

Papers Laid

Monday, September 04, 2000

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, September 4, 2000

The House met at 10.30 a.m.

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PAPERS LAID

1. Report of the Auditor General on the accounts of Trinidad and Tobago Forest Products Company Limited for the year ended December 31, 1985 [*The Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs (Hon. Ramesh Lawrence Maharaj)*]
2. Report of the Auditor General on the accounts of Trinidad and Tobago Forest Products Company Limited for the year ended December 31, 1986 [*Hon. R. L. Maharaj*]
Papers . 1 and 2 to be referred to the Public Accounts Committee.
3. Annual Audited Financial Statements of Telecommunications Services of Trinidad and Tobago Limited for the financial year ended March 31, 2000 [*Hon. R. L. Maharaj*]
To be referred to the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee.
4. The Fifty-eighth Report of the Salaries Review Commission of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago [*Hon. R. L. Maharaj*]
5. The Fifty-ninth Report of the Salaries Review Commission of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago [*Hon. R. L. Maharaj*]

**APPROPRIATION BILL
(BUDGET)**

[Third Day]

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on question [August 29, 2000]:

That the Bill be now read a second time.

Question again proposed.

The Prime Minister (Hon. Basdeo Panday): Mr. Speaker, I believe it was Winston Churchill who once said that democracy is the worst form of Government, but I am still to find a better. Obviously what he had in mind when he called it the worst form of Government or when he said he could not find a better

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must have been that the alternative to that was authoritarian dictatorship. I think that when he said it was the worst, he must have had in mind what the democratic political system is capable of producing and it is a pity that this political system encourages the kind of behaviour that I have seen in this House, not only during this debate, but, Mr. Speaker, the behaviour in this House that I have witnessed during the five years that I have been Prime Minister of this country is the worst that I have seen in the 24 years that I have been here. [*Desk thumping*]

Some say that is democracy. In this Parliament, parliamentary privilege includes the right of one Member to make the most serious allegations against another Member without the slightest shred of evidence. In the good old days of Mr. Speaker Thomasos, if you made an allegation against another Member, you either produce the evidence, or withdraw it. [*Interruption*] Democracy requires the Opposition whether...

Mr. Speaker: I think that the hon. Prime Minister ought not to do anything which could reflect on the Speaker. I think that it is quite clear in the Standing Orders how rulings of the Chair are to be questioned by substantive motions and it does—although the hon. Prime Minister may not mean it—what the hon. Prime Minister is now saying does come over as being a criticism of a ruling which I made against the Attorney General on Friday before the last. I just think that if indeed that is the intention, I do not think it could be done under the Standing Orders, and if it was not the intention, I think it should be clarified.

Hon. B. Panday: No offence meant, I was merely exercising my own freedom of speech in the Parliament, but if it is offensive to you, Mr. Speaker, I withdraw it unreservedly. I was merely making an observation of what takes place in the Parliament. Be that as it may, Mr. Speaker, democracy will cause the Opposition to oppose whether the Government is doing something good, something bad, something right, something wrong, whether it is in the national interest or it is not. That is normal and legitimate and it is expected, and that does not affect the system, but only the Member of Parliament who makes those kinds of unjustified criticisms of the Government's work—the system, Mr. Speaker, sometimes makes fools of us all.

Take for example the provisions on pensions and I refer to page 43 of the Budget where the Minister said that one of the reasons this country has done so well in dealing with poverty is because of how it has treated its senior citizens. He said that he proposes once again to increase old age pension for the fourth time in five years. In this budget the current level of \$620 per month was raised to \$720

per month and Mr. Speaker, what is the Opposition's response to that? The Opposition's response is that they would have increased it even higher.

In 1995, between 1991 and 1995, this Government increased old age pension by \$41.00. The Leader of the Opposition, the Member for San Fernando East, as far as the senior citizens of this country are concerned, will be known as the \$41.00 man.

The response to the Government's effort to the Common Entrance Examination to provide a place for every child in a secondary school has been the most comical as far as the responses of the Opposition are concerned. What are the responses? The model school is not a secondary school. The revolution solution is not quantity, but quality.

Mr. Speaker, before you can provide a child with quality education, you must first put it in school. If the child is not in school, you cannot provide it with a quality education, you can provide it with no education at all, and during the time this Opposition has been in Government between 1991 and 1995, it did not build a single secondary school. *[Desk thumping]*

While abolishing the Common Entrance Examination, children are being denied an opportunity to repeat the exam, but what is the purpose of abolishing the Common Entrance Examination? It is to put children in school. So you deny them a chance to do what? You deny them a chance to take the Common Entrance Examination so that they could get into school.

Mr. Speaker, it is difficult to understand the logic of that kind of argument. They say that they wanted to introduce universal free secondary education, but there were not enough places to put the children. Obviously, there were not enough places because they did not build any schools. If you wanted schools to put the children in, you must build them, but they build not a single secondary school, and they had intended to put all the children in school.

The other argument is that some of the children who have entered secondary school are not fit for secondary schools. Mr. Speaker, are they fit or will they become fit if you leave them out of the system? Because that is exactly what the Opposition did. The Opposition had a limited number of places, had an exam that excluded between 8,000 and 10,000 children and said they could not put them because they had no schools for them.

Mr. Speaker, on the airport, that has been the subject of all kinds of criticisms. All I tell them is, if they have evidence of corruption go and tell the police, tell the

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Director of Public Prosecutions, bring an action in court, do something, show the evidence that there is corruption, but they abuse the privilege of Parliament by using the parliamentary protective cloak to make these spurious accusations. They would not say it outside, and they would not go to the police, they would not go to the Director of Public Prosecutions, and they would not bring an action in court because the truth is that they have no evidence at all.

They speak about the cost of the airport. I want to tell them wait until it is finished and wait until they examine it and I assure them when it is finished we will determine how it compares to other airports in other parts of the world as far as cost is concerned. What they forget to tell the country, Mr. Speaker, is that that Government attempted to build an airport, and they had something called Project Pride on which they spent \$100 million in an attempt to build an airport and did not get so much as a post-hole. [*Desk thumping*] And that was their pride.

10.45 a.m.

Their pride was that they spent \$100 million in an attempt to build an airport and did not get a single counter, a single strip—[*Interruption*]—exactly, a single post-hole. Even the racing complex did better. They had a few posts. There were a few posts in the racing complex, which was abandoned and for which millions of dollars were spent—\$120 million. Then they speak of costs.

Mr. Speaker, the green fund—the environmentalists say it is too little and the Chamber says it is too much. It is said that when one is being hit from both sides one must be doing something right. Less than one-tenth of one cent in every dollar cannot be too much. It is only too little if the assumption is that those are all the funds that will be available for dealing with the environment. It is not, as one can see from the budget presentation.

Sustainable development—this Government claims that sustainable development is possible and it implies that there can be development and protection of the environment at the same time and that is and has been our policy. For example, for the work that is being done at the port, the environmentalists complain that some of the mangrove will have to be cut down. Yes, as I always say, it is very difficult to make an omelette without breaking eggs, but the Government has given an undertaking that it will replant twice as much mangrove after the project is completed. What can be wrong about that?

Then, what are their further criticisms of the budget? One that does not appear in the budget at all is the allegation that Government has given MPs huge salary increases. That is a statement that was intended to provoke and incense the public. When I laid the report of the Salaries Review Commission in this House—earlier

this year I think it was—I said then and it is on the parliamentary record, that the Government will not implement the same without the support of the Opposition, particularly insofar as it related to the salaries of the political persons mentioned in that report. It is on the record here. The reason for the provision in the 2000 and the 2001 Budgets must be clear to all, because this Government intends to implement that aspect of the report that does not deal with politicians—[*Interruption*]

Dr. Rowley: That is lie.

Mr. Manning: That is lie.

Mr. Speaker: Order please, order please!

Hon. B. Panday:—that deals with the top echelons of the public service and so forth, but cannot do so until the negotiations between the CPO and the Public Service Association is concluded. [*Desk thumping*] No wonder the other side has got into so much trouble. They cannot see the connections between issues. However, I am not worried about that, Mr. Speaker. I am not worried about those allegations because “time longer dan twine” and the time will come and the public will see what is happening.

Another attack on the Government is on crime. They can jump high, they can jump low, Mr. Speaker, the facts are that murders and serious crimes have been reduced since this Government came into power. I believe when the Leader of the Opposition left government in 1995, the figure for murders for that year was 120 and those figures have been declining steadily since this Government has been in office; but that does not satisfy us. The battle against crime is a long and bitter battle. The Government has never said that by providing vehicles to the Government crime will be solved. The role of the Government is to provide resources, both physical and human. The Government cannot do the work of the Police Commissioner or of the Police Service Commission as far as recruitment, discipline and training are concerned.

The Executive, the Government or the Cabinet cannot hire, fire or discipline policemen and policewomen. It does not have the power to manage the police personnel or even its vehicles and equipment. What the Government can do is to provide them with new police stations, and we have done that. It cannot determine the salaries. These are dependent upon negotiations. But, Mr. Speaker, the struggle against crime involves more than just the police vehicles. It involves a change of culture in the country. In Trinidad and Tobago there is a propensity to lawlessness. I read in the newspaper today that in Moruga, I think it was, a group of drunken men put the police under siege because they wanted to free someone who was in

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the police station or in the police cells. That is a propensity to lawlessness. A propensity to lawlessness includes making allegations where there are no foundations.

Drugs—crime is dependent upon drugs. I think the statistics will show that some 75 to 80 per cent of all the crimes committed in Trinidad and Tobago are drug-related and the Government has been dealing in a significant way with drugs. Even, Mr. Speaker, the new dimension of crime, that is to say, the crime involving domestic violence, is more often than not related to substance abuse. Fighting crime also involves creating job opportunities and this Government has produced over 50,000 jobs since coming into office. The creation of jobs involves education, hence the accent on education. It also involves recreational opportunities, hence the four new stadia and all the sporting facilities that this Government is establishing and has established. It involves the creation of jobs and therefore it means investments.

Mr. Speaker, my predecessor's strategy for dealing with crime was to fire his Minister of National Security and to appoint himself as minister. Another strategy was also to fire the Commissioner of Police—an attempt in which he was to fail, of course. I want to tell him, however, crime is not a matter for jest or for politics. Crime threatens every single person in the society and we are particularly vulnerable given the designs and the connections of international drug trafficking cartels and their money laundering networks. Some of those connections were identified in the Scott Report, Mr. Speaker. This Government is fighting that and we are doing so with an increased measure of success.

We had the courage to carry out the judgments of our courts and those of the Privy Council in the cases involving Dole Chadee. We do not sell him motor cars. We carried out the law against him and we do not sell our house to people involved in drugs. We do not do that. We carry out the law against them. It is regrettable, Mr. Speaker, that the Opposition frustrated the Government's effort to deal decisively with cases of capital crimes, preferring instead to align with dubious positions of international capital punishment lobbies which have never been known to shed a tear for any victim of crime.

On the question of poverty alleviation, while we proceeded with infrastructural development, from day one the focus of this administration has been on human development, and that is where our focus and our priority remain. We have always said and we have demonstrated that people are the very centre of the decisions we have made since 1995. We have constructed a strong, comprehensive network—a safety net—to protect the poor in our society and to

protect senior citizens and their families. While we continue to put children first we have made extraordinary gains in relieving the financial squeeze on poor people in overcoming serious poverty.

In this mission, Trinidad and Tobago's achievements have won global recognition. The Human Development Report published in the United Nations Development Programme ranks Trinidad and Tobago among the top five of all developing nations of the world in overcoming serious poverty. This evaluation is on the UNDP's human poverty index. When compared with the developing countries, Mr. Speaker, Trinidad and Tobago has outperformed such countries as Germany, France, Japan, Italy, Canada and even the United Kingdom and the United States in overcoming serious poverty. It seems that in the face of such objective evaluation, the hon. Leader of the Opposition has sensibly omitted from the budget this year his oft-repeated reference to what paradoxically he has been describing as the new phenomenon of poverty in the country.

Poverty remains a serious problem for all of us in Trinidad and Tobago. A single family living in poverty renders all of us poor and vulnerable. That is one reason the Government has placed education at the top of the national agenda. As far as education is concerned, Mr. Speaker, let me tell you what this country has had to experience under the former regime. For us, abandoning secondary education for all our children is not a choice. I want to ask the Leader of the Opposition if, God forbid, he is returned to office, will it be a case of abandoning free secondary education because it is not PNM free secondary education? Will he do that? [*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: Order please, order please.

Hon. B. Panday: I have asked him over and over to make a statement in this House. Will he send back the children we have put in secondary schools? Whose name will be crossed? I will give him the names of the children who "failed" the Common Entrance Examination and I will ask him to cross off the names of those he thinks ought not to be in secondary school.

Mr. Manning: Do you want me to answer you now?

Hon. B. Panday: No, you will answer later.

11.00 a.m.

Will it, again, be a case of survival of the fittest in education? That is what they are saying. It is a case of the law of the jungle, survival of the fittest in education. They have limited spaces. Those who qualify for the spaces, fine. Those who do not qualify, fine. The law of the jungle, as far as education is concerned.

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Mr. Speaker, it saddens me that hon. Members opposite would seek to denigrate and worse, to subvert the new education system. Universal secondary education is not an option. It is an imperative. Secondary education reform is a key measure in reducing the risks to which our youths have been so long exposed—substance abuse, crime, tendency to lawlessness. Indeed, I see secondary education as a right of our children, a right that has been too long denied so many thousands of our nation's children in the past, including those denied an education between 1991 and 1995. That is the issue.

Members opposite have a propensity to claim as a PNM patent, every development related to education in this country. There are some things, however, for which they should be legitimately credited. School enrolment in the 12—16 age group in this country dropped from 92,000-plus in the late 1980s to 83,000 in 1994—1995. They must claim credit for that.

In the same period, the population in the same age group grew from 118,500 to 131,500. As the age group went up, the amount of children going to school decreased. We give them credit for that. This means that the enrolment ratio for children of secondary school age dropped from 79 per cent in the late 1980s to 63 per cent during the period that the San Fernando East Member led this government. We give him credit for that.

Mr. Speaker, we are talking about almost 50,000 children left out of the secondary school system in the 1991—1995 period. This does not include the 15,000 children in the age group 5—11 who were not enrolled anywhere in the primary school system. A 1994 study found that 14 per cent of the registered student population in the 12—16 age group never attended classes or attended classes infrequently at best. That was another 11,000 to 12,000 children in addition to the 50,000 children who were not even enrolled in any school.

Mr. Speaker, we understand the hysteria that our reform of the education system has triggered on Benches opposite and among their cohorts outside of this House. They are obsessed with talk of scandal. They can think of nothing more. The mismanagement of the education system was a colossal scandal and a tragedy of apoplectic dimensions.

Let me turn now to the performance in education of this Government. My administration's response to the problems faced by our young people is a comprehensive programme with short-term goals and with targeted long-term outcomes. Early childhood care and development; overhaul of the primary education sector; expansion and modernization of the secondary education

system; increased vocational skills training; distance learning, the National Training Agency; the new community college, the College of Science and Applied Arts and Technology; the Trinidad and Tobago Institute of Technology; Safety Nets for Families support programmes; the increased support for non-governmental organizations working with young people.

Maybe I should leave the details of that to the acting Prime Minister. [*Desk thumping*] That would be another first, Mr. Speaker, for all those who talk about the rights and privileges of women. For 50-odd years they were in Government and a woman never even acted.

We have made progress, Mr. Speaker, with respect to our young people with sports and cultural activities. It is said that the young people of Trinidad and Tobago are alienated or feel alienated from the system. The reason is because politicians in the past made promises to them which they never kept. They never kept any promises to the youth. How can they say they are keeping promises to youth when we see 50,000 of them will not be entitled to a secondary education? That is the first betrayal of the youth in this country.

Here are some of the measures, Mr. Speaker—programmes that we have put in place in response to the crisis in which this nation's youth and, indeed, this entire nation has found itself. The Government had to intervene with a broad front of strategies to save the youth. This will be the first government which has kept its promises to the youth of this country. [*Desk thumping*]

The Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs is making a major contribution in all of this. The confidence of our youth was demonstrated yesterday with 4-0. If a certain person was not there, it might have been 6. [*Laughter*] A little blight now and then would not hurt.

In the 2000/2001 budget, it supports the thrust to give our nation's youth a better chance. One example is the 150 per cent tax for companies contributing to the promotion of sport, art and culture. One organization, Crown Plaza Trinidad, has already confirmed to my office its desire to participate meaningfully to this thrust with no regard to the ceiling of the 150 per cent tax credit.

Mr. Speaker, we continue the mission in education, engaging the problems of our young people of all ages on all fronts. Now that we have enabled every child to enjoy the benefits of free secondary education, we have resolved to achieving 100 per cent primary school enrolment by the opening of the next school year, September 2001.

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Mr. Speaker, I am strong in my resolve that secondary education, like primary education, must be legally mandatory for every child in Trinidad and Tobago. *[Desk thumping]* Our children's future, our country's future is at stake. The Opposition can be expected to intensify their campaign to distract the population's attention from the monumental work and the unprecedented growth that is taking place in our country.

We have decided that we will put children first. On Wednesday, the day after tomorrow, 27,739 children will take a giant step forward to a better future on what will be their first day in secondary school. Less than four weeks to go, on October 2, 1,616 more children will make a similar giant step forward to a better future when they enter their new secondary schools. This means that 29,355 children—every child who took the Common Entrance Examination this year—will have a secondary education. *[Desk thumping]*

No child has been left behind. For the very first time in our nation's history, not a single child has been left behind through the denial of secondary education. This is a cause for national celebration. Instead, hon. Members opposite continue to denigrate the children whom they feel are not fit for survival. In doing so, they are doing immeasurable harm to the psyche of every child who, through universal affirmative action in education in the new system has been given a chance which, hitherto, that child would have been denied.

It is to be noted, as I say, I keep asking him and he would not reply. The hon. Leader of the Opposition obdurately continues to refuse to give commitment that in the highly or likely event that he is returned to office, he will not return to the old secondary school system of survival of the fittest with thousands of children being abandoned every year.

