaluation by the Client. A further submission was made on February 01, 1999, and yet another on February 18, 1999 accompanied by detailed specifications as a substitute for the contracted specifications.

The Contracting Authority decided to evaluate the proposed design in comparison with the contracted design using an independent third party, namely, the Transport Research Laboratory (TRL) in the United Kingdom. A preliminary report is expected on Wednesday 10th, March 1999 and the final report on Friday 19th, March 1999. In addition, the Client has commissioned a detailed report on quarry materials available locally that could satisfy the contract specifications, and that are also available in the necessary quantities suitable for the Solomon Hochoy Highway project.

Formal Notice of Breach of Contract was issued to Comylsa-Lain Joint Venture by letter dated February 05, 1999.”

Mr. Speaker, you have to go through a process and point out the breaches, give them notice and so forth, and then a final notice of breach was given in February 1999.

“Three areas of breach were identified, namely:

- Failure to rectify or prevent the constant slippage in the official work programme

- Failure to appoint a suitable Site Representative, and
- Failure to accelerate and provide the increased resources and inputs required to achieve the official work programme

The date on which this was given, Comylsa-Lain had not responded. At every step of the way, we had to report to the European Commission what we are doing.

I will quote a letter because they are saying that we were lax, you have to go through a procedure, and the European Commission has to approve the steps you are taking. Every step has to be approved by them.

This is what the European Commission in a letter signed by the Ambassador, Kieran O’Cuneen had to say on April 16, 1999. We had already issued a notice of breach in February. In April, the European Commissioner is asking us still to hold our hands.

This is a letter written to the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Planning and Development. It says:

“Considering the present situation and the fact that the Contractor’s design proposal is rejected, I think it would be useful to organise a meeting with the principals of Comylsa-Lain to verify the intention of the Contractor to complete the Works following the original design.”

April 1999, two months after notice of breach had been given.

“One of the main questions that should be considered and discussed before taking a decision on the termination of the contract is the availability of materials complying with the contractual specifications.”

We have already done that, but they are insisting.

“As I have already proposed in my letter n° 281 of 18/2/99 a special report of the Resident Engineer regarding the availability of materials could be a very useful tool to take an appropriate decision.

This report should be made available before the 23rd April 1999 to allow some time of reflection and discussion before the proposed meeting with the Contractor. This meeting could be organised for the 29th or 30th April 1999. On the basis of the results of this meeting a final decision could be taken on the contractual situation.”

But they come here to talk nonsense about corruption and delay, and who they want to favour and so forth. This is the procedure that the European Union has laid down for the funding they have provided for this project.

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Mr. Speaker, I merely want to say that we and the European Union have decided, after we have terminated the contract, to do between Indian Trail and Claxton Bay. This will be funded from resources which we will get by terminating the bond of the contractor, plus some of our own resources.

1.55 p.m.

Between Claxton Bay and San Fernando the 25-mile strip has to again go out to international tender, if we are going to get the grant and loan funding from the European Union.

The EC delegation has advised that in the event of a termination of the works contract, the entire project would have to be re-tendered. This process is likely to take approximately 12 months, and during this time, all activities to be undertaken on the site will have to be funded from Government resources. That is the conditions they have laid down. If we want the loan and grant funding, we have to go out for international tender. The bidding is going to take 12 months and we are not going to go through that procedure because I had raised with them, the whole issue of whether we could break-up the contracts into three separate amounts, which would have permitted local contractors to have the resources in order to bid. They firmly rejected that suggestion and, therefore, we have to go out for international tender. Mr. Speaker, that is the situation.

Mr. Speaker, I thought, I would take some time and put this on record once and for all, so that we do not hear coming from that side charges of corruption, incompetence, delay and all the other things that they have fabricated, as to why this project is not proceeding expeditiously.

Mr. Sinanan: Could you indicate the amount of money that would be realizable on the cancellation of the bond?

Hon. T. Sudama: The bond itself was \$10 million, rather \$12 million and there is \$2.6 million available, where moneys were owing to the contractor which we had the legal right to hold back. The overall construction of the north bound and the completion of the south bound is approximately \$18 million.

Mr. Speaker, I hope that this is behind us and shuts up the mouth of the Member for Diego Martin East once and for all. If he does not shut up, all I can say is that the man has a perverse interest in distorting things and making allegations with no substance—a perversion on his part.

The other issue he raised—in every case—he made a statement here saying, that the reason we were not progressing with the loan programmes of the

international financial organizations is because they would not permit corruption. Yet in the same breath, he is saying that our relationship and association with the European Union is corrupt. In the same breath, he is saying that they are permitting and condoning corruption of a UNC Government in the award of these contracts under the Solomon Hochoy Highway. I do not know how we can deal with a character like this Member for Diego Martin East.

Let me raise the other issue, which was the drainage problem that we have discovered because it is important to understand what has happened. It would have been far better if we could have had the resources in order to finance our own development. We do not have a sufficiency of those resources. Therefore, it is important for us to go out and seek resources outside whether to raise money on the capital market, which is a higher figure but can be raised more expeditiously, or whether to go to the international financial institutions and go through their negotiating process and all its conditionalities and so on that we have to meet.

In the case of the drainage programme, this was in progress before we came into office. When we came into office I asked a number of questions. Firstly, the scope of this drainage programme must be more comprehensive. The drainage programme only addresses flooding in certain residential areas. I said it must address flooding in rural areas, as well as agricultural areas so that we have a comprehensive programme. They said that we would have to go and redesign that programme. So we did that and they came up with certain conditions. Two of the conditions, which they would have agreed to, was that we had to retrench further than we had already done in the drainage division. There was a great deal of attrition that went on.

There is a minimum staff in the drainage division and it could not cope with the intensity of flooding. We indicated that we could not further retrench. There was no way we could have done that although, presently, we are doing a substantial amount of work through contractors. We are doing a lot of the heavy work through contracting.

Mr. Speaker, the second thing was to put a cost recovery mechanism in place. Now, I do not know if they understand what cost recovery means. It means that the people who would benefit from this programme would have to recover the cost of that programme.

Mr. Speaker, could you imagine asking farmers in this country to pay the cost of a drainage loan in the vicinity of US \$30 million? From what source of income would they pay that back? We said that cost recovery was not an option for us.

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Therefore, on that basis we had to go back and re-negotiate on what was our position. This is what is taking so long with that loan. In the mean time, we are committed to dealing with the drainage problem and we would have to find alternative sources of finance in order to deal with this problem on a more expeditiously basis.

Mr. Speaker, I could not close without raising some issues about the tendency I observed on the other side and that is, a subtle incitement to insurrection—subtle incitement. In the old days, the Member for San Fernando East used to say that the URP is to keep social peace. Do you know what that implies? It meant that if we did not have the URP programme, then it was all right not to have social peace. That is the implication of what he is saying, right! *[Interruption]*. Hear what my friend from Arouca North had to say about the 1990 coup. *[Interruption]*

The Member for Arouca North was talking about the NAR government. I hope my friend from Diego Martin West is listening. He said that when it got into office in 1986, the URP programme started to decline in 1987, \$10 million a year; and by 1990, the allocations for the URP—programme—which was Developmental and Environmental Works Division at that 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 table, you would understand what happened in 1990. That attempted coup and the confusion that took place was because people were under pressure by the NAR government.

Mr. Speaker, let us understand what this coup was all about. This coup was the work of a handful of insurrectionists in Trinidad and Tobago. It had nothing to do with poverty out there. If, in fact, it had something to do with poverty, when this coup took place, there would have been mass marching in the streets, an expression of dissatisfaction of the population. Nothing like that happened. All they did was looted the stores. There was no expression of discontent and dissatisfaction among the population in the attempted coup of 1990.

2.05 p.m.

So what are you saying, that you are justifying—*[Interruptions]*

Mr. Speaker: Order please, order please!

Hon. T. Sudama:—the coup because there was disaffection and discontent in the society and, therefore, people were justified in having a coup? Who perpetrated this coup? Have you asked yourselves? Who perpetrated this coup of 1990 and did it have the support of the population? If it had the support of the

population then the coup would have been successful. On the day of the coup, very curiously, you know, the Member for San Fernando East never showed up at all in the House. I say it is merely a coincidence that he did not show up on the date of the coup.

Mr. Manning: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. Member for giving way. I was seated in this House in this very seat, on the day of the coup, until 5.15. The person who was curiously absent was the hon. Member for Couva North. Perhaps the Member for Oropouche could find out why that is so.

Hon. T. Sudama: Mr. Speaker, I would not permit this gross fabrication here. I was sitting right there, in the seat of the Member for Toco/Manzanilla. That Member never showed up that day. The then Leader of the Opposition was here until teatime and then he went to the Hall of Justice to attend a function there, the opening of the Law Term. The hon. Member and the representative for Laventille were never in this House, right? *[Interruptions]*

Mr. Valley: If the Member would give way, this is easy to check, because, I mean, the Member is guilty of misleading the House. It is easy to check. *[Interruptions]*

Hon. T. Sudama: You are guilty. You were not here, so you sit down. *[Interruptions]*

Mr. Speaker: Order please, order please!

Hon. T. Sudama: Mr. Speaker, he talks about, "This is the worst budget. This is the worst Government ever. This is the worst performance of the PSIP". What he omitted was, this is the "wus" Leader of the Opposition that we have had in the history of Trinidad and Tobago. They cannot come "wuser" than that Member for San Fernando East. *[Laughter]*

Mr. Speaker, let me just make this point because it is important, and this has come from a normally sober man, the Member for San Fernando West who was quoting approvingly Raffique Shah. Because if you are not quoting approvingly why do you quote him at all, is my question? Hear what the Member for San Fernando West is subtly instigating in this country. He is quoting Raffique Shah, this man who should have spent his life in prison for treason. Hear what he says:

"But the seething anger my friend referred to, that feeling"

He is talking about 1970 now:

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“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.”

This was quoted approvingly by the Member for San Fernando West. These are the critical lines, Mr. Speaker:

“If that does happen, it won’t be the first time that the oppressed will have exploded into violence.”

This is a subtle call to violence:

“Only this time around,”

and hear this very carefully:

“having learnt from the mistakes of 1970 fools like me, they won't balk at bloodshed.”

You understand the route, the path on which that PNM Opposition is travelling?

“And those who expect to ‘wake up when it's over’ may find they may never wake up at all.”

This was approvingly quoted by the Member for San Fernando West. Why else would he want to bring Raffique Shah into this debate? You see, they have nothing to offer—it is a Government of negativism, as I said—and what they are doing now is subtly inciting the population to violence and to insurrection. Mr. Speaker, all I say is that despite all their efforts this Government is committed to and will build a new Jerusalem on this green and pleasant land. Thank you very much. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Fitzgerald Hinds (*Laventille East/Morvant*): [*Desk thumping*] Mr. Speaker, first of all, not for the sake of self congratulation but I feel obliged, I feel compelled, to publicly congratulate the Member for San Fernando East for a very solid, analytical, intellectual response to what purported itself to be a budget presentation by the Minister of Finance. [*Desk thumping*] I noted the look on the face of the Minister of Finance and I have noted even more carefully the very sullen expressions on the faces of all the Members opposite as they have been sitting here for the last few hours, for the past few days, listening to what the People's National Movement intends to do to lift Trinidad and Tobago up from the certain course of disaster upon which this UNC regime has set us.

As has been said before, a budget presentation affords a government an opportunity to account for its stewardship to the nation, to the people who put it in

government for the past year, the year under review, and to indicate the direction it proposes to take us, henceforth, Mr. Speaker. This Government has, on all those counts, palpably failed. I listened very sadly to the Minister of Planning and Development, the Member for Oropouche. He spoke about the fact that the Government took special pride in the construction of the primary school at the Beetham Estate.

I represent part of the Beetham Estate, Mr. Speaker, and I do not see the Beetham as any particular or special area requiring any special approach. I see the Beetham as a community of Trinidad and Tobago like any other. I got the impression that, because of this special pride that the Minister said he had for the establishment of that school that he, from a superior posture, looks at the Beetham in a certain way. Well, I want to tell him that when that school was under construction, in my conversations with the people of that area, some of them quite legitimately expressed fear. Many of them send their children to any school that they choose around Port of Spain such as Newtown Boys, Sacred Heart Girls, Rosary Boys, Gloster Lodge Moravian and Nelson Street Boys. They send their children to the nearest school and the one best suited to their circumstances.

When that school was being established on the Beetham some of the residents expressed the fear that now the school is there the children of that area are likely to be put there and they will no longer be in contact with the remainder of Port of Spain and the rest of the community. In that sense some of them expressed the fear that they may be confined, barricaded, perhaps marginalized and that is a legitimate concern. [*Desk thumping*] So this special thing about Beetham and Laventille—and let me tell him further, the people of those communities— [*Interruptions*]

Mr. Speaker: Order please, order please!

Mr. F. Hinds: When I came from that community the people of those communities do not want any sympathy from anyone. They want respect and equity like everyone up and down Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] They are accustomed to struggle, they are accustomed to hard times [*Interruptions*] and the times they have gone through, like all of the people of this country, reflected the state of the economy of this country.

This is why a previous speaker on this side had to remind you, the Government, that for the last 13 years in this country the PNM has only been in office for 3 years and 10 months. [*Interruptions*] When the Minister of Education speaks about no schools being built by the PNM, no secondary schools for the last

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10 years and statements like that, he does not even remember basic mathematics. Three years and 10 months out of 13 years leave just less than 9. [*Interruptions*]

So, Mr. Speaker, the Member for Oropouche with his usual penchant for misleading this House and giving false impressions, he is a very tricky, tricky man, Mr. Speaker, tricky, slippery. One has to watch him and listen to him very well. He started to highlight statistics about the Government's assistance to people of Laventille. He mentioned Laventille East/Morvant, Laventille West and St. Ann's East. When we checked him out, what was he speaking about? He was speaking about self-help projects. I then questioned him. [*Interruptions*]

The philosophy of the self-help project is that community groups—it has nothing to do with a constituency, it has nothing to do with the Member of Parliament per se. It has nothing to do with political affiliations; it ought not to. However, he is now creating a situation where a community group applies for a self-help project, they get that help to fix the bridge in their area for the benefit of more than eight families and then he had—[*Interruptions*] I am sorry, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: May I appeal to the Member for Oropouche and the Member for Chaguanas, notwithstanding that what the Member for Laventille East/Morvant is saying may not meet with your satisfaction or agreement, that is not the way to deal with it. You could brief those to come to deal with it or you could get up and ask him to give way, but you cannot shout it across the floor like that.

I also need to remind Members on both sides that there is a certain type of heckling and the like that could take place quite easily at a political meeting, on the platform, but which should not take place in these hallowed halls. I ask you, please, distinguish as between behaviour that is perfectly in order on the hustings as opposed to here.

Mr. F. Hinds: I am most grateful, Mr. Speaker. As I was indicating, the Member is attempting to politicize the thing because he highlights these statistics showing how many projects were carried out in Laventille East/Morvant, St. Ann's East and San Fernando East and lends the impression that the Government had something to do with that. No. That is not the case. However, for the unwary listener across the nation they may get the impression by the statistics and the argument that he was carrying that the Government was doing something for Laventille East/Morvant and, therefore, no one can reasonably say that the Government discriminates.

When we accuse the Government of discrimination we do so on the basis of solid, provable and established facts. [*Desk thumping*] Let me give one short

example that was alluded to and ventilated earlier today. The Diego Martin Secondary School—it was a requirement after a study on the basis of population figures and the need in a particular community, four were on the agenda. Since 1994 they were on the agenda. The Government, no doubt at the pen of the Member for Oropouche, the very Minister of Planning and Development, struck it out in 1995 when they came to office and met it. It was off for two years.

Agitation by the Member for that area caused it to go back on to the records and today it is off again, after the Government decided to build a further 10 secondary schools.

[MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

When the Member for Tabaquite asks, in his usual simple way, why we did not build more secondary schools, again I have to remind him, hopefully for the last time and, if not the last, perhaps the time before the last as you exit from Government shortly, that it has to do with the economic circumstances of the country.

Between 1991 and 1995 the government of the PNM had the task of rebuilding a broken economy [*Desk thumping*] and did so beyond measure. There was no question of social development and social programming, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

2.20 p.m.

There were constraints. Inflation was what it was. Foreign exchange was what it was and it was a task of rebuilding. Having rebuilt it, no economist in this country disputes the fact that a marvellous job was done at rebuilding the economy, the very essence of it. Once that was done, putting it back on a growth path—

Mr. Sudama: Mash it up.

Mr. F. Hinds:—that was the first time after the structural adjustment years. The NAR had begun it. We must give some credit for that, and when that was done—

Mr. Manning: Chambers started it.

Mr. F. Hinds: Yes, it begun with Mr. Chambers. When that was done, Mr. Deputy Speaker, what happened? The UNC came into office and, you know, the ship of state became the *Titanic* because they took it to a very ignoble collapse. What is the state of affairs now? Public debt bursting the ceilings and everything is going haywire yet again, because of the coming of the UNC.

Mr. Sudama: You are on the *Titanic* now.

Mr. F. Hinds: But, the people of this country are waiting patiently and, in due course, they will adjust that. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will not be detained by the Member for Oropouche. There is much to say and it must be said.

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I say that the Minister of Finance came to this Parliament—of course, this is not his headline in the *Trinidad Guardian* of Saturday, October 9—but based on his utterances during his budget presentation, he saw no need to raise taxes; everything was going fine, so do not interfere with that which need not be interfered with. You do not fix that which does not require fixing. He gave the impression in the interviews he had with the media after, that everything was “cooked and curried”, to use a colloquialism; everything was fine. Things nice, the papers said. Things nice? Furthest from the truth.

He argued about whether—and he is still trying to defend the inaccurate position that unemployment was 11.7 per cent. The figures he produced, the national average. That is the impression he gave. The figures he produced showed that male unemployment was that, and female unemployment was some 19 plus per cent, so that the national average worked out to be 14 plus, but he lent the erroneous impression that it was 11 plus. But he has been told about that, knocked on his hands, knocked about him—not literally of course, but in the metaphor—for that inaccuracy.

Mr. Imbert: Deliberate.

Mr. F. Hinds: Yes, deliberate inaccuracy it was, trying to mislead us and fool us.

But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I assure you that things in this country are not exactly nice. It is sad to say so, but it is the truth. Because, for the people who are unemployed in the communities, whether they come from the Beetham, or from up the hills by Desperadoes, or from Point Fortin, or from Charlotteville, Mason Hall, Calder Hall, wherever; unemployment for the unemployed is always 100 per cent, and they will take no comfort in hearing the Government try to say it is 11 per cent, as opposed to the truth of it being 14 per cent. They want the Government to fulfil its responsibility by creating the right environment so that the possibility of work for those who are willing will become available.

Before we come to the world of work, we know, if I may quote the Mighty Sparrow, that children must go to school and learn well. You must work today in order to earn tomorrow, if I remember the lines of that calypso. That brings us to the business of education and training, the matter that I propose to deal with briefly in this debate.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Government boasted about the revolution in education. Revolution means change. Everyone understands that and one would think, impliedly, change for the better. Fortunately, for the Minister of Education and the Government, when they came to office, they met, not *A Blueprint for*

Human Development and Sustainable Growth, as it has been called. You get the impression that the Minister of Finance was on his regular jaunts around the country and perhaps out. He gave the public servants in the Ministry of Finance no real fiscal directions. They told him the time was coming, he had to present a budget. They had the general theme because they have been doing this for years with their cumulative wisdom and experience and, suddenly, he appears after one of his jaunts, perhaps drowsy. What was to be done, Mr. Minister of Finance? And he just said call it A Blueprint for—you know, even the name of the thing is so typical and so common—*A Blueprint for Human Development and Sustainable Growth*—and so cliched, and they walked in and put that on the front of the document and there it went. Nothing. Yes, in 1998; look at it. You could see the simplicity. The 1998 budget was called *A Blueprint for Human Development, Savings and Asset Building*. So uncreative. It demonstrates that—

Mr. Manning: And what is '99?

Mr. F. Hinds:—no real thought has gone into this thing. I want this Government to understand—

Mr. Assam: Because we want development to be a continuing process. You must understand.

Mr. F. Hinds:—that a budget presentation is not merely about words; it is not merely about complying with the legal and/or constitutional requirement to come here by a certain date and call it a budget and read something for 92 minutes. It is about people's lives.

Mr. Assam: That is right, human development.

Mr. F. Hinds: People are affected in a meaningful way by it and this Government does not seem to understand that.

This is why, if I may just shift marginally, when we spoke earlier about the Concordat, that is a settled arrangement. In a sense, it is part of the constitutional settlement of the country, and whether you like it or you do not like it, you do not just throw it up in the air and let the chips fall where they may. This is about people's lives, a settled position; and if you interfere unthinkingly with it, you may create a situation where you will have social disharmony and social upheaval. This Government does not understand that.

So, as I was saying, when the Minister and the Government came to office, they met a real blueprint for the nation's educational development for the next 10 years—well, by then in 1995, it was eight years. This blueprint was from 1993 to

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the year 2003, the White Paper on education, a document that came as a result of genuine consultations with the people of this country. This is not a document of prescriptions. I studied it. I am sure the Minister managed to study parts of it.

It is not about prescriptions. It provided guidelines by which educators and by which government could have gone and taken the country for that period in time. All of the policies that this Government has presented to the nation, half-heartedly as it did over the last four years, came out of this White Paper. Absolutely nothing is new. I challenge the Minister to show me one thing he has done that came out of independent thought. Every bit of it, nothing is new to us, except, of course, whenever he perverted, if I may use that coarse term—I am sorry, not in a moral sense, but whenever he corrupted it, Mr. Deputy Speaker. For example, the so-called “one book policy” which I shall come to a bit later in my discourse.