Thousands of children who go forward to a better future from Wednesday and from October 2, 2000 will be attending new schools close to their homes. That is an advantage of reform—close to their homes in their communities. Before now, many of these children across Trinidad and Tobago have been required to travel long distances at great cost to their parents. Mr. Speaker, many of those who have to travel will be riding in dedicated school buses provided for the children. *[Desk thumping]*

Very likely, those school buses will be travelling on newly surfaced roads wherever they go to school in Trinidad and Tobago. *[Desk thumping]*. In the east, in the west, in central and in the southland, roads are being upgraded. Mr. Speaker, since the start of the special road upgrade programme in July, over 150

projects have already been completed. [*Desk thumping*] Another 100 projects will shortly be completed in this programme.

Tribute must be paid to the technical personnel and other employees of the Ministry of Works and Transport for their sterling performance in the upgrade programme.

Mr. Manning: The newly appointed Minister, Carlos.

Hon. B. Panday: When a star is shining in the sky, you do not have to point to it. All eyes are attracted to it. I will not attract attention. Mr. Speaker, I now turn to the way we have been dealing with the economy. I do not think there has been any previous government that has done so much to encourage investment, whether it be local or foreign investment. I am deeply gratified when our leading manufacturers and our exporters commend me, as they have been doing, on the effectiveness of my advocacy on Capitol Hill in Washington last year for the enhancement of the Caribbean Basin Initiative (CBI).

We have entered into a partial agreement with Cuba seeking to provide export markets for our manufacturers. We can now look to a new export market in Costa Rica. We are also in the process of negotiating a free trade agreement with Mexico. Caricom has recently concluded a free trade agreement with the Dominican Republic. As I have said, I am happy to have been associated with this hurdle for the CVBI enhancement benefits that this country has received.

Under the Trade and Development Act, 2000 passed in the United States Congress and signed by President Clinton, Trinidad and Tobago, with other Caribbean neighbours, now enjoys advantages comparable with those extended only to Mexico, Canada and to the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA).

11.15 a.m.

So that, Mr. Speaker, we have been able to enjoy NAFTA priority without joining NAFTA.

We are also engaged, as you would know, Mr. Speaker, in negotiations for bilateral treaties with such countries as Argentina, Chile, Paraguay, Venezuela, Sweden, the United Kingdom of the Netherlands, Switzerland and the Republic of Korea and China. Uruguay, Colombia and El Salvador have also expressed keen interest in bilateral investment treaties with Trinidad and Tobago.

So that this country can look forward to a better future and, indeed, to a very bright future. Major new projects are under construction and in the immediate pre-construction phase. The \$7 billion Atlantic LNG second and third trains are in

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construction. The new Caribbean Nitrogen project is a \$2 billion project. The REMA International corporation gas to liquids project can eventually run into several billions of dollars invested. The \$200 million UNICEL Paper Mill Caribbean operations will occupy a 15-acre site at Arima. All of this means new jobs and economic expansion. It means funding for education and for health and other social programmes. It also means revenue to support the human resource development upon which we have embarked.

It means, as well, expanded capacity to finance new adequate remuneration and new facilities and technology for the officers of the police service, the defence force, the prison service, the fire service and the public service. New export markets and new investment also mean better capacity to meet the entitlement of our public officers of all categories, including our teachers and our health care professionals.

Mr. Speaker, I now turn to the 10-point plan.

Mr. Valley: You like it, eh!

Hon. B. Panday: It is said that people are judged not by what they promise but by what they perform. Talk is cheap and anybody can promise anything in an election year.

Mr. Manning: Check the 1995 manifesto.

Hon. B. Panday: Those who aspire to political office are judged by performance, not promise. If you have never performed before, you are lucky; you may get away with it. But if you have been there before, there is a record by which to judge and you cannot extricate yourself from that record, so that you could promise 10 points, 15 points, 50 points, it does not matter. The points do not count. [*Desk thumping*] What counts is what you will do, and what you will do, can only be judged by what you have done. [*Desk thumping*] When I say what you have done, I do not mean 1956—1986. In this election—

Mr. Breaux: But you talked about the racecourse though. When was that?

Hon. B. Panday:—you are not going to ask people to vote for the Eric Williams regime, or for the Chambers regime, you are going to ask them to vote for the Manning regime, most of them who were there and who are going back. They were there in 1991—1995 and they are going back. That is the regime that counts. Nothing else counts. Therefore, you have to be judged by that.

Mr. Valley: And we are prepared to be so judged.

Hon. B. Panday: You have been in office before. How did you perform?

Mr. Speaker, when I go to public meetings and I ask the population: Please tell me one single thing that you could remember that stands out as an act of performance in the Manning regime. The only person who has put up a hand in the audience was a former Speaker, Miss Occah Seapaul, who said that you declared a state of emergency to lock her up. Not a single act worth remembering between 1991 and 1995. That is what counts.

Mr. Valley: Lock him up! Put him in St. Ann's!

Hon. B. Panday: You could run but you cannot hide. Just imagine telling a poor old lady that. Threats. If that is what you are going to the public with, to tell them to vote for you again, well, you have no case.

The issue of performance, as I say—[*Interruption*] You are right, we cannot go back. We cannot go back because when they look at that performance, nobody in this country will say, “We want to go back.”

Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition, in response to the budget, said that he expected that this Government would—I almost said "woulde" "coulda" "shoulde". He expected that there would be more increase for the pensioners. Let me deal with the hon. Leader's comments that he expected pensioners would have received more than the \$100 increase to \$720.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the speaking time of the hon. Prime Minister has expired.

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

Question put and agreed to.

Hon. B. Panday: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For a time there, I thought the Leader of Government Business wanted to switch seats. [*Laughter*] I heard him say he wanted to extend the time of the Member for Couva South but, Mr. Speaker, you know the only thing that will switch is the seats.

To deal with the hon. Leader of the Opposition's comments that he expected pensioners would have received more than \$100 which took them to \$720, let us look at what he provided for our citizens in the 1992 budget, the year after he came into office.

In the 1992 Budget which should have generously treated with a population that had given him popular support just one month earlier, the hon. Leader of the

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Opposition said thank you to the population with the following measures. One month after, the same leader of the Opposition who, while in the Opposition, said, “We have spent our years in the Opposition, 1986—1991, preparing ourselves. We are ready to take government.” One month after this population elected him into office, look at how he says thank you.

Old age pensioners were given an increase of \$32 to take their pension to \$347 and I understand that during the rest of his term, he increased that by another \$9 and became the \$41 man. Mr. Speaker, a \$32 increase for pensioners; do you know what that meant? That meant a dollar a day. That amounted to a dollar a day. Incidentally, Mr. Speaker, since this administration has come, we have increased that from the \$347 to \$720, a 100 per cent increase.

To show how he cared, he came on the platform saying that this was a government that cared and one month after they voted him into office, let me show you how he cared. In the 1991 election campaign, he said that he would raise the public social assistance payments and he did, from \$91 to \$101 per month in the 1992 Budget.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar: Ten dollars.

Hon. B. Panday: No. It is nine. That is \$9 a month—30 cents per day and that was in 1992. That is the government that says it cares; put us back—30 cents a day. In the case of children, he raised social assistance from \$8 to \$88. That is \$8 a month, less than 27 cents a day for children. That is the performance we have to talk about; 1991—1995; not 1956—1986. That is what we are telling this population it cannot go back to. Back to the future. That is the future.

Mr. Speaker, in comparison, what has this Government done? In comparison to the lack of compassion of our predecessors, the 2000/2001 budget increase of public assistance to adults, from the current \$171 to \$222. On top of that, there are incremental increases in relation to the number of persons in a household, to \$720 in a four-person house. Our actions speak much louder than the torrent of words and the avalanche of allegations, accusations and abuse issued from the other side.

Mr. Speaker, let me continue to indicate how this Opposition when in government performed between 1991—1995. One month after the population elected the Manning regime—if I may use that term. I do not mean to be abusive.

Mr. Manning: The Manning Administration.

Mr. Sudama: What did you administer?

Hon. B. Panday: Administration. A month after, he rewarded the population with a 65 per cent increase in the rate of excise duty on gasoline. He increased

that one month after that caring government came into office. That meant that every gallon of gasoline went up by 44 cents on regular gasoline and 46 cents in the case of premium gasoline. I would not mention the increases in cigarettes, beer and so forth.

Mr. Speaker, do you remember the panic that used to grip people every time a budget date was announced in this country? Every time they announced a budget date and people knew that the budget was going to be delivered in the morning, there were long lines at the gas stations, with people trying to fill up, between 1991 and 1995. I am talking about no other time but between 1991 and 1995. People running out to buy cartons of cigarettes and so forth; people running out to buy cases of liquor.

Mr. Valley: Personal experience.

Hon. B. Panday: Devaluation—people running out and buying food stocks and so forth. That used to be the scenario the day before a budget was announced.

Since this Government came to office, every single year, it has reduced taxes. It has never increased taxes and so the population is no longer fearful. They do not live in panic.

11.30 a.m.

But to reward the population, my friend, the Leader of the Opposition, then Prime Minister, imposed a hefty increase on gasoline prices and the other products just a month after they elected him into office. That is one thing.

But the Opposition was to reward the population with yet another measure which can only be described as macabre. Elected in December 1991, a month later, January 1992, the hon. Leader of the Opposition, then Prime Minister, imposed on the population, a 100 per cent increase in the fees payable to registrars and superintendents of registrars of births and deaths.

Dr. Rowley: From what to what?

Hon. B. Panday: Do you know, Mr. Speaker—let me repeat what I said; apparently they did not listen. One month after his election in December 1991, the hon. Leader of the Opposition doubled the fees payable for registering a birth or death.

Dr. Rowley: From what to what? From 24 cents to what?

Mr. Speaker: Order please!

Hon. B. Panday: No matter what the financial state of the mother, one hundred per cent more to register the birth of the child. No matter what the

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financial or emotional state of the bereaved, or the tragic circumstances of their loved one's death, 100 per cent more to register the death. No wonder the Attorney General has to declare an amnesty and to say: "You people who have not registered your births, please come forward and get your birth certificates so that you may enjoy the rights that all citizens are guaranteed under the Constitution." [*Desk thumping*] That is how they put people first.

One month after his election in 1991, the Opposition Leader, then Leader of the Government, rewarded the population with hefty increases in income tax.

Dr. Rowley: Why "yuh doh" call the election and go "yuh" way?

Hon. B. Panday: He increased the rate of income tax on personal incomes between \$20,000 and \$40,000 from 40 per cent to 35 per cent, that is 35 cents on every dollar. That was his act of caring during his first term. On individual incomes over \$40,000, the hon. Leader of the Opposition increased the rate from 35 per cent to 40 per cent. He also increased corporation tax. This was not a case of "woulda, coulda, shoulda": they "dida". [*Laughter*] These things he did to the voters one month after they placed him in government in 1991.

Mr. Speaker, with a record like that no one in this country can afford to turn back. No one can afford to turn back. You cannot go back to that kind of performance. I am not saying that everything is hunky-dory, all is well. There is much work to be done. There is an enormous amount of work to be done, but we must go forward, we cannot go back. We cannot go back to what we have come from. It is clear that, from the performance of that administration, there is no hope. I heard they keep saying that they will win the next election. You do not win elections by saying that you will win the next election. That reminds me of the coward man in the dark who keeps whistling because he is afraid. Whistling in the dark, that is what they call it. We shall win, we shall win, because they know that they will lose. That is democracy.

Mr. Bereaux: You better say thank God for Tobago.

Mr. Speaker: Order please!

Hon. B. Panday: Mr. Speaker, this Government has kept its word to the people, except for the years when the oil revenues fell to \$8 or \$10 a barrel. This Government reduced taxes every year and, even in those two years, there was growth. Growth is expected to be 8 per cent in the year 2000. This country cannot afford to go back to negative growth as we had between 1991—1995.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Manning: “Doh” spare him.

Mr. Colm Imbert (*Diego Martin East*): Mr. Speaker. I wish to thank the Prime Minister for his intervention. It is a rare sight for us in this Parliament. It is a rare performance on the part of the Prime Minister to intervene in any budget debate. It is a pity he did not intervene last year; when we on this side asked him to answer certain questions about InnCogen and his role in it.

Mr. Manning: It start.

Mr. Colm Imbert: On that occasion, when we asked him about the short pants man, he left the Parliament at a speed, never to return. If he had stayed around and answered our questions, perhaps, we would have been saved that \$84 million loss that T&TEC suffered this year. [*Desk thumping*] T&TEC would have been spared that \$84 million.

Mr. Speaker, I join this debate to deal with some of the half-truths, distortions, and blatant lies of Government’s spokesmen. I wish to deal right away with statements made by the Minister of Finance. I will return to the Prime Minister in due course. Throughout this budget statement, on page 3, the Minister boasts that they have reduced the public debt. He keeps on boasting about this throughout this document. In about five places he boasts that they have reduced the public debt. I wish to quote, Mr. Speaker, from the Minister’s own document: *Review of the Economy 2000* so they cannot say that we are pulling figures out of thin air. I wish to place on the record the public debt in accordance with Appendix XVI of the Minister’s own document, *Review of the Economy* for the years 1995—2000.

In 1995 when the UNC took office through a “vaps” coalition, the debt was \$18.8 billion. In 1996 the debt was \$18.6 billion. In 1997 it increased to \$20 billion. In 1998, \$21.8 billion. In 1999, \$24.1 billion, and in the year 2000 it is \$30 billion. Those are the figures. You hear commentators, you read in the papers and people say that they hear these figures but they are not sure where they come from. They come from the Minister’s *Review of the Economy*, his own document. It is Appendix XVI for anybody who cares to look at it. It is under the heading “Total Public Debt and Debt Service”. That represents an increase in the total public debt—since this Minister and that Prime Minister came into office—of 59 per cent increase in total debt or in real figures, \$11.2 billion. That is the prudent fiscal management of that Minister and that Prime Minister. They increased the public debt by almost 60 per cent. Do you know what that means, Mr. Speaker? Every man, woman and child in this country is now indebted to the tune of

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\$23,000. That is our *per capita* debt, up from \$14,000 in 1995. It is now \$23,000 in debt for every man, woman and child in this country. That is performance!

11.40 a.m.

The Minister lies in his budget statement, right through in about five places. He should be put before the Privileges Committee, saying they reduced the public debt. [*Desk thumping*] Nonsense! Even worse, Mr. Speaker, is the debt service. In 1995 the debt service, the money spent dealing with debt, repaying debt and so forth, \$2.75 million; 1996, \$2.95 million; 1997, \$3.82 million; 1998, \$4.06 million; 1999—do you hear how it is going up, Mr. Speaker? In 1999, \$4.67; 2000, \$4.94 billion in one year. Do you know what that means? The Government collected \$12 billion in the last fiscal year, out of every dollar collected by the Government 42 cents, almost half of the people's money, has to go to pay debt; 42 cents out of every dollar.

Mr. Bereaux: No shame!

Mr. C. Imbert: They have absolutely no shame whatsoever! The debt service has increased by 80 per cent since 1995, and that is prudent fiscal management. The Prime Minister boasts about it. When you go into the documentation you see other anomalies: not only has our debt not decreased, but it has increased astronomically; yet the Minister boasts, he alleges growth of 7.9 per cent in fiscal 1999/2000.

When we look at collections there are certain indicators which one looks at to see whether the economy is growing or not. Let us look at taxes on goods and services, because that is a real indicator of economic growth, because it is a tax that is paid on supply of goods and purchases and so forth. He projected to collect \$2,018 million in revenue, taxes on goods and services. He actually collected \$1,835 million, a decrease of almost \$200 million. So how on earth can this economy be growing if the taxes collected, the VAT, is going down? I would love to know. The VAT collected in 1998/1999 was \$1,849 million. The previous year \$1,849 million collected, but in this fiscal year where the economy grew by this fantastic amount of 8 per cent, VAT collections went down from \$1,849 million to \$1,835 million. That is why they have to give a tax amnesty, because their partners out there are not paying tax, but let us look at the picture over the years.

In the 1997/1998 fiscal year, Mr. Speaker, Value Added Tax collections, \$2,141 million; 1998/1999, \$1,849 million, down; in 1999/2000, \$1,835 million, down. In a growing economy, Value Added Tax collection going down? That is a world record; that is prudent financial management. I want to hear what excuses

and "Anansi" stories the Minister is going to come with to explain that. I would love to hear. I am sure we are going to hear all sorts of foolishness.

The other thing that I have to draw to the attention of this honorable House is the amazing statement made by the Minister about poverty. You see, Mr. Speaker, I am convinced, as the Member for Tobago East is wont to say, that there is a bunch of illiterates on that side, because they cannot read, they do not read and they are incapable of understanding anything.

Here we have the Minister on page 17 saying that we have come a long way to rank No. 5 among developing countries in fighting poverty. Now, I have heard the Minister of Social and Community Development parroting all kinds of foolishness about the last five years, about the poverty levels and so forth. I did not pay any attention to him, because I knew he was using outdated data, that he was using figures from 1991 and so forth to talk his nonsense, but when the Minister made this statement that we have come a long way to rank No. 5 among developing countries in fighting poverty, I had to look into this matter.

I went to find the United Nations Development Programme reports, which are available on the Internet for anybody who wants to take a look, and I looked at the human development index, because that is a better statistic in terms of determining how a country is developing its human resources. I found in the 2000 United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) report on human development that among over 174 countries in the world, Trinidad and Tobago was ranked number 50, five zero. [Crosstalk].

Hon. Members: He took off the zero!

Mr. C. Imbert: I wondered if the Minister had just taken out the zero. Here we have the human development index.

Mr. Assam: That is illiteracy!

Mr. Speaker: Order please!

Mr. C. Imbert: Trinidad and Tobago ranks No. 50 behind Costa Rica, St. Kitts, Chile and so forth. I have not found this poverty index business yet. So I said, let me go back and check the 1995 report, the 1994 report and so forth. I hear the Minister, the ex-Member of Parliament for St. Joseph, bleating. I think he had better keep quiet, because I have some information. I went back into 1995 and checked Trinidad and Tobago's ranking—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: Just for the sake of the record I would prefer if you refer to the Member as the Member for St. Joseph and not yet as "ex".

Mr. C. Imbert: I am so sorry, Mr. Speaker, I have anticipated. [Laughter] I am a bit previous, I am so sorry.

Mr. Speaker: Anticipating, as you know, according to the Standing Orders, is not right; you cannot do it.

Mr. C. Imbert: I am so sorry, Mr. Speaker; the MP for St. Joseph had better keep his mouth quiet, because I went into 1995 figures, the same United Nations Human Development report. I am quoting the Human Development Index for 1995 when the People's National Movement was in power; surprise, surprise, Trinidad and Tobago was number 40! Is that not strange? So we were No. 40 in the world in 1995, we are number 50 in the world in 2000, and you do better than us? "Yuh" drop us 10 places in the Human Development Index, from No. 40 in the world in 1994/1995 to No. 50 in the world in the year 2000.

Do you know what is interesting also? Countries in the world are ranked in terms of high human development, medium human development and low human development. When I went into the 2000 report, which they are so boastful about, I found that we were classified as medium human development. When I went into the 1995 report, we were in the high Human Development Index. So we dropped from high human development to medium human development; from No. 40 in the world, in terms of our development of human resources, to No. 50. That is the UNC's legacy to the people of Trinidad and Tobago. [Desk thumping] [Crosstalk]

Mr. Speaker: Order please.

Mr. C. Imbert: Hold on, that is not all. I wanted to find out where this Minister of Finance, Planning and Development got his number, so he could say we ranked No. 5 among developing countries. He beat his chest, we have come a long way. I went back into the statistics and I found the human poverty index, and I discovered that it is a fact. It is a fact that Trinidad and Tobago is ranked No. 5 among developing countries in fighting poverty. It is a fact; it is here. [Interruption]

No, he did not speak the truth, because he said we have come a long way, so I went back again into the 1995 figures to find out where we were in 1995 on the same poverty index. The poverty index value in the 2000 report is 5.1 per cent, where we are ranked fifth in developing countries in terms of fighting poverty. In 1995 the poverty index for Trinidad and Tobago was 3.3 per cent. Guess where we were in the world? No. 1! [Desk thumping] "Yuh hear lie, that is lie!" So instead of coming a long way to the fifth country in fighting poverty, we fell from No. 1 to No. 5. "Yuh hear lie, that is lie!"

This explains a lot of the problems we are having in Trinidad and Tobago. [Crosstalk] Yes, he should go before the Privileges Committee.

Mr. Speaker: Order please!

Mr. C. Imbert: That is an outright blatant lie! [*Words expunged*]

The Member for Tobago East cannot even read the reports. You have to check the year to which the statistics relate. I will give it to you. Nonsense, cannot even read! This is what they are going to produce in this country with this model school, that is where they are going *Chicken Licken, Goldilocks*—

Mr. Speaker: So that we can be guided, when you first used the word “illiterate”, you used it in a sense as being used often, you said, by the Member for Tobago East, and in that sense it was acceptable to me. You have used it again in another sense which is unacceptable. It is insulting to refer to any Member as an illiterate, whatever one may think. We would regard that as a no-no, and it would accordingly be expunged.

Mr. C. Imbert: Certainly, Mr. Speaker, that “doh” change the price of coffee. It does not change the fact that the Minister has misled the House for yet another time. It does not change the fact that ministers of government look at data and do not even understand to which year they pertain. It does not change those facts.

They were deliberately quoting 1991 figures pretending that they related to 1995 and 1996, and that is why I went into the document myself. Let them come up and say that it is not so, that he was quoting figures from previous years; he cannot. He wanted to get up before. What happened? [*Interruption*] You sit down like “laglee” now.

Mr. Speaker, what I found intriguing with the Prime Minister’s presentation is that he said he has witnessed the worst behaviour in this Parliament in the last five years, but he was speaking about his own Members. [*Desk thumping*]. Look at the political hypocrisy of the Member for Couva South trying to bring my colleague from Diego Martin West before the Privileges Committee for alleged untruths, but we have had in this Parliament the Minister of Finance, Planning and Development, the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources, the Minister of Works and Transport, all of them telling stories, Mr. Speaker.

Remember that gentleman from First Citizens Bank who got a billion recommendations or something like that.

Hon. Members: Oh yes.

Mr. C. Imbert: Who did the best, and the Minister had to come back and recant and say that he made a mistake, he did not understand. Then we had the Member for Princes Town taking somebody from No. 6 and making them No. 1, and coming into the Parliament and telling untruths about the Inter-American Development Bank and so forth.

Then you had the Member for Caroni East talking about some PNM minister who took some bribe, but when he is challenged to call the name, up to now, nothing. That is the most disgraceful behaviour that I have seen in my nine years in Parliament. [*Desk thumping*] Is that what he is talking about; ministers telling untruths “bol’face” in the Parliament? It is a practice.

11.55 a.m.

The Prime Minister talks about if you have evidence of corruption go to the police. I recall a certain Local Government official was murdered almost a year ago and somebody went to the police, and an arrest is imminent now for 15 months. [*Desk thumping*] Could there be political interference, Mr. Speaker? This is what we have been told to do and I know somebody went to the police with evidence about the murder of the Sumairsingh fella and an arrest is imminent.

The Member for Couva North and the Member for Couva South talk about the abuse of Parliament. Mr. Speaker, I had to sit in Parliament and witness the Member for Couva South bringing fabricated and anonymous letters into this Parliament, written by a person with no face and no name and lay it on the Table as if it is some kind of public document. I had to witness that—bogus, fabricated, anonymous letters laid by the Member for Couva South in the 1991—1995 term. He wrote them himself, and talking about abusing Parliament by using parliamentary privilege? It is all right; the people know they are talking nonsense so I would not waste any more time on that.

He tries to skirt around the issue of corruption on the airport project. He repeats the nonsense spoken by the hon. Member for St. Joseph talking about PNM spent \$100 million in an effort to build an airport and then five seconds later, he raised it to \$120 million. I would love to know how this money was spent, on what, and by whom. It is an outright falsehood, Mr. Speaker. I cannot believe they are coming into this Parliament with this foolishness and this is their attempt to deflect the criticism that is rising on a daily basis about the obscene squandermania on the airport.

The Prime Minister is very good at red herrings and we were treated to one of his red herrings recently. I have said it before and it bears repeating. Whenever

some skullduggery is about to take place in this country or something that is irregular, we get a red herring. The Prime Minister attacks the media, Carlos paved the savannah. Whenever something is about to take place in this country, it is bacchanal and confusion. The Attorney General attacks the Chief Justice, the Prime Minister attacks the President, and while all these smokescreens are taking place and the whole country is in uproar; “Oh, how he could pave the savannah? How he could attack the President like that?” And it is in the editorial and the front page for a month—signing InnCogen contract, signing desalination contract, paying one of their favourite friends \$30 million to accelerate a contract that he slowed down instead and so forth. Everything is a smokescreen in this country.

The most recent smokescreen was the opening of the airport on Independence Day. That was the latest. Well, the first thing was Independence Day, then the 30th and all kinds of things, up and down 31st, 29th, all kinds of things. That was the latest smokescreen and do you know what that was designed to hide? The fact that the cost has gone from \$700 million to \$1.3 billion . [*Desk thumping*] That is what it is all about. When the airport opens does not matter. I do not want to know when it is opening, I want to know how much it costs. That is what I want to know. Whether it is opening Sunday or Monday, 12.00 midnight, I do not care. I want to know how much it costs, and I hear them talking about value for money and it has gone from \$700 million to \$1.3 billion and they “ain’t” finish yet. Because they have not included the consultants’ fees of \$200 million, \$50 million to NIPDEC, and \$100 million to improve the infrastructure at the airport.

Mr. Speaker, I am told when they finish counting the cost of that airport, it will be right underneath \$2 billion. That is what I am told.

Mr. Sudama: Who told you that, Elias?

Mr. C. Imbert: It is so interesting. We have seen correspondence in the newspapers which shows that just on the last contract alone there was a single tender, by that time the rest of the construction industry had given up. They are tendering for a contract on the airport and they cannot get it, it is not going to the lowest bidder and all kinds of funny things are going on. So they give up, they say, “We done.” For the building works, for the finishing of a simple portal frame building—we are not talking about anything fancy. There is no dome on top, no free-standing span, no huge hall. For a simple shed with a galvanize roof, something you see down at Point Lisas where they make steel and briquettes, a galvanize shed, a warehouse if you wish, the engineer’s estimate was \$100 million. They gave it to their partner for \$185 million. That is what is going on, and that is only one contract and that is what they do not want us to talk about.

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They want people to be carrying on about will it open, or will it not open? Are they going to have a fete to open it, and how many bands would be playing and all those things?. That is what we must confuse ourselves with, while they are sending the cost up by \$1 billion.

The Prime Minister says, talk about it when it is finished? He means if it is finished. I understand it does not have a control tower, no ground control. Jokers! No new runway, imagine that! They spent nearly \$2 billion and they cannot put in an additional runway. Imagine that, Mr. Speaker! If they had put an additional runway it would have cost \$3 or \$4 billion. Jokers!

The Prime Minister “vex” because one group of people saying the green fund does not deal with the problem, and another group of people saying it is a tax. He “vex” for that. Do you know what they are annoyed at? It is the arrogance of this Government: that is what people cannot take, the arrogance. [*Desk thumping*] They spent \$2—\$3 million on the savannah ripping up grass, no environmental impact assessment, nothing; no studies whatsoever on what it will do to flooding in Port of Spain, nothing. They are spending another \$50 or \$60 million destroying the mangrove on the foreshore, no environmental impact assessment at all, nothing, no study whatsoever on how this will impact on the environment. They want to build some oil terminal in Toco—no proper study whatsoever on what this will do to the environment.

They want to kill all the fish in the Gulf of Paria with their desalination plant—no environmental impact assessment of any significance. That is the record of this Government. That is their record of the environment, and all they are doing is attacking environmentalists. They are throwing gravel on some of them, they want to beat one, they want to put a next one out of business. That is how they deal with the environment in this country. They would not implement the environmental commission. Five years they are in office and they cannot put in place the environmental commission. Do you know why? If they did, all these megaprojects they are doing—the oil terminal in Toco, the reclamation of the foreshore *et cetera* would not pass. They would be illegal. That is why they do not want to put the environmental commission in place. That is why; and that is why people consider this green fund to be an insult. All it is, is another attack to go into the Government’s coffers as flush fund to do whatever foolishness they have in mind. That is why people are so annoyed.

The Prime Minister, with his tail between his legs said he never meant to implement the Salaries Review Commission Report. They stuck it into the draft Estimates of Expenditure. If you look in every ministry, you see under wages and

salaries there is a provision for the implementation of the Salaries Review Commission Report from July 1998. I cannot understand how they thought nobody would see this. This is an unusual notation, a most unusual notation. They have not put in whether they intend to increase nurses' salaries, teachers' salaries, policemen's salaries or ordinary workers in the ministries. I do not see any notation on that. I do not see it includes provision for settlement of collective bargaining. I did not see that one, but they had to put "includes provision for implementation of the Salaries Review Commission" and that is why this entire budget is a flop.

When you give old people a little \$100 a month and put \$10,000 a month in your own pocket, that is the increase the Member for Couva North is getting you know, Mr. Speaker. From \$15,000 to \$25,000; \$10,000 a month increase and giving old people \$100 and making a big song and dance and beating drum and playing saxophone, and saying nothing about the \$10,000 he is taking and the \$6,000 all the Ministers will get and the \$8,000 a month that privileged people like the Minister of Finance will get. The Minister of Finance is silent. He talked for 85 minutes in this House, one set of nonsense rambling on and on about all kinds of foolishness, a tissue of untruths and outright lies, but he would not say that he is getting an increase of \$8,000 a month. [*Cross talk*] Go ahead with your "ol' talk". I know you are feeling it, you know. I am so glad, Mr. Speaker, I am getting a rise out of the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance. I know you are feeling it—caught with your hands in the cookie jar. You got caught with your hands under the table. "Yuh get ketch" and pretending that they cannot implement the salary—[*Interruption*] You could read what you want. I will read the one on you in the court, what the girl say about you.

12.10 p.m.

[*Interruption*] You read mine, I will read yours. It is not a problem. "We go read it, one for one". Anyway, Mr. Speaker—[*Interruption*] Yes, I will read about the ladder and "all dem t'ing".

Mr. Speaker, it is interesting that he says he cannot pay permanent secretaries, judges, legal officers, magistrates or the Ombudsman because that has to wait on the outcome of the negotiations for the rest of the public service. Since when is the Salaries Review Commission in any way linked to the negotiations with the rest of the public service? [*Desk thumping*] That is an utter untruth, Mr. Speaker. There is no link whatsoever. You see, what happened is, they want the increase. With all the "ol' talk" on that side, they want it. Why do they not just take it? If they want it so badly, why do they not just take it? They took enough already. [*Interruption*] Yes, I knew I would get a rise out of the Member.

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Now, the Prime Minister went on to talk about serious crimes having gone down since the UNC came into power and murders have been declining steadily. Well, I would love to know, Mr. Speaker, in what country is the Prime Minister living? He has finally recognized that they have failed on their campaign promise to deal effectively with crime. [*Desk thumping*] He surreptitiously and dishonestly sought to blame the police, the Police Commissioner and the Police Service Commission. Listen to what the Prime Minister said. “The role of Government is to provide resources and equipment. Government cannot do the work of the Police Commissioner or the Police Service Commission. We cannot hire and fire. We cannot determine salaries. This is dependent on negotiations”. That is their reason for their failure to deal with crime.

They were not saying that in 1995, though. They said, “If you do the crime you will do the time”. Now, according to the Prime Minister, we have become a lawless country. Imagine that. In 1995 we were not lawless but in 2000 we are suddenly lawless. Under this UNC administration, we have become a lawless country. Listen to the Prime Minister. “In Trinidad and Tobago there is a propensity to lawlessness”. He gave the example of Moruga where he said people in Moruga had laid siege to a police station so Moruga is a lawless state. How did it become so, Mr. Speaker? How come all of a sudden Moruga, according to him, is a lawless state? Did it happen by accident? Did it happen in his sleep? They have failed, Mr. Speaker. They have failed miserably.

Do you know, this is the same UNC that “shared out” money in 1995 in Moruga and asked people to vote? Now, in 2000 the people of Moruga are lawless; but the people of Moruga will show them what they think of the UNC in the next General Election. [*Desk thumping*] They are going to kick the UNC out of that part of Trinidad and Tobago hard, into the Columbus Channel. We are going to drive them into the Columbus Channel. [*Desk thumping*] To paraphrase some of the statements made by the Prime Minister in 1995 when he talked about a pincer movement, driving the PNM into the Gulf of Paria; well we are coming to crush them and drive them into the Columbus channel. We will go ahead, through Moruga. We are coming through Moruga and it will be out into the Columbus Channel with the UNC.

Now, let us go on to secondary education. He keeps asking my political leader if he will send back the children. What utter nonsense! The PNM has a proud record in education. [*Desk thumping*] What we will do is correct the damage and clean up the mess that they have created. Schools were supposed to open today, not Wednesday. They cannot make. How many of those 10 new schools—and I

will talk about them in a little while—will be ready on Wednesday? I would love to know. What happened to this famous school in Tableland? What is going on with this school in Tableland? Who owns the building for this model school? I would love to know.

You see, Mr. Speaker, they cannot do anything without creating opportunities for people to fill their pockets. There are some fellas who meet every week in a room and ask, “What is the scam we going and pull on the population now?” *[Interruption]* Yes, they meet in various places. They ask, “What we go do now?” That is how they came up with the airport, the InnCogen plant, the desal plant, Miss Universe and the Toco port. Some “lil fellas” in a room “does meet” and ask, “What skull we could pull now?” Well, the “skull” of the moment is this thing about free secondary education. *[Interruption]* Well, universal, because they are not telling us who owns all of these schools and who is benefiting from all these new school places. Who is pocketing the money, Mr. Speaker? They are not telling. They will never tell us. If they are asked, they will ask for more time to answer that question. They would not answer that question before the election.

I want them to tell us why in 1995 the World Bank had approved the construction of four schools in Trinidad and Tobago; three in Trinidad and one in Tobago—one in Cunupia, one in Sangre Grande, one in Diego Martin and one in Mason Hall. The World Bank had approved it, funding was in place and the project was ready to go.

Miss Nicholson: Are you sure?

Mr. C. Imbert: It is a fact. Mason Hall, Cunupia, Grande, Diego Martin—four large secondary schools approved by the World Bank for implementation in 1996. What has happened?

Miss Nicholson: They have no shame.

Mr. C. Imbert: They built one. Guess which one? They built the Cunupia school. What about Grande? What about Diego Martin? What about Mason Hall? Nothing for them. The Prime Minister stopped the building of those three schools. The children of Grande must get no school. The children of Diego Martin must get no school and the children of Tobago must get no school. That is national unity UNC style.

There are 100,000 people between Cocorite and Chaguaramas, and they would not build a school, Mr. Speaker. That is one-tenth of the population, but they are building a school where—you know, I passed one of them yesterday. I

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drove about four miles before I saw a house. They are building a school in the bush, away from the population centres, away from where people live. [Interruption] Yes, you are building schools in the bush instead of where people live. The Prime Minister talks about building schools where people live, so I want him to tell me why children from Malick and Second Caledonia are being sent to Cunupia. Explain that to me.

I want the Minister of Education to tell me why people from Malick should go to school in Carapichaima. [Interruption] Yes, because they are building schools where people live? What utter nonsense! The mass of population, Mr. Speaker, is in the East/West Corridor and centred around San Fernando. You know, this Government built 10 schools and not one of them is in the San Fernando and greater environs area, not one is in the East/West Corridor, Mr. Speaker. They built them in the bush—a school in the bush for parrots and all kinds of wild animals, Mr. Speaker—crazy people, crazy people. You see—[Interruption]

Dr. Griffith: People in those areas vote, you know.

Mr. C. Imbert: That is all right, Mr. Speaker. They talk about their commitment to secondary education. They bemoan the fact that our enrollment rate in tertiary education is low. They cry about how our enrollment rate in university is low, but if we look at the estimates over the last five years, I would like them to show me where they have provided money to the University of the West Indies to increase its intake. Show me the increase in allocation for the University of the West Indies between 1999 and 2000. There is nothing there. They are doing nothing for tertiary education in this country except “ol’ talk”. They have no commitment. You see—[Interruption]

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

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

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. C. Imbert: [Desk thumping] Mr. Speaker, this budget is characterized by smokes and mirrors. This Minister of Finance will go down in history as the worst Minister of Finance this country has ever had. [Desk thumping] He has bankrupted this country. Listen to any of the analyses by Price Waterhouse or any of the accounting firms. Look at any of the accounting firms and you will see what they say. They say one cannot sacrifice debt for growth and low inflation. “It

ain't go last". It is not sustainable. One cannot keep borrowing one's way out of a hole, Mr. Speaker, and that is what they keep doing. Every year the Minister of Finance runs a budget deficit. He comes into this Parliament, talks a set of nonsense about how he managed so well and he balanced this and balanced that and he runs—[*Interruption*] and it is important that you know.