So, he had the thing easy; he met the thing up and running; all he had to do was to follow through and do the thing properly. But, what did the Minister do? Because of his poor history on public relations, he must have—I am sorry. Let me not say that. But, because of his poor ability to relate to public servants and to people in general perhaps, he fired some of the key people in the Ministry of Education; the people out of whose minds and whose bosoms this document and others came. He fired the technocrats. In four years, he got rid of four Permanent Secretaries. He has made history in this country. All the senior technocrats in the Ministry of Education want out.

Miss Nicholson: The best in the Caribbean.

Mr. F. Hinds: All want out. Dr. Claudia Harvey was so upset at the fact that he wanted to discriminate against certain teachers and to be vindictive against certain teachers, she walked out. So disgusting.

Miss Nicholson: I could walk, you know. You cannot.

Mr. Assam: Talk is cheap.

Mr. F. Hinds: Mr. Deputy Speaker, like a bull in a china shop, that was the approach of the Minister of Education. As a consequence, he finds himself like the cheese standing alone, not realizing that in a modern society, in a modern era, you cannot manage an education system from an air-conditioned office on Alexandra Street; you need the people out there in order to put the thing to work, to give life to it.

He then realized that he was like the cheese standing woefully alone, so he brought in public relations people headed by one Mr. Parson Lall who took the

flak like a fall guy for him; Parson Lall is gone. He brought in another team; they, too, are gone. I do not know what next the Minister will do, so inadequate and so woefully incompetent is that Minister of Education that there is in place a *de facto* Minister of Education, Mr. Clive Pantin. Everything the Prime Minister wants done, he gets Mr. Clive Pantin to do it. [*Interruption*] Well, I would not comment on that, but the fact is that the Prime Minister demonstrated time and time again that he has precious little confidence in that Minister of Education, but yet, because of the restriction in terms of numbers, he cannot reshuffle, he cannot fire anybody, we are stuck with a poor and horrible government destroying the education system in this country because of Mr. Panday's regime.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when you are talking about revolution, you need vision; you need radical thought; and, as I have indicated, nothing new has come out of the Panday regime and, in particular, the Minister of Education, for four years, except the failed "one book policy". Why do I say it is failed?

I attended a school's parent/teacher meeting recently and I heard the principal—I am afraid to call the school or principal's name because victimization is one of the things that characterizes that Government and if I do, that principal may find himself in disfavour with the Minister. I saw the principal pointing out to the parents in the Standard 5 class saying, "In a couple weeks' time, we will need this one book, and when we are finished with this, shortly after we will need another one book", and so they went on jokingly, demonstrating the fact that the Government's attempt to impose a "one book policy" on the nation's schools is simply not working and it will not work.

Mr. Assam: But that was the policy at the time, one book.

Mr. F. Hinds: Mr. Deputy Speaker, education was the PNM's flagship function from the coming of the PNM in this country till today. Eric Williams, the founding father of this country—and may his soul rest in perfect peace—said that to educate was to liberate. Education was very, very important in the mind, in the philosophy of the PNM. As a result of that, we set about a programme of educational development in this country, unrivalled perhaps in the Caribbean. I am not saying that it was a perfect system. For example—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Sudama: Ah!

Mr. F. Hinds: Nothing is perfect. Mr. Deputy Speaker, can I enjoy your protection?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. F. Hinds: Mr. Deputy Speaker, the junior secondary system. When the issue arose of universal education, free secondary education for all those who

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were able and willing, then naturally the issue of places arose. In that time, there were, obviously, a restricted number of places and the philosophy was to create more places for many more of the nation's children. Because of the economic situation, remember, although we became Independent in 1962, it was not until about 1974 or 1975 that we had an oil boom, which gave the government of the day an opportunity to do some of the things it wanted to do.

The government set about building a plethora of schools around the nation. A school next to almost every residential area, in all areas of the country, Mr. Deputy Speaker. In Mexico for example, I am told they had a three-shift system in school. That was recommended to the government of Trinidad and Tobago of the day. That was rejected and we went for the twin-shift system. Effectively, one secondary school was two schools in one because with a morning shift and an afternoon shift, we really had two schools in one and that was designed to create more places, which was the imperative of the time. Of course, I will be the first to agree—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am being disturbed by the Member for St. Joseph and I do not wish to be disturbed.

It is a fact and no one will disagree that by virtue of the fact that children are home, perhaps unsupervised in the morning and otherwise in the afternoon, they get up to mischief and that has led to another stream, another vein of social problems, but that problem does not come from the school, or from the folly of those who planned the system, but it demonstrated something of a problem coming from the homes. [*Interruption*]

2.35 p.m.

Simply because if I had to stay home from school as a child for half day because of illness, or for any other reason and the situation at home was such, as I was sufficiently trained to know that I should sit and get some extra work done—as many children in fact do—then that would have been it, rather than come out unsupervised and get into trouble. That is the situation, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Everyone with hindsight would see that there had been some social problems arising. The decision was taken, not by the Minister of Education or the Panday regime, but, again, out of the bowels of the educators and all the interested parties whose thoughts went into this White Paper to deshift the secondary schools. It is out of the White Paper, the concept of the deshifting came and therefore the need for even more secondary schools. Nothing is new.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as we move into this area of further deshifting and as we move into the area of needing more secondary schools, the Government came with the Budget. The Minister of Planning and Development and the Minister of Education boasted that the Government proposes to build 10 new secondary schools, which is the first phase of the SEMP Programme. A school is a mere part of an educational system. The White Paper recognizes this. There is much more to the entire policy than building a school.

Immediately one recognizes that there needs to be a situation where there is a link between—because we all understand clearly that the developmental years are at its highest in the lives of children between ages 1—5 years. It is a fact. Therefore, the concept of the Early Childhood Care Centres arose. That too was enunciated in the White Paper. Again, nothing new. The Government, through the Minister, boasted about the fact that it has established the Early Childhood Care Centres and many primary schools; including the one at Beetham Gardens; and secondary schools. But what is lacking? This Government does not have a total understanding of what is required to develop an educational system. It just does not have it. It is quite clear that they do not. The very fact that the Prime Minister could maintain in office, as the Minister of Education, the Member for Tabaquite, exemplifies the Government's non-commitment to education in this country. [Desk thumping] Because the Minister of Education enjoys a very high reputation in the educational community even among the schoolchildren.

The Minister of Education was driving past Queen's Royal College one day and a little boy started to sing Sprangalang's song: "He mother cannot say that". The Minister found himself in the school to the Principal and had the boy upbraided. [Interruption] It is the truth. [Interruption] That is right, but it is the truth. The point is the Minister does not understand the children, principals or teachers. They just do not take the Minister very seriously. People in the ministry said that they cannot speak to the Minister. He does not listen. The teachers have a perennial problem with this Minister. The one group of people the Minister must have on board, if he wants to create any change or revolutionize anything in education, is the teachers.

The previous Minister of Education—the one thing that singled out Mr. Augustus Ramrekersingh as a Minister of Education—if there is one thing it was the fact that he was able to win the support of the teachers: the ones who must pervade the elements of the White Paper and who will effectively be the builders and creators of the educational system. The Minister does not understand that. [Interruption] Listen to the Member for St. Joseph.

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The persons in this country who would not accept that the educational system is in crisis is the Minister of Education and the Prime Minister. Everybody else feels so! TTUTA feels so, parents tell you so on a daily basis, individual teachers and the National PTA. A few nights ago Mr. Glenville Taitt said flatly: “The situation is in crisis.” Nobody has to look far to see that.

We understood, in the PNM, education had to be about discipline. Of course, the school is not the only institution responsible for discipline. Only last week the Minister maintains there is no crisis in education. Ill-discipline is manifest in all the schools. I know when the Government is told this; they begin to blame other people and other situations.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, a teacher was raped recently—much to my shock and horror—in the presence of her charges in a kindergarten school in Rio Claro. A teacher was raped in front of the children.

In schools throughout the country [*Interruption*] Yes it is reported in the newspapers—[*Interruption*] the story was reported by Isha Kowlessa on Friday October, 15, 1999—[*Interruption*] There has not been any denial from the Ministry. [*Interruption*] I would not be disturbed by the Member.

There is a problem now in the schools—they were not constructed yesterday, many of them—with asbestos. This brings me back to the point that I always make: one could have the best ambitions in the world, in today’s world if one does not have the money to realize those ambitions, it is just as if one did not have them. People did not have knowledge of the dangers of asbestos then as they do now. In any event, this Government is in a better position than any other Government for the last few years to do these little goods to make the nation’s schools safer and healthier.

I want to quote Malcolm X to my aid in this. Brother Malcolm X in his tremendous wisdom once said: “Being ignorant may not be your fault, but remaining ignorant certainly is.” If those that went before were ignorant of certain material facts and did things and acted in a manner that we have come to learn is inimical to the public interest, then if that be the case, it is the duty of those who have seen better to improve it.

We have a problem with sewer systems throughout the country. Do you know what irritates people in this country? The Government wants us to believe that everything is so nice. There is a moral dimension to it all. As the Member for San Fernando East pointed out—when he responded to the Minister of Finance’s budget—the least apostles among the Government is driving fancy cars. Nothing

is wrong with that in principle, but the people in country are out there looking on and suffering. They are saying: "Listen, you could have squandered \$120 million in Chaguaramas for a one-night-stand, as we call it. You have squandered that in a flash."

We started off the airport project with a price tag of \$400 million, today it is \$900 million.

Miss Nicholson: And the Government is only giving Tobago \$10 million.

Mr. F. Hinds: Understand that. That kind of obscenity is what irritates people. Let me give you another example, it was alluded to here earlier today, the Minister of Planning and Development spoke about Cubiertas and Comylsa-Lain. The Government received a bid for \$125 from Cubiertas. The Government had one of its agents—I rather suspect—broach the idea of reducing the contract price to that firm. The Government told Cubiertas that they should come in at \$101 million. Of course, naturally, the company refused and backed off. That was deliberate and intentional. The Government knows, had the company done it on that basis, they would probably have suffered a loss. All the while what the Government had up its sleeves was to bring in another operator, Comylsa-Lain, which was a company closely associated with its favourite local contractor: a contractor that the Government went out of their way with. The Government changed regulations at NIPDEC in order to facilitate another majors project costing \$950 million.

2.45 p.m.

All that was done manipulated the process in order to bring in Comylsa-Lain and their friend at a higher price. Mr. Deputy Speaker, the little people up and down the country find the whole thing obscene. So, when we tell school children we do not have money to replace the benches and the annual repair programme is always in disarray—worsening since the coming of the UNC Government—previous ministers tell you that as early as January, sometimes the year before, they begin to plan.

You know what? Twenty-five schools could not open last September because of the fact that the necessary repairs were not completed. This Government has mishandled the whole education system and will continue to do so and, as for the Prime Minister, everything one raises with him, he tells one he wants proof. "Prove it!" he says.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, if we are to move—and this is a question that the Minister raised—to a situation of universal education in the true sense, and for the

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PNM, what does that mean? We sought to create equal opportunity for every citizen of this country, regardless of religion or race, through education. We recognized a long time ago—and I am the beneficiary of that cumulative wisdom as well—that the one way we can create equal opportunity is by giving everyone a chance to make himself or herself as much as he or she could be, on the basis of their God-given talents and the provision by the State of some assistance teaching, learning and training. We understand that.

The Prime Minister went to a function at the university and told the nation two years ago that the Common Entrance Examination will be removed in the year 2000. He is now backtracking and saying 2001. Mr. Deputy Speaker, last year, a pilot project for the Continuous Assessment Programme was put in place in 58 schools. The Continuous Assessment Programme, as some of us will know, is the backbone of the new approach to secondary school education, although it only represents 20 per cent of the marks. In this, the student ought to be assessed as he goes along during his life in that school and then the examination will account for 80 per cent of the marks. So, there is a 20/80 dichotomy.

Obviously, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the CAP is extremely important. The vexed question about Common Entrance was that the child, after all the preparation, stress and trauma the family goes through—unnecessarily in many cases—may perform badly on that one day out of nervousness and everything goes down the drain therefrom. I failed my first attempt at Common Entrance. That did not deter me, and there are many others. I know the Member for Caroni East failed his exams nine times.

The point is that we envisaged a situation, and the White Paper saw it and highlighted it, that one must have a movement from the early childhood care through primary school. If one has to have an assessment, it ought not and must not be only an assessment of the child's academic performance since we realize, and the PNM takes it, that one can discipline through education as well.

In fact, at the level of university, many areas of study are called discipline. Realizing this, we want to take into account the whole psychological and behavioural profile of that child, so it is extremely important to have the Continuous Assessment Programme properly in place before they introduce the new approach to secondary education. The Common Entrance Examination will be replaced by the Secondary Entrance Examination which some educationists believe would be even more trying than the Common Entrance Examination. It will still carry an element of multiple choice and, of course, science and social studies will not be examinable topics.

This raises all sorts of serious issues that they need to think carefully about. This is what the PNM had that the UNC and the Minister simply do not have. We will get back to CAP in a second. When, for example, social studies and science subjects are no longer examinable, the teachers who are teaching these subjects may come to the erroneous conclusion that they are not important and, therefore, take it a little lighter than they should. They would feel that perhaps they are not participating meaningfully in the process. All of these things need to be taken into account, because we want our children, notwithstanding we do not examine those subjects, to still be very aware of what is happening socially and scientifically; basic elements. This is something I hope the Minister would bear in mind.

Secondly, there is an element of selection and there will always be an element of selection, because even if we had all the schools to occupy all the 30,000 students who write the exam in any one year, the question is, unfortunately—but some schools are seen in this society as so-called prestige and others are not. Of course, we do not countenance the concept of any prestige school. As one person put it, what we need in this society are prestige parents who will bring up prestige children so that we will have a prestige society. *[Desk thumping]*

The reality of the situation is, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that one will still arrive at the question: who will go to which school? There will still be an element of selection. What is in place now? There is a board headed by a former chief education officer. He is still there although he quarreled with the Minister of Education when it was clearly demonstrated that the Minister was attempting to discriminate against teachers for their geography scholarships because they took lawfully entitled industrial action.

He called them, in his own handwriting—he brought it here in Parliament earlier this year—“TTUTA days” and asked the Permanent Secretary to provide him with the names of teachers who remained home on the invitation of the union. To the extent that they stayed home, he scored their names off of the possibility of a geography scholarship, not bearing in mind that in this environmentally conscious epoch in human existence, geography is a basic requirement and that there is a shortage of geography teachers in this country.

Like Latin, nobody ever said we would stop teaching it, but it fell off the table because there were no teachers to teach it and it just disappeared. Geography is facing that, and realizing that, the PNM government of the day decided to put geography scholarships in place to encourage young persons and teachers to qualify themselves. That Minister sat in his air-conditioned office and scratched off the names of teachers simply because they took legitimate industrial action!

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[Desk thumping] That is the vindictiveness and pettiness for which this Government is known! And destroying the educational thrust of this country—*[Member on his feet]* I am not giving way to the Member, with the greatest humility.

Hon. Assam: You have humility?

Hon. H. Bereaux: Why do you not shut up!

Mr. F. Hinds: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am back now to the question of the CAP and the importance of recordkeeping. The Prime Minister insists that the Common Entrance Examination would be abolished by the year 2000. A few days ago they said 2001. Give them a year. No problem. A pilot project in 58 schools was put in place only last year and the project is still pilot. As a matter of fact, it is now dead. The teachers are refusing to get involved and they complained properly and rightly that the basic tools and infrastructure are simply not to hand.

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

Motion made, That the hon. Member's speaking time be extended by a further 30 minutes. *[Dr. K. Rowley]*

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. F. Hinds: Mr. Deputy Speaker, they do not have the resources. I have a list here, and I am grateful to a gentleman—a very public-spirited individual, a public servant—but I would not dare call his name. He took his time and money, assisted by TTUTA to some extent, and conducted what I consider to be a very thorough analysis of the CAP programme and the constraints that face it in this country. He provided me with a list of all the school fires that took place since 1984 in this country right up to 1999. A comprehensive list.

Fire is a serious threat to all records. How could one have a system where one will be assessing people if one does not have a place to keep records? They do not even have cabinets in the schools. Do not tell me that they do not have money because we see what they are doing, as I have described, all over the place. This is what makes the thing obscene. They cannot allege that against the 1991 government. A Member from their side who is familiar with PNM ethics and ethos told me, and I stand proudly to say, that the 1991—1995 PNM government was a clean government. *[Desk thumping]*

Hon. M. Assam: Who said so?

Mr. F. Hinds: Mr. Deputy Speaker, this Government has the resources, but as with everything else, it siphons the resources to assist its friends and family and

forgets the whole CAP programme. Fire is a serious threat! If one goes to the hospital today and goes again three years hence, they do not open a new file. They will ask if one has been to that institution before and, if the answer is yes, they go back into the records, pull up the file and there they have one's history.

How will one assess a child approaching the Secondary Entrance Examination? What if the child moves from Carapichaima Boys' RC to Newtown Boys' RC in Port of Spain? In fact, the gentleman who did the survey pointed out to me that in many cases, they do not even keep records. The idea and the recommendation was for records to be had from the childhood years to be transposed to the secondary years and on to the secondary school.

There is a situation in this country where the bulk of the students from the feeder schools, like Mucurapo Junior Secondary, go to the Senior Comprehensives, but there is no movement of records so, the teachers in the Senior Comprehensives meet a brand new individual without any idea as to his temperament, capabilities or the lack of it, and the programme starts afresh. We have to have a more organized approach. This is what we were approaching here before the Minister of Education, given his gross and tremendous incompetence, nose-dived the whole project like the *Titanic*. [*Desk thumping*]

To that extent, this Government says that we are a quality nation and we understand the part that education, both informal and formal, will play. But this Government, by destroying the potential and the educational thrust in this country, is destroying the very fabric of this society and still wants to convince us that things are nice.

3.00 p.m.

The point I am making is that building ten new schools without an understanding of the system would not work. We have to be asking ourselves a question he never asked himself: what do we want from education? Walter Rodney in his book, *How Europe underdeveloped Africa*, attempted in a very banal way to explain the purpose of education. He gave the example. In African society in the 17th or 18th Century, education did not require one to be able to run a gasoline pump or do the kinds of work that a geologist or a microbiologist would; it was not the order of the day. Education probably meant being able to look at a leaf or some plant or animal and discern what was its medicinal or healing value or some kind of thing like that. We have to be asking ourselves: what do we want from education? Because common entrance success; GCE O'level and A'level success; even a degree success at the university is not the end in itself. That is what we want! On that test, we know that things are not going right.

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I have said before and I say again, I would not blame the UNC for crime, but the presence of the UNC creates an environment in which crime and bad behaviour will flourish! [*Desk thumping*]

Miss Nicholson: Why you say that?

Mr. F. Hinds: Of course! Because, if you have no top, you “cyah” have “no” bottom. [*Desk thumping*] When the people of this country look upon us as the leaders, the legislators, the government, and see the behaviour of that particular Government—listen, I am not justifying antisocial behaviour or crime, but believe me, I can tell you as a legal practitioner in the criminal courts often, there are people who, perhaps wrongly, but they tell you that, “You know, it is like, if the priest could play who is me”.

I had the displeasure when a young man came frantically to me and told me that another young man came down on the street corners with two brand new nine millimetre firearms and asking the fellas on the block if they have anybody to shoot. When he was brushed off, they were sending him away, because they realized that something is wrong with the young fella. A gentleman came around the corner and the young fella asked them if they knew the man going there and whether he did any of them anything.

I am showing you the wanton madness that exists in our society and education is designed to culture, socialize and lift up these depraved minds so that they can make a better contribution to our society.

So the Minister comes and wants us to smile because he puts one computer in Success R.C. School. What is the fact? When you put one computer in a school, the first thing happens is that it finds itself in the staff room and is not used as a learning aid, but it is used as an administrative aid and they keep records in it.

Our philosophy on computerization was one, to link the Ministry of Education with every educational outpost in this country; and secondly, to link the schools and to get links between schools. That is what we intended! I mean, it is all fine when you put a computer in a school, hats off! But I do not have to smile about that. Nothing to smile about that. You understand, Mr. Deputy Speaker? We had envisaged a situation where you would have, not a computer in every class—like the Minister of Finance said a year ago—but a computer room in every school, where every child would have an opportunity to become, at least, basically literate in the use of the computer, and hopefully, the computer would become much like a pen, it would be as natural to use as one's pen. Again, a very important point, and to be secure.

The teachers I spoke about who took that industrial action did it because they were complaining about security in the schools. Teachers were being attacked by some of those students. Fighting with students! A student attacked an uniformed police officer in a school last week! So the teachers feel insecure. How could they operate in that environment? Even if you cannot provide it, at least they want some kind of comfort from a sensible minister who understands their concerns and who will try to resolve the problems.

As I was saying, you cannot have the movement from the primary school to the secondary schools if you do not have some proper records and the movement of those records from the one institution forwarded to the next. Today, you have a situation where, as they try to introduce this programme—and the Continuous Assessment Programme is not going any anywhere, so the 58 schools which were put on the pilot project are at a standstill! But the Government is tugging in the opposite direction wanting to impose the change from next year, in time for election. It just will not work.

Then, when you have this process of selection—we saw earlier this year one person's son passed for two colleges. Up to now I do not understand how that happened. What you have is a situation where there is a unit at the Ministry—perhaps the gentleman has now become the friend of the Minister. We cannot trust this Government or any of its appointees to decide who should go to which school, because that question will still arise, even under the Secondary Entrance Examination.