Look, here we have it, Ernst & Young. So it is not I talking. It is not the Member for Diego Martin East talking; it is Ernst & Young. Let me quote the figures. Let me show you what they are doing in terms of borrowing. They planned to borrow \$1.6 billion in the last fiscal year—it is contained in the documents—and they actually borrowed \$4.7 billion. They went from 1.6 to 4.7. [*Interruption*] I am not supposed to call names in here. That is UNC style. They increased the borrowing by \$3 billion, Mr. Speaker, and showed savings and economic growth and all kinds of things. If you listen to what any of the—[*Interruption*]

Dr. Rowley: How much do they plan to borrow this year?

Mr. C. Imbert: Another \$3 point something billion. It is another \$3.2 billion, Mr. Speaker. So between this year and the coming year they will borrow over \$8 billion, to send up the public debt to \$33 billion. That is management UNC style. Every one of the accounting firms, every one of the economists has made the point that one cannot sacrifice one's public debt for imaginary growth and so forth, Mr. Speaker—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: Order please.

Mr. C. Imbert:—because the bubble is going to burst sooner or later. Already, almost 50 cents out of every dollar collected goes to service debt. [*Interruption*] Yes, well, almost 50; 49 cents. It depends on how we look at the revenue. Almost 50 cents out of every tax dollar goes to pay debt. That is the legacy of this Government and they do not want us to turn back now.

Dr. Rowley: Go over the cliff.

Mr. C. Imbert: Yes, go over the cliff; over the precipice with them.

12.25 p.m.

One of the intriguing things about their portfolio of debt, Mr. Speaker—let me read out all the megaprojects: the airport, the Toco ferry port, InnCogen; all of these crazy schemes. The liability on guaranteed debt, for the benefit of the Member for St. Joseph who—I thought he had some financial knowledge—the liability on guaranteed debt in 1995 is 2.48.

Mr. Assam: Nobody ever took me to court.

Mr. Imbert: You have a judgement debt against you. Do not talk nonsense! It is a fact. The liability on guaranteed debt, Mr. Speaker, is \$2.48 billion in 1995, and in the year 2000, \$9.1 billion.

Dr. Rowley: Including InnCogen!

Mr. C. Imbert: They have increased the liability on guaranteed debt by 267 per cent and, in the last year alone, they sent it up by almost \$4 billion. That is management UNC style, and they want credit for that. We must applaud.

They increased the guaranteed debt from \$2 billion to \$9 billion. We must applaud. They increased the public debt from \$18 billion to \$30 billion. We must applaud. They increased debt servicing from \$2 billion to \$5 billion. We must applaud. We must thank you and say, “No turning back now”. He must be crazy. Take the country from number one in the developing world, in terms of dealing with poverty, to number five. We must applaud! Drop us from 40 in the human development index to 50, and we must applaud. They come and lie about it and try to fool people, thinking that people would not go and check the documents.

This whole secondary education thing is a total scam. Where are the additional teachers? Where are the funds for maintenance and upkeep of the schools, where the principals right now have to hold raffles, cake sales and barbecues to buy chalk and simple goods and services for schools, Mr. Speaker? Where is that? Where is the funding for that? Where is the funding to pay teachers better salaries?

They talk about hysteria on this side. They made a footnote to implement their salary increase, but nothing in there for teachers. They want the education system to improve? They are putting 5,000 more children into the system which already has problems in terms of human resources. They are putting more children in inadequate facilities and they expect to have a better product at the end of the day; all for elections. All they are doing is creating a set of high school dropouts five years from now. That is all they are doing.

The chickens will come home to roost, maybe even earlier—three, four years from now—when this chaotic system, this election gimmick they have introduced, when the chickens come home to roost; when there are no teachers, when children are not getting a proper education, when the facilities are not functioning, when there is no funding, and so forth. That is what is going to happen. That is the legacy of this UNC administration. That is their legacy!

I heard the Minister talk about health. Imagine that! Nurses are marching. For months, they cannot get paid, the hospital is shut down, people are waiting for

simple operations like hernia, and so forth, for three years under this administration. For three years they are waiting to get a simple operation, but they say they have improved our health system.

They do not care and we cannot turn back now. That is why we in the PNM are making it our priority to deal with the human situation in Trinidad and Tobago when we get back into office. [*Desk thumping*] We are not going to fool around with all these fancy imaginary numbers. We know how to fix the financial situation. We know how to do that, but we will deal with the damage that has been done to the human capital of this country. [*Desk thumping*] We will bring us back up to number one.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the sitting is suspended until 1.45 p.m..

12.30 p.m.: *Sitting suspended.*

1.48 p.m.: *Sitting resumed.*

Mr. C. Imbert: Mr. Speaker, as I was saying before the break, the Minister of Finance, Planning and Development has presented budgets in this Parliament for the last five years which have all proven to be based on false accounting. While he has been "mamaguying" and misleading the national population, he has not been doing his work. He came here early in 1996 talking about pensions and pension reform, but what has he done? He has done nothing. He just mouthed about it in 1996 and 1997. It is easy to talk.

In 1994, the former Minister of Finance went to Chile and Chile has an 18-year history of pension reform and, in fact, among the developing countries in the world, Chile is seen as the model for pension reform. Now, the information is at the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Development. In Chile, there has been a dramatic improvement in pension reserves and a dramatic improvement of payments to persons in the public sector because of the reforms undertaken in that country. But, what has the Minister done? Nothing; absolutely nothing.

The thing about portability of pensions, about allowing persons to move from the public service to the private sector and *vice versa*, the whole question—and it is in our 10-point plan—of the removal of the limit for deductions on pensions; he has done nothing about it. While he could give himself a salary increase of \$8,000 he cannot see it appropriate to allow persons to enjoy a pension of up to 100 per cent of their final salary. What is so significant about this magic limit of 2/3 of final salary? That is a colonial handover. Why should persons not have the option to contribute more, a greater proportion of their salary, in order to enjoy a higher pension? What has the Minister done about this? Nothing. Just talk.

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What about the whole question of vesting of pensions? Right now, there is a limit of five years. Why is it five years? Why not four years? Why not three years? What national debate has this UNC Administration stimulated, encouraged or initiated on pension reform in their five-year period? They have done nothing; absolutely nothing.

What about Employee Stock Ownership Plans? Why do we not hear the Minister talking about these things? He does not talk about it at all. Why does he not look at the ESOP legislation? In fact, what legislation of any significance has this Minister brought to reform our financial sector in the last five years? He has brought none. Why, in an ESOP, for example, is there a restriction that employees can only get shares if a company is profitable? In other words, they get it out of a bonus. Why can they not decide to put more of their salaries into their shares? Why can an employee not have an option to decide, "Well, I will take 20 per cent of my salary and I will take it in shares in the company"? What has the Minister done about that? He has done nothing; absolutely nothing. He just tinkered with the tax system. He has not dealt with core issues, with fundamental issues. We do not understand his philosophy.

What is he doing to encourage savings in the country? What is he doing to encourage home ownership? Nothing. It appears the only interest the Minister has in financial matters is give-aways to his friends like the \$66 million—

Mr. Valley: \$69 million.

Mr. C. Imbert: Sorry—\$69 million to Maritime without Cabinet approval apparently. He cannot give people 2 cents and 5 cents; cannot give ministries their allocations; cannot give regional corporations money for their development programmes; but he could give his partners \$69 million for a set of failed policies. I understand that the independent actuary had indicated that—what happens to the surplus?

Mr. Valley: It falls to surplus.

Mr. C. Imbert: It falls to surplus. Very interesting. A set of lapsed policies where you have a surplus and the surplus will go to Maritime. So you give them \$69 million for about \$30 million worth in policies and you pocket \$30 million. What beautiful, creative accounting, Mr. Speaker. This is what the Minister has been doing in his five years, instead of dealing with fundamental reforms.

In contrast, the PNM reintroduced new companies legislation. That was a legacy of the last PNM administration. We were serious about financial reform in

this country but all we have heard is a set of old talk. As my colleague from Diego Martin West said, every single budget there is some promise to deal with the legislation in this country governing pensions, governing taxation and so forth. Every year, there is some old talk about that and I read the Minister in an interview in the newspapers saying that he had not achieved as much as he had desired in terms of legislation. He achieved nothing; absolutely nothing. The Parliament will soon be prorogued. Yes.

Sen. Kuei Tung: I will keep you all out of office.

Mr. C. Imbert: I guess the Minister thinks that is something good.

Sen. Kuei Tung: I will keep you all out of office. You in particular. You have to stay out.

Mr. C. Imbert: Yes; so you could thief more.

Mr. Speaker, what has the Minister done in terms of reforming the financial sector? What is his philosophy? What is his plan? Why is there interest on savings, for example? He cannot tell us. He cannot tell us why he is still taxing savings. He has a windfall from oil of \$600 million but he is still taxing savings. He has no plan whatsoever.

His budgets have been an abysmal failure and if I understand and interpret what he is saying, *sotto voce*, his plan was to get his hands on the Treasury and his plan is to get his hands on the Treasury again. Well, there is certainly a lot of evidence of that.

When you go through this Budget Statement—what is it—state of the nation address. As I think the Member for Laventille East/Morvant had described a statement made by a Member on the other side, they think we are living in "cloud cuckoo land". The entire health sector is in chaos but, according to the Minister, everything is hunky-dory. There is going to be a chaotic situation in education within the next day or two, but according to the Minister, everything is hunky-dory.

I had to listen to his inane absurdities about water. I would love to know where those people who are getting all this water live. Where do they live? I am seeing people protesting in Central Trinidad, in South Trinidad and in North Trinidad. Last week, we were seeing people complaining and protesting throughout Trinidad and Tobago about a lack of a basic necessity—water. Everywhere—in San Fernando, in Diego Martin, in Maraval—no water. People who used to get water three and four times a week are getting it once a week now. That is the legacy of this administration.

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That is why you will be voted out of office; because all the “ol’ talk”. Go and tell the people of Maraval that they are getting water 24 hours a day, see how they will deal with you. Go and tell the people of San Fernando that they are getting water 24 hours a day; you will see how they will deal with you very severely.

This Government is an abject failure. It has mortgaged this country. People cannot see the debt but they will feel it just now. You see, sooner or later, Mr. Speaker, this administration will have to account for bankrupting this country. They will have to account for it and no set of pretty talk like what I see in this nonsense here—

“...an issue of immediate concern: the ferry service between Trinidad and Tobago.”

When the PNM was in power, there were two boats running, the *mv Tobago* and the *mf Panorama* and there was never a situation where Tobago was cut off as it was cut off under this administration.

2.00 p.m.

You know, a Government Minister told me something—I would not name the person, but I agree with that person—that the reason there are so many problems on the Tobago run is that they cannot get the racket right. [*Desk thumping*] That is the problem. Whoever is involved in the negotiations, they cannot work out how much the bribery will be. That is the problem: too much skull going on. I understand they are sending the—[*Interruption*]

Miss Nicholson: Since 1997.

Mr. C. Imbert: For three years they have been fooling around with this thing. They parked the *mv Tobago* outside there to rust. They are allowing a boat to rot in the harbour for two years, as its value keeps diminishing all the time. I understand they are sending the *Mf Panorama* off to Curaçao where the cost of dry-docking would be double what it would be in Trinidad. This is my understanding. The cost of dry-docking would be double, that is my understanding. Apparently, they are sending 50 people with the boat. That is what I heard.

The reason why the “fellas” from the management like to go down to Curaçao is because they get free trip, free hotel, and free entertainment. Apparently it is about 50 of them. Apparently it is a nice little trip that these “fellas” have become accustomed to. That is why they always want to run down to Curaçao with the boat. I hope the Member for Tobago East is taking note. When they go down to Curaçao and they have a lot of fun with persons from other countries—Colombia

and these places. They have a lot of fun down there. This is what characterizes this Government. They let things build up to a crisis—this ferry situation—so that you have to hustle and put something in place in two weeks. Where are you going to get a ship in two or three weeks? The only way that could happen is if you have one parked up there already waiting. I notice the Member for Tobago East is listening. The only way you could find an international standard ferry with its safety certificate and so forth, is if you are already organized and you have it parked up there waiting, and then you create a crisis where you have to hustle and do everything in two weeks, so that your preferred tenderer will just slip through. This is what this Government is all about, Mr. Speaker.

I cannot support this budget. I cannot support anything they do. Their claim to fame is to mislead the people of this country while they raid the Treasury, to take us from No.1, in terms of dealing with poverty, to No.5; to drop us from No.40 on the Human Development Index to No.50 and come and lie about it. That is what they are good at. All I could say is thank God we will see the back of that Minister and the back of this administration within the next couple of months.

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

The Minister of Housing and Settlements (Hon. John Humphrey) Mr. Speaker, before I get into my contribution I would like, on behalf of my fellow members of Cabinet, to congratulate our newly-appointed acting Prime Minister, the Member for Siparia, and to indicate how she will get all of our co-operation and support while she acts for the next week. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, it is a great pity that on such a positive note, I now have to deal with the Member for Diego Martin East. Quite frankly, when we came back after lunch, I could not record any more quotes, but I am going to read out the quotes that I recorded from his contribution before the luncheon adjournment was taken. Everything I read is a verbatim quotation on what he said in his contribution before lunch.

He started off by attacking the Prime Minister on InnCogen and the short pants man. He described partners outside there not paying tax; which is why the Minister of Finance made the provision to enable people to come in and pay their back tax: it is partners. As I was advised by our acting Prime Minister, I should say that we, indeed, are partners, but partners of all the people of Trinidad and Tobago and seeking their interest. He described Members on this side as, I quote, “a bunch of illiterates”. He went on to say that the ex-MP for St. Joseph was bleating. He said: “Yuh hear lie? That is lie.” He also said: “bunch of illiterates

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on that side, they cannot even read reports.” Then he said: “Chicken Lickin, Goldilocks.”

Dr. Rowley: What did you say?

Hon. J. Humphrey: Then he said, about one of us, that we sit down like “laglee”. He described what we are doing as obscene squandermania on the airport. He said whenever skullduggery is about to take place, you get a red herring—a most brilliant contribution. We have heard these things so many times before.

He did not stop there. He said: “Everything is a smokescreen in this country.” On the description of the airport, he said cost has gone from \$700 million to \$1.3 billion. I do not know where he got those figures. He described the airport project—these are his words: “a simple shed with a galvanize roof, a warehouse.” That is how he described it. But he previously described the terminal building as a cowshed. I am using his words. Then he described our approach to the environment, these are his words: “Dey throwing gravel on one of them, they want to beat ah next one. That is how they are dealing with the environment.” Then he said: “This entire budget is a flop. It is a flop. It is a flop.” As if the record got stuck and he could not get out of saying that. He likes the sound of that.

Mr. Griffith: That is when the tadpole lost its tail.

Hon. J. Humphrey: Yes, the tadpole when it beats. It flips and flops. Then he said: “Beating drum and play saxophone is how we are running the country.” He then warned that he is going to read about “the ladder and all those things”. Then he said: “Dey want the increase, why dey don’t just take it? Dey take enough already.” That is the contribution of the Member for Diego Martin East, former Minister of Works and Transport.

I am not finished; this is just before lunch. “They cannot do anything without creating opportunities to fill their pockets.” Then he said: “building schools in bush for parrot and wild animals, crazy people. This whole secondary education thing is a total scam.” The last one I recorded is: “All you are doing is creating a set of high school dropouts five years from now.” That is how he addressed our educational plan and the National Budget for the year 2000—2001. Mr. Speaker, how can I respond to him?

Mr. Griffith: Do not sink so low. Do not answer him. It is not worth your time. Do not even bother to answer him, go on to your presentation.

Hon. J. Humphrey: Mr. Speaker, I got a phone call early this morning from a Trinidadian who migrated to the United States of America and is now living in the

Boston area. He said why he left several years ago is because, as a professional man, he could never get any opportunity to do work for the Government while the PNM was in power.

2.10 p.m.

He told me something interesting. I have heard rumours about this before. He told me about a loan from the Inter-American Development Bank to build a particular mountain road on the North Coast of Trinidad, where the former Minister of Works and Transport bought up as much land as he could in the vicinity of the road, borrowed the money from the Inter-American Development Bank to build the road and now he has a road accessing his own private property. This is what I got from Boston early this morning, and I have heard it before.

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. The Member is imputing improper motives, Standing Order 36(5). I certainly did no such thing; I did not buy anything for any purpose. *[Interruption]* Of course not, and I have no land up there.

Mr. Speaker: Please proceed.

Hon. J. Humphrey: What is the ruling, Mr. Speaker?

Hon. Members: Proceed!

Hon. J. Humphrey: I did not say who the minister was, I said former minister, but the cap fits who wears it. *[Laughter]* *[Desk thumping]* *[Crosstalk]* All we get from certain Members on that side are these negative tirades, and that Member described us as being involved in a feeding frenzy of corruption. Mr. Speaker, they invented that feeding frenzy of corruption, because there is not one on that front Bench that you cannot point a finger at and say allegations of corruption were made against every single one of you; the first four; none here, none here.

Mr. Manning: Would the hon. Minister give way please.

Hon. J. Humphrey: Sure.

Mr. Manning: I would like the hon. Member for St. Augustine to tell this House the allegation of corruption that was laid against me and the evidence for it and what the verdict was.

Mr. Valley: Mr. Speaker, I do the same.

Mr. Speaker: Order please!

Mr. Sudama: You bought a car from Dole Chadee.

Hon. J. Humphrey: All I am doing is in the tradition of this Parliament where they get up at every meeting—*[Interruption]*

Mr. Speaker: I have dealt with this question of whether or not I have been conducting the proceedings of this House, in the contribution of the Prime Minister. I am not going to sit here and have allegations made concerning the way in which I preside over this House, and I ask you please to desist.

Hon. J. Humphrey: Mr. Speaker, I am not attacking the Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: This book talks not only about allegations, but insinuations, and this Speaker is certainly not going to continue in this House and have such allegations made against him.

Hon. J. Humphrey: Mr. Speaker, as I just said, I am not against the Speaker, if the Speaker wants to get involved in the debate that is his prerogative. *[Interruption]*

Hon. Members: Oh!

Hon. J. Humphrey: I am not accustomed to a Speaker getting involved in debate; seriously.

Mr. Speaker: May I ask whether the hon. Member is suggesting that I have gotten involved in this debate? Is that the suggestion that is being made?