So that, a recommendation has been made and supported by teachers all around this country, in the survey of which I spoke, that sensible survey. There should be put in place an assessment board, [*Desk thumping*] independent of the politicians whose responsibility it will be to deal with that problem when it arises and, of course, to deal with any problem that will flow from it—allegations of unfairness and that sort of thing. We will say more on that.

It is not new to the world, you know. You had a famous case of the board of education on rights. In the United States and other countries they have it, and it is something I will develop on at a more convenient time.

They have demoralized the teachers. I mean, the PNM had espoused solid policy. The school boards, nothing new, that too was a guideline in the White Paper. You know, the school boards, which the Minister is now proposing, will consist of between five and ten members. You know what? They will be appointed by the Minister. That is what he is proposing. Could we trust that Minister to appoint school boards? And they are talking about local management! We want to create

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school improvement and we know that the school boards will assist in that, but they need not be appointed by the Minister. For, when they want to do something that the Minister does not agree with, and he wants to treat them the way he treated all the other people who he came and met in the ministry and then fired—

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we had also spoken, and I must touch on this, the question of the de-linking of the teaching service. That is a policy that we shared. It was espoused in the White Paper. The idea was to amend the law, and that was done in 1981 to some extent, and further amendments will be necessary, perhaps, even to the Constitution, for the establishment of an education service commission. We had broadened the definition of the teachers to include professionals who operate in the system to include education officers, school supervisors, that sort of thing and create a separate and independent service commission. We had envisaged that and it was approved by the PNM Cabinet in 1995. The legislation for that was already drafted and approved by the Law Review Commission. We had done that. We understand the importance of it.

So Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I have indicated, we appreciate that the Minister asked, and I want to reply to this specifically: why were children not getting two chances at Common Entrance before? I just indicated unashamedly, I wrote Common Entrance twice, did not succeed on the first, succeeded on the second; that is nothing new. But we have come to realize that whether it is 11, 12 or 13 years, the important issue is one of readiness, and the idea was not to send the child on to secondary school if he or she was not ready.

In terms of vocational training, it was under the PNM—and this is not to politicize it, but this is to establish facts, an historical fact—we had set up the trade schools, San Fernando and John Donaldson Technical Institutes—

Miss Nicholson: They are running them down.

Mr. F. Hinds: They are running them down, yes.

Even the Civilian Conservation Corps, to give our young people a sense of self-worth, self-esteem and environmental consciousness; they have scrapped it. They scrapped the youth camps. They have whittled down YTEPP. They do not have the money or the commitment to deal with those things, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is only their friends and family they are sorting out and, as a result, destroying beautiful Trinidad and Tobago. Then he comes here to tell me that we should be smiling because he put one computer in Success R.C. School.

I want to suggest that this budget offers little hope for the salvation of the educational function in Trinidad and Tobago. While in accordance with the loan

agreement with the World Bank, new schools will be constructed. It appears to me that the cohesiveness of the approach to lifting the educational function in this country, the Government does not see, the Government is missing that point, absolutely missing it.

As a result, nothing in this budget commends itself to me as worthwhile by way of achieving the purpose of educating our children so that they can make a useful contribution to our society. As a matter of fact, as I indicated, it is quite possible that the behaviour of the Government, in all respects, is creating further problems rather than solving them.

Before I conclude, I want to deal with an issue that cannot escape me. Permanent Secretaries, State Counsel, the Director of Public Prosecutions' Office (DPP), and I read only yesterday—or I think today—the magistrates of this country are asking for a meeting with the President of the Republic. When it gets to the point where magistrates are bypassing the Attorney General and the Government and wanting to take their plight to the President, that is an issue that has to be taken rather seriously. They have been threatening to strike.

Only two weeks ago the staff at the DPP's Office threatened the same thing. Only recently the Director of Public Prosecutions had to stand up to the Attorney General and assert his independent office as established under section 90 of our Constitution.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to join the Members for San Fernando East, Diego Martin West, Diego Martin East and my good friend from Toco/Manzanilla in calling on the Government to take heed and to implement the recommendations of the Salaries Review Commission. The last time we spoke on the issue, the Prime Minister walked angrily away from the Parliament saying that he is going to the people. Yet another lie! He has not said a word since then.

The Chief Justice recently raised an alarm at the behaviour of the Government and its tendency to interfere with the independence of the Judiciary. What was the Prime Minister's first response? That is no concern of mine, the Attorney General will fight his own battles, as though that is a matter for the Attorney General. Like education, the administration of justice and the independence of the Judiciary in this country are everybody's business. [*Desk thumping*] Most of all the Prime Minister. What was his second response when he was prodded by a journalist to speak soberly and sensibly? He called on the Chief Justice to bring him proof of the allegations that the Chief Justice made of the interference by the Government in the person of the Attorney General.

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Mr. Deputy Speaker, my grandmother once said to me, “If you walked into a room and there was a cake on the table and a plate of food, and you see a fly buzzing around, you do not have to get proof to know the fly would land on it. You just have to see the fly, and it logically follows”. So what proof do we want? When we talk about corruption—you only see cake and fly and you know you have trouble, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I have spent my moments dealing, as best as one could, specifically with some of the micro aspects of the educational function. I have tried to respond, as far as possible, to some of the issues raised by the Minister of Education.

3.15 p.m.

I call on the Government to implement the recommendations of the Salaries Review Report, and if it wants to be vindictive, as usual, then it could spite the Opposition, it could spite the politician but leave us out, we would survive. We have survived! The PNM has a history of survival. We have become part of the social and political fabric of this country but pay the people their money! [*Desk thumping*] Pay them! Otherwise we would wind up with a crisis on our hands; not only a crisis in education but a crisis in the Judiciary, as well.

If the Attorney General is contemplating, like some other senior counsel called for—on the steps of the Hall of Justice—any Commission of Enquiry, in my humble view, that is not necessary. We do not need any Commission of Enquiry. We know what the concept of the independence of the Judiciary means, and all we want the Government and everyone to do is to respect it and observe it. That is all we want.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, almost in conclusion, I say that the PNM’s record speaks for itself. Those who criticized the PNM benefited from the provisions made by the PNM, by way of offering educational opportunity to all in this country. One of the loudest critics of the PNM is the Member for Tobago East, and we demonstrated here that he was probably one of the most major beneficiaries of PNM’s policy. We do not give ourselves credit for it; all we did was to create an environment in which every man, woman, and child, boy or girl could access education in this country to make himself at any level. We had to come in this Parliament and raise issues with him to pay back the Student’s Revolving Loan. Many of them who speak—even my good friend from St. Joseph—of their background in grammar, Latin and curriculum reform. [*Interruption*] I just remember this—I was speaking about my friend—if he was on the committee, of which I would now speak, I could understand that, because he is a sensible man. Mr. Deputy Speaker, would you believe, we have a Curriculum Review Committee

in place in this country; curriculum reform is important because we could see, from what is coming out of the schools, that there is need to revise the curriculum. The Minister said so! They want to put a moral element into the school curriculum. Nobody has any problem with that. *[Interruption]* But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, who is the Chairman of the Curriculum Reform Committee. The Member for Tabaquite, the Minister of Education. *[Interruption]* Imagine that!

Mr. Manning: Who?

Hon. Member: Are you serious?

Mr. F. Hinds: Mr. Speaker, another Member is Mr. Tim Gopeesingh; another Member is perhaps the *de facto* Minister of Education, the one to whom the Prime Minister runs to save embarrassment—Mr. Clive Pantin who too—*[Interruption]* Well, let me not say anything on that. Dr. Rupert Griffith, the Member for Arima. Mr. Deputy Speaker, just like the little anecdote I shared with respect to the fly and the cake, when you see a curriculum reform team like that, you do not have to see the fly land on the cake, you know, as a fact, that education in this country is not in safe hands and Trinidad and Tobago is destined to serious trouble in those circumstances.

You do not have one of the well-known technocrats and educators in this country, it looks to me more like a political caucus, a little cabal.

Recently, I spoke to a lawyer employed with the state and she told me about the state's one book policy. Right now as we speak, in the month of October, there are children who are without certain textbooks. She tried to get a mathematics textbook for her child. She went to a store downtown with a branch in Tunapuna—she was told here that they had none, go to Tunapuna. When she went to Tunapuna they told her that they had none. She called somebody high up in that organization. The person told her, all right they have a few—come up and ask for Mr. “X” in Tunapuna. She drove back up the priority to the book store in Tunapuna. When she spoke to Mr. “X” he told her that they really do not have the Book III, they have only the Book I and II. She left dejected again. She got on a telephone and called the person she spoke to first, yet again. They then told her do not speak to Mr. “X” speak to Mrs. “Y”, and it is when she spoke to Mrs. “Y”, she slipped one of the textbooks out and gave it to her. What we now have, is a bigger monopoly in the production of textbooks than existed before.

We now have a situation where one publisher is responsible for publishing every textbook, from Standard I, II, III, IV and V, in social studies; in mathematics; in science and in grammar. So there are four publishers doing all the

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textbooks in the respective subject areas from one to five, a bigger monopoly now than before. That is what that Government created, and an opportunity by publishers or book store owners—as happened in the example I have just given you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for them to discriminate as to who will get the textbook or not. Because if I walked in there with my beautiful dreadlocks and they do not like “rasta” I am not getting the textbook. That is what it has come to in this country.

So when I argue that this Government has single-handedly in a mere four years, destroyed the potential of this country because it destroyed the backbone of that potential thrust, the educational function, I know what I am saying and I do not need to see the fly rest on the cake to prove that.

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

The Minister of Public Utilities (Hon. Ganga Singh): Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I stand before this honourable House to support this Bill and congratulate the hon. Minister of Finance for his efficient management of the country’s economy and finances for the benefit of all in this country.

This year’s budget focus is clearly on enhancing the social welfare of citizens, with emphasis on improvements in health, education, employment creation, crime and poverty alleviation. The Minister has outlined, in his presentation, the ambitious action that would be required to make fundamental changes in these areas. From all the indicators, unemployment went down to 11.8 per cent; inflation—2 per cent; reserves—five-month period; exchange rate’s stability and growth in the economy. Clearly, by any benchmark, these are indicators of good governance.

I pay particular attention to the utility area because it seems to have exercised the thinking and provocation of the Member for San Fernando East and the hon. Member for Diego Martin West. I want to take a historical broad brush as to what we inherited in 1995 and then carry the picture forward.

When we assumed office in November 1995, we took a conscious decision to change the *raison d’etre* of the utility sector in this country. We took the position that the Water and Sewerage Authority (WASA), the postal services, the Trinidad and Tobago Electricity Commission (T&TEC) and the Telecommunications Services of Trinidad and Tobago (TSTT) should provide efficient service to the citizens of this country at the lowest possible cost.

In other words, the existence for these utilities was to serve their customers. Mr. Deputy Speaker, linked to this rationale was our philosophical stance which

became our mantra for the utilities, that the quality of our democracy is not measured by the contentment of the affluent, that is to say, the rich and the wealthy, but rather in how the poor have access to the basic amenities: water, lights, telephone and postal service.

3.25 p.m.

Today, some three and a half years later, we stand firm in our commitment and resolve to provide good customer service in the utility sector so as to meaningfully enhance the quality of our democracy in Trinidad and Tobago and, by extension, the quality of life of our people.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, what was the legacy that my Government inherited? What was the status of water? Those on that side could run their mouth about water, but they could have never, for the 34 years that they were in governance, run water in the taps in this country. [*Desk thumping*]

What was the status of water back in 1995 and prior to that time? While many people are unaware and while others choose to conveniently forget, the statistics clearly paint a bleak picture of the water sector. Only about 11.2 per cent received a 24-hour water supply. This meant that approximately 88 per cent of our nation was consigned to a scheduled water supply and 42.7 per cent of our residents received water just one day per week.

Why was this so, Mr. Deputy Speaker? The hon. Member for Diego Martin West spoke of his presence on the Water and Sewerage Authority (WASA) board. He spoke about the Knight study, and I would deal with the Knight study because he is bringing in 1999, a 1977 study. I will demonstrate to this honourable House how dated and dinosaurial that study is in 1999. [*Crosstalk*]

Why was the utility sector in this state of complete malady, disrepair and unable to provide the services, notwithstanding billions of dollars of transfers to these very same utilities? In the period 1962—1986, the utilities became an extension of the dominant political party, the PNM, so what you had was the utilities becoming party branch No. 1, WASA; party branch No.2, TELCO; party branch No. 3, T&TEC; party branch No. 4, the Port Authority; party branch No. 5, the post office. So as a result, the reason for the existence of the utilities was never to provide service for the people of this country. Never, never to provide service for the country!

In the period 1962—1986, the politicians controlled the utilities to the extent, that notwithstanding the billions and billions of dollars transferred, they could not provide the service for the people of this country.

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[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

As I am doing a broad-brush analysis, in the period 1986—1991, the managers of the utilities, recognizing that they were no longer under the political dominance of the political masters of the day, then took the utility in their control, and this continued. In the period 1991—1995, the administration of the hon. Member for San Fernando East, there was absolutely no sense of leadership in the utilities sector, because he was changing public utility ministers at his very whim and fancy. First, he was paranoid about Marshall. I have read, in this honourable House, a letter he wrote to the late Morris Marshall requesting a plan to provide water in 24 hours.

Of course, you know, Mr. Speaker, Morris Marshall subsequently died, and the hon. Member for San Fernando East became the Minister of Public Utilities for a very short period, if only to facilitate certain transactions—I will deal with that—then subsequently, Barry Barnes and Ralph Maraj. So in the three years and ten months there were about five ministers of public utilities, therefore, there was no sense of leadership, direction and future planning in this sector. When we came into office, therefore, this is what we visually inherited. [*Minister shows a map*] [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker: Again, I appeal to Members on the Opposition benches, whether you like what he is saying or not, hold your peace. You still have many more Members to speak. I ask you please, let us hear him.

Hon. G. Singh: This is what we visually inherited. [*Minister shows a map*] This is a map provided by the Water and Sewerage Authority, which points to the water supply in this country as of December 1995. What it points to is that 11.2 per cent of this country was receiving a 24-hour water supply, 88 per cent of this country was on a scheduled supply, and some 42.3 per cent of this country received water but once a week. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: I appeal to my good friend, the Member for Tunapuna, please. You had your say, and nobody interfered, please.

Hon. G. Singh: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. If there ever is a case for discrimination, the water sector demonstrated that after 34 years of the People's National Movement rule. And the hon. Member for Laventille East/Morvant comes this afternoon and talks about discrimination! Mr. Speaker, you are talking about regional discrimination and class discrimination. They do not like that, but that is factual representation. How are you going to deal with this reality when you are confronted with years and years of neglect?

How did the PNM attempt to deal with this reality in their period, I am only dealing with the period 1991—1995, private sector participation. Conceptually nothing is wrong with that, because it meant that you would get competence and expertise to deal with it. A management contract for the water sector is conceptually flawed, because whenever you have to do major capital works, it is conceptually flawed. Unfortunately, the hon. Member for San Fernando East, taking the advice of his good friend, the energy czar, who is the man who looked after bringing Severn Trent into this country, and others, his handlers, spread-eagled and prostrated, with arms beckoned, embraced Severn Trent; three years and some.

They provided Severn Trent with \$500 million, with a contract that had absolutely no penalties, no benchmark for deliverables, no benchmark whatsoever, together with fees of over \$50 something million. They signed that on a mere five days before the general election, on November 1, 1995. That is their legacy. Their legacy was, “Look, for years we have controlled WASA; for years we have put our party people in charge of WASA, and now we are going to give WASA to the foreigners because we feel that the locals could not run WASA.” That is their legacy bequeathed to us.

Mr. Speaker, when it was dealt with, and we began to grapple with this water sector and we began to understand the demands being made upon the public water supply system by Point Lisas, and that the continuous fixation of Point Lisas and in Point Lisas—. I will give you an example. The hon. Member for San Fernando East is a former Minister of Energy, and he knows that water is absolutely necessary for the process at Point Lisas, because processed water is critically important to the production of methanol, urea and ammonia.

Our water from Caroni/Arena was meant for the people of south and central Trinidad. When you go back to the *Hansard* record as to the reasoning for Caroni/Arena, you would see that it was meant to solve the problems in south and central Trinidad, because as we know the water is produced in the north and then transmitted to the south, to alleviate that. I would demonstrate that it is critically important for water to be part of the process in Point Lisas. So what happened? In the absence of a dedicated supply of water to Point Lisas, what happened? They diverted the water, meant for the people, to the industrial areas. That is what happened. Simple; they diverted the water to the industrialists and the people got a mere trickle. So that is why the 42.3 per cent got water once every two weeks, and if you miss the schedule “crapaud smoke yuh pipe”; you would wait till 3,0’ clock in the morning for a next two weeks. That is the legacy of that regime.

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We began to grapple with this issue and to appreciate what was required, because it takes certain gallons to produce a short ton of ammonia; a short ton of Under the skewed development plan of that side, they were taking our water meant for potable purposes, giving it to the industrialists who were converting this water into a product and selling it for US dollars, while the people in south and central, in particular, starved for water. Water riots, brink of water riots, every dry season.

What did they do? The hon. Member for Diego Martin West, guffaws his chest, first class honours in this and that. We are very happy for that, but what did he do, when he was a member of the board, in order to alleviate and solve the problems in WASA? What is your legacy of achievement in WASA, apart from the continuation of the PNM party supremacy in WASA?

Dr. Rowley: I did not enrich myself.

Mr. Speaker: It is very good information for the public that you did not enrich yourself at the expense of others. But you know that if even that is so, this is no time to blurt it out. You know perfectly well that he is really speaking to me to ask that question. You are not permitted to answer; you know that. You know the rules. You know Member that you cannot answer like that. [*Interruption*]

Hon. G. Singh: So, Mr. Speaker, what was his legacy apart from the maintenance of the PNM party supremacy in WASA. That is his legacy; Ph.D. in geology, all kinds of things, but that was what? His legacy.

The Member came today and spoke of a report, 1977 report, by Knight, because Knight said certain things. It is some 22 years since that report. I have a report from 1998—I am not dated like the hon. Member—The Government of Trinidad and Tobago, Ministry of Planning and Development, *Water Resource Management Strategy for Trinidad and Tobago*. [*Interruption*] Hold on, have patience, do not be premature. It was done by DHV Consultants, in association with Delph Hydraulics, Lee Young and Partners. It is dated 1998.

3.40 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, this is what they had to say about the report which the hon. Member for Diego Martin West read. And they are analyzing all the reports, because one thing WASA had was reports. Under the rubric, “History and previous studies” on page 6, 1977, Caroni River Basin Report on water supplies. It is an excellent study that gives a good overview of the water resources management in Trinidad by the late 1970s.

It says:

“The estimate of the average daily demand by Knight for the year 2000... is substantially less than our estimates... mainly due to the underestimation of the industrial demand (Point Lisas demand estimated at nearly 3 m³ /s in the year 2000).”

This is what they are saying. The Knight Report of 1977 is outdated because of the fact that it did not take into consideration the tremendous demand and impact of Point Lisas in the water supply. It goes on.

“A very useful part in the report of Knight is dedicated to potential reservoirs. Knight distinguished 53 potential sites, with an identification on the map of Trinidad of their location and extent of the reservoir lakes... The technical details of each of those reservoirs are given in Appendix 23.

A special case is the Wyke’s reservoir, named after a government official that suggested the location. However, the location at the outskirts of the Caroni swamp has a number of drawbacks:”

And the Member promoted that the 1977 dated dinosaurial input...
[Interruption]

Mr. Speaker: Order please, order!

Hon G. Singh: The report goes on:

- “such a location would be rejected immediately from the point of view of ecology (e.g. inflow towards the swamp);
- difficult to implement nowadays due to the occupation of the area; and
- inflow of highly pollutant water due to the position at the downstream end of the Caroni river and only possible in combination with large-scale measures to improve the water quality.

For these reasons, the Wyke’s Reservoir is disregarded as a measure in the present study.”

Mr. Speaker, this study goes on to deal with Braithwaite (1985) and the water balance system in Trinidad in this appreciation and review. In dealing with the Braithwaite study it also says:

“In Chapter 3 the projected water demands are given. As can be expected, these data are now obsolete in view of the major industrial demands.”

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It goes on:

“JICA (1991) Improvement Water Supply Supervisory System in T&T and Tahal (1992) Water Management in Trinidad and Tobago”

Mr. Speaker, the hon. Member, as a Board Member, had this Knight study in his embrace and possession, but did he put forward the recommendation of the Knight Study in 1977 when he was a board member during that period? Did he put forward anything to build a dam to satisfy the needs of the people? Did he do anything? What did he do? He is an excellent example of the infliction of doctor politics in this country. So he comes here to beat his chest on his Ph.D. and he “ain’t” do nothing when he was a member of the board. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, we are going to deal with the issues. It moves into the arena as to what is the rationale. I am quoting the study of 1998 because it is the latest and does an analysis of everything that has transpired in the water sector. It calls for coherent management of the water sector in this country integrating watershed management, the ecology, the reservoirs, the dams required, area, the flow of rivers, everything it deals with. A comprehensive study of the water sector with clear recommendation and this study recommends a desalination plant at Point Lisas.

Dr. Rowley: Would the Minister give way?

Hon. G. Singh: No, no, no. You had your time, you had an hour and a half. Therefore, recognizing this, part of the PNM’s approach is to malign people and their professional competence in the society. You are hearing about Joe Ramkisson and Lee Young and Partners, but it is the foreign consultants and I will demonstrate that. It is the very people in WASA whom the PNM abandoned, and embraced, Severn Trent spread-eagled and prostrated.