Hon. J. Humphrey: Mr. Speaker, I am making my contribution, I did not mention the Speaker until the Speaker rose to get involved in the debate. *[Crosstalk]*

Mr. Speaker: Order please! Would the Member please proceed.

Hon. J. Humphrey: Mr. Speaker, time and time again for the last four and more years we have had allegations coming from the first four Members of the front row of that side, blanket allegations of corruption, and again we got it today, and we are now hearing remarks from the Member for Diego Martin West about allegations of corruption. For many years I have heard of allegations of corruption when he was in charge of National Quarries; for many, many years.

Hon. Member: Bring the evidence!

Hon. J. Humphrey: The Leader of the Opposition wants specifics. I have seen the record of a transfer of a car from him to Mr. Dole Chadee; I have seen it. *[Crosstalk]*

Mr. Manning: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

Mr. Speaker: What is that point of order? Which section?

Mr. Manning: Section 36(5).

Mr. Speaker: Okay, please sit. With the greatest deference, if indeed, one Member says, rightly or wrongly, that he has seen evidence of a car being transferred from the Member for San Fernando East to "Mr. X" that in itself, as far as I am concerned, is not defamatory. With the greatest deference, if it is not true you could get up on a point of clarification and the like. If something is not true that is not, indeed, a breach of the Standing Orders.

If what you are saying is that, no, you have never transferred a car, that has nothing to do with these Standing Orders, all it means is that the Member on the other side is saying something that is not right about you, as, indeed, Members on this side may say that there is 'X, Y, Z' about them which may not be true. One has to get up and refute it, but that has absolutely nothing to do with a point of order.

It is like the ruling that I gave on Friday before the last with respect to the Attorney General, who was saying that the Member for Diego Martin West had said certain things, which were untrue. I am not the judge of that. Please proceed.

Hon. J. Humphrey: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, it is just tit for tat, that is all. [*Crosstalk*] I am taking advantage of my opportunity to speak in this budget to deal with Members opposite, which is my right. That is my right.

Anyway, Mr. Speaker, I have always been taught, if you live in a glass house, do not throw stones. I want to extend that advice to them, especially those four: Member for Diego Martin Central, Member for San Fernando East, Member for Diego Martin West—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Valley: Mr. Speaker, if the Member has any evidence about corruption with respect to this Member, he should bring it. I have no difficulty with that at all.

Mr. Speaker: The Member for Diego Martin Central does not have the floor.

Mr. Valley: My apologies, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Would the Member for St. Augustine proceed. [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. J. Humphrey: Mr. Speaker, a word from the wise should be sufficient. Some of us have been in this game of politics for a very long time.

Hon. Members: A game, it is a game to you?

Hon. J. Humphrey: I am going to my fortieth year, and I am accustomed to the brand of politics that we get from that side. In fact, we are getting a taste of it already. The moment I was announced as candidate for St. Augustine, we got in

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St. Augustine a taste of PNM-type politics. They descend to the gutter; they are not able to rise above it, and they get completely personal. When you give them a little jab—[*Crosstalk*]—a tiny percentage of what they give you every day, they cannot take it.

Mr. Speaker: Could we return, with the greatest deference, to order. Could we return to the budget, please.

Hon. J. Humphrey: I was dealing with the Member for Diego Martin East, he has hardly touched the budget.

Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition, Member for San Fernando East, has often said that I am the Minister of Housing and Settlements who has built no houses. [*Interruption*] Say it again. Do you want the opportunity? Put it on record. [*The Minister sits*] [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. Members: Go ahead.

Hon. J. Humphrey: Let me just put on record a few facts about housing. Mr. Speaker, in terms of mortgage financing through the banks which are approved mortgage companies and the Trinidad and Tobago Mortgage Finance Company Limited, I have the record of the performance of the Government from 1992—1995 inclusive, which was the government led by the Member for San Fernando East, who was then Prime Minister.

We have in 1992 total mortgages from the approved mortgage companies, \$21,200,000. Mortgages from Trinidad and Tobago Mortgage Finance Company Limited, nil; not a single cent was loaned to anyone who went to TTMF to get money for a house that they built. In 1993 approved mortgage companies, \$18 million, Trinidad and Tobago Mortgage Finance Company Limited, nil. For the second year, not a house was built to enable a single beneficiary to borrow money from the Trinidad and Tobago Mortgage Company Limited. In 1994, \$138 million was loaned through the approved mortgage company programme and, again, with the Trinidad and Tobago Mortgage Finance Company Limited not a cent was loaned. In 1995, which was their final year in office, \$4,200,000 was loaned by the approved mortgage companies, and, at last, some money was loaned by TTMF, \$6,539,270.

Dr. Rowley: Who was the Minister of Housing and Settlements then?

Hon. J. Humphrey: That totals from the approved mortgage companies, \$181,400,000 for four years. I would like them to take a note of it so that when

they want to get up and say this is the Minister who built no houses, they would have the facts before them. From the Trinidad and Tobago Mortgage Finance Company Limited, \$6,539,270; four years.

Now, let us look at the record from the time we came into office. In 1996 approved mortgage companies, \$460 million; TTMF, \$23,210,570; 1997, \$499 million; TTMF, \$38,475,256; 1998, approved mortgage companies, \$65,338,420; and the Trinidad and Tobago Mortgage Finance Company Limited, \$41,649,279. Let us tally it up. The approved mortgage companies was \$1,024,338,420, and TTMF was \$103,335,105. Compare four years of the Manning administration, as compared with three years of the Panday administration, in terms of mortgages, the Manning administration, \$181,400,000, the Panday administration, \$1,024,338,000. [*Desk thumping*] That is comparing four years to three years. Then for the Trinidad and Tobago Mortgage Finance Company Limited under the Manning administration for four years, \$6.5 million; the Panday administration, \$103.3 million; so put that to rest.

Mr. Manning: What do you mean put that to rest? When were those houses started?

Hon. J. Humphrey: Mr. Speaker, I head a ministry that is laying the ground work to enable every family in Trinidad and Tobago to have the security of tenure on a piece of land and to have a home which would not be an economic burden on the family, and they would never be threatened with the loss of that home. The intention is to ensure that every citizen of Trinidad and Tobago becomes a tangible shareholder of the national wealth. There can be no better way than by enabling them to own land and to get a decent home for the security and convenience of their families. We are well on the way to getting this done. What I want to put on record is the strategy that is being adopted to enable it.

Mr. Speaker, when we came into office at the end of 1995, we found no reliable data for physical planning, nor did we find a viable physical plan in place to enable the orderly development of this country. In fact, what we found was that of all construction that had occurred in Trinidad and Tobago, only 20 per cent had planning approval and 80 per cent of everything constructed was without authorization. That is what we found, total chaos.

2.25 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, when I asked the questions: "Where can I find the data on state land? What land of Tobago and of Trinidad is owned by the state?" I wanted to know, because when I first came in, I inherited a survey that had been undertaken

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which had assessed that the current need for shelter units was in the vicinity of 115,000 units. That averages over 11,000 a year requirement. The current need then included all those who had been waiting and who had matured families and were not able to access either the land or the housing market. It included all those who were becoming adults and starting new families on an annualized basis and the country could never begin to meet the requirements.

When we did a tally of the land that was required to enable the satisfaction of the housing market, what we found was that in the areas of the country that had already been developed with infrastructure, road network, electricity, water, sewage disposal and so forth, those areas were already saturated and the life of the majority of our people was inconvenient because of that saturation. I will give you an example; a place called La Horqueta, which the PNM government boasted about establishing, a housing settlement that is now a constituency. There are so many citizens and their families living there that it is a constituency for election purposes, but a housing settlement without opportunities for the people to work. There were no job opportunities, no schools and they had the effrontery to talk about the locating of the schools that this Government is building. No schools, no recreation facilities, inadequate services and a very poor quality of houses. A very low standard of development in terms of dimension of roads and dimensions of lots, and a method that was adopted by their government in building the houses that virtually condemned those families to the condition of shelter they met when they moved in, because the houses were not flexible, they could not be readily expanded. The houses were too cold at night and much too hot in the day, they were very poorly designed and that is the quality of housing that had been imposed on the people.

There is a place called Maloney where people had been forced to live in sub-human conditions because of the standard of housing that was built by the PNM regime. Mr. Speaker, wherever you looked, the way they approached solving the housing problem had nothing to do with the welfare of the citizens and the security of our families. It had everything to do with politics: political expedience was foremost in their mind. They thought we were going to be just like them so when we started regularizing squatters, as the Member for San Fernando East jumped up to say, we were putting our supporters in their constituencies. There was a foreman by the name of Sudama on one of the projects and he did not read to see who that Sudama was, he automatically assumed it was the Member for Oropouche, but that project had been done by him. I inherited it. Mr. Sudama was already there, employed by him and it was not the hon. Member for Oropouche so we were being condemned for what they had done. Very strange.

Mr. Speaker, what we did was to look at the whole country and we saw a pattern of settlement that stretched from the Western peninsula all the way to Arima and then a leap to Sangre Grande and then down South, Chaguanas, Couva, San Fernando and then the vast majority of our people were put to settle in that pattern, while the rest of the country was being completely neglected. The roads were not improved, no water was delivered, electricity was not provided and the people in those areas were totally neglected. However, what we found when we examined the trend of settlement, was that people did not want to come into the already highly settled areas, they, in fact, wanted to stay in the little towns of the countryside. Towns like Princes Town had a growth capacity. Rio Claro, Fyzabad, Siparia, Penal all these towns had a propensity to grow and that was the trend. Our planners concluded that what we should do is encourage it by putting in adequate infrastructure, by making it convenient for people to live in those areas and that new generations as they mature would not want to leave. So we adopted a strategy on settlements and it was guided by a vision that we had and we shared in the ministry which was the creation of sustainable and affordable communities through partnering with the private sector; and we accomplished this through a framework of national planning which encompasses land management in the broadest possible sense.

Mr. Speaker, the core business of the Ministry of Housing and Settlements is organized along two main functional lines namely, the physical planning and settlements modelling and strategy. Let me enumerate all the stages that are considered in the process: the formulation of comprehensive development plans for physical development. That takes a certain exercise because you are not developing on something that has already started, but merely continuing the momentum you found. You are virtually starting from scratch so what the planners did was to first look, and that exercise required that you identify those physical features that should be preserved for all time so in the development process, there are certain things that you must not damage.

Mr. Speaker, if you ever journeyed to Haiti you will appreciate what I am telling you. In Haiti, because of the poverty, the people cut the trees and kept cutting the trees generation after generation for hundreds of years until no trees were on the hills and, with the rains, all the topsoil was washed away and no tree can grow. That is the legacy and if we do not identify areas for our protection for all time, the same thing could happen because loggers could decide there are lots of trees in the Northern Range and we will cut those trees to take to the sawmill for timber, but what the planners did was to identify these physical features that must be preserved where any development that would occur in future must begin

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extremely carefully and they identified the Northern Range as an extremely valuable eco-character that must be preserved. They identified forest reserves in other parts of Trinidad and Tobago and the farm in Tobago, the oldest forest reserve in the Western Hemisphere where the very early settlers of Tobago had quite a lot of vision and they established a gigantic forest reserve. However, the centre of Tobago is in fact preserved as a forest reserve and they have the wisdom to manage it carefully.

So having established a vision and a couple other things that were identified that needed to be protected, like the natural wetlands, very little of which exist in Tobago, but quite a lot exist in Trinidad. In the Nariva area, there is a unique system which must be preserved. Caroni wetlands must be preserved, the Oropouche Lagoon, a magnificent area, must be preserved. They identified the coastal areas; the North Coast, a very delicate area that must be preserved; the East Coast with the long beaches must be preserved. Where you have the beaches with the roads eroded, you must put protection to ensure that you protect those beaches.

The West Coast, which is the area influenced mainly by the Orinoco River, is an area which needs to be planned. In fact, to preserve the natural features of the West Coast, you have to have development, and I hear the Member for Diego Martin West shouting Invaders Bay.

Mr. Speaker, Invaders Bay is a project that will at last enable the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago to enjoy the Gulf of Paria and the shoreline of their capital city; something they used to have. When I was a little boy, that was available, but we have lost that. In the Second World War, we lost the whole of Wrightson Road to the British who built the harbour. When they built that, they dredged the harbour and took that material and reclaimed what is now the Port Authority's land and that told us that that material was suitable for reclamation.

In terms of Invaders Bay, we have a design for enhancing the coast of the capital city into the Gulf of Paria where we are going to win 300 acres of developable land. That land is to be developed for housing and expanding the commercial aspects of the city of Port of Spain for hotels, recreation, cultural theme parks and every foot of coast will be available for the enjoyment of our citizens. There would not be fences with spikes telling citizens you are not welcome here, as there is with the existing Port of Spain harbour. Every foot of the coast will be available for the enjoyment of our citizens.

We are going to redevelop an area that I see they keep agitating, the Sea Lots area, and the Katanga area, by adding space, by burning—decent accommodation

in a mix of industrial, commercial and residential so that those very people who live there now will move into decent accommodation and have supporting facilities for their families, playgrounds for their children and parks and if they cannot get jobs they will have space where they could open their own business.

We went first with the vision and following the vision, once we had agreement from all the planners and the consultations that were held, we then moved with the discerning people of the country, including the PNM who had visited on more than one occasion in the office the Leader of the Opposition for consultation including the PNM. So having done the vision—*[Interruption]* He wants to preserve Carenage for the corbeaux.

2.40 p.m.

That is all that is there, a set of corbeaux eating the guts of the fish. That is what the Member wants to preserve for them.

So we then ventured into the development plan but that had to be preceded, Mr. Speaker, by a conceptual plan, and as an architect I can understand that one has to go through a conceptual phase before one can build anything. One has to agree on what one is trying to achieve, otherwise one builds chaos, one imposes on future generations no end of inconvenience, as they have done very, very successfully for all of their supporters, Mr. Speaker. *[Interruption]*

Mr. Speaker: Order please, order please!

Hon. J. Humphrey: Every building that they have built for their supporters has condemned them to a lower living standard. Yet there are some people who will still support them, for what reason I do not know. So we had to then develop conceptual plans. But, Mr. Speaker, let me go through the list of what is required in putting things in place to enable physical planning.

Land and hydrographic surveys have to be conducted. Maps, charts and plans have to be produced for the developers to know what they are working with and what needs to be preserved. These things have to be identified. We have got to determine who owns what. Mr. Speaker, we eventually did the exercise of discerning state land throughout Tobago and Trinidad but we have not yet completed how that land is committed because much of the state land is leased to citizens, some over a long period, some over short periods, but we are doing that exercise now. We took the decision to partner with the private sector, to marry the resources of the Ministry with the resources of the private sector and it has proved to be very, very successful.

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Then naturally the main job has to be done, which is to provide shelter for people in planned and orderly communities. So one has to actually identify lands that are suitable for housing where the people can live conveniently and one has to develop that land and put in the infrastructure. That means one has to rally the resources of the whole country. For water one has to get WASA. WASA has to provide funds in their budget to run the pipes and to win and deliver the water. For electricity one has to get T&TEC. For telephones and communication one has to get TSTT. For postal services it is now TPost, which is a very, very efficient service. These things have to be done. Then, Mr. Speaker, once all of that is done, one has to find the funding to enable people to borrow the money to actually organize their shelter, then one has to manage all of this.

Now, Mr. Speaker, nothing was in place to enable any of these things to happen. When we came into office the Lands and Surveys Division was holed up in a building that was falling down virtually. Officers who used the elevator to go up the three and four floors had to stop using it because one officer fell through the floor of the elevator. They could not put their new computer hardware and software in those conditions, so the very first thing we had to do was to find a new home for them, which we did successfully.

For the first time in about 30 years we gave them a decent office in which to work. They modernized and, Mr. Speaker, anyone who visits their offices on Frederick Street opposite St. Mary's College would be proud to see what they are capable of doing now. In fact, Mr. Speaker, during my term we licensed 21 new surveyors. The country was complaining that all these youngsters had gone to university, they had qualified, but none of them, having qualified at UWI, could get a licence to practise. All now have been licensed. So you see, Mr. Speaker, this is the Minister of Housing who built no houses.

Let us talk about the physical development strategy and the agencies that are engaged in it. We established an interim National Physical Planning Commission pending the passing of new legislation, which hopefully will be passed during this term when there would be a National Physical Planning Commission. That is conceived as a one-stop shop, not only for development planning approvals but for actually facilitating the process of development planning. They would be responsible for the overall physical plan for the country. Anyone who wants to develop any part of the country would be free to go to them and have consultations before they spend a cent to see what can and cannot be done, and they will be facilitated in that process. The Town and Country Planning Division is another arm and, of course, the Lands and Surveys Division. These three agencies are the main arms of the Ministry dealing with the physical planning.

We have put in place, and when the legislation is passed we will already have, an interim commission working. We will have the Development Control Division. We will have codes and standards of building practices already done so that developers will be able to get a simple little volume and know what can and cannot be done in terms of development. Little people who want to build their houses can get a little booklet and see what they need to do so that when the gusts of wind blow past, their roofs would stay on their homes, and when the earth shakes with an earthquake the house does not fall down. All of these things have already been done.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the Ministry is divided into six agencies. The National Housing Authority is one and I am on record as saying that if we had a good National Housing Authority we would not need a Minister of Housing. What we would need is a Minister of Settlements with housing as a component of overall settlements, because what we need is proper planning and proper mobilization of resources for development. We never had it before under them. The Sugar Industry Labour Welfare Committee is an excellent group that under the law is established for assisting sugar workers in improving their homes.

The Land Settlement Agency is a new agency that has come out of legislation to enable the regularizing of all squatters on state lands and, Mr. Speaker, they had it before them for two terms in government and could do nothing with it. We have now passed the legislation, we are regularizing squatters and there are 25,000 families that are now in the process of being regularized.

The Project Execution Unit of the Ministry is a unit of which we are very proud, Mr. Speaker. The Inter-American Development Bank financed that unit, in fact, since I was there in the NAR government. Over a 10-year period, four of which were spent by the Manning administration, \$80 million was loaned by the bank to the government and by the end of this year that programme comes to an end. But, Mr. Speaker, because of the performance of the Ministry and the Project Execution Unit since I have been Minister, the bank is now offering a \$100 million loan over a five-year period. They are satisfied, in fact, that we can properly manage those resources and we have adopted a strategy to which they fully subscribe, which, in the PNM advertorials, they describe as lunacy.