Mr. Speaker, it is the Water and Sewerage Authority’s analysis of various options to supply water to Point Lisas. In the project team you have amongst here, the best and the brightest people in the country: Errol Grimes, team leader; Wayne Joseph; Leslie Figaro; Allan Poon King; Sandra Sammy; Steve Fletcher; Sharon Archie; Ramchand Ramcharan; Wayne Dowers; Claudette Goddard; A. Khan; David Boyce. These are the people who are dealing with the water situation, and the Member for Diego Martin West served a short stint on the board maintaining party supremacy and now he has the solutions.

Mr. Speaker, I would read from the executive summary. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: Ladies and gentlemen, I appeal to you one more time in the gentlest way that I can, please hold your fire, pass it to those to come, let them destroy it if they want, but please allow the Member to make his contribution.

It is not a political meeting. One can go to a political meeting and do that, but in here let us not do that please.

Hon. G. Singh: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I was indicating, I was going to read the executive summary of this report done by the best and the brightest in WASA. This report analyzes the various options available to supply water to Point Lisas. The preferred option identified is the construction of 100 million litres per day (mld) desalination plant at Point Lisas.

“The development of a new desalination facility at Point Lisas would reduce the gap between water demand and supply which at present is estimated at 100 Mld assuming a level of 45% unaccounted for water (UFW). The new desalination plant designed to produce potable water can be developed on a phased basis and could feed Point Lisas exclusively. Water from the present source, Caroni, can then be utilized otherwise to improve the level of service to domestic customers nationwide.”

Mr. Speaker, we had these analyses done by the best and the brightest, but when they had the opportunity, and Knight in 1977 said build a dam, build treatment plants, your demand is going to be so much, you are going to have a population of so much, what you had was inaction. That is their legacy, inaction.

Having established the necessity by virtue of the studies carried out in dealing with this problem, I will now deal with the rationale in layman terms so that it will be entered into the record. WASA says send the water exclusively to Point Lisas and that is exactly what we are doing, but the whole contribution of the hon. Member for Diego Martin West today was based on the premise that we are going to sell 16,000,000 gallons of water into the domestic system. Nothing could be further from the truth. So his whole hour spent in his contribution started off on a false premise because when we come to it you will see that desalination allows for a phased basis and only as the plants come on stream, you have the water coming on stream, modular expansion to meet the phased demand. So this thing about the desalinated water going into the domestic system is a total untruth, but it is another example of the kind of fabrication, the kind of mischief, the kind of false information, misinformation and disinformation of which the Member for Diego Martin West is capable.

Mr. Speaker, I want to place on the record—you know we have a lot of argument as to why—yes, we have a lot of rain water, but did we in the past plan for using it wisely? The obvious answer is in the negative. We did not plan for a collection of rainwater, impounding it, treating it, and supplying it to the

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consumers otherwise we would not have that rampant legacy of lack of water. A lot of this country is waterless. This is now being done through studies as we have indicated and we are going to include that in the future planning of the water resources framework for WASA.

If proper planning was done in the past when time was available and when funds were more readily accessible, we would not have been faced with this crisis situation of having to satisfy the present large deficit in a very short space of time with little or no funding. Prior to this Government, the last major capital investment made in the water sector was in 1981 when the Caroni Treatment Plant was commissioned. Since then, prior to us, there was no major investment in the water sector. That is irrefutable. So concomitant with this one-pronged policy, you have heavy industrial demand and growth in Point Lisas. That is what all these studies tell you.

In fact, a recent study undertaken by London Economics estimated an increase of 9.5 per cent in demand between 1998 and 2005. Another study undertaken by DHV Consultants predicted that demand will increase from 778 million litres per day (mld) to 1,278 mld. That is 64 per cent between 1999 and 2025.

Mr. Speaker, the demand at Point Lisas Industrial Estate alone was estimated to increase from approximately 12,000,000 gallons daily to 33,000,000 gallons by the year 2005 owing to the expansion of existing plants and the proposed construction of new plants at the estate. That is what the studies say. You cannot refute that, but the Member is saying, Mr. Speaker, as we attempt in a phased basis to bring it in that we would sell water to the domestic supply. Nothing is further from the truth.

Mr. Speaker, to reinforce this argument, only last week the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries announced the construction of one ammonia and one methanol plant at the estate. As I indicated earlier, it takes, I think, about 585 imperial gallons of water as processed water to make either a ton of methanol, urea or ammonia. So you need the water, you have to provide the water. The real question is, how do you provide this? The studies have been taken and I gave you in layman's language as to how they arrived at that.

3.55 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, what are the sources of water? There are the surface and ground water sources. Based on the study it is clear in terms of the ground water sources. I would tell this House—because the Member seems to know everything—he is a geologist that could not predict Soufriere. *[Laughter]* A seismologist could not predict Soufriere. The Member cannot predict anything.

Mr. Speaker, what were the options that this study looked at? This study looked at North Oropouche's new wells; North Oropouche Dam and Water Treatment Facility; Mathura Road Water Intake; Matura Water Treatment Plant; Beetham waste water recovery.

It would be remiss of me, Mr. Speaker, if I did not tell this honourable House, and by extension the national community, that the hon. Member for Diego Martin West, came to me, as Minister, during the period 1996—1997 with a proposal to utilize the water at Beetham Estate and pipe it down to Point Lisas. We entertained the hon. Member and explored that option because we wanted to solve this problem. We went through the process and the effluent discharge at Beetham—there was too much crap in the water coming out from Beetham because they had not done anything to look at it—was not of such a quality as to pipe it down to Point Lisas. We had done the studies at Beetham and the hon. Member knows that, and that is why he came with this proposal. So he is interested in providing water to Point Lisas. *[Interruption]* Yes, you were interested in providing water to Point Lisas and you have no doubt recognized that with the provision of the desalination facility at Point Lisas the Beetham project is now stillborn. We have explored the option of a Beetham wastewater recovery system. *[Interruption]* He is an expert in wastewater.

Mr. Speaker, we explored the option of the Gunapo waterworks upgrade; Wallerfield wells and water treatment plants; Savannah wells. We are going to produce the Savannah wells for the people in Gonzales and Belmont because that is the only place in which they can be assured of a regular supply of water, and we are going to do that under our North Water Project.

Mr. Speaker, in the new cut channel at South Oropouche they even explored the desalination project; Nariva Swamp water scheme and the Point Lisas desalination demand management leakage control. These are all the things that we looked at. I will go through this for the purpose of the record. Volume Factor:

“Besides that no new sources were developed since 1981, the most disturbing issue is that there have been no studies, analyses, planning or preparation for the development of any sources since then. This situation has placed the Water and Sewerage Authority in a precarious dilemma of having to satisfy the present and projected demands of the country in a very short time-frame with scarce financial resources.”

Mr. Speaker, a historical review of water resources data from the Water Resources Agency has shown that ground water sources cannot and will not produce the required quantities. In fact, the studies demonstrate that we are now

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currently extracting some 80 per cent of the known ground water resources in this country. We have reached saturation point in that area. *[Interruption]* Ground water means water in the aquifers. That is what it means.

Mr. Speaker, there is a copious amount of water available in North Trinidad via resources which can be impounded to form a dam. *[Interruption]*

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Order.

Hon. G. Singh: Mr. Speaker, we acknowledge that the heavy rainfall in this country is in North Trinidad and that we need to build a dam. This dam can accumulate the water in the wet season and release it for use in the dry season when it can be then transmitted to South and Central Trinidad. This is the same process on which the Caroni Water Treatment Facility and the Arima Dam are based.

Mr. Speaker, what about the time factor? The best advice tells us that the exploration of the surface water resources require the following:

- (1) Feasibility study and analysis.
- (2) Project planning and preparation;
- (3) Estimation exercise
- (4) Tender documents preparation;
- (5) Invitation of tenders;
- (6) Award of contracts;
- (7) Implementation of projects; and
- (8) Completion testing and commissioning.

I am advised that it is estimated that the time-frame for conducting the above processes to produce the required volumes of water necessary for the elimination of the deficit would take no less than approximately seven years for a dam project even through a fast track approach. *[Interruption]* Mr. Speaker, the Member has had his hour and a half.

Mr. Speaker, it is therefore clear—*[Interruption]* The Knight report was in the time of the boom. It was in the time of the boom when money was no problem. Knight was saying that, “Look there is a tremendous demand coming down do something”, but the hon. Member, being a member of the Board and a doctor—having two first class honours with his Ph.D., was sufficient to maintain party supremacy rather than look after the interests of the people. *[Laughter]*

What is the Government doing now, Mr. Speaker, under our South Water Project. For the first time since 1981, we are conducting feasibility studies on water sources at several river intakes in North Trinidad, such as, North Oropouche, Mathura and Yara Rivers which can be potentially developed into impounding reservoirs. I am advised that the expected cost of the development of a typical dam such as North Oropouche, together with treatment facilities and transmission lines to the demand centres in Central and South Trinidad, would be more than TT \$1 billion. Not only is there a time-frame but there is also a funding constraint.

Mr. Speaker, the hon. Member for Diego Martin West spoke about leaks. What is the reality of the pipeline transmission network of the Water and Sewerage Authority? After three or four decades of the lack of a coherent programme of replacement, there are leaks all over the country because of the dilapidating nature of the transmission infrastructure. There are all kinds of pipes that are old—there are asbestos pipes, concrete pipes, tin pipes and PVC pipes—which in many instances cannot now withstand the pressure.

4.05 p.m.

So that, therefore, if we could fix all the leaks, Mr. Speaker, then certainly we would be able to achieve this 45 per cent addition to our water supply which we have because of the leakage and it goes under the rubric, ‘unaccounted for water’. However, there are several issues which must be considered in this option. How many leaks are there? What is the status of the infrastructure, the time-frame and cost involved in fixing the leaks? Would fixing the leaks solve the problem? What is WASA doing about improving the infrastructure?

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

Motion made, That the Member’s speaking time be extended by 30 minutes.
[Dr. K. Rowley]

Question put and agreed to.

Hon. G. Singh: Mr. Speaker, I wish to thank hon. Members for extending my time, in particular the hon. Member for Diego Martin West.

The pipelines, therefore, are old and with approximately 3,900 kilometres of main transmission and distribution pipelines owned by WASA, most of it needs replacing, upgrading or rehabilitating. At 1997 prices WASA estimates that it would cost approximately \$950 million over a 10-year period to replace 100

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kilometres of pipeline per year. So you see, Mr. Speaker, pipe replacement is not an option. Therefore, how are you going to find a coherent programme? We have embarked upon it, but in terms of meeting the deficit it is not an option.

So, Mr. Speaker, in order to deal with the water imbalance, as we indicated, a technological solution is required, production of desalinated water which can provide adequate quantities at the desired quantity. You know, the hon. Member for Diego Martin West talks about sending the water down outside into domestic, but it is not so at all. It is confined. We are going to refence Point Lisas and the desalinated water will be available in Point Lisas for Point Lisas at a phased approach. So, Mr. Speaker, Point Lisas will be disconnected from the public water supply system but we will ensure security of supply for Point Lisas in the event there is a major disturbance.

So what we are doing? We are, in fact, creating—we are thinking outside the box—a dedicated supply to Point Lisas. We are providing security of supply. We are providing a higher quality of supply. You see, and the technocrats will tell you, Point Lisas takes the potable water and further processes it so as to reduce the number of solids. What we will be doing is charging them the higher price, creating the fine-tuned processed water and, in that way, providing them with water that they require.

With the infrastructure in Point Lisas we have little or no leakage. What you have is a dedicated water centre and then the people of south and central Trinidad and, by extension, north Trinidad now have an additional 12 million gallons of water. If we do not disconnect Point Lisas from the public water supply, according to the projections by 2005, 24 million gallons will be coming off the public water supply. So you understand. So when I heard the hon. Member quoting the Knight Report, I chuckled because I realize he is passé in more ways than one and the hon. Member for San Fernando East recognized that also. *[Interruption]* He is a “Knight Rider”, you see, riding on the Knight Report.

Mr. Speaker, I want to deal a bit—because the hon. Member for San Fernando East, having established that the experts say this is the way to proceed, having established that this is the approach—I want to read into the record what the Aid Memoire of the World Bank Mission to Trinidad and Tobago under Dr. Raffique Gurji, Senior Resources Management Specialist dated August 5, 1998 states that one of the significant conclusions of the water resources planning presentation was that since sizeable addition to total water supply would only become an availability, in the longer run the desalination option may have to be explored in order to meet current and short-term deficiencies in supply. This is the World

Bank. This is the HV consultant. This is WASA. All I have on the other side, however, Mr. Speaker, is a Member who was on the board maintaining party supremacy and leaving this Government with a legacy of lack of water.

I want to now deal with the whole issue raised by the hon. Member for San Fernando East with respect to how we arrived at the decision. Having arrived at the decision that we have to pursue the desalination option in order to solve the water problem, free up the water from Point Lisas to the communities, the procurement process followed several strictly defined steps and procedures as follows. I want the hon. Member for San Fernando East—because, you see, what is happening to the hon. Member for San Fernando East is that he is becoming the lobbyist for losers. In any competitive environment when people lose they come to him and being paranoid or, as the Prime Minister said, delusional, he is arriving at or jumping to conclusions without looking at the facts.

First, and I will deal with it as we go along:

Step 1: Advertisement for pre qualification

- Public invitation in the press issued on July 28, 1998 for interested companies/joint ventures/consortia to prequalify for the project.
- Copies of invitations sent to all foreign embassies in Trinidad and Tobago and also to those companies which have expressed interest in desalination through unsolicited offers.
- Closing date for submission of completed application 2.00 p.m. August 21.

Step 2: Response to public invitations (August - September 1998)

- The criteria and relative weights for the prequalification documents
 - Desalination technology and experience - 20 %
 - Technical Capability - 20 %
 - Environmental Impact management - 15 %
 - Financial Strength - 25 %
 - Methodology - 15 %
 - Other (litigation history) - 5 %

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- A five-member prequalification team was assembled to rank submissions. [*Interruption*] Mr. Speaker, the committee comprised representatives of the Ministry of Public Utilities, WASA and assisted by an international desal expert.

Step 3: Opening of prequalification submissions. [*Interruption*]

- Officially opened on September 14, 1998—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: Order please!

Hon. G. Singh:—in the presence of the full prequalification evaluation committee.

- Evaluation of the submissions were completed on September 18, 1998 and ranked according to the predetermined rating system.

Step 4: The results of the prequalification exercise

Out of the 21 applications

- 4 prequalification applications were duplicates
- 4 companies were not substantially responsive
- 6 companies were responsive but did not pass all the predetermined minimum criteria and/or standards
- 7 companies were responsive and also satisfied the predetermined minimum criteria and/or standards.

Step 5: Postqualification and Bidding

- The seven highest ranked prequalified companies were invited to submit bids during the second week of January 1999.
- The bid document package issued to all prequalified companies consisted of four sections:
 - Tendering procedures and Instructions;
 - Project definition
 - Minimum Information and data to be included with the bids and
 - Key elements of the required water sale/purchase agreement.

The criteria for ranking the bids and their relative weights were spelled out clearly in the bid documents package and were as follows:

- Contractor Team Qualifications and record - 15 %
- Technical Offer - 40 %
- Economic Offer - 45 %

Three of the prequalified companies, Mr. Speaker, indicated by letter that they were unable to submit a bid. One of the prequalified companies joined forces with another of the prequalified companies which continued to pursue the bid. As a result, three companies submitted a bid by the stipulated closing date of February 12, 1999.

Step 6: Evaluation of bids

- Bids were received from the following teams:
 - Powergen/Stone & Webster
 - Neal and Massy
 - Ionics Inc/Hafeez Karamath Engineering Services
 - Bhagwansing's Group of Companies/US Filters. A nine-member bids evaluation committee was appointed to conduct the next stages of the process comprising the following members:
 1. An international desalination expert, the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Public Utilities;
 2. Senior managers of WASA, Directors of Capital Investment and the Director Legal Secretariat;
 3. Commissioners of WASA board with engineering, legal and financial backgrounds, a representative of the environmental division Ministry of Planning and Development, the Director Project Implementation Unit, Ministry of Public Utilities.

Mr. Speaker, the Bids Evaluation Committee held several meetings and conducted a rigorous evaluation of the bids resulting in the following rankings:

- Ionics, Inc./Hafeez Karamath Engineering Services - 85.7 points

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Bhagwansing's Group/US Filters	-	72.1 points
PowerGen/Stone & Webster/Neal and Massy	-	65 points

That, therefore, is the evaluation ranking and the process continues. However, you see, the hon. Member for San Fernando East wants number two to become number one. He has become the lobbyist for the losers.

I want to raise a point. You see if you are not certain, if you are not circumspect, you can be misled because the hon. Member in his contribution and the response to the budget debate said that Vivendi, the largest water company in the world, was left out of the process. I tell the hon. Member for San Fernando West, Vivendi was never one of the bidders, never alone or conjointly with anybody as part of the process.

I am going to read it for you. *[Interruption]* You see, you are being misled. *[Interruption]* I will read, Mr. Speaker. *[Interruption]*

Mr. Speaker: Order please!

Hon. G. Singh: Mr. Speaker, at the prequalification stage of the project the Bhagwansing's Group of Companies took the lead road in attempting to prequalify for the project. Their team consisted of the following companies:

- Bhagwansing's Group of Companies, and
- Cayman Water Company

They submitted the prequalification documents on the closing date of August 21, 1998 at 11.55 a.m. at the Ministry of Public Utilities. At this stage there was no mention of U.S. Filters or Vivendi as part of their partnership or joint venture.

After prequalifying, the above joint venture strengthened their team with the inclusion of U.S. Filter-Enerserve N.V. In addition, the firm of Cayman Water Company changed its name to Consolidated Water Company Limited, effective December 03, 1998. Therefore, the new team which submitted the bid was transformed to the joint venture of:

- U.S. Filters-Enerserve N.V.
- Consolidated Water Company Limited, and
- Bhagwansing's Group of Companies

At this stage, there was still no mention of Vivendi as part of a partnership or joint venture.

At the bids clarifications stage, by letter of April 14, 1999 from the above team, their responses to queries, clarifications and missing information contained no mention or reference to Vivendi. *[Interruption]* Mr. Speaker—*[Interruption]* You see, you do not know. Listen and you will learn. In fact, during this stage, one of the specific queries was a request for the team to submit a project organization programme showing the distribution of tasks, duties, authority and responsibilities of each of the project contractors and subcontractors.

In response to this request, the team listed all the members of their team, including services consultants, design consultants, construction companies and operational inputs. *[Interruption]* I will quote, Mr. Speaker. *[Interruption]*

Mr. Speaker: Order please, order please, order please!

Hon. G. Singh: I will quote:

“DESIGNS

- Voltec Limited
- Geotech Associates
- US Filter—Chester Engineering
- Ecoengineering
- Coastal Dynamics
- Bernard Mackay Architect

CONSTRUCTION

- Skinner & Joseph Partnership
- Pres-T-Con
- Earthmovers Limited
- Haniff Mohammed Limited
- RK Plummer Limited
- Coosal’s Construction Limited
- Steel Structures Limited
- Kennicon Limited
- Doc’s Engineering
- Damus Limited

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- Comfort Engineering
- Cooper's Electrical Services
- MEI Limited
- Sea Works (Trinidad) Limited"

There is no mention of Vivendi.

In a recent newspaper article [Interruption] [Interruption] dated September 26, 1999, Mr. Speaker—[Interruption]

Mr. Speaker: You know, I honestly do not know what else I should do to impress upon certain Members that we should conduct the affairs in here in a certain way. What do I have to do? Do I have to beg you for it?

Hon. G. Singh: Mr. Speaker, there is no mention of Vivendi. You see, Mr. Speaker, the Internet is a wonderful tool to deal with mischief-makers. Having read that, I directed that a search be done on the Internet about Vivendi and their appearance on this project.

4.20 p.m.

It was discovered on a web page on the water industry—Vivendi to buy US Filters. I have the web page, Mr. Speaker.

Last month, France's Vivendi announced plans to buy Palm Desert Based US Filters Corporation—this web search was done at the end of September 1999, therefore, in August, Vivendi was still announcing plans to buy US Filters—and that there was no mention of Vivendi up to the time of the closing stage for the submission of bids on February 12, 1999 or even to the clarification stage of April 14, 1999, because Vivendi was buying US Filters in August, so after everything closed, then they went to the hon. Member for San Fernando East and said, "Boy, you know, we are the biggest water company". But, you might be the biggest water company—and I am glad you are getting knowledge in the water sector—because when Leonez des eau at that time, was the largest company, you kicked them out for Severn Trent because your handlers told you to sign the contract five days before the election.

So, the small point I make, Mr. Speaker, was that Vivendi was nowhere in the picture. In fact, they came in to see me subsequently. What you have is a series of fabrications and half truths and the hon. Member—I have a few minutes—for Diego Martin West, "Dr. Expert on desal", you know, who could do nothing when he was on the board of WASA, talks about brackish water. He is now an

expert on desal water and brackish water, but he left the people, when he was on the water board, waterless.

This is what the Barbados consultant had to say, unsolicited. Why do you not listen?

“Consultant: Good deal with ‘desal’ plant.

Barbados desalination plant consultant and project manager Ambrose Johnson said yesterday that ‘it is not a bad deal Trinidad and Tobago is getting’ with its US \$120 million desalination plant and described the criticisms as ‘very unfair’.

Johnson said the plants in Trinidad and Tobago and Barbados were not alike, adding that ‘in order to produce the high quality water you are getting, Barbados would need two plants’.

Johnson, a water engineer, was speaking on desalination as a water supply option at yesterday's session of the Caribbean meeting of the Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council (WSSCC) at the Ambassador Hotel.

He said the site of the Bds US \$24 million plant was on coral, was being built near the sea and the feed water was slightly brackish and needed little treatment from hard to soft water.

He added that the Trinidad and Tobago plant was being built on land fill, while the water, which was the worst quality feed water containing oil and silt, had to be pumped to the plant.

Johnson said all of these things mitigated against the low cost of operations and ‘despite all this you have got a very good price. I am amazed you got a price of US 70 cents a cubic meter’, he stressed.

He said Cyprus was presently putting down a similar plant to that in Trinidad and Tobago and its lowest bid was US 80 cents.”

[*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Hon. G. Singh: You see, internationally, the experts are telling us that what we are doing is the right thing; [*Crosstalk*] the local experts are telling us that what we are doing is the right thing; but you see those on that side, Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Speaker: Order. No. I am really having tremendous difficulty in following as I should what is being said. I appeal to Members, if it is necessary

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for Members on the Front Bench to speak to those on the Back and it cannot be done in quiet terms, without disturbing the Hansard Reporter and others, I ask you please to go to the back of the Chair. It is not fair. It is just not fair.

Hon. G. Singh: So what you have here is Ionics Incorporated being—and I inform the Member for San Fernando East—the largest desalination company in the world. Vivendi is the largest conventional water company in the world. Mr. Speaker, Ionics had done over 2,000 plants; Enerserve did only eight. So, when I hear the hon. Member speak, I know that he is not being advised properly because I know he has an interest in solving the water problems in this country because his constituency, like the Member for San Fernando West—do you know what he said, Mr. Speaker? The water got a little better. He was even niggard in his praise.

Mr. Imbert: What is that?

Hon. G. Singh: Niggard in his praise for the water sector.

Mr. Imbert: Do not use those words around here. Watch your language.

Hon. G. Singh: Mr. Speaker, we have moved from 11.2 per cent to 30 per cent. People are getting 24-hour water supply during the tenure of this Government, but the hon. Member is very, very niggardly in his praise for the water sector but his constituents are getting.

The Member for La Brea is very happy. He said that he had to undress to get water, but you see what we are doing—La Filette is getting water; Santa Cruz is going to get. What we have done is recognized that water, like all the utilities, and water in particular, is vital to life, is a vital part of infrastructure, to give us the global competitive edge. We have to solve this problem. To delay is to deny this reality. It is one of Parkinson's law—to delay is to deny.

So, Mr. Speaker, what we have here, we are, in fact, going to solve this water problem notwithstanding—and I want the hon. Member for Diego Martin West to go down to Cedros in his grandstanding. The people will give him what he deserves in Cedros for not solving the water problem. Take it to Barrackpore; take it to Penal; he wants to go on the soak box. Go to these areas that are water starved and tell them what you did, honourable doctor, when you were on the WASA board. I want him to tell them.

Because, you see, we are about service in this sector; we are about delivering the goods to the people. This is what people elected us for, not to engage in all kinds of perambulations without providing water to the people, and that is why there is a passion today in WASA; there is an energy in WASA. We have unleashed

the talent in WASA. There is south water project; there is north water project; there is Tobago water project, all run by WASA, all run by the talent there at WASA. Tobago water project.

Miss Nicholson: You now remember.

Hon. G. Singh: If I had more time, hon. Member, I would have dealt with it. I will deal with it at another time. We have unleashed the passion and the energy because we have brought the talent of this country to bear to solve the problem. That is why we can confidently say, “Water for all by the end of the year 2000”.

I thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

4.28 p.m.: *Sitting suspended.*

5.03 p.m.: *Sitting resumed.*

Mr. Eric Williams (Port of Spain South): Mr. Speaker, thank you for recognizing me. It is my pleasure to contribute merely a few words on a Bill entitled ‘An Act to provide for the Service of Trinidad and Tobago for the financial year ending on the 30th day of September, 2000’.

Mr. Speaker, in this debate, I propose to say a few words in the area of public utilities, in the area of energy and just a few words about my constituency and my constituents.

We just had a very hot-paced debate in which a Minister of Government has wound a yarn of string around his legs. He has stripped himself up. He has left this room full of hubris, not realizing that he has opened up an entire can of worms, into which he is about to fall, with regard to the desalination plant at Point Lisas. [*Desk thumping*] The hon. Minister has now confirmed, for the record, that we are purchasing water from Ionics Incorporated at a cost of \$90 million per year for the next 20 years. The Minister has confirmed, in effect, that WASA is about to go into a situation with a loss of revenue of \$60 million per year for the next 20 years. I thought by now, the message had gone across; the matter had been prosecuted entirely and adequately.

Mr. Speaker, I recall when we had the debate on the increase in the water rates at Point Lisas, at that time my daughter was a second former. She produced her geography book and said these words—it is already in the *Hansard*—“Daddy we do not need a desalination plant in Trinidad, everybody knows that only goes in desert areas.” She showed this from a second form geography book that a

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desalination plant goes in Qatar, Aruba or some other place where there is very little water, not in the wet tropics, as is Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] Every second former, every child—I am happy to say she began her schooling prior to 1995—in high school understands that from their geography book.

Mr. Speaker, here we have a Minister of Public Utilities who has gone to great lengths to try to justify the unjustifiable and defend the indefensible. What the Minister is saying, in effect, is that the manner in which we are training our students, the information we are providing them with is *ultra vires* and *infra dig*, Mr. Speaker, because he is in direct contradiction with what we are teaching our children.

The PNM maintained from the start, and continues to maintain, that the major solution for the water supply in Trinidad and Tobago is an accelerated mains replacement programme. [*Desk thumping*] Let me get back to that. In addition to which there are other sources of surface water which are cheaper than this desalination approach. [*Interruption*] Not ground water, surface water: the cheapest kind, the kind where it falls from heaven and there it is. That is what God provided for us. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Sudama: And what will you do with it?

Mr. E. Williams: I will deal with you and your Bible quotations just now, because you are trying to emulate me. I am coming for you. [*Desk thumping*]

The Minister finally comes to this House to acknowledge what I have been telling him; in every single budget debate to date; that WASA's capability to replace its water mains involves 2,900 line kilometres of pipe not 3,900 line kilometres. In fact, Kancham Kanhai, the Minister's official mentioned, in his article in the newspaper, it would take 29 years. Mr. Speaker, I would repeat it for the benefit of *Hansard* and the people for the fifth time. Finally, it is now starting to sink into the heads of the Members on the other side. WASA's capability to replace its water mains is at a rate of 100 kilometres of pipe per year. For an island the size of Trinidad and Tobago that sounds like a lot, until one recognizes that there are 2,900 line kilometres of water main in the ground. Those mains have been there in excess of 20—50 years. In fact, the PNM started laying water mains in this country in the 1800s. The first programme was the water plant in Maraval which was put there to run water into the city of Port of Spain.

Mr. Speaker, what the previous administration recognized was that it is not that WASA does not have bright, motivated engineers and technicians; that was not an issue at all. As a matter of fact, we are proud to say that all of them got their

qualifications while the People's National Movement was in governance. We know what went into their education. [*Desk thumping*] The Minister has just confirmed that they are indeed bright. We are all products of it. The problem at WASA has to do with its history which comes out of our colonial past.

5.10 p.m.

What is today WASA was not before the mid 1960s. The Minister showed a map that indicated prior to 1995 there were certain areas with 100 per cent supply and other areas with varying amounts of supply. We know this. For his understanding, because he does not seem to know, prior to the People's National Movement in government creating WASA, there were several individual water companies throughout the nation, each supplying its own area. In addition, supplementing that, there were river intakes, wells and certain other sources of surface water. [*Desk thumping*] That is why the system was how it was.

In addition to this, many of the areas which are today urban areas were then rural areas, and what would happen is that the People's National Movement, when it was in government, would run a water main down a street to provide water for a village at the end of the street. Word would then come out, "Hey folks. There is now water down this street", so there would be ribbon development along that street tapping water off of it. At the end of the day, the village at the end of the street received an inadequate supply of water because they acquired neighbours because of development spurred by the then developmental plans of WASA and the thinkers in water. That is how it came to be how it is.

WASA was formed as an amalgamation of all of these companies, and what we ended up having was a clash of corporate cultures. There were people who were bosses in their open areas, all of a sudden. In effect, we have what is today known as a merger and in a merger there are teething problems. Over time, the culture developed so that there were some inequalities in the system; imbalances.

WASA as a system, we maintain, had not been performing to the optimal standard that was expected. As a result, Mr. Speaker, an attempt was made to bring about a change in corporate culture at WASA and so, the previous administration went to the international financing agency—the World Bank—with an attempt at a solution. The idea was to bring in a company picked by them, according to international standards and with full international oversight, transparency and tendering—not local, international—under the purview of the World Bank to bring in a company for whom laying 2,900 kilometers of pipe replacement is a small job as opposed to our paradigm—not paradigm-im—a large job. [*Laughter*]

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Mr. Speaker, that was the genesis of the Severn Trent arrangement. He opened the door and mentioned Leonez Des Eau. At the time of the tendering for this process, several senior officials of Leonez Des Eau, along with several mayors of French cities, were being prosecuted and subsequently went to jail for corruption in the tendering process. [*Desk thumping*]

What he also did not mention is that Leonez Des Eau had a local partner, a company by the name of Maritime, the insurance company—the one of which senior members are now senior functionaries in the present Government. [*Desk thumping*] He did not tell us that, and I am sure his colleagues did not know that either.

Mr. Manning: They are twisted from long.

Mr. Williams: Mr. Speaker, the idea to have an accelerated mains replacement programme was a sound one. What did they do? The World Bank wrote report after report about how they put square pegs in round holes, party functionaries of all kinds in all kinds of key positions and the World Bank wrote that this Government had lost its way, lost its vision and its understanding of its regulatory function as regards water. [*Desk thumping*]

As a result, it compromised the process and, in addition to which, increased the difficulty which the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Planning and Development had in negotiating future loans with them. The World Bank objected, put somebody in charge of the Water Resources Board, the regulatory arm, with absolutely no experience: the brother of the Chairman of UNC. They wrote report after report about the frustration of that programme, and this is why they now come to say that the programme is a failure, it cannot work. I believe an analogy was presented earlier about a cake and a particular winged insect. [*Laughter*] Since WASA also has water and sewage, I believe it may be sewage and that particular but rather dark and large winged insect. All of them on that side, in this regard.

What was the next plan? Rehabilitation of sewage plants. I wonder if you know, Mr. Speaker, that the plant at Beetham has been leaking sewage for some time? The infrastructure, just like the water mains, was old. So, the PNM in government, in its previous administration, embarked on a programme to rehabilitate the Beetham plant.

Do you know, Mr. Speaker, that if that plant is rehabilitated, and if the San Fernando sewerage plant is rehabilitated, we are likely to obtain, just at the beginning, 24 million gallons of water, called gray water, per day from Beetham

and a further 15 million gallons of gray water from the San Fernando plant? If we apply the same financing, we could treat that water from those two plants to the specifications required at Point Lisas and we can then pipe that water from those plants to Point Lisas and, if there is an excess, we could pipe it to agricultural areas—which they claim to love—which are sometimes starved of water.

They are an agrarian Government. They come from areas that are agrarian. In other words, they would supply water to Point Lisas and to the farmers for irrigation, in addition to which, they would solve what is a crying environmental problem. For years, satellite photos over Trinidad have shown that there is a plume of raw sewage two to four miles long going into the Gulf of Paria because of the malfunctioning sewerage plant.

Mr. Speaker, I had the ignominy to look through all these budgets. In 1996 there was \$63 million assigned to the Beetham project in the PSIP; not a cent spent. In 1997 there was \$63 million in the PSIP; not a cent spent. In 1998 it went from a project to a study of the Port of Spain area with \$90 million potentially allocated. In other words, they are going in the wrong direction. They are supposed to go from study to project to execution. This one is going from project to study and it was no surprise that in 1999 there were zero dollars. No mention whatsoever of that study! *[Desk thumping]* That is curiously the same time that we started to hear about the wonders of desalination. *[Desk thumping]*

The gall of it, Mr. Speaker, is that senior ministers in different places are telling my constituents in Sea Lots that it is they who are fouling up the area with their indiscreet disposal of their own sewage. I have had to, along with my constituents, take that insult. Further to that, all of a sudden—that is a good point—it is the same sewage plume going out that they are going to treat to put in the desalination plant. *[Laughter]* I almost forgot, the water in the Gulf of Paria, in the scientific lingo, forms what is called a gyre. It circulates; goes around and around, and we know that when things get washed down in our rivers they do not go too far; they hug the coast. It is known as longshore drift. So, he is still going to treat the same thing, but now out in the sea at a higher cost.

Further to that, I know that WASA means Water and Sewerage Authority. How is it, Mr. Speaker, that all of a sudden I saw in the press that the amelioration of the problem of the Beetham sewerage plant suddenly was no longer a WASA problem under the purview of the Minister of Public Utilities—and some people call him a political and social Brahmin—but all of a sudden, it became a project that was one for the environment under the Minister in the Ministry of Planning and Development with responsibility for the environment, the Member for Point Fortin.

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In other words, in local parlance, he was now to pick up the sewage-soaked end of a very short stick with absolutely no budget, with the EMA crying over the fact that there are no teeth in their legislation. *[Laughter]* In fact, on the Order Paper we have EMA legislation coming up in this House. That is what he did! Water for all! We run off doing water for all and it is now “Sewage for Lasse!”. Sorry, Mr. Speaker, the Member for Point Fortin. *[Laughter]* It pains me to say.

Mr. Speaker, the real issue with water supply in Trinidad and Tobago is the leaks. Let me go back again. After they dealt with the sewerage plants which would deal with both the environmental problem and the pressing issue of supplying water—because obviously, one could now divert the water that was going to Pt. Lisas, the potable water, and use the treated water, and one would get immediately 12 to maybe 15 gallons per day. They could then concurrently conduct studies to show where to put down the next plant to get surface water, as in a dam, as in the North Oropouche River which is the river with the highest discharge of water in this country. *[Desk thumping]* And he says it is outdated.

One of the main reasons they said it was not wise to go there is because they needed to conduct extensive geotechnical studies because on the one geologic map of Trinidad which was published in 1959 by Couglar and others, it shows a fault known as the “El Pillar fault”—the same one in Venezuela that caused an earthquake recently and killed some people—to be running probably under us and along the base of the Northern Range through that area. Therefore, it may have been an unstable area. Two things: seismic research over the past few decades has indicated that the fault, if it is there, is not active and, secondly, engineering technology has increased to the point where one can compensate for certain types of engineering and geotechnical problems, Mr. Speaker.

5.25 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, I am told that there are senior Members on the other side who suggested building other dams, in fact, building mini-dams and looking at other ways to go after aquifers throughout the nation. I am proud to say that a comprehensive plan, gone to pieces over expediency and in a manner that has opened the hon. Minister and his Government to—what the Member for St. Joseph likes to say in his best “Oxbridge” twang—*ad hominem*.

Mr. Speaker, water and sewage in this country, in an island archipelagic state such as Trinidad and Tobago, are in crisis. They are in crisis because of the mismanagement of that Minister of Public Utilities. I do not ever like to say these things. But, when I look at the facts, when I weigh them, I come to the inescapable conclusion that that is our sad state of affairs.

There is a lot more to be said about the desalination plant. As a result, I do not think I can deal with all of it today, and I am sure that there are other Members who would like to revisit that discussion. I will just say for the record, that we will seek to file a Private Member's motion in the very near future to deal with that particular issue in this House. [*Desk thumping*] I am not going to let it go! Water for all.

The other thing too, Mr. Speaker, I reminded him that the time of greatest water shortage in and around Central Trinidad is at the time of the sugar crop. The greatest industrial activity associated with the sugar crop is the activation of the sugar factory. Now you will recall that he found one or maybe two illegal connections of water off the main, into the factory. Most people suggest when you model that factory, it should use almost 10 or maybe even more million gallons of water per day to produce sugar. Yes, quite a lot! But we will look at it some more. Interesting, is it not? But again, politically, for this Government to deal with that, that would be a bit of a problem. We will look at it. We will revisit it.

Mr. Speaker, I propose to move on to another matter, the TT Post business. At the time we discussed the TT Post in this House I raised a question which did not receive an answer until recently. I want to read, from the *Hansard*, part of the question that I asked in my contribution at the time. It goes this way, at page 603 of the *Hansard*, of Friday, November 13, 1998.

“As a Member of Parliament, I am allowed to communicate with my constituents in the legitimate performance of my duty by having mail that goes from my office through the postal service at no cost to me personally as a Member of Parliament. Government departments send mail out to various people, we all have gotten mail from some Government department, schools for instance, just simple things: announcements of a PTA meeting and so forth. What provisions are we putting in place to ensure that this type of public service is assured?”

Because you see, Mr. Speaker, as part of my function as a representative, in the discharge of my function of representation, I have to send correspondence to my constituents or, on behalf of my constituents; similarly, ministers and ministries. Imagine my shock to see an ad in the newspapers from the TT Post, not from the Minister of Public Utilities, instructing all government departments, “From here on in as of the first of October, you are no longer allowed to send mail using your official stamp. All Government departments are now on notice that you will pay for your mail”. Mr. Speaker, the legality of it, really, is in question, but I still do not know because he never answered my question then.

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In addition to which, Mr. Speaker, I am not aware from this blueprint—which we are starting to understand may be a blueprint not for success and sustainable growth. There is nothing in there that I am aware of that tells me how to solve that problem, nothing that says that there is increased allocation for government departments or Members of Parliament in the performance of their representation to be able to have this facility Mr. Speaker. I thought it was a condition.

The folks on the other side who are ministers can now send their correspondence for representation through their Ministries if they choose to, and at taxpayers' cost. So what happens to us on this side who also have to represent in excess of half the population? Because we got more votes than they did the last time around. *[Desk thumping]* Not one word on TT Post!

By the way, lest I forget, going back to desalination plant just one more time. They talked about how the electricity cost was going to be less. Well, if it is less or more, I now understand that it is likely to come almost entirely from InnCogen across the ways, which is a take or pay contract, which we have already prosecuted to some degree and, therefore, one dubious project seems to be feeding another dubious project in this, our beautiful Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Hart: Chaos and confusion in this land.

Mr. E. Williams: Mr. Speaker, with regard to another issue in public utilities that was not raised by the hon. Minister on which I wanted to touch; that is the new cellular licence. Not a word! A complete—

[Mr. G. Singh rises]

Mr. E. Williams: No. You had your chance. You could go in the other place and enlighten us.

Mr. G. Singh: *[Inaudible]* You do not even know, you are misleading the House.

Mr. E. Williams: Mr. Speaker, whether it is under his purview or not, to date, nobody on that side has told us anything about the cellular licence.

Mr. Speaker, we would like to know, and we are very concerned, about the following 11 items:

- Does the current legislation and licence allow new licences to be issued? We do not know.
- What will be the transparency for the licence tendering process? In light of the desalination plant, InnCogen, the Airport, the rice, the stadium,

the sugar mill from Dhanpur, and on and on. The UNC Government, a six-legged, winged insect. We have a real concern.

- How is this process in Trinidad and Tobago going to be put in context of the international telecommunications mergers that are taking place at this time, with their economies of scale?
- What would be the minimum experience and financial qualifications of bidders? Their entire qualifications must not only be golf and short pants and a taste for scotch and shades.
- What procedures will we put in place for interconnection of systems and the portability of telephone numbers?
- What are we going to put in place for tariff structures?
- What will be the network build-out and the universal service contribution requirements? Foreign language to these guys.
- What technologies would be deployed? Mr. Speaker, currently we have 2.5D or third-order digital technology on the market. What are we going to employ here in Trinidad and Tobago? Is it going to be cutting edge and at what cost?
- What will be the quality of service and the consumer protection standards?
- What would be the spectrum, the bandwidth that will be allowed to be used by any or all of these companies? The frequency? What range?
- How will we facilitate their international gateways?

Eleven areas that are of concern! That is a whole debate in itself. So we are putting the public, the nation at large, on notice. We are looking and evaluating this whole process from 11 criteria, not simply what seems to obtain from the other side, where they simply look at a range of bids, low to high, and take the highest bidder.

At this time, Mr. Speaker, I wish to move to energy. *[Interruption]* I would like to deal with a few issues in the energy area. First and foremost, I just want to inform the public at large that when the Minister of Finance indicated that the reference price will be \$16. Given the qualities of crude in Trinidad and Tobago, that comes out, really, at an average price of somewhere between \$14 and \$14.50. Because I noticed a comment from one of the business leaders saying that the

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price ought to have been pegged at \$14. Sixteen dollars is not so bad in that most of the international companies have determined that, they could still make a bit of profit with the priced pegged at \$16. But what that means to the nation is that the basket of crudes that we have—we have East Coast Crude, we have Land Crude and we have Trinmar Crude—each fetch different prices, particularly the reference price is mainly for East Coast Crude. The Land and Trinmar crudes attract lower prices. And so, as a nation, with our basket of crudes, near as we can tell, given the expectations of production, which ought to be somewhere a little over 130,000 barrels a day, it should be of the order of somewhere between \$14.18 and \$14.50 or thereabouts.

5.40 p.m.