The other arm of the Ministry is the Urban Development Corporation of Trinidad and Tobago. Mr. Speaker, UDECOTT is almost like the private sector because it is a company under the Companies Act but it is fully owned by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago and we are using UDECOTT for several innovative projects. Planning has already been done up to the point of conceptual

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planning and within the next six months we expect to complete the development planning for the areas that I will now enumerate.

Port of Spain, Diego Martin, Chaguaramas, Barataria, San Juan, Curepe, St. Augustine, Tunapuna, El Dorado, Arima, Arouca, D'Abadie, Toco, Sangre Grande, Valencia, Wallerfield, Rio Claro, Mayaro, Biche, Charuma, Guayaguayare, Princes Town, Moruga, Siparia, Penal, Fyzabad, Point Fortin, Erin, Cedros, La Brea, San Fernando, Marabella, Gasparillo, Couva, Claxton Bay, St. Mary's, Point Lisas, Chaguanas and Cunupia; and in Tobago—Scarborough, Canaan and Roxborough. All of those plans are now complete in the conceptual stage, and when we have done the development planning this will be laid in Parliament so as to become the statutory plan for the development of Trinidad and Tobago.

Whatever government comes into office will have to abide by that because that will be the law. Then, Mr. Speaker, we will see orderly development taking place. In spite of the protestations organized by the Opposition, this country will be developed. People's lives will be improved, although they want to keep people just as they are. The Member for San Fernando East says it is a cultural thing. Is it a cultural thing to keep people backward in their poverty and deprivation? I say no, Mr. Speaker. This is a very well-endowed country, richly endowed, and there is no reason on earth why we cannot solve the physical problems for our people and enable every single family to have a decent home.

So, Mr. Speaker, there is very much more that I could put on record about the performance of the Ministry of Housing and Settlements, but I want to conclude my contribution by describing the policy that we have adopted for enabling the poor to get shelter of a very high standard. The problem has been—[*Interruption*]

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

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

Question put and agreed to.

Hon. J. Humphrey: The problem has been in the past that governments have tried to solve the shelter problems of the poor and, Mr. Speaker, the poor have no resources to support industry, therefore no industrialist has ever gone into the production of components of homes for the poor. The mistake we have made is to try to confine our focus on that group because the private sector could not be rallied to deliver adequate shelter for the poor. That is why the poor live in substandard conditions.

What we have found is that if the market is opened up to all comers and the Government goes into joint ventures with the private sector using Government land, using private sector resources to develop that land and putting housing on the market for all income groups, we can easily put a percentage of all the units for the poor and transfer the profits derived through the partnership with the private sector from marketing to the very rich to the poor. That is now working, and it is one standard quality of infrastructure. When I described the infrastructure on some other occasion, I read in a PNM advertorial that a member of the Senate said what I have described is lunacy.

Let me describe it to you, Mr. Speaker. There will be minimum sized lots of 5,000 square feet, which is a typical Woodbrook lot, which all planners have agreed is the golden rule for planning—50 x 100, very sensible—for the 50 feet of frontage is 50 feet of infrastructure, 50 feet of road shared by 2 lots, one on either side of the road; 50 feet of water lines; 50 feet of electricity and 100 feet that one can, in fact, develop to improve one's living conditions, not requiring further national infrastructure. So here will be a minimum sized lot of 5,000 square feet.

2.55 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, the housing will be set back from the street alignment, and with a reserve in front of the houses for green space for lawns and landscaping, and with sidewalks so that people can enjoy afternoon outings meeting with their friends in the community and, therefore, nurture a community spirit which we do not have in our housing neighbourhood right now. We do not even know our neighbours and they are all locked up behind bars because nobody trusts anybody anymore.

Mr. Speaker, in this way, the Government will get the rich to come in and buy and pay market prices for the land and build the houses that they want for their families; it will get the middle class to come in and buy and then put that on the market and subsidize it for a percentage of the poor in those very developments, but not to encourage the poor to build "shacks and shanties" because if the Government does that it is going to devalue the properties of the rich, and they are not going to want the property. So the Government has to build decent starter houses for the poor.

Since the Government has offered that option a number of industrialists—both local and foreign—have come to us requesting that they get involved in the supply of starter houses and it is getting a momentum. The poor will no longer be condemned to the living conditions imposed on them by the colonial regime and previous governments of Trinidad and Tobago. That is the policy that the

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Government has adopted. The Inter-American Development Bank has fully subscribed to that measure and we are now getting the support for it and that is the way the Government is going.

Mr. Speaker, now, the key to success of that strategy is to have enough land, but there is such a massive requirement for shelter that the Government needs a tremendous amount of land to develop and service. So it is not an easy task, but the physical planning has to be done first. The Government has to identify areas in the whole of Trinidad and Tobago suitable for housing in the context of settlements that have services that support the residents of those areas, and that is well on the way.

Mr. Speaker, if the country goes back to the PNM well, I say, “crapaud smoke dey pipe” because the PNM’s regime of housing was the most hopeless failure that anyone could imagine. The UNC’s regime of housing, on the other hand, not only has outshone previous governments, but has now paved the way for developing this country into this new millennium.

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

Mr. Roger Boynes (*Toco/Manzanilla*): Mr. Speaker, I thank you very much for allowing me the privilege of entering into this budget debate. Today, allow me to skip the stories, the poetry and the temptation to get into nice, but vague rhetoric and allow me instead to deal immediately with the serious issues at hand in this budget, and whereas I have seen my friend for St. Augustine stand up and make several allegations himself—the Member says he is going to give tit for tat—we on this side are very reasonable, and whatever the Opposition says it has proof for it.

Mr. Speaker, I did not think that the hon. Member would sink to such a low standard today. Let me just indicate immediately that the Member mentioned that physical planning is, indeed, necessary in order for us to go forward in Trinidad and Tobago. We on this side agree with the Member. We also agree that in order for there to be proper planning it must be done in such a manner that a person’s property is not destroyed.

So, if I may just draw your attention to the Environmental Management Authority Report of 1995 which gave a three-year obligation to any government to appoint the Environmental Commission and thereby implement the Environmental Court and several mandatory standards. Sadly, today, we are in the year 2000 and that court has not been established. Furthermore, we find that the

passing of the Land Development and Planning Bill of 1998 did, in fact, undermine the authority of the Environmental Management Authority and the Environmental Management Authority Court by giving legal immunity to the Minister of Finance, Planning and Development. If the Ministry, for instance, approves a high-impact, dangerous, contaminated industry in the middle of a residential area—like the current oil terminal tanker bunkering facility being planned for the middle of Toco Village—then the Environmental Management Authority would have absolutely no teeth to stop that type of development.

Mr. Speaker, I listened to the Minister quite carefully. The Minister did, in fact, mention that plans for the north-east are for eco-tourism. It came out of the Minister's mouth. We on this side cannot understand that if those are the plans for that particular area, why is the Government ignoring the environment of the Toco area? The people are saying that they are afraid that their environment would be destroyed. They are saying that. In the Toco Bay for instance, there are several corals there which are 300 to 400 years old, but yet the plans for that Toco Port is such that 15 hectares of that area in the Toco sea would be reclaimed. Mr. Speaker, do you know what that would do? That would bury the coral in that particular area and it is not dead.

Mr. Speaker, we have had the opportunity of having the learned Sen. Prof. Julian Kenny talk to the people, and he brought photographs of the beautiful corals that exist in that particular part of the country of which we are all very proud. Sen. Prof. Julian Kenny even demonstrated to us that any type of work done in that particular area would cause serious silting of the other beaches in the area. The people have been very logical and professional in their objections to that particular port being in that particular area. Mr. Speaker, but do you know what? The preferred developers happened to be the Chairman of Maintenance Training and Security (MTS) and the other the Chairman of Caroni (1975) Limited, as my friend, the Member for Diego Martin West had alluded to on the last occasion in the House.

Mr. Speaker, the people have requested and hired professional consultants such as environmentalists to assess the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) that the preferred developers have claimed to have in fact done. They have also claimed that Town and Country Planning has in fact approved it and found it satisfactory. When confronted by the experts that the people of Toco have hired—the preferred developers—the Ministers put their tails between their legs and ran away. I mean this is not the last we are hearing of this particular situation. One of the environmentalists had this to say about the Environmental Impact Assessment.

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He says of the 50 criteria listed in the protocol, the subject of the Environment Impact Assessment failed completely on 29 of them.

3.05 p.m.

The work was very unsatisfactory in that the important Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) tasks were either poorly done or not attempted at all. A passing grade for the EIA requires that 11 selected criteria all be positively evaluated. The subject EIA got positive evaluation, only four out of the 11. That is critical. In other words, Mr. Speaker, it failed miserably.

When the Member for St. Augustine is talking about physical planning and development, he is saying one thing but on the other side of his mouth he means something else. How can he sit there and say that they are carefully going to plan the areas of Trinidad and Tobago but, yet, we have the Government together with the private partnership—is that what he called it?

Dr. Rowley: Personal friends and associates. Benefactors!

Mr. R. Boynes: Yes. He has the Government and private persons, private companies looking to destroy what God has blessed the people of the Toco area with. Mr. Speaker, when the Member for Diego Martin West, on another occasion in this House, brought this to the attention of this House and of the national community, do you know the end result of that? The Member for Couva South threatened to take him to the Privileges Committee. That is what came out of that, Mr. Speaker. It is because of your brilliance, Mr. Speaker, and because of your knowledge of the law, the hon. Member for Couva South had to be put in his place.

Miss Nicholson: Do not bring the Speaker into it.

Mr. R. Boynes: We even heard the Member for St. Augustine today talking about Members on this side being corrupt, and if we have information and evidence of corruption, we should bring it forward. Well, Mr. Speaker, I propose immediately to do so.

Dr. Rowley: You have evidence?

Mr. R. Boynes: I do have evidence, Mr. Speaker. If I may just direct your mind's eye to the Statutory Minutes for the month of June 2000 from the Sangre Grande Regional Corporation, to page 16 of that said report—I will, in fact, make a copy for the Speaker when I finish my contribution—it says here:

1. Approval of \$63,630.00 (TT) for Councillor Gabriel Henderson's medical expenses in the USA.

Councillor Emamdee referred to the letter read at the Unemployment Relief Programme Sub-Committee Meeting held earlier that day re: estimate for Councillor Henderson's medical review in the United States of America totalling \$63,630.00 (TT).

Alderman Singh moved and Councillor Picton seconded that the sum of \$63,630.00 be approved for Councillor Henderson's medical expenses under the Unemployment Relief Programme.”

Mr. D. Singh: Mr. Speaker, I just want to make a comment. That was brought to the Ministry's attention. As far as the Ministry is concerned, we did not approve that.

Dr. Rowley: Thank you for telling us!

Mr. Manning: So it was not approved by the Ministry?

Mr. R. Boynes: Which makes the case even worse. I do not know what they are doing at that regional corporation, Mr. Speaker. I also wish to direct your mind's eye to No. 3:

“Approval of the sum of \$29,100.00 for the provision of transportation and chairs.

Alderman Singh requested that approval be granted for the following claims submitted to the Unemployment Relief Programme Sub-Committee held on 8/6/2000.

Dr. Rowley: URP money again?

Mr. R. Boynes: URP money again. It reads:

“Kumar Singh for transportation by maxis from S/Grande to Couva -	\$2,400
Patrick Howard for transportation by maxis from S/Grande to Couva-	\$2,800
Cyril Beekhee for transportation by maxis to Rienzi Complex -	\$1,200
Patrick Howard for 26 maxis to Navet -	\$10,400
Pamela Nanan for 26 maxis to Navet -	\$10,400”

Mr. H. Bereaux: Who are those councillors?

Mr. R. Boynes: They are the UNC councillors attached to the Sangre Grande Regional Corporation, Mr. Speaker. Do you want more proof? On page 23—that is in the same month of June—clause 188 states that the request for URP to pay all

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outstanding arrears on cellular bills for members of the council in the sum of \$45, has been approved.

Dr. Rowley: Poor people's money! They are all wicked.

Mr. R. Boynes: Mr. Speaker, page 25, a bill dated May 5 for the Cantonese Wok, \$964,201; Chinese restaurant, \$554; Chinese Garden, \$312; Chinese Garden, \$1,292; Chinese Garden, \$460; Chinese Garden, \$174.

Mr. Valley: Is that URP money?

Mr. R. Boynes: Yes. That is the same month, Mr. Speaker. They normally have "Granfest" in Sangre Grande, but this was a sharkfest. It was a feeding frenzy in Sangre Grande. At 224, we see a bill dated May 18, 2000 from Nu Wok Restaurant, \$420. From Chinese Garden, \$361; Chinese Garden, \$312; Chinese Garden, \$371; Nu Wok Restaurant, \$6,985.

Dr. Rowley: All of this with money? Have they no shame?

Mr. R. Boynes: Mr. Speaker, I also wish to refer you to another section of this report. It just goes to show that the councillors at that particular regional corporation, rather than using the funds to serve the poor and the needy, they are using the funds, the people's money, to satisfy their own selves. [*Desk thumping*]

Clause 557, we have 16 cases including Nu Wok Chinese Restaurant for food, \$9,891; Nu Wok Chinese Restaurant for food, \$3,250.

Mr. Valley: Who owns Nu Wok Chinese Restaurant? How come it is only for food?

Mr. R. Boynes: Mr. Speaker, this situation is very untenable. It is scandalous, to say the least, and the fact of the matter is if it is happening in Sangre Grande, it is happening all over the country. [*Desk thumping*]

I would just read one other aspect. For the statutory meeting ending August 2000, I also wish to draw to their attention clause 761, and in this particular clause, the chairman made a request for an estate constable or SRP or full-time security for the chairman of the council, since the overtime cost for the daily rated patrolman is too high. That is the only man I know who has a 24-hour personal security guard. That is the Chairman of the Sangre Grande Regional Corporation. He finds the overtime is too much money, so he wants to get an SRP or full-time security for the chairman of the council. Mr. Speaker, what really is going on here?

When I look at several clauses again, clause 349, Chinese Garden, Chinese Garden, Chinese Garden:

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“Request for the payment of the following bills from Chinese Garden Restaurant for food and refreshments supplied to Verne Richards.”

The past Chairman of the Sangre Grande Regional Corporation. What is going on? It is a feeding frenzy in Sangre Grande! That is exactly what is taking place.

Mr. Assam: Like it is a hungry council!

Mr. R. Boynes: Apparently. Mr. Speaker, when I was the Chairman of that regional corporation, we took one whole year off without eating a single thing from the vote at the regional corporation so that we could do some work in the region. [*Desk thumping*] This is what we did.

Mr. Speaker, I wish also to draw your mind’s eye to 350:

“Request for payment of Claim Form dated 23/6/00 from Ivan O’Garro in the amount of \$500.00 for transportation provided by maxis from the UNC Toco/Manzanilla constituency office to Matelot on 17/6/00.”

What is going on here? They are not even smart enough to leave out the politics from the document?

Mr. Assam: It shows they are honest, then. [*Laughter*] They want transparency? They are getting transparency!

Mr. R. Boynes: They are some honest crooks! Mr. Speaker, I also refer you to clause 339. This was an undated letter from Shamilla Ramoutar for reimbursement of \$8,400 for transport to Matelot, Matura and Valencia.

I am on page 21, from 332 to 336. For the month of August 2000, there are 18 particular bills submitted to the regional corporation from the Chinese restaurant in Sangre Grande, Chinese Garden. There are 12 from Nu Wok Chinese Restaurant. If I may just make a tally of the amount of money that the council from the Grande regional corporation have wasted and have blown, it amounts to \$278,360. This is Chinese food, medical expenses and the payment of their cellular bills, and we on this side are saying quite clearly that this type of situation is untenable and we will be referring this matter to the Director of Public Prosecutions for further consideration. [*Desk thumping*]

3.20 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, in keeping with the other types of feeding frenzies that have been taking place in this country, this is but a small example of what is the norm in Trinidad and Tobago at the moment. We have the airport. We have several examples throughout the length and breadth of this country that the people are

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seeing. Today, we have brought proof, we have brought concrete evidence to show what takes place in Trinidad and Tobago under the UNC watch. We are asking the country, the people of Trinidad and Tobago, to hold and wait a while, in a few months' time it will all be over. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, I would not want to spend any more time on this particular area. Just suffice it to say that if it is that the councillors are seeing what the top is doing, they will do the same thing. That is all. That is exactly what it is. We have, really and truly, to bring back some sort of order, integrity and respectability into Trinidad and Tobago and we intend to do that on this side.

I want to focus on a few areas. I must say that the budget reminds me of an old African proverb that states: If you do not know where you are going, any road will take you there. The budget elicits similar sentiments that are not entirely surprising. The Minister of Finance, Planning and Development, in neglecting the planning and development aspects of his portfolio, only serves to support the contention that the economy is on autopilot. He is steering a vehicle whose mechanics were defined and enhanced by the previous administration. All he has to do is steer. Heaven help us if he had to deal with a flat tyre or a mechanical difficulty.

[MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

This presentation was similar to that of the last four offerings by the Minister, lacking fundamental performance evaluation or variance analysis. Sure, we have more reserves. Sure, with more money, we can buy more water, even though at a higher price; more jobs; even more airports. I understand that one man benefitted by over \$215 million from that airport—one man and one man alone. But did we plan for the funds received and, not having planned for them, should we not be evaluating where we are against where we should have been with the price differential in oil of US \$16 used in the last budget compared to the average rate of \$25—\$28? Does that really translate to TT \$415 million in the Revenue Stabilization Fund? Hardly. Where is this fund really?

It is difficult to determine whether we are on plan or operating by guess, based on the funds we discovered in our pockets. To extend the Minister's analogy, we are dressing up for something, black tie mixed with three-quarter pants and top-of-the-line sneakers. But, really, what are we dressing up for? Where are we really going? Without a plan, how do we really know that the programme is sustainable?

The Minister and his bunch out fires; they do not plan strategy. In the face of oil at approximately US \$25—\$28 a barrel, sometimes more, what is disconcerting

is, in those circumstances, what accounts for the state of our medical and education systems? Mr. Deputy Speaker, surely growth in the face of increasing oil prices—something over which we have no control—cannot be compared with growth in the face of slow and steady recovery. One requires more management—in this case, steering—and the other assiduous leadership, strategic planning and constant evaluation of action taken, the type of leadership the PNM intends to bring to this country very shortly, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I am an optimist and notwithstanding the Minister's disrespect to our country and to this honourable House for the last four years, I keep hoping that in the face of an impending general election, he might try to redeem himself, especially since from his recent comments and behaviour, it is obvious that he is so disenchanted by this Government's ever-increasing disregard and disrespect for the people of Trinidad and Tobago, but true to form, he did not fail to disappoint. Instead of a statement which would at least attempt to outline a vision for moving the country forward, the Minister has come to us once more, with a set of sums that do not add up.