Just a bit of information because that was not contained, per se, in the blueprint. Venezuela, which has much more oil and gas than we do, quote their oil at basket—a national average, so that everybody knows it, even if you demystify it. I just want to commend that to the Minister of Finance for future reference, if he is still around, but I think when we get back into power—which will be soon—we may change that.

The Minister of Finance in his revenue estimates said that he expects to get a \$1 billion increase in revenue taxation from the oil companies and my hon. political leader and Member for San Fernando East questioned that. The Minister—I saw, I am seeing—has been going in a number of places saying, “yes that is so, I can get it”—this, that and so forth, from pillar to post and then I saw an article in the *Sunday Guardian* of October 17, 1999 on page 1, headlined “Amoco Boss backs Kuei Tung.”

So I thought, wow, maybe, there is something to this, let me read this quickly. I read it again, and something struck me, and then I read it again; then I blocked off the headline and I read the story again. Let me read a couple of choice parts:

“Wight said Friday he fully expected the Government’s tax revenue from the oil company to increase...”

It did not say by how much; it continues:

“because of the additional income which BP Amoco will receive from new projects in 2000.”

Mr. Speaker, we would look in a little more detail at what some of that might be, I just want to deal with this. He has a telling paragraph and it is in quotation marks, so I can only go with the integrity of the reporter. Let me go on:

“The Minister has not shared with me how he adds up his numbers...”

[Interruption] He has not shared with us, but that is the point. Numbers do not matter. Let me start again. I quote:

“The Minister has not shared with me how he adds up his numbers but we fully expect that the Government’s revenue will increase in the new year...”

Again, he did not say by how much.

Mr. Speaker, remember the Minister is saying that the increased revenue of \$1 billion will come from Amoco! And here is the chairman of the management group in Amoco saying that he does not know exactly what that number would be. Then why did he refer to the increased use of natural gas on the domestic market, and new projects in Point Lisas Estate and such? Do you know what this reminds me of? One day on a little “lime” there was a fellow who made an outrageous boast, saying that he could do something that nobody else could do—going *brave’ danger* and thing, but he was the leader of the “lime”. We did not know if he could do it and nobody wanted to tell him that. So we told him well, brother go ahead, show us. We did not think he could do it, and we did not know his capabilities, so we told him to go through and do it. What is interesting in this article is that he goes on to say;

“Wight said he did not know where the Government had reached on the fiscal policy reform for the natural gas sector.”

Mr. Speaker, here is the part. The quote continues:

“But, he added, as a businessman...”

that is a very cold light of illumination—

“...he felt that the taxation of the energy sector was higher in Trinidad and Tobago in comparison to other countries in which BP Amoco does business.”

In other words, he is saying we have high taxes and we will get some increase but he cannot—and he is very polite—substantiate that \$1 billion increase! Very polite language. This underscores heavily our concern on this side.

Now, I would like to look at some of these projects which, it is hoped, would bring additional revenue from somewhere.

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

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

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. E. Williams: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the hon. Members of the honourable House for extending my time.

The first thing I want to look at is the natural gas taxation regime. Before we go into this, all these measures require considerable analysis of thought and research. This afternoon I would like to present a few points for consideration, and time would tell whether or not they would be useful. What I believe, at this time, is that they should be considered. We have seen in the Minister's speech and in the documents, that there is consideration of changing the natural gas taxation regime, but there is none as yet, so we do not know, in other words, what we expect as an increase from a change in the taxation. We know that we expect to get a little over 200 million cubic feet of gas per day. This year, we expect to go from 903 million—or by the way, the estimate of 9,992 million cubic metres, given the actual average production really should have been 9,331.68 million cubic metres because the average natural production, over the past year, was 903 million, so a slight adjustment would have to be made. There is also a similar adjustment on the oil numbers, too, but we take it that those are estimates.

One consideration—and I mean we were hoping for some debate—is if we could, in changing the taxation regime, bring it to a situation that is considered to be revenue neutral, where you increase the royalty on the gas and increase the taxation regime. It is a consideration, because in that way as a country, we get the revenue upfront of the royalty, without any room for tax deductions and tax holidays on projects. You see the reason that the royalty was low was to encourage developments, and we now have the development.

If you go to a revenue neutral condition, but skew it so that we get the revenue upfront, as a nation, we stand to benefit. It needs to be looked at. Is it feasible or not? Is it doable, is it not? Can we renegotiate our current contracts? It should have been done before the LNG project, but it should be reconsidered now, before trains two and three.

Mr. Manning: Yes, before trains two and 3.

Mr. E. Williams: And I am coming to trains two and three just now with the LNG. With regard to the LNG project, it has been widely reported that the consortium of companies involved with the Atlantic LNG would like to go to trains two and three.

5.50 p.m.

Let me backtrack a little for the benefit of those who are now coming into the discussion. As we produce natural gas from the east coast, there are liquids

associated with it that we call liquifiable petroleum gases, which we use for cooking, LPG and other things. In train one, the gas is being scrubbed by Phoenix Park and others, as it is now, and the LPG liquids are being exported. In train two, it is hoped that we can bring the gas from the north coast, mixed with gas from the east coast. The gas from the north coast is different from the gas on the east coast. It is what we call dry gas, as little or no liquids associate with it. With the value of the liquids you can take out of the east coast gas, it would make it economically viable to take gas from the north coast and mix the two together in trains two and three. Part of the problem is that the objective is to monetize the gas, turn it into something that has value, dollars that we can use for sustainable development or growth.

One of the ways we need to do that and we have been thinking about doing that is by creating a plastics industry, and to do that we have to build something known as an ethylene cracker. Ethylene is a slightly heavier hydrocarbon molecule, than is the natural gas itself, which is mainly ethane from which we can make ethylene. So what you do, the idea is quite simple, you produce enough gas to get enough liquids to put into the ethylene cracker which would now allow us to make all the different branches of plastic products that can be made.

The Minister of Energy and Energy Industries has been saying and sending signals back and forth: no trains two and three; we do not want that. What I am discovering is while the consortium of companies is saying, "We want trains two and three," the Government is saying, "No." But what they are really saying is that we want the liquids from the gas you produce at half its economic cost, half the market value. The companies are saying, "But that is not fair, because if you are going to use it as feedstock over here, pay us the market value for it." And the Government is saying, "No, it is our own." But again there are certain contractual arrangements and, as a result, the negotiations seem to have broken down.

One of the things that could be considered to get around that particular dilemma—at this time all of the liquids are being exported, in fact, this year we expect to export \$165 million cubic metres of LPG. If for some reason, the Minister of Finance is able to adjust his taxation regime to provide an incentive for that LNG, instead of it being exported where it fetches US dollars on the export market, to be utilized in the domestic market, we will then have a better chance of combining all of the liquids being produced now and will be produced from the ramped up gas production, into the same ethylene cracker which would provide the plastic industry, which we believe would be good for sustainable growth.

In addition, part of the problem, too, is that the additional gas now being produced, the gas to liquid ratio changes very drastically within eight to 10 years

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so that they cannot now justify a 20-year project, which would be the life of such a cracker. Where is any discussion on an adjustment of our taxation regime? Where is a vision for sustainable growth, as this document purports, that will take us from our current situation forward into that kind of scenario, into the next millennium.

While we are fiddling, guess what is going on next door? Next door to Trinidad and Tobago is Venezuela. At this time, at the very best, we have somewhere between 18 to 20 trillion cubic feet of proven reserves of gas. There are another nine to 10 trillion cubic feet that we either probably or possibly have. We are not quite sure, but there are suggestions that we might have that. In other words, an optimistic upside as they say in the lingo, is that we might have about 30 trillion cubic feet of gas available to us, possible, probable and proven.

In Venezuela, they have proven gas reserves, not possible or probable, of 145 trillion cubic feet. That is a ratio of almost one to five. In other words, even at our best they have five times more than what we have. In addition to which, their gas is not just gas by itself, but gas that is associated with oil. It is called “associated gas” which means it has more liquids in it than our gas has, which means they could put up the same kind of project in Venezuela at the same cost as ours, but justify it, because they have the liquids to do it, and they can beat us out of the ethylene market in this part of world.

Mr. Speaker, why is that a concern? I want to read an article from the *Venezuela Oil & Energy* of Wednesday, October 13, under General News of that day. This was taken from the PDVSA, the state oil company in Venezuela:

“Representatives from state run *Petróleos de Venezuela (PDVSA)*, Shell, Exxon and Mitsubishi were meeting today to attend a funeral and a birth.

The funeral is for the *Cristóbal Colón (Christopher Columbus)* offshore gas project that will be officially cancelled today after years of legal and technical tangles to try and get it off the ground.

The project originally set sail on Oct. 12, 1978 when exploratory work began in three areas off the Venezuelan coast. Along the way, storms interrupted the plans for the \$5 billion plus project leading up to today’s cancellation at PDVSA’s headquarters in Caracas.

However, despite death, life carries on and the *Colón* project is no exception.”

Here is what they want to do, Mr. Speaker. They want to form a company—I am not quoting anymore—with those same international giants plus two other

companies, British Petroleum, as in BP Amoco in Trinidad, and Repsol, also operative in Trinidad, to form a company to produce liquefied petroleum gas; the same LPG that we need now, if we are going to try to get our ethylene cracker off the ground.

Why is that of concern? One of the main reasons the Cristóbal Colón project died is because under the astute management of my predecessors, we got our LNG plant off the ground before them; we did it first—[*Desk thumping*]*—*and it killed their project even though they have five times more gas than we have. Therefore, if we can now adjust and move ahead with the speed required, we can put in our own LPG arrangements here in Trinidad and we will kill that project. [*Desk thumping*] We will kill the Shell project over in Nigeria where they are seeking to penetrate the Venezuelan market that we are seeking to get into with our trains two and three, and at the same time we will encourage the production of trains two and three, so that we get the liquefied natural gas. We get the ethylene complex, all the plastics that go with it and the additional revenue from the taxation. [*Desk thumping*]

They are imitators [*Desk thumping*]. They could only copy, they cannot innovate. There is a cost for pioneering and there is a cost for vision. As a government you have to be willing to pay the price politically or economically to move this nation forward—[*Desk thumping*]*—*and you all cannot do it. You are showing that you cannot do it. [*Crosstalk*] Yes, we are aware that you are in discussions with Syn Petroleum, Corporation to try to get a gas to liquid plant in Trinidad. Yes. Syn Petroleum; S-Y-N, Syntroleum Corp; that is the name of the people's company.

Syntroleum Corporation has a process to take natural gas and make synthetic gasoline, and they have put on their website that they are in final negotiations for sites in Australia and Trinidad. “But drag yuh feet nuh,” do not change the natural gas regime—[*Interruption*]*—*and I am coming to that too. Thank you for raising that.

The aluminum smelter used to figure very heavily in all the discussions about new projects coming in, and they were going to have co-generation with that too, but the co-generation had a better chance of being above board. It was going to be BP Amoco providing the co-generation. But hear what happened, Mr. Speaker; they were negotiating with a company by the name of Norsk Hydro out of Norway. Norsk Hydro, at last report, asked its local partner BP Amoco—near as we can understand—for a three-year hiatus before coming to a decision. At the same time, we are aware that they are in discussions with the government of

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Qatar, which has even more gas than Venezuela, and can offer a cheaper price for gas.

Guess what, Mr. Speaker? Over in Venezuela, in an article, again from PDVSA's website, I understand that Venezuela tried to sell its Corporación Venezuela de Guyana's CBG Aluminum complex and they failed because of wrangling in their congress. Politically, the new President of Venezuela has dissolved the congress and they are going to change the way they approach their laws. It is, therefore, no surprise to learn that of the four old aluminium smelters, right next to the bauxite to produce the aluminium in Venezuela, I understand that the President of Venezuela himself has offered the same Norsk Hydro, at least, two of those smelters, merely for the cost of refurbishing them. Right next door to us. Guess what they are going to fire it up with, and provide the energy with, either hydro or natural gas. Venezuela could go either way.

At the same time, we are yet to come up with a comprehensive natural gas regime, which is rooted in a vision of sustainable growth. We are fiddling. Our place in the market is assured, not by our size, but by our nimbleness and our integrity. [*Desk thumping*]

6.05 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, the word is out internationally—and do you know part of where it ties back to? It is the same World Bank that initiated the Severn Trent programme with us for water. They are spreading the rake, justifiably so, and do you know why they are doing it? Because they are responsible and they have to do it, because they are accountable.

Mr. Speaker, when one looks at those two areas which really ought to be major growth poles for our economy, we are in shambles, we are in real trouble and this is where we come back to quoting the *Bible*. You want to quote *Bible*? Daniel 5, verses 25 to 28 .

“MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN.”

The writing is on the wall.

“...God has numbered the days of your reign and brought it to an end.”

...You were weighed on the scale and have been found wanting.

...Your kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians.”

“MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN.”

At this point, Mr. Speaker, I think there is another forum in which I will tackle my constituency matters because I have other avenues open. Not that they are not pressing. I want to talk with the Minister of Housing and Settlements about his very surreptitious increase in rent to \$100. Not that I necessarily disagree with the quantum, but there really ought to be some relief for pensioners and single mothers who are on welfare. When one considers that the real plan behind the whole thing is to sell the apartments to the current occupants without repairing them, that is very painful to me too.

There was a gentleman whom I came to know from the Mango Rose area, a good friend of mine, a pioneer in Trinidad All Stars. A very good friend of my colleague from Tunapuna. He lived at the top floor of a four-storey apartment in the Mango Rose area. His roof leaks like a sieve.

Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Tunapuna buried that man on Saturday without the relief of knowing that his invalid wife who is left behind can sleep on a dry bed at nights. For years we were begging and writing letters. In addition to which, there is one other issue in my constituency that is a burning one, and it is the Nelson Street Boys' R.C School. I am happy to see in the documents that \$1 million had been allocated to start, but that was so from before, so I have already initiated discussions on that issue. Those are the two hot issues.

Mr. Speaker, as I have said, I have other avenues open to me, other forms of dialogue. All that is left for me to say is that I congratulate Members on this side, led by the Member for San Fernando East, for what I have found to be a very lucid and illuminating, revealing debate on this matter. There is a lot of work that we as a nation have to do, but the nation must know, we want the nation to know that we on this side will be, not will be, we already are prepared to resume the mantle of responsible leadership as soon as the bell is called the next time. [*Desk thumping*].

Miss Pamela Nicholson (*Tobago West*): Mr. Speaker, I do not know if I will be able to live up to the excellent performance of the Member for Port of Spain South. He did a good job this afternoon and I am here this afternoon, perhaps close to an invalid.

I was looking at the television last night and I heard some statements from the Member for St. Joseph and I said even though I have to creep and crawl, I have to be here to say a few words on behalf of the people of Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] I recognize we have no other representative in this Lower House for Tobago.

Mr. Speaker, when I looked at the budget, I recognized that over \$14 billion will be spent for the 1999/2000 period and when the whole situation is analyzed,

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sometimes even when you hear people say they want their gas and their gas money and you say the country is Trinidad and Tobago you have to accept they are saying something that is sound. When I heard the Member for Port of Spain South talking about the gas in the North of Trinidad I asked him quietly if it is in Tobago waters because if it is not in Tobago waters, I want to know why Tobago is only given \$417 million to run the island when Caroni (1975) Limited is being given \$450 million and you are talking about an island. True, it is a very small island with 45,000 to 50,000 persons. It fluctuates because all our gas and oil are dealt with down here. People have to come down here to get our drugs.

Mr. Speaker, when I looked at that situation and I heard the Member for St. Joseph saying that by the end of the year 2000, Tobago would be in a situation of over-employment, a situation which I experienced many years ago when I used to visit Bermuda where there were so many jobs available, and so few people. The people used to have two and three jobs and so forth. He said that is going to happen in Tobago because there is so much investment already on the ground and more is coming, I said, I had to come down here. Because when you look at the development programme, one observes that \$92 million is given to the Tobago House of Assembly from a development perspective, a very scandalous situation.

Mr. Speaker, when one looks at agriculture, every topic there is dash, dash, dash, and if the tourism is to develop, agriculture is linked to tourism and zero, zero, zero right through, but \$62 million is given to the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources in Trinidad. *[Interruption]* But you have certain powers, Member for Oropouche, we tired tell you all that. You have constitutional powers that you can deal with certain areas as far as Tobago is concerned. The Act in section 43 tells the Minister and the Government what should happen in considering the estimates. Section 43 of the Tobago House of Assembly Act 1996 says:

“In considering the estimates as submitted by the Chief Secretary, Cabinet shall give due consideration to the financial and developmental needs of Tobago in the context of Trinidad and Tobago and shall allocate financial resources to Tobago as fairly as is practicable, and in determining what is fair and practicable, the following considerations, among others, shall apply:”

- a. physical separation of Tobago by sea from Trinidad and Tobago’s distinct identity;
- b. isolation from the principal national growth centres;
- c. absence of the multiplier effect of expenditures and investments (private and public) made in Trinidad;

- d. restricted opportunities for employment and career fulfillment;
- e. the impracticability of participation by residents of Tobago in the major educational, cultural and sporting facilities located in Trinidad.”

So when the Minister of Finance meets with the Tobago House of Assembly, there are certain fundamentals that he must take into consideration. “Isolation from the principal national growth centres.” So there are certain things that you must do in Tobago that you do not have to do in every constituency in Trinidad. It is important that you recognize that. If that is recognized, you cannot be giving Tobago \$417 million to run Tobago in 1999/2000 when the budget of the country is over \$14 billion. This is crazy, especially when, as the Chief Secretary, Mr. Charles would argue, it is his gas that they are now using to do the developments which the Member for Port of Spain South was talking about.

Why I use this line, Sir, is because of what I heard the representative for St. Joseph say. There is a situation in Tobago where there are no trade centres. The youth camp is closed down. Over four years, the Signal Hill Technical Vocational Centre is there to be furnished and staffed.

Nobody cares! I have spoken about it several times in this House. There is where our skills will come from and we need it.

6.20 p.m.

This year, I saw where there is \$11 million for a skill centre in Roxborough. We agree with that but that is the first phase. We need the technical vocational centre to be furnished and staffed immediately. [*Desk thumping*] It is four years now and we put them there. [*Desk thumping*] We have raised it year after year, and time after time—that the technical/vocational wing for Signal Hill is completed and there are no staff and furnishings. We need trained people in technical/vocational skills in Tobago.

Mr. Manning: I thank the Member for Tobago West for giving way. I wonder if the honourable Member is aware that the Government is contemplating to removing completely, the technical vocational block from the secondary school system and replacing it with something else.

Miss P. Nicholson: Mr. Speaker, I recognized what the Member is saying. He has anticipated me. Last year, I went to John Donaldson Technical Institute, on behalf of certain people, and I was alarmed at what I saw. Instead of upgrading, refurbishing, keeping the staff and having the technical vocational wings in

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Trinidad and Tobago moving, they are running to close them down. [*Desk thumping*]. The staff was crying out because they did not get any money to purchase materials or to do anything. The students are being sent home day after day.

Mr. Speaker, I did some investigation into the San Fernando Technical Institute and I recognized that was the same tendency. I argued what idiocy! How the Government is going to close down things that are there already and are functioning effectively and efficiently in the country. We do not want any skill centre in Signal Hill. We want our Technical Vocational Centre in Signal Hill. It is already there and they can put the technical skill centre in Roxborough. We are not against that but fix up the Technical Vocational Centre. It is there for years now. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, the whole of Tobago is crying out because they need people who are skilled in their trades and trained in the technical vocational area. We do not have these people and that is why the member for St. Joseph can make such an imbecilic statement. [*Laughter*] Mr. Speaker, sorry, he is my partner and I did not have to go so harsh on him. But that is why this statement could be made because there will be thousands of unemployed and unskilled people when the Member is talking about Tobago being over employed. When I saw him on television, I said, I have to go down to Trinidad. It is very sad to see at this time, the kind of leadership that we have in Tobago. At this time, we are a little distressed and we cannot be entertaining this kind of behaviour. [*Interruption*] I would not answer him.

Mr. Speaker, I am questioning the kinds of funding. Agriculture—any country with any development—they have been talking about it in Trinidad. I looked at the Ministry of Agriculture and I saw over \$62 million there for development. If one looks throughout, people are asking for extension services for improvement of facilities at Louis Do'r; development of orchards for demonstration purposes; development of irrigation facilities, and infrastructure for extension services, so that they can demonstrate and assist the farmers *et cetera* and we have seen not a single cent. If you look at fishing—improvement to beaches, landing facilities work on the Buccoo and Spyside Reefs and so forth, no money was allocated. They are unimportant.

Mr. Speaker, forestry is a very important area. Presently there is a serious water situation in Tobago. It is a crisis situation. That situation never existed this year in Tobago. It is a pity to say that the Tobago House of Assembly is the most serious offender in the creation of that problem. We have to say it. They want to build a road and there is no communication with the Water and Sewerage Authority—nobody at all! There are no linkages. They are just going in with

tractors and cutting down the trees. So, where there was the virgin forest and so forth that is now destroyed. After I did my home lessons, I realized that is to protect the watershed and that kind of thing. I do not want to say this but it is something you just have to say.

If one looks at the Hillsborough, Southwest and Green Hill dams they are all affected by the Belmont Road that is now under repairs. What the Water and Sewerage Authority is saying is that where the virgin forest was protecting that watershed area they are just cutting it away. A lot of work is taking place at Mount St. George and Castara Roads. Walls are being put up and some are being broken down. *[Interruption]*

The Government does not recognize what is taking place. *[Interruption]* Do not disturb me. The Member does not care about Tobago. All the Member cares about is that I will put him in his seat. *[Desk thumping]* That is the situation and because of that, there is a huge problem now. When the rain falls the water is very turbid both at Courland and Hillsborough. When that is straightened out and rains stop falling there is a little water. When it is dry like the problem we had in Mount St. George— I am sure that the Member for Caroni East is cognizant of that. In the dry season when there was the watershed protecting the scenario, there was water to last over a period of time, now you do not have that situation again.