The Government's philosophy is simple—spend, spend, and spend more—with no thought for tomorrow and investing in our future. We are not fooled by their attempt to disguise their true intent when they try to deceive and "mamaguy" us.

For example, when they tell us that they are going to spend \$2 billion on education, we want to know how much of that is going to fatten other people's pockets. It is going to be more of the same with 10 schools that were supposed to be built under \$150 million and now are costing more than \$300 million. Where has the money gone? Who was enriched by these and other scandalous occurrences?

The Minister cavalierly told the national community that we have proven oil reserves for the next 15 years and proven gas reserves for the next 25 years and, given an opportunity, they would definitely spend that out before those projected periods. What I want to know is: what is going to happen after oil and gas run out? How will the rest of us live when they have frittered away our national wealth? The fact that oil and gas will be finished in the next 25 years should be an indication to any thinking government that we have to start planning for that time.

The PNM has always made diversification of the economy a central part of its platform and vision for the country. It is clear to us that even if we had oil and gas reserves to last beyond the current horizons, our experiences of the 1980s should have made it clear that it is ill-advised, dangerous and reckless even to base the national economic strategy on two closely related and non-renewable commodities.

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But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we ask the question: What is the Government's investment in the future? What really is its investment in the future—a future in which there will be no more gas and oil to bail out the country? If we look at the Public Sector Investment Programme, we and the national community are supposed to get some indication that the Government has a plan, that the Government has been thinking about the future, that the Government has the interest of the national community at heart and not just its narrow interests and how to line the pockets of their friends, but the country at heart. Instead, the PSIP, like the rest of the budget, is further example of how this Government has no vision for the future. The PSIP is supposed to be the indication of Government's investing for our future. It is the clearest pointer in the budget of a longer-range plan for the country, rather than just some effort at personal enrichment.

In a year where there is an unexpected inflow of income, what has the Government done with the Public Service Investment Programme? They have savaged it by almost 60 per cent. The Minister has the gall to come here and talk about using oil revenues in a stabilization fund. Who are they stabilizing? The Public Service Investment Programme has fallen from an allocation of \$1.567 billion in the last budget to a mere \$982 million in this budget.

It is not even worth the effort to respond to the Minister's contention that this budget is not a bag of election year goodies when you can just look at the way the Minister has neglected investing in the future.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Minister has no plan for the future and us. Let us just take tourism as an example. It was the PNM administration that had the foresight and laid the infrastructure for the development of the tourism industry in Trinidad and Tobago. We commissioned the Tourism Master Plan as the blueprint to guide the development of the industry. We also put in place supporting mechanisms to facilitate the development of the industry.

The Minister comes here and tells us that tourism arrivals have increased over the last five years but, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is not because of anything that this Government has done. In fact, if we look at Government, what the Government has done has more or less destroyed the natural advantages that we have in this country; as, for instance, what they attempt to do at the Toco port.

Like every other aspect of national life, this Government has played politics with this industry. If we look at other tourism destinations in the Caribbean, long-standing destinations which have a very high level of awareness in the marketplace and, therefore, do not require the kind of groundwork that is still

needed here, what does the comparison tell us? Tourism development in this country continues to be underfunded and approached in a *vaille-que-vaille* manner.

In Jamaica, that Government, with nowhere near the level of resources available to Trinidad and Tobago, spent approximately US \$60 million in the tourism sector. That is approximately US \$15 on the promotion per visitor. Barbados spends just under US \$20 promotion per visitor. The Bahamas spends US \$30 per visitor and, more than that, Aruba is in that region. How much does Trinidad and Tobago spend? The Minister said that we had 360 visitors last year.

Mr. Assam: Only 360?

Mr. R. Boynes: Sorry—360,000 last year and he has put in the PSIP just over TT \$5 million for tourism promotion and marketing. In other words, while the Minister lauds over his Government's achievements in tourism, he proposes to spend less than US \$2 per visitor on tourism promotion and marketing. That is exactly what is going on.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, where is the future? Where is the seriousness? Where is the international competitiveness that we keep hearing them talk about? This Government cannot expect that it would just rely on whatever our natural advantages are and hope for the best. That kind of faith belongs in the church, not in government. What will happen when the oil and gas are done?

Even the National Carnival Commission: we understand that rather than spending money in that particular area, some of the management—the chairman and board of directors—are flying up and down first class and we understand that persons are actually on their doorstep levying.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, they on that side make legislation and then they leave things to run anyhow, so you have foreigners taking advantage of laws when they come here to build holiday homes and then convert them into all-inclusives with no money coming to Trinidad and Tobago. This is not right and this Government is shameless in its disregard of these facts. That is what is happening.

There are hotels in Tobago that are not making any attempt to integrate their operations with economic activity on the island. They are importing everything, and not just from Trinidad but from overseas and these things are available in Tobago. This Government could loosely say that is the market at work. But that is the cop-out. Does the Government not see that there is a role for it to encourage integration of linkages amongst the various sectors that is through development?

We are giving these hotels all kinds of incentives at a cost to the Treasury and then they are buying coffee and other products from overseas. No, Mr. Deputy

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Speaker, at least, they have to encourage some dialogue and discussion. We have to do better, otherwise the worst fears about tourism will be realized. Our product will not differ from those other countries in the Caribbean.

3.35 p.m.

What we have done is, we have worked on preparing a master plan and we hope that the country would buy into our master plan. They are also talking about investment in the tourism industry. I do not even want to talk about the scandal of the Inter-island Ferry Service. My colleagues have already spoken on that.

We also looked at the Miss Universe Beauty Pageant. I know why my friend for St. Joseph has left. The whole aspect of that Miss Universe Pageant is very scandalous. Over \$100 million was spent on that pageant. If the Member had taken any advice, he would understand from an entertainment lawyer, that when you are focussing and trying to negotiate that particular contract one would ensure that one has at least synchronizing rights so that one can buy into the project in such a way that one would recoup one's investment at a later stage. Mr. Deputy Speaker, when one broadcasts—*[Interruption]*

Dr. Nanan: Mr. Deputy Speaker, just a point of clarification, it was \$71 million. That report was laid in Parliament.

Mr. R. Boynes: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to hear the Member for Tabaquite on this point. What is taking place is that, if that particular contract was negotiated properly, the country would have been able to benefit from royalties for having that particular show beamed to other parts of Trinidad and Tobago. *[Desk thumping]* That is the point, but we did not negotiate that contract properly. We had no broadcasting rights, or synchronizing rights and we hoped to achieve benefits from the Miss Universe Pageant by having the hotels full. That is totally unheard of! I do not know how it is that the Member for St. Joseph, in their haste to make Donald Trump richer, neglected to negotiate a proper contract for us. He is laughing all the way to the bank, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Another contradiction: the Minister told this House about growth in the manufacturing sector and in the non-oil exports. I searched the entire budget for an indication of how this Government proposes to support our non-oil trade and industry. Unless my glasses are not working, there is nothing. If we are talking about international competitiveness and if we are talking about positioning Trinidad and Tobago for the developed-country status, I repeat once again, we cannot do that on the basis of giving away oil, gas and the national wealth to our friends.

Every day the international trading system becomes more and more competitive. Every day they are taking away concessions and preferences from countries like ours. Every day it becomes clearer and clearer that the only way we will be able to secure prosperity for our people is by investing in the future. Mr. Deputy Speaker, what does the Minister do? He comes here and provides nothing for the development of the non-oil sector.

What is the competition doing? What are they doing in Barbados, Jamaica, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic and Singapore? If you look at these countries you would see governments that are investing in creating an environment that is conducive for international competitiveness; for the production of goods and services; governments that take seriously the creation of infrastructure for the manufacturing and services sector; governments that take seriously ensuring that provisions are made for research and development for new learnings and for harvesting knowledge. Is there anything like that taking place here, Mr. Deputy Speaker?

I challenge you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to look at the PSIP allocations for the Ministry of Trade & Industry and Consumer Affairs. Not because they are going to get rid of my friend they have to treat him like that.

Look at the details Mr. Deputy Speaker, if I may just crave your indulgence. He got a reduction for the Bureau of Standards on the last occasion. For trade promotion, he got naught. For agricultural business, he got naught. For light manufacturing, he got naught. When they spit you out on the other side “yuh” dead. For the pleasure boat industry, I do not know what he requested, if anything, but he got naught. We go on and on down the list. The amount of naughts that he got, it is a shame. Are they serious? How could you talk about diversifying the economy and preparing for sustainable development when you are not investing in the future? You have a situation where you have about 11 projects on stream and you only gave allocations for three in that particular sector? This is investing in the future?

We continue to throw away money. We throw away money behind World Beat, the Miss Universe Beauty Pageant and the airport. We should be throwing away money behind our future and our future development.

It was back in 1992 when the then Prime Minister delivered a budget that put in place a set of policies that freed up the non-oil manufacturing sector in this economy: to invest, retool, upgrade their plan, and to recognize that if they were going to survive, they had to focus on the international market. To their credit, the manufacturing community in Trinidad and Tobago demonstrated that they were

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up to the challenge. They came to the wicket, a little tentative and uncertain, but they demonstrated that, with government support and facilitation the people of Trinidad and Tobago would compete with the best. Ask any manufacturer, they will tell you all what the PNM has put in place—even the last administration, a number of the projects for training and research that were done by the previous administration, the 1991—1995 PNM administration—were not followed by any allocation of funding to date. Is that the type of way we are doing things? We start for a year and for 2001 we do not do anything? We reach midstream and then we back off?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, do you know what is the response of the Trinidad and Tobago Manufacturers' Association to this budget? I quote:

“The budget should have provided more direction for the development of the manufacturing sector.”

One newspaper paraphrased it:

“The budget left manufacturers in the cold.”

If I may just read the Price Waterhouse report at page 27, I quote:

“The Honourable Minister proposes that 60,000 new jobs will be created, but if no incentives are provided to this sector, to invest in research and development, to be afforded free zone benefits, to be given relief across the board for continued capital investment and to have measures to support the industry with the proposed removal of the export allowance in 2002, the prediction for the future of manufacturers may be “gloom and doom”.

That is what they have here.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is our position quite clearly to ensure that—we have to send a message to the manufacturers of this country. Let me assure the manufacturers of this country, that when the PNM returns to power in the next few months we will, as day follows the darkest night—the manufacturers can expect to have in place a set of policies with the necessary supporting resources—ensure that Trinidad and Tobago can not only continue to compete with the best, but that we can also increase our competitive edge. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Member for St. Joseph also boasted that the small business sector was equally responsible for generating the large portion of 60,000 jobs that were created, but this sector is itself on auto. Apart from raising the loan guarantee level at the Small Business Development Company from \$150,000 to \$250,000, and the asset value threshold qualification from \$500,000 to \$1.5

million in 1997, as expected, the Member and his government have done nothing more to stimulate growth in this sector.

3.45 p.m.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The speaking time of the Member for Toco/Manzanilla has expired.

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

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. R. Boynes: Thank you very much Members of this House.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, do you recall in 1998 when the Minister promised to give the Small Business Development Company \$30 million to facilitate the grant of lending to some 4,000 entrepreneurs in Trinidad and Tobago? If I may just quote him as he spoke on Monday 12th October, 1998. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Assam: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I heard the Member say that his glasses may not be working well, so I thought I would read from the Public Sector Investment Programme (PSIP) 2001, although, perhaps, the allocation may not be as large as one would like it to be: support to industrial development, \$9 million; continued development of science and technology, \$5 million; trade promotion programme, \$0.25 million; development of industrial estate, \$1.6 million; marine research programme, \$300,000; development of standards, \$350,000; science and technology development, \$400,000. [*Crosstalk*] On the question of the small business development loans, the Government has moved from giving actual funds.

The Minister of Finance, Planning and Development provides letters of comfort to all those who wish to access loans from the commercial banks and financial institutions. So it would be more than \$30 million because he is now giving letters of comfort. I just wanted to correct the record in case your glasses were giving you trouble. It is all in the Public Sector Investment Programme.

Mr. R. Boynes: The items that I called out were not provided for, Member for St. Joseph, and they were provided for on the last occasion.

If I may just indicate that you had promised—and I would quote you—on page 86 of your contribution you mentioned:

"It is the first time in the history of this country a government has, in fact, supported small business in the most tangible way possible, just as we have supported a home-owning democracy, and the provision, additionally, of \$30

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million to the SBDC to facilitate the grant of lending to some 4,000 entrepreneurs in Trinidad and Tobago."

That has not been done for 1998 to the present time; it has not been done. [*Crosstalk*]

The Member also indicated that:

"The supplementary measure which had been outlined in the 1998/1999 budget included an enterprise development support programme which would provide funding of up to \$150 million and would be established for small and medium enterprises in this country."

That has not been done, and you come here trying to pull wool over people's eyes.

Mr. Hart: Whose glasses giving trouble, Om Lalla? [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. R. Boynes: You are probably talking about the \$0.3 million from the European Union grant; that is what you are talking about. You are probably talking about the \$7 million from the Republic of China; that is what you are talking about. The fact of the matter is that you have not been given anything. The Government has not given any allocation as they normally do from year to year; \$7 million that has been given from the Republic of China—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Assam: It has already been disbursed. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Boynes: Mr. Speaker, if I may just indicate that the Member for St. Joseph could have taken some of the money that he wasted and he blew in the Miss Universe competition and focus on small business development and increase the sector. [*Desk thumping*] That is what he should have done rather than screaming here across the floor. [*Crosstalk*]

He has also failed with respect to the venture capital market; up to now that has not taken off, it has not gotten anywhere, and year after year in the budget he keeps on saying that it would take off, it has not done so. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker, he then goes on to speak about e-commerce and e-business. If I may just mention that is, indeed, the way of the future. E-commerce, e-business simply put is the ability of the enterprises to expand their customer base by doing business with customers electronically. If we are serious we would seize the opportunity now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, rather than having, let us say, about one computer in each class. We must seize the opportunity to have at least 30 computers in every class having the Internet access. [*Desk thumping*] These are the kinds of things that we have to do if we are serious in this particular sector.

If we are serious we would put the appropriate funding in this area, not simply \$9 million to build a science and technology park in Wallerfield. We have to get

the best information technology personnel on board. We must get our telecommunications Act in place quickly. We must provide the necessary legal framework to contract digitally as well as the ability to accept evidence in the courts in a digital form. Our bandwidth for the transmission of data must be increased. Our telecommunications prices must be reduced and the speed at which we have access to the Internet must be increased.

We can get into the business of data processing, for instance. On behalf of my constituents I have spoken with several persons abroad who have insurance companies, and they are interested in having their data processing work done in Trinidad and Tobago. That is why in our constituencies we are busy ensuring that we have classes where we educate our constituents so that they would be computer literate as we take them forward for this new century.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are also at the gateway of the South American market, and with the e-commerce linking the world, we must have, at least, 50 per cent of our population speaking Spanish within five to 10 years. Telecommunications is one of our greatest assets, even more so than oil or natural gas. It is environmentally friendly and would always be there. I ask the Government, do not sell out our children's greatest asset, I refer to our spectrum.

The new thinking in the world today is to offer the use of spectrum two, for example, in the cellular providers, at an economic cost, instead of the present peppercorn rent that does not even cover administrative cost. Jamaica, for instance, has auctioned off their spectrum and has recently raised about US \$100 million in the auction of two of their licences. It is another way of raising revenues for the country.

Do you know what we want to do, Mr. Speaker? We want to give it away at a peppercorn rate.

Mr. Bereaux: We are giving it away, but Gillette getting money for it.

Mr. Boynes: We on this side are saying simply that we are here to promote trade, industry and business in Trinidad and Tobago. We are going to give the business community all the support.

The whole thing about it is that when you make a comparative analysis, we on this side are saying that we are minded to be futuristic. We can try to put at least 30 computers in every class. If you take, for instance, the cost of a computer right now, which is about TT \$3,000, and you look at the \$100 million spent in the Miss Universe competition, you can see that we could have bought 30,000 computers

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already with that same money. This is how we have to value what we have thrown away. The Member for St. Joseph has actually robbed us of 30,000 computers.

I ask the question, what is the Minister's plan for sports? To date, no one has reaped the benefit of the annual three-year scholarship of \$250,000 in the name of Ato Boldon. After so long I understand that they are now probably trying to advertise for anyone to participate for the fund.

They have also failed to deliver the multipurpose sports facility in the Mayaro/Rio Claro region as promised. The sports and youth affairs office in the Sangre Grande area is extremely dormant and nobody knows who they are or what they do. Every single sporting event that takes place in that particular area, we have a part and a hand in it. Rather than the office or somebody from the Ministry of Sports and Youth Affairs, at least, play a role in it or, at least, come and talk with us, come and take part in the sporting activities that we hold in that particular area. They are non-existent; they are nowhere around.

Mr. Speaker, do you know what the Member for Chaguanas told me? He said that I should have called or written to him. So if it is so, then I am doing his job for him in Toco/Manzanilla, then I might get some of that big salary increase that he is expecting to get shortly. The recreation grounds in that particular area are still in a dilapidated state.

At this point, I just wish to commend our footballers who have made us very proud in Trinidad and Tobago yesterday, by defeating Canada four/nil. [*Desk thumping*] We could be producing more excellent players like that if we certainly care about our recreation grounds. More cricket needs to be played in Trinidad and Tobago. We need to get very serious about our sports, because when we look at what took place today in England it is a sad, sad day today. We need to be playing more cricket in Trinidad and Tobago.

Another aspect of how we can develop sports in Trinidad and Tobago can be also through the use of the satellite earth stations. We can use these satellite earth stations to set up shop in each of our community centres and broadcast activities throughout the world. We can also down-link programmes like coaching programmes in each of these community centres so that persons do not have to go abroad to get the type of coaching in the various disciplines. We can have that right in each constituency, in each region of Trinidad and Tobago; that is how we should be using our venture capital incentive programme, not giving it away.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we can down-link Olympic seminars via the satellite for the benefit of our sportsmen and women: gymnastics, table tennis, volley ball. We

can broadcast our sporting competitions, earning valuable revenue in the process. We can hook into the cable companies abroad and earn valuable revenues; we can do that for our culture and sport as well. We can become the Caribbean centre for sports, entertainment and information. There are persons abroad who like to get the feel of what is taking place in Trinidad and Tobago and the Caribbean.