6.30 p.m.

In Courland, the whole of Providence, Easterfield feeds Courland and because of big road development, everything was cut down. So as soon as rain falls it is just mud running down into the plant and that is why I think they had to give something like \$9 million immediately to go into Courland to do some work. If you are dealing with tourism you must have water, you must have agriculture. When one looks at the development programme here, I do not know how a Minister of Finance approved of something like this—no money in agriculture, Minister of Finance.

We used to be the food basket of Trinidad and Tobago. Now there is a situation where the vendors are coming down with their vans and their trucks every Wednesday to buy food—our food, our fruits, our vegetables, everything—and going back to Trinidad and that is what they would feed the hotels with when they should be doing their own farming in Tobago to feed the hotels. So when the Minister say no money for development, this is what the Minister is saying, that Tobago must be dependent for food from Trinidad. *[Desk thumping]* You cannot be handling it like this. You look under a host of other areas and you see no funds.

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So when I heard the Minister I told myself, I have to come and at least defend Tobago a little down here because—[*Interruption*] Well, I made the point already. So with a \$14 billion budget we say at least we should get more than that because you have the water scenario. The Minister did not say anything in the budget about water. I do not know if we are going to get water. The Minister and Member for Caroni East spoke here this evening. He said not a single word on Tobago so the people are left imagining.

You have a budget and not a word is said on how you are going to fund something like water in Tobago. Would we be having construct, design and what? [*Interruption*] Whatever it is. Would you be raising bonds to get the money? We must be told. The people must be told. They are taxpayers of Trinidad and Tobago and regardless of however you want to handle it, we must be told. When we do not see it here we must feel that you are not going to address the water problem in Tobago. There is not a cent budgeted, there is not a word said by the Minister.

Then the Minister said—and, you know, I found that this statement was so vague that I wanted to know, well, how this could be what he is saying, when he was talking about the ferry service. This is another important area in Tobago. The Minister said that:

“The Port Authority of Trinidad and Tobago has already completed a study on the sea transportation link between Port of Spain and Scarborough. The Port Authority will be authorised to implement the recommendations of this study. Therefore in this fiscal year, we will ensure that there is adequate sea transport between Trinidad and Tobago.”

This is a vague, scandalous statement. A few days after this we saw a boat appear. Is that how a Government is functioning? We never saw the study. The study was never laid on the table here. We do not know what the recommendations are. We are the representatives of the people. If you have done a very important study it should have been laid on the table here. We should know what the recommendations are. [*Desk thumping*] The people consider this very scandalous and they feel very distressed that this is the behavioural pattern of their partner; very, very distressed.

A few days after we saw the Member for Tobago East with some people launching some Pyramid—I did not even get a good look at it because I was not so well over the weekend—boat. The people are asking, “Did they advertise for people to come forward with proposals? Is it a charter? Is that a boat that will be rented?” The people do not know. Or is it a private business between the Minister of Finance and that company?

If you look at the Port Authority Act, it says that the shipping scenario in Tobago and Trinidad should be done by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago and the Government of Trinidad and Tobago should own two boats to service the route. It also says that the Port Authority, when they are functioning must not spend any of the money for their other business on that shipping route business between Trinidad and Tobago. The Act says if you have deficits the Government of Trinidad and Tobago should pay up those deficits in subventions.

So we do not know if the Port Authority has a say. The people who represent us there, when you ask them questions, they say, “We don't know”. A man playing games with us. Two to three years, no subventions, even though there are deficits because of increase in salaries to workers and so forth. There was the situation last year when the *MF Panorama* was sent on docks. The people who did the work had to come down to Trinidad with a court order to seize the *MF Panorama*. Then the man who is in charge of the Port got busy. He called the Permanent Secretary, the Permanent Secretary said, “If you have any money pay up for us and then we are going to pay you back to save the embarrassment in Trinidad and Tobago”.

Well, that is to show you their concern for Tobago—not a cent. At this time they owe \$28 million to the Port Authority on the works for the shipping scenario between Trinidad and Tobago. They show no concern. So you want to know, is it the Port Authority? *[Interruption]* No, I am watching at him. He is a very rude “fella” but, you know, sometimes I excuse him. This is the kind of behaviour.

We raised this issue as representatives of the people of Tobago to the Government. We were told that they will be setting aside funding to deal with this issue in the budget. Obviously when you get the thing you are rushing very quickly to see how much money is set aside, because we know that there is need for an interim solution. We need another boat to deal with the cargo going to Tobago. Beside that other boat we also need a new ferry to come into this country. So one expects to see something to deal with the interim situation and one also expects to see funding to deal with a new ferry.

When you do your home-lessons you hear the Minister of Transport say, “Not at all; we are not putting that on any front burner”. So you want to know if they are going to be privatizing the service and if they are going to privatize the service obviously they have to amend the Act that governs the running between Trinidad and Tobago, the Trinidad and Tobago Shipping Service. *[Interruption]* No, there is nothing in the budget about—all the budget says is that they did a study and they approve of the study and the recommendations will be implemented. We do

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not know what the recommendations are. You just see a boat. And then you are just going to hear any and every—we do not want to hear. I must not be hearing, as the representative. [*Interruption*] I hear all of that. I leave that aside. We are going to follow up that.

They should not be hearing these things. These things should be functioning above board. That is what we want, transparency. So that is one concern that the people have had with respect to this blueprint. Any and everybody is coming to Tobago now and doing business. We are suddenly hearing about them. Nothing is advertised so that others could have a chance. Somebody could meet somebody secretly and then they have a boat. So, Mr. Speaker, we are very, very concerned about a number of important areas in Tobago. There are crisis proportions. There is the ferry service that is an essential service. If there is a breakdown of those boats there is also a big breakdown in our economic situation in Tobago. That is why you have to handle it [*Desk thumping*] in a very serious way.

Two, the water service in Tobago right now. The area in which I live used to get water every day. Sometimes we only get water twice per week now and the hotels are feeling the impact of what is taking place because Courland is just turbid from the time rain falls. We need urgent action there. Hillsborough, the areas they serve, the same thing is happening because of what I explained—because I did my home-lessons—turbidity, no water and we are talking about tourism.

The Member for St. Joseph is talking about the opening of Hilton. Hilton could never open without any potable water. They have ground water for their lawns and whatever it is, but they must have potable water to run the hotel. We do not know. Nobody has told us, “Well, we will be setting aside \$600 million or \$300 million or \$400 million to give Tobago water immediately in these areas”. Nobody is telling us, “Well, yes, it was announced that \$8 million or \$9 million was given to Courland”, so we know that some work will be taking place there. But we do not know the length of time it will take and the urgency that the situation demands.

Another area of concern that we have, Mr. Speaker, is the waste-water scenario, the sewerage business. If as we say water is important, of course it is essential, the south-west waste-water system is another important area. Why is it important? A few months ago a study was done by the environmental people in Tobago. They did a pilot case with a number of beaches and what was found at very important beaches in Tobago—Mount Irvine, polluted; Back Bay in Plymouth, a nice bay also, polluted, because all the water from the farms: pig farms, goat farms and everything goes through the drain down into the river then into the sea.

There is the Man of War Bay, the area from which I come. There is a river called Collette River so all the water coming down from the hills go through there. It is a very beautiful beach. I do not think you have a more beautiful bay in Tobago than Man of War. It is a natural deep-water harbour. At Pirate's Bay, which is an inlet of Man of War Bay, there are two old latrines. They do not have any modern system across there because all the tourists, all the young people, there is where they will go. It is a very beautiful beach and it is totally polluted.

The recommendation was that Government should look at these beaches immediately, have a survey month after month and take an urgent decision to address the waste-water development project that is needed in Tobago because that could only lead to the destruction of tourism in Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] That is the urgency. You go into some of those bays and the waste is right there where these yachties are dumping their story. I have already spoken about that in the House. So it is very urgent. I am sure that the Government got a copy of the study that was done because they sent it right around and it is important. Just as how the south-west is important, the north-east is also important because Charlotteville is in that direction. So, Mr. Speaker, this is another important area.

We do not know if anything is set aside by the Minister, the representative for Caroni East, who is responsible for that area, to deal with that. As I said, going through the budget one just does not see anything except some provision for some schools; there are two roads, the L'anse Fourmi/Charlotteville Ring Road and the Belmont Road which is about 60 per cent complete already. Those are the areas for which there is some funding.

6.45 p.m.

So, when the Minister talked about communication with Tobago and so forth, and people read what he was doing for Tobago, people were asking the question: How does he expect a good relationship? Obviously, if you have certain kinds of representatives, we will continue to communicate and dialogue with the Government, but you also want action. A sum of \$14 billion and you cannot give \$1 billion to Tobago to do those urgent jobs about which I am talking—water for the people; waste-water system to protect tourism. Can you not do that? [*Desk thumping*]

And they have a devious ferry service, a boat just appearing through devious means and they are telling the people that is their business. We do not know if it is for three months, or six months, or if that is what is replacing the *MV Tobago*. We do not know if they sent the *MF Panorama* on docks, because we saw \$10 million for the *MF Panorama* to go on docks, so when they send that, we do not know what will be happening. That is the situation.

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Mr. Speaker, I listened to the Member for Tabaquite this afternoon when he was talking about the good work he was doing in the Ministry of Education and he was talking about—

Sen. Kuei Tung: I only want to tell you a bit about this devious ferry that you are talking about, because it came as a surprise to me, too. I am just telling you what I know.

Miss P. Nicholson: You got a surprise, too?

Sen. Kuei Tung: I was surprised because the people have been harassing me. From what I have been told, it is nothing more than a private sector initiative where the people chartered this boat out of Panama. They said there is a demand for ferrying goods between Trinidad and Tobago and they decided to take advantage of whatever shortage they anticipated. It has absolutely nothing to do with the Government. [*Interruption*] I do not know. I am just telling you they turned up here and they have been asking the same thing, so I do not know anything else about it at this point.

Mr. Imbert: I could fly a plane to Tobago.

Miss P. Nicholson: Well, therefore, it is devious to you, too, because it is devious to the country. You cannot have a government functioning like that. [*Crosstalk*] You should demand an explanation, Mr. Minister. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker: Order! Order please.

Miss P. Nicholson: Mr. Speaker, I listened to the Member for Tabaquite and I think he was talking about Common Entrance and the post primary area and that the Government was purchasing places in high schools for Common Entrance students. I am one who believes that perhaps that is an area where the Minister should do some investigation because there is one school in Tobago where I feel not a child should be sent to that school—a school without teachers and Government is paying. I am not going to call the name of the school; if you do your investigation, you will know immediately. [*Desk thumping*] Teachers are not there. Parents are complaining; they come to me every day; their children are just on the streets, and Government is paying that school for children to attend.

You might have that same situation. I do not know if there is that same situation in Trinidad, but that situation exists in Tobago, especially when you realize that there are children who could barely read and write. After the O' level exams recently, I would never forget the statement made by the principal of Roxborough Secondary. He said that over 75 per cent of the students who come

into Roxborough Secondary cannot read and write and Roxborough Secondary is where the last batch of students go and then these people that they pay for in the other schools.

Mr. Sudama: Whose fault is that? The PNM.

Miss P. Nicholson: He was talking about why the performance was so poor in the school and I am sure it is the same thing in Trinidad. To me, there is a need for urgent action in the primary school sector, because when you leave primary school and you go to secondary school and you cannot read and write, obviously, you are coming out a lame duck. Those are the people who are going back without any O' levels, without any A' levels and then there is the other situation that they are not skilled in anything. That is the scenario that we are confronted with, Member for St. Joseph, in Tobago.

Mr. Assam: I thought you were the Minister of Education at one time.

Miss P. Nicholson: They were performing. [*Desk thumping*] Look, this is serious business. This is not something to "skin teeth" about, Member for St. Joseph. We have to battle to save the children of the nation.

Another problem that we have had, I heard an explanation here this afternoon from the Member for Oropouche. I cannot buy that, you know. For four years you cannot get somebody to sign a paper. Well, something is wrong. You are incompetent and inefficient. [*Desk thumping*] Four years and the Mason Hall school is on the budget year after year—\$10 million, \$10 million, \$10 million—and I am sure one or two secondary schools have been completed in Trinidad in that time frame and the Mason Hall school cannot even get started. You are saying that you cannot get the man to sign the Memorandum of Understanding. Well, something is wrong with your negotiating ability. Something has to be wrong because it is—

Mr. Sudama: Could you get him to sign? [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker: Order please.

Miss P. Nicholson: It is four years, Mr. Speaker.

Again, the Minister of Education plus the Tobago House of Assembly might even need to do some work in the thinking of it because if Roxborough is complaining that 75 per cent of the children cannot read and write, it is the next batch that will go to the school at Mason Hall when it comes on stream, so we have a very serious problem and if we have the Minister of Education of Trinidad and Tobago—I must say sometimes, even though I find that he should have been

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articulating very strenuously Tobago's case here, he makes some sound arguments. Real children who cannot read, who cannot write and do their maths.

Mr. Manning: Who is that? "Para-dig-im"?

Miss P. Nicholson: The Member for Tobago East. To me, when you listened recently to Mr. Pantin and I think it was Mr. Seereram on television one morning and they were articulating the case of how many children did not pass Maths and English—over 60 per cent did not pass their English and only about 40 per cent passed the maths.

Dr. Rowley: Well, just give them all computers.

Miss P. Nicholson: No. But we have to do something about that.

Dr. Rowley: Just throw computers on them!

Miss P. Nicholson: But if you throw computers on them, that would not make them improve. I am of the opinion that the Ministry of Education has to do some serious work and I am one who subscribes to the view that some serious work must be done in that area. So you will find that you have to look at the whole educational structure there. Is that the kind of institution we want? That is a basic secondary school because it has—

Dr. Job: Mr. Speaker, could the Member from Tobago West advise the honourable House, I have been hearing her good self say in this House that \$17 million was spent on scholarships for tertiary education in Tobago. How much has been spent on preparing children at the primary level to get into the secondary? Could she tell the House about that?

Miss P. Nicholson: Member for Tobago East, how could you be asking me that question? You are the Member for Tobago East. I am sure I see you in Tobago almost every Tuesday, so at least you come one day per week, so you should be doing your home lesson. You have your meetings with your Chief Secretary and so forth, so you should be telling us about that. I am sorry I did not walk with the scholarship document because I am determined to leave it with you all here so that you could examine and see what I am talking about—101 scholarships, \$17 million. By now, it might be \$20 million. People who could barely read and write and might not even have their O' levels are given scholarships. Scholarships are not for mediocrity, as you would articulate.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the speaking time of the Member for Tobago 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.

Miss P. Nicholson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and thanks to the Members of the House.

There is another situation that came up recently in Tobago where all the schools were at least made five-year schools. I do not know what is the style in Trinidad. Scarborough Secondary used to be a three-year school and also Signal Hill Senior Comprehensive. So, there is a situation now where Scarborough Secondary is a five-year school and Signal Hill is a seven-year school and the staffing situation is atrocious; the science block has not been furnished with the necessary equipment that the school should have. That has not happened. I was complained to up to this morning when I was coming down that people just say five-year school, seven-year school and nobody is overseeing what is taking place. That must be the same reason why Pleasantville is prancing up and down the road for its science block. It is a similar situation. There are these schools—

Dr. Nanan: The Pleasantville situation is a slightly different matter. The situation with Pleasantville is that they were given \$1.2 million to build the science block but the PTA had a meeting with the principal and they decided to build a wall for over \$500 million.

Mr. Imbert: Million dollars?

Dr. Nanan: \$500,000.

Miss P. Nicholson: So, Minister, you are not in control of your business. How could a school decide to build a wall? You have your money to build a science block. How could the PTA decide to build a wall? You are not in control of your business at all, man.

So, you have the situation, and I am sure you might have that same problem in Trinidad where schools were turned into five-year schools, and I believe there is need for an investigation into that situation and for the upgrading of the schools.

Another problem that I raise from a Tobago perspective and from a Minister of Finance perspective is that there is an urgent need—I do not know if the Planning Division visits Tobago at any time. Is there a link? The country is Trinidad and Tobago. Even though there is devolution of power, is there a link where, when you are dealing with the budget, people go to visit? Does anybody monitor anything?

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7.00 p.m.

If you do—I raised it last year, I am almost sure—there is an urgent need for some coastal work at the Scarborough Secondary School. When the Minister might have to give \$20 million for the coastal work, if that is not addressed—that is on the Milford Road running alongside the Scarborough Secondary School—immediately the Minister would have to find \$60 or \$70 million, in a year or two, to build a new school. What should be considered is the inconvenience of that; where the children would have to go in the interim to have the school built. That entire coastline is just moving away by coastal erosion.

There is need—[*Interruption*] a road was on the outside. Coastline work next to the Scarborough Secondary School is a priority in Tobago. If the Minister does not work on that, we are going to lose the school. I am sure it will cost over \$50 million to build a secondary school. When the coastline work would have cost the Government \$20 million, it will cost over \$50 million to build the school. I am calling on the Minister of Finance to look at that situation because that is an emergency.

There was a playground at the Scarborough Secondary School, half of that has already been eroded. I have to raise that matter here because this is the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago. If the Minister was not told about it, I am telling him what is taking place on behalf of the people of Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] There is that urgent situation.

I have one question I want to ask the Minister of Education before I move on: Mr. Minister is history, at the A' level, taught in Trinidad and Tobago?

Hon. Member: Yes.

Miss P. Nicholson: I do not get that impression. I have done some work in Trinidad and I am told that the same situation exists. When one goes to the United States of America one has to do history. All those who have to sit the SAT exam must do history. It is a very important subject; not only science and mathematics. Some people talk as though only science and mathematics are important. History is very important, people must know about their lands. It is a struggle for the children in the Tobago schools to do A' level. I heard the Minister saying that he is increasing A' level by approximately 1,000. I want to tell the Minister that he has to increase so that children must be able to get certain subjects. Those who like law and those kinds of areas—they are interested in history. History is no longer taught at the Signal Hill Senior Comprehensive School. Bishops High School is just struggling, they cannot find teachers. Something must be wrong

with the system. The problem also exists in some of your prestige schools in Trinidad. Therefore, it must be something in our education system that needs to be addressed.

Mr. Speaker, another problem that we have when we looked at the budget, is the extension of the Crown Point International Airport. We were told that \$300 million was to be spent on the Piarco International Airport and it is now \$900 million. We want to know what \$10 million would be doing in Tobago. Was the \$10 million put there for it to appear as if something is happening? This is what everybody is asking.

There is another situation linked with that. When one looks at the *PSIP* report there is also that problem; where the Government spoke about money for the acquisition of lands. The people of Crown Point have a serious problem; I raised it in this House already, and I am raising it again. In terms of value for lands, Crown Point and Bacolet are perhaps two of the highest valued areas in Tobago. There is a situation where the people are being offered \$90,000 for their half acre of land in 1999 going into 2000.

There is nobody to help the senior people. I have raised it before. I am always told that I must organize. It is the Minister of Housing and Settlements and the Tobago House of Assembly to do that. The Government has to pay the people so that they would be able to buy another property—with the moneys they receive—in an area that they know: old people 70—80 years old. I have two cases following up with the Ministry of Housing and Settlements. The Ministry does not want to reply. I have to write.

There is that situation where there are approximately 20 persons. There is also another option where the people can be relocated—which I think is the better option. The Ministry does not know what it is doing. There are nice areas—for example the Cove Estate, Orange Grove, Shervan Park—where the Government could acquire lands, develop them and relocate the people because that is nearby to where they know. Even though the Government gives them \$1 million they cannot build back anything. Relocation must be a very important area in this whole scenario. The Government is removing those people to extend the airport. This matter must be treated with urgency. It must be treated with sensitivity.

We have been complaining in this House, for nearly two years now. I think it is time that the Government takes a serious approach to this area. We hope that the Minister of Housing and Settlements would address this area seriously.

There is another problem where, coming out of a housing development programme since 1989—it is a national programme by the Government—these

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are the areas that were supposed to be developed: Bon Air West; La Paille; Caroni Village; Malabar Phase IV; Couva Phase II; Harmony Hall; Union Hall; Buen Intento; Debe Phase II; and Calder Hall Phase II. When the programme began, the Tobago House of Assembly appealed to the Government, at the time, for another area. Another area called Signal Hill was granted for development. The people were given an estimate of the price for a lot of land. They were asked to make a down payment with respect to the development of the area. Approximately 600 people contributed to Signal Hill. The National Housing Authority is the institution which collected the funds the same way it was collected for all the other areas.

There is a situation here where 163 applicants have paid down between \$20,000 and \$37,000 because some of the lots were bigger than others. Sixty-three applicants have paid \$10,000—\$19,999. Today there is a crisis. What is that crisis? A crisis that a serious government must address. The Tobago House of Assembly is now telling the people that lands which were developed—the people contributed \$5,239,630.92 and the development cost was approximately \$8 million.

The Tobago House of Assembly recently announced in Tobago that the people will have to pay more for those lands because of the value of the land. The lands were for the landless and those in need, but they announced that they are going to increase the price to \$7 per square foot.

7.10 p.m.

One has to ask the question: Is the country Trinidad and Tobago, or are we independent? Because, Signal Hill was a part of this developmental programme which is a national programme and, the National Housing Authority did the development in collaboration with the Tobago House of Assembly just supervising, but they did the development. The new Tobago House of Assembly has not done anything new on it and they are now telling the people that they will have to pay \$7 per square foot.

I have a Cabinet Note here. It was a policy note for vesting of state lands in the National Housing Authority for housing purposes. The date of this was October 1, 1987 and the Ministry of Planning stamped it on October 15, 1987. There are two important areas in it. Before, they used to lease the lands on a 30-year lease, and a decision was taken in 1987—I believe it was when the present Minister was the minister at that time—that a lease of 99 years be granted to the beneficiaries of such lands whenever legal authority is conveyed to the National Housing Authority. So, the anticipation is that these lands will be vested in the name of the National Housing Authority and then the lease will be 99 years;

such leases to be at the rate of \$1 per annum and to exclude the restrictive covenant not to assign—I do not know what that means.

Then, there is another important statement which is the one I am really interested in right now. It says that a charge of not more than \$5 per square foot be paid as a premium on the land. So, all the people in Trinidad are not paying more than \$5 per square foot for their land, but the Tobago House of Assembly wants to impose \$7 per square foot on people. Lawlessness!

We have been appealing. The Ministry of Housing and Settlements knows about this. The National Housing Authority has played a very important role. It is a very stupid political act, too, because if I am a politician, I will never do that. They did not do anything on it. They came and met the place developed already: road, water, lights, everything, and then they are telling the people they have to pay \$7 per square foot. I have asked some questions in the House and I only hope soon we will get some answers to them, but I have raised it again here because of the urgency of the matter. People are alarmed!

When we look at the Tobago House of Assembly Act also, it tells them that they cannot increase taxes, so how could they come and increase the price of the land? There is also clause 25 which tells the Government that the Tobago House of Assembly has to function without prejudice to section 75(1) of the Constitution, and the Government is refusing to act. You are the Government of Trinidad and Tobago! There is devolution of power, but when they act against the constituency of which you are in charge, you must come in! [*Desk thumping*] You cannot throw up your hands in the air.

There is a situation where they stormed NHA's office and claimed it. All the contractual business in Tobago, just like anywhere in Trinidad, like the housing developments, development of lands and so forth, all that contractual business is with NHA. One day they stormed down there and said that they should leave the money with them, and the Member for St. Augustine threw his hands up in the air.

We want to know what is happening. When his chance comes to talk he will tell me. We want to know what is happening; why they are condoning this lawlessness. They claimed the offices. The people do not know now where they must pay their money to NHA because NHA has not even written to the people telling them anything. So, the people who have to pay their monthly installments do not know where to go. This is the situation.

We must appeal here. This is the Government of Trinidad and Tobago! Tobago is not independent! I am appealing to this Government and to the Minister

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of Housing and Settlements to address the NHA situation in Tobago, because the people have their contractual business with NHA. They do not know anything about anybody else. We are appealing for action to take place there.

Mr. Speaker, I have another important area of concern. When I looked at the development programme I saw where the Government is building the four stadia for the under-17 World Cup programme in 2001 and, I had to ask some questions. I remember that Fincor was supposed to finance and construct, I think it was, these four stadia at a cost of \$35 million, but when I looked at it, I saw that they are now costing \$75 million each.

When I did my home lessons, I recognized that Fincor is no longer in charge of that programme to finance and construct, but the Government is borrowing Fincor's money to run the programme and they have handed over the programme to FIFA which will be overseeing it. Who is FIFA? Has FIFA put up some bonds with them? Has FIFA deposited money with them that if the programmes do not come off good they could grab FIFA's money just as how the local contractors that Fincor have already prequalified—and the next step is that they were going to bid for the stadia and the contractors with best scenario would get it.

The next thing we are hearing is that the Government took away everything from Fincor but it is borrowing Fincor's money. What are the credentials of FIFA to build our stadia in Trinidad and Tobago? What bond have they put down with the Government to ensure? What I am hearing is that they are going to give a number of contractors the work to do. So, somebody will probably do the foundation, another set will do the electrical work, another set will do the plumbing—they cannot even plumb in this country—and there is no contractor overseeing what is taking place so that if the whole scenario fails, one can deal with the contractor. I would like to hear something about that. I am very surprised at the line that the Government is taking, because they have people who say they are representing FIFA, they are not engineers, architect—nothing, and they are going to oversee the programmes. That is the most backward step I have seen for a very long time. *[Desk thumping]*

I would like to hear the justification for that; from \$35 million to \$75 million. I am very concerned, because I want the stadium in Tobago. We want to see it, but we want to know the plumbers who will do such work—all the different areas. We will be very pleased to see something like that working out. I learned that some consultants were chosen. I do not know if they, too, put down some bond so that if the thing does not work, they will seize their money. Mr. Speaker, I am very concerned about that.

Another matter that I noted in the PSIP is on page 32; I am very concerned about this too. Mr. Speaker, It says:

“Grant resources from the IDB amounting to \$3.1 million are provided to support the institutional development of Credit Union systems with a view to improving solvency and operational efficiency.”

When they talk about credit unions here, are they talking about credit unions in Trinidad and Tobago? It is not clear, so I would like to have an answer to that.

There is a situation where \$3.2 million has been allocated in the 1999/2000 PSIP for the EDF assisted Youth Agricultural Credit and Training Programme. This \$3.2 million, I noticed, is under the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources. Is Tobago a part of this programme? Can the young agriculturists in Tobago apply for this? That is another question I would like to hear answered, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, when coming to the hospital, I do not want to raise it again. All right, just one minute, Sir. That is another question I would like to ask the Member for Oropouche. Four years and only design level! I remember when we went in, we told them that in one or two years they would get their hospital. Today, we see \$5 million for design and construct. So, if the design is finished by mid-year, because they might charge \$1 million to design, only \$4 million will be left to do the work.

Mr. Speaker, I am very concerned about the problems in Tobago, and I am calling on this central Government to live up to its expectations and address the crisis situation in Tobago. Thank you very much. [*Desk thumping*]

7.25 p.m.

The Minister in the Ministry of Planning and Development with responsibility for the Environment (Dr. The Hon. Vincent Lasse): Mr. Speaker, I rise to make a very brief intervention in this debate on the Appropriation Bill (Budget).

At the outset, I wish to join with the rest of the national community in congratulating my distinguished colleague, the hon. Minister of Finance, for presenting a budget which addresses in a meaningful way the pressing socio-economic and environmental concerns confronting our society, while not imposing any additional tax burdens on the population.

Mr. Speaker, what I intend to do in my brief intervention is to speak briefly on the environmental situation in Trinidad and Tobago and then briefly on the constituency of Point Fortin. But, I hasten to say that what the man in the street

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was concerned with in respect of this budget was no additional taxes, no financial burdens. So, the budget was really a blueprint for human development and sustainable growth and it, indeed, was a noteworthy achievement because it epitomizes the deep commitment of this Government to the enhancement of the spiritual, social and material well-being of our citizens.

Mr. Speaker, the question has been asked during the course of this debate and I will ask: What is the budget? As I see it, a national budget cannot include all facts, figures, plans and projects of any government, because, the budget statement is normally accompanied by other supporting documents. But, this budget gave an account of the stewardship of this Government and the plans and programmes of this Government for human development and sustainable growth for the fiscal year 1999/2000.

Mr. Speaker, the budget received very good ratings from all segments of the national community. For this reason I would simply refer to a few publications in this regard. For example, in the *Daily Express* on Monday, October 11, 1999, the headline read, "South doctors and police happy with the budget". The *Newsday* of October 15, 1999 had the headline, "Wonderful budget, Mr. Kuei Tung". Again, on October 13, 1999, the *Newsday* mentioned—and this came from the chairman or president of the Arima Business Association—"Budget clear and sensible". In another article, this was on October 9, 1999, former finance minister Wendell Mottley also said, "Well done Brian". So, while there are those who would have opposed the budget and those who may have wished to see many other things in the budget, I believe this budget was well presented and, of course, received many good comments from the national community.

Mr. Speaker, I now turn to the environmental concerns. I now wish to highlight some of our major achievements in the area of environmental management during the fiscal year just completed. I first turn to policy development. The National Environmental Policy Framework was formulated and put in place in 1998. The policy provides for a holistic, integrated and comprehensive approach to environmental management. It is to be noted that before this policy was put in place by this administration, environmental management was, by and large, reactive, *ad hoc*, and lacking focus and co-ordination. Central to the efforts to promote a sound environmental management is the management of solid waste. The continued abuse of our wetlands, watersheds and other environmentally sensitive areas, and the overexploitation of our wild life has been of serious concern to this Government.

In order to address these problems, I am happy to record that a policy has been put in place in respect of protected areas, also, wild life. I would now give the main policy objectives:

1. Preservation of the biological diversity;
2. Protection of the unique biological communities;
3. Promoting an integrated and holistic approach to the management of parks and protected areas; and
4. Wild life conservation and facilitative research.

Mr. Speaker, I now turn to institutional development. Our efforts in this regard have focussed on the strengthening of the capabilities of all public sector agencies involved in environmental management with a view to enhancing the effectiveness of policy implementation. Additionally, it is to be noted that during the last fiscal year every effort was made by this administration to operationalize the Environmental Commission with a view to enforcing and strengthening the enforcement function.

I now turn to strengthening the regulatory and legislative framework and enforcement capabilities. This Government has been vigorously pursuing a number of initiatives directed at strengthening the regulatory and legislative frameworks. Significant in this regard has been the work undertaken in respect of the development of standards to control pollution. Major achievements in this area include: drafting of rules with respect to the certificate of environmental clearance; process for management of environmentally sensitive areas and sensitive species; drafting of standards and related regulations for water quality; the drafting of legislation with respect to watersheds and national parks.

Mr. Speaker, with a view to strengthening the enforcement of environmental legislation, a dedicated enforcement unit within the EMA, resourced by reserve police officers, was established. This unit is working well as a pilot project and the unit is responsible for investigating and prosecuting offences under the Litter Act and the Visible Vapours Regulation of the Motor Vehicles and Road Traffic Ordinance.

I now turn to public awareness which is of paramount importance to us dealing with the environment. Increasing the awareness of the general public to environmental issues is a necessary precondition for the success of efforts at promoting sound environmental management. During the past year, there was a marked intensification of activities directed at engendering greater environmentally responsible behaviour among the population. The major target in this regard was the school population. As part of this thrust, a consultant was engaged by the Ministry of Education to assist in the mainstreaming of environmental education in the school curriculum, and this has been done at all levels:

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Additionally, both the EMA and the Institute of Marine Affairs continue to mount various public education and awareness programmes including lectures, essay competitions, public speaking competitions, and distribution of posters and brochures. There was also a significant increase in the number of public awareness initiatives taken by the EMA in the electronic and print media as well as intensification of its community outreach programme.

Other important developments during the last fiscal year included the opening of a Marine Education Centre at Chaguaramas by the Institute of Marine Affairs; and the launching of an EMA website providing easier and wider access to a wealth of information on the environment with specific focus on our unique and diverse ecosystems.

I now turn to research and environmental monitoring. Mr. Speaker, the key projects undertaken during the period under review include: environmental monitoring of the Gulf of Paria with a view to determining the extent of pollution of the marine resources; the effects of pollution on marine population dynamics; as well as the long-term status of the Gulf of Paria as a viable source of seafood for the nation; a coastal conservation project which involves long-term monitoring of the status of habitats in the coastal areas such as wetlands, sea grass beds and coral reefs and monitoring of coastal dynamics; and a fish age and growth project which would provide information on age structure of key fish populations. Such information is important for assessing the sustainability of our fish stock.

7.40 p.m.

The formulation of a management plan for the Nariva Swamp was also of paramount importance.

I want to deal, briefly, with the question of remedial work and here I would simply refer to two instances where such work has been carried out by the Environmental Management Authority in conjunction with other authorities. The first instance was the lead contaminated site at Demerara Road. A remedial investigation feasibility plan was developed by the Environmental Management Authority in collaboration with a lead expert from the United States Environmental Protection Agency. Also, a health intervention programme, which includes blood and soil testing, was implemented. It is the intent of the Government to relocate those persons who are affected and, to date, 36 housing units have been distributed through the National Housing Authority, and an additional 28 houses have been completed and are in the process of distribution.

Another area where remedial work took place was at Parry Lands, where the investigation of a problem of noxious emissions in the atmosphere was undertaken. The Environmental Management Authority brought in experts to monitor the test and test air quality, and the Pan American Health Organization investigated the possible health effects on the residents. As a result, the steam flood plant operated by Petrotrin was temporarily closed down.

It is unfortunate that the Member for Port of Spain South is not in this room at this point in time, because I wanted to address the question he raised concerning the Beetham Estate. He was partially correct when he raised that question. In response to a multiplicity of complaints about the state of the environment in the Beetham Estate area, I toured the area, together with senior officials from all the relevant government agencies. The visit confirmed that there has been significant neglect of this area during the past several decades, and that the environmental situation is extremely poor. As a result of this initiative, a committee was appointed by Cabinet to make recommendations for dealing with the environmental problems and remedial programmes of action are currently being implemented.

I now turn to co-operation with the international community. During the period under review, co-operation with the international community in dealing with global environmental problems continued.

Mr. Speaker, I now turn to the way forward. Essentially, in 1999/2000, we will continue to build on the platform laid over the last few years; ongoing programmes will be continued and intensified and new initiatives will be taken where necessary. Here, I wish to highlight only the following: In the area of institutional development, there is to be full operationalization of the Environmental Commission by the first quarter of the year 2000. We now have a Bill before this honourable House which is designed to amend the Environmental Management Act to accommodate this commission.

Additionally, a National Parks and Wildlife Authority will be established and provided with the authority and wherewithal to ensure the protection, conservation and sustainable management of national parks and wildlife.

Regarding the strengthening of the regulatory framework and pollution management systems, the following initiatives will be undertaken:

- implementation of the certificate of clearance programme, requiring the issuance of certificates to all new development projects;
- implementation of a system of permitting an inspection with respect to liquid effluents;

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- design of a deposit refund scheme for beverages containers and other consumer items;
- development of a strategy for noise-pollution management.

Now I turn to other initiatives to be undertaken in the new fiscal year. This would include:

- a study to determine the level of pollution in the Port-of-Spain harbour;
- a study to examine marine contamination in the Chaguaramas area;
- completion of the relocation of affected residents in the lead contaminated Demerara Road area, to which I have made reference before;
- implementation of remedial programmes in the Beetham Estate, to which I made reference before.;
- completion of the codification exercise in respect of environmental legislation;
- formulation of a national, bio-diversity strategy, and action plan and addressing the problem of the proliferation of motor vehicles scrapyards along our major highways.

I now turn, briefly, to the constituency of Point Fortin. Mr. Speaker, permit me to say a few words on the initiatives that have been taken to improve the quality of life of citizens in my constituency. The Government, in an effort to promote greater regional balance in its development thrust, has sought to modernize and upgrade infrastructural facilities in the previously neglected areas of the country.

My constituency of Point Fortin has benefited significantly from this approach.

Some of the major projects undertaken in the period under review, or to be contemplated in the next fiscal year include:

- the completion of construction of the National Energy Skills Centre at Point Fortin.
- This centre was officially opened by the hon. Prime Minister.
- The centre also graduated 24 women recently in welding and fabrication; [*Desk thumping*] the completion of four new bridges

between CAP-de-Ville and Cedros, which were officially opened in July, 1998;

- The completion of the Cedros Primary Government School to accommodate 300 students.
- This school was formally opened by the hon. Prime Minister;
- the commencement of design work on the Fanny Village Government Primary School to accommodate 840 students; the commencement of design work on the CAP-de-Ville Government Primary School to accommodate 660 students.
- The construction of the Erin R.C. school to accommodate 240 students is due to be completed early in the year 2000;
- the commencement of design work on the Icacos Primary School to accommodate 175 students;
- the implementation of a repair programme, including the Point Fortin R.C. School and the Point Fortin Vocational School;
- the completion of the feasibility study on the highway from San Fernando to Point Fortin.

Mr. Speaker, this highway was promised to the people of Point Fortin some 41 years ago; to be exact, in 1958, and it is under this administration that the feasibility study was completed.

- The commencement of design work for the construction of the Point Fortin Anglican School;
- the construction of a community centre at Wardens Road, Point Fortin;
- the commissioning of the south water project at Cedros by the hon. Prime Minister;

This was done on June 23, 1999. It was the first area where water was commissioned for the residents of the area. [*Desk thumping*]

- the introduction of a drug abuse prevention programme in Point Fortin;
- the introduction, shortly, of the rural bus service from Icacos to Point Fortin.

A decision was taken by Cabinet to declare Cedros a port of entry, and I was informed by the Minister of Finance, only yesterday, that the documents have been signed and all that is left to be done is for it to be gazetted.

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Mr. Speaker, it would be true to say that before this administration assumed office, the constituency of Point Fortin was, by and large, neglected. Indeed, there were even plans to downgrade the Point Fortin Hospital to a polyclinic; [*Interruption*] to locate the LNG plant in La Brea, and to shut down the refinery at Point Fortin. All that has now changed. [*Crosstalk*] I am happy to report that under this administration, the health facility at Point Fortin would be fully refurbished and upgraded to provide the full range of health services consistent with the needs of the constituents. [*Desk thumping*] As far as the LNG plant is concerned, I understand that negotiations are on the way for trains two and three.

To conclude, Mr. Speaker, I have sought in my contribution to provide this honourable House with an update of the work which is being done by this Government in the constituency of Point Fortin and to address the serious environmental problems confronting our country. Our approach to environmental management is a holistic and comprehensive one. However, given the resource constraints involved, there are limits to what could be completed in any fiscal year. But we are clear on our priorities and we have a clear vision of the path we must follow, buttressed by the unswerving commitment of the Government to relentlessly pursue the goal of sustainable human development. I implore the national community at large, to work with us towards the attainment of this noble achievement.

Having said this, Mr. Speaker, I wish once more to congratulate the Minister of Finance for presenting this 1999/2000 budget in a unique style, and I trust that all Members of this honourable House will see the wisdom in supporting this budget.

I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Is there nobody on the Opposition Benches who wants to speak?

The Minister of Finance (Sen. The Hon. Brian Kuei Tung): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. There is no doubt that this has been an extremely lively debate on the budget. I want to begin by thanking Members on both sides of the House for making contributions, which obviously will go a long way in assisting me in future budgets. Four years ago in presenting a budget, I want to indicate that the intent, as Minister of Finance, was to present budgets of a type that, obviously, would bring no pain whatsoever to the people of Trinidad and Tobago. I want to begin by saying that the budgets I have presented were intended to be a consultative process by which the people of Trinidad and Tobago would be brought into the mainstream of the development of the budget.

I had said on a previous occasions, that the budgets had evoked quite a great deal of comment from many people and that over the years I have taken the pains to study all of these submissions that had been made by people throughout the length and breadth, and from all walks of life in Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Speaker, I want to begin, as well, by thanking all those people who came forward from all walks of life, who found it necessary to inform the budgets that I have presented here, by reducing their ideas to pen and paper and by having the ideas they had submitted to the point where I had every one of these submissions analyzed by the technocrats in the Ministry of Finance, and considered in its form in every way.

Many of these ideas, regrettably, were not practical. I would use one as an example of the kinds of submissions that I had received. I am aware that many people feel that pensioners' income should be tax free, and this is one of the submissions that had been made to me by the Chamber of Industry and Commerce. But upon very close scrutiny and examination, it was found that an idea like that was impractical because, in many cases, you find that there were pensioners whose income was on a wide spectrum. In the case that I had mentioned in the budget, there were government pensioners earning under \$1,000 a month and, as you know, there are pensioners in Trinidad and Tobago today who earn very hefty incomes. I know that in many cases, the people who make these hefty incomes are people who have come from the private sector, because one recognizes that the pension plans of the private sector had always been far superior to the pension plans that had been offered by the Government or even some other smaller private employers.

It meant that I was being asked to treat all pensioners who were earning under \$1,000, as well as those earning in excess of \$10,000, \$15,000, or \$20,000, to be treated alike. In those circumstances, it was felt that what we should do instead is to seek to give each taxpayer an allowance and to hope that that would attempt to equate all pensioners, as far as possible.

ADJOURNMENT

The Attorney General (Hon. Ramesh Lawrence Maharaj): Mr. Speaker, I beg to move the adjournment of the House to tomorrow, October 20, 1999, at 1.30 p.m., when the Government would complete its response on the budget.

Question put.

The House divided: Ayes 18 Noes 15

Adjournment

Tuesday, October 19, 1999

AYES

Maharaj, Hon. R. L.

Persad-Bissessar, Hon. K.

Lasse, Dr. The Hon. V.

Humphrey, Hon. J.

Sudama, Hon. T.

Maraj, Hon. R.

Rafeeq, Dr. The Hon. H.

Khan, Dr. The Hon. F.

Assam, Hon. M.

Job, Dr. The Hon. M.

Singh, Hon. G.

Nanan, Dr. The Hon. A.

Partap, Hon. H.

Mohammed, Dr. The Hon. R.

Singh, Hon. D.

Ramsaran, Hon. M.

Sharma, Mr. C.

Ali, R. Mr.

NOES

Valley, K.

Manning, P.

Rowley, Dr. K.

Imbert, C.

Robinson-Regis, Mrs. C.

Narine, J.

Hart, E.

Adjournment

Tuesday, October 19, 1999

James, Mrs. E.

Bereaux, H.

Joseph, M.

Sinanan, B.

Boynes, R.

Hinds, F.

Williams, E.

Nicholson, Miss P.

Question put and agreed to.

House adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 8.05 p.m.