We can even bring a coach into Trinidad and Tobago and broadcast a coaching session to the other 21 Caribbean territories. Just the money we would get from the broadcasting rights would be able to pay the coach, and we would then establish ourselves in the eyes of the world, as taking sports seriously. We would be marketing Trinidad and Tobago in the process. What we can also do is put the several sportsmen and women on the Internet and start marketing them; that is what we can do, so that we can be looking for large contracts for them abroad. Sport is big business, and if we are serious we can do a lot in this particular area.

I just have to say look at the likes of Ato Boldon, Brian Lara, Yorke, Latapy, just to name a few of the talented sportsmen that we have in this country.

4.00 p.m.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when I also look at the Ministry of Youth Affairs I have to say that for two years consultants were employed to develop a national youth policy to direct the nation's youth. They were supposed to have gone to every nook and cranny of our society. No one in my constituency, that is the youths, knew when they came, if they came at all. The youths have not been consulted and the Minister needs to account to the nation for a total waste of funds at the recent meeting held at the Hilton Hotel with the various stakeholders.

The document was blasted, the stakeholders were not consulted at the inception. The young people are saying that at the inception they were not consulted, which leaves to assume that someone drafted the document in some back room. Five per cent youth participation at the task force level took place. They should have included the youths at the decision-making level. They spent too much time defining youth, for instance. They spent too much time defining what participation by the youth is and not actually involving the youths in active participation. Can you imagine that?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in short, the document is very vague and the young people of Trinidad and Tobago have shut it down. I am calling on the Minister to do the right thing, to recall that national draft policy which he seems to want to pass for a national youth policy. Recall that and start over from scratch. Really and

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truly, consult with the youths and get their feelings on some of the things they want.

They are talking about North American culture and Jamaican blood. Do you know there is a new kind of music that the youths are doing now? Do you know that? You do not know. Do you know what is rapso?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I wish to touch very briefly on the Salaries Review Commission and I wish to reiterate that we, and by extension, the national community do not appreciate the back-door approach in obtaining this salary increase, backpay, and leave benefits which may amount to approximately \$250,000 to each of the Ministers and when you look at it, we look at what they are trying to do for themselves and I recalled the last occasion I mentioned it. The magistrates of Trinidad and Tobago are bleeding, they are tired, they are depressed, they are annoyed. When you look at the Salaries Review Commission, they were misled by the Member for Couva South. They have a personal allowance that is for them and the Member told the Chief Justice that that personal allowance would remain and their salaries would increase. Lo and behold, in the Salaries Review Commission, do you know that the personal allowance was added to the salary and that was it?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, do you know that before, the magistrates used to have free medical services at the Mount Hope Medical Sciences Complex, but now that has been taken away from them? For instance, if a magistrate from Arima jails someone and he is injured, he has to be taken to the Arima Health Centre, he has to sit next to the relatives of the person whom he jailed while awaiting treatment. This cannot be right.

There is another issue they are very concerned about—the aspect of travelling. Do you know there are designated points whereby the magistrate would benefit from travelling? Point Fortin, Siparia, and San Fernando? If somebody is living in Point Fortin and goes to work there he gets travelling, but if somebody is living in Port of Spain and he has to come to Sangre Grande or go to Tobago they do not get any travelling. It should be amended to have it structured in a way based on kilometres; depending on the distance you have to travel, you will be entitled to travelling.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I wish to reiterate a few issues that affect the constituency of Toco/Manzanilla. The burning issue in that constituency is the Toco landfill site and you will no doubt recall recently on TV 6, the residents had blocked off the road in that particular area. The stench is unbearable. The contractors drop the garbage in the middle of the road. Sometimes one cannot pass

to go into the Toco region and I would have thought that the Members on that side, with their intention of developing a port in that particular area so that visitors could see Toco in all its splendour and glory, I would have thought that at least the first thing they would have done was to fix that dump, but instead they have neglected that particular landfill site.

When I was Chairman of that corporation, there was a road on the side of that dump where the contractors used to go in to drop the refuse into the back of the dump, but it is only because one of their friends has established a quarry along that said road, they have blocked off the road so none of the contractors can use that particular road now. What they do is drop the materials and garbage at the side of the road. We used to have security in place to ensure that the contractors drop the garbage at the back of the dump, but now that does not happen. They are busy spending money in the Chinese Garden or the new Wok Restaurant and are not using that money where it should be used. That money should be used to ensure that there is proper security at the dump. I am making a proposal and I reported the matter to the police of the Environmental Management Authority. I took them to the dump and the police of the Environmental Management Authority have indicated to me that they will be consulting their department and shortly a notice would be served on the Sangre Grande Regional Corporation to close down that dump, or get their act together.

I also wish to deal with the situation as it relates to the Matelot Post Office. The situation that obtains at Matelot is very traumatic to the people of that area and the Member for Caroni East has given me the assurance that even though the post office will be removed, the agency that would be dealing with the postal services in the Matelot area would be able to carry out each and every type of service that the post office carried on before. I want him to explain to me when he is addressing this honourable House, whether or not persons in the Matelot community would be able to bank at that agency, whether they would have proper security, whether they would be able to change cheques at that agency. The people are very concerned because that, in a sense, would cut off that entire community from the rest of the country because there are old people in that particular part of the constituency who cannot travel to go to Port of Spain.

I also wish to draw to the attention of the Parliament the problem of the people in Valencia whose lands have been taken away from them by the hon. Sadiq Baksh. That is what he has done in order to build the school in Valencia. We had a meeting with him and like a thief in the night the contractors came and cleared up all the people's property. One farmer lost \$200,000 worth of crops and

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the people had agreements for the sites, they had legal documents for their sites. I see the Member for St. Augustine smiling and I heard him talking today about people's right to property and so forth, but yet like a thief in the night, he came and got the contractors to clear the people's property. Up to this day, Mr. Ramai is still waiting on compensation for the loss of his produce and they were also promised to be relocated. None of that has taken place and Mr. Ramai has a mortgage to pay in the bank and there are many persons who have been affected by the grab for lands in Valencia and I am asking this honourable Parliament to ensure that we get some action and if the hon. Minister talks during this budget, at least I want to hear him talk about that particular situation, because the people are very concerned.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I also wish to talk about one other aspect that affects the people of the constituency of Toco/Manzanilla. A very long time ago, I think it would have been about two or three years ago, the hon. Member for Princes Town who was at that time the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources had bids tendered out for the acquisition of about 1,830 acres of land at the Non Pareil Estate. It is one of the most profitable, one of the richest soils in Trinidad and Tobago where cocoa, coffee and citrus are grown and the people of Sangre Grande and Toco got together and formed themselves into groups and applied for the acquisition of the estates for themselves. We were able to raise \$200,000 to ensure that a proper application was put in. The application was made via the only three active credit unions in the area.

The Minister told me at one time that the documents were lost so he had to call in the fraud squad. The next time I spoke with him, he told me we were shortlisted and that was the last the people of Toco/Manzanilla have heard of the acquisition of that Non Pareil Estate. They have spent over \$200,000 to put in an application for the Non Pareil Estate and planning, as they were, for 400 to 500 persons from that area to get permanent jobs. They also had a joint venture partner from abroad. They were taking matters into their own hands to ensure that they empower themselves and they have lost money in that process and not a word from Members on that side, but they come to this Parliament and try to tell us that they care about the people.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, if they are serious about agriculture, they would really deal with that situation of the Non Pareil Estate. I wish also to indicate that there is a need for lifeguards in the Toco area. Two young ladies from Laventille drowned at Balandra recently and we have always been advocating for lifeguards to be at the popular beaches in the Toco area: Balandra, Salibia, Salibea, Gran Riviere, these are the beaches people visit on a regular basis.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Member for St. Joseph also promised us in the last budget that he has passed moneys to upgrade the beach facilities in Salibia/Toco and up to this day not a nail, nothing at all and the people are still waiting with bated breath to get anything in that area.

I want to serve the Government a notice that we in that particular area need to share in the pie just as much as anybody else in Trinidad and Tobago.

Thank you.

4.15 p.m.

The Minister of Social and Community Development and Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs (Hon. Manohar Ramsaran): Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is a real pleasure to join in this debate 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, 2001". I wish to commend and thank the hon. Minister of Finance for his excellent presentation of the Budget Statement 2001 entitled "Building Trinidad and Tobago for a Better Future [*Desk thumping*] More Jobs, Better Education, More Caring".

The Leader of the Opposition, when he replied to the budget, condemned this Government and the Minister of Finance for mismanagement and waste. [MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*] He accused us of frittering away the country's wealth and ensuring that nothing is good although, coming to the end of his contribution, he said the country is in a sound financial position. The Member for Diego Martin East too mentioned that the Minister of Finance has bankrupted this country. Now, Mr. Speaker, the contradiction is a contradiction of sorts in that the Leader of the Opposition said that within 90 days of returning to office he will implement a 10-point plan. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Manning: I did not say that.

Hon. M. Ramsaran: The first one he spoke about was tax relief. "The PNM commits itself to a reduction of tax rates for individuals and corporations on a phased basis to a target level of 25 per cent". Mr. Speaker, the cost of this alone would be billions of dollars and he would do this within the first 90 days. This is the contradiction that I talk about. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: Order please, order please.

Hon. Mr. Ramsaran: He would come into office and within 90 days he would put things right. He would ensure that public servants are paid. Mr. Speaker, I want to refer him back to the period 1983 to 1995 when public servants

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in this country were owed their salaries and increments over time and that government in office did nothing. It took this administration between 1995 and now to pay all the debts owed to our public servants. We ensured that they were paid salaries that were due to them and I am sure that when the negotiations are completed with PSA, public servants of this country will be paid and paid on time. So, Mr. Speaker, for the Leader of the Opposition to mislead this country and tell us that we have wasted and squandered the wealth of the country and to try to fool this country and say that within 90 days he is going to implement a 10-point plan, I feel this is conceit and this is misleading the public.

Just before I come back into the meat of my presentation I want to answer the Member for Toco/Manzanilla. He talked about sports. I would like the people of this country to judge what they did for sports between 1991 and 1995 and what this administration did for sports between 1995 and the year 2000 and they would see the vast difference. He is talking about coaching. I want to let the hon. Member know that this Government, at least the Ministry of Sport, has embarked upon a coaching scheme to target our youngsters. We have under-10 coaching, under-12, under-13 and under-15, and this would show them the results. [*Interruption*] Maybe they had some spurious coaching in the past but we have made concerted efforts across this country instituting top-class coaching, not the likes of the Member for Tunapuna; people who know what cricket is about and how to teach cricket.

This resulted, Mr. Speaker, in Trinidad and Tobago winning the under-15 championships for the year 2000. [*Desk thumping*] We get results. These people were 10 years old when we came into office, now they are 15 and we have won the West Indies Regional Championships. More than that, Mr. Speaker—Tichan Maraj captained the West Indies Youth Under-15 team with six Trinidadians and won a world tournament for the West Indies. [*Desk thumping*] This is a Government that performs.

Let me also come to football as mentioned by the Member for Toco/Manzanilla. Mr. Speaker, we have to say this is a national effort. We called for the public to support this football team because we know that we will reach Korea. We had that vision that we are going to the World Cup finals but we got the impression that we were not supported by the Opposition. This was said by the Member for Tunapuna who said the team is not good and the coach is a waste of time and so forth. Today, Mr. Speaker, we have reached a stage where there is no turning back. As the Government of the day we are not turning back to the PNM of 1991—1995. So when they talk about sports they have to be very careful of what they say.

Hasely Crawford won a gold medal for us in 1976, and for 19 years—between 1991 and 1995, what did the government of that era do for Hasely Crawford? Nothing, Mr. Speaker! When we went into office through the then Minister of Sport we ensured that he got a house and then the Hasely Crawford Stadium was named after him. More than that, last week, about Tuesday it was, he came into my office and said, “Minister, you know, things are not going as well as I would like”, because in the past the government made him do this and do that with promises that they would reimburse him. The man sat in my office and I called my Permanent Secretary and my Director of Sports who listened to him talk about how he was promised, “Do this, we will fix it. We will give you back the money. Do that and we will give you back the money”; and, Mr. Speaker, the man was heavily indebted.

As a sportsman of the last century in this country I listened with compassion. Immediately I called my colleagues and with the help of Friends of Hasely Crawford we have raised \$400,000. [*Desk thumping*] [*Inaudible*] We also gave him a plaque to mark his contribution as a sportsman of the last century. Do you know what, Mr. Speaker? Suddenly the Leader of the Opposition wants to recognize Hasely Crawford because there was a crowd of 25,000 cheering people there. He ensured his supporters sort of hijacked the situation so that he would be part of a presentation. The Government of the day presented to the nation’s hero an award and a plaque, which they had the opportunity to do between 1991 and 1995—they did nothing. This Government attempted to do something at the half-time portion of the match and if you looked at the newspaper this morning—we like national unity—you would see we allowed the Opposition Leader to be part of the picture.

What is happening, Mr. Speaker, is that this—[*Interruption*] [*Mr. Manning rose*] I will give way as soon as I finish the point. This Government is about honouring our heroes. We think that if we want our young people to move forward they must know who our heroes are. Hence we gave that award to Mr. Hasely Crawford in the sum of \$400,000 so he could pay his debts, fix his house and he would have a future befitting the sportsman of the last century. Mr. Speaker, if I am thought of as misleading this House I would not apologize because I have reliable information that a Senator on that side actually abused the people from the football federation and ensured that the Leader of the Opposition be part of that picture. This is what I was told.

Mr. Manning: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. Minister for giving way. I would like to let him know that I was invited. In fact, I was beseeched yesterday to join

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that party. I want to make it clear, Mr. Speaker, to the hon. Minister and Members opposite that I do not have to foist myself on persons. We create our own opportunities in politics and, quite frankly, I do not need the UNC to be able to advance my own political cause. I was in that party yesterday because I was invited to join it. [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. M. Ramsaran: Mr. Speaker, I would not debate that much more. I would not talk about who invited and why they invited him. Indeed, the point we must make is that this Government remembers our heroes. Recently we honoured 100 sportsmen of the last century. Do you remember the PNM in office from 1991—1995 saying thanks to anybody? They could not even say thanks. They could not even honour Hasely Crawford who is the only gold medalist in the country to date. They do not respect our elders.

As a matter of fact, when we heard the budget presentation of the hon. Member for San Fernando East, he talked about a middle class—enriching the middle class, bringing them back and that people must have one car in their households. However, Mr. Speaker it is a fact today that since this Government came into office and made certain changes to the motor car industry people do not only have one car. There are families with three to four cars in their households. So to talk about his—this is to show that this Government cares about everybody.

That is why the hon. Minister of Finance spoke about why this Government is doing so good. It is because we have taken care of our elderly and we are doing this in more ways than one. Of course, this Government must go on record as having increased old age pension by 103 per cent from 1995 to 2000. [*Desk thumping*] In five years they increased it by 41 per cent. Since 1956 onwards it was \$2 there, \$3 there, and these people were living well below the poverty line. We aimed to get our old age pensioners above the poverty line by the year 1999. We arrived at that figure and now our old age pensioners are \$100 above the poverty line in this country. [*Desk thumping*]

When the hon. Member for Diego Martin East tries to split hairs by bringing figures to this House, I want to remind this House that it was under this government's watch in 1996 that the rankings of Trinidad and Tobago rose from about 74 to No. 1 in the world. [*Desk thumping*] That was repeated in 1997 and 1998 and in 1999 we slipped to fifth place. After the break I will get the information to read it to hon. Members. No country in the world remains static with any one position. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Valley: Look them here. Do you want them?

Hon. M. Ramsaran: People move from 1 to 5 to 4 to 3 to 2. *[Interruption]* So Mr. Speaker, I want to let you know that we have made our mark as far as poverty is concerned in this country.

Mr. Valley: Read it.

Hon. M. Ramsaran: Thank you very much. Mr. Speaker, this will prove that no country, and especially Trinidad and Tobago, stayed static. This is not to remain static. These are figures—this is how the UNDP would view us—and I am glad the hon. Member for Diego Martin Central ran across and gave me the figures. Do you know why? Let me say why—and deny this one. When we came into office in 1995 the poverty level was 35.9 per cent. *[Interruption]* In 1998 *[Interruption]* the World Bank Report reported a poverty level of 20-odd per cent and in this very UNDP report, *[Interruption]* poverty was 5 per cent in Trinidad and Tobago. Deny that. *[Desk thumping]* So, Mr. Speaker, this country to me should be grateful for having this Government in place and we could go on and show this country what we have done.

If I repeat speakers on this side I would ask, “What did that government do between 1991 and 1995 that the country could be proud of them?” We will show you what we have done. Just to touch on a few of the MPs, the MP for Diego Martin East said that his constituency got nothing in the last five years. Poor representation, Mr. Speaker! *[Laughter]* *[Desk thumping]* How could one say anything different? *[Desk thumping]* How could somebody be so “bol’ face” to say he got nothing in five years. He should resign and let somebody else do the job. If he cannot do it let somebody else do the job.

The Member for Arouca North on Radio 104 told the country that he is going to be re-elected because the UNC did nothing for him in four and a half years. Mr. Speaker, he feels that with the blessings of his leader and a balisier tie he is going to hoodwink people and win a seat. This is unfortunate politics in this country. Someone admits to the country that they did nothing in four and a half years but they want to win an election. *[Interruption]* This is what is happening. *[Interruption]*

Mr. Speaker: Order please, order please.

Hon. M. Ramsaran: The Member for Toco/Manzanilla—*[Interruption]* *[Inaudible]* I would like the hon. Member for Arouca North to show this House—bring to the Parliament letters he wrote to anybody. What representations did he make? The Member for Toco/Manzanilla this afternoon said that I asked him to write me and I did that, Mr. Speaker. He was having a problem. I said, “Well, drop a note for me and I will have it investigated”. He said, “That is doing

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my work”. Mr. Speaker, as a Member of Parliament I am sure you will know better than I do that one has to make representations for one’s constituency and if one cannot do it, do the honourable thing. Tell your leader, “Well look, I am not interested because I cannot do the job”, and let somebody else do it.

In Toco there is a person by the name of Michael Alves, head of the Toco foundation. He has done so much for the people of Toco. He has done so many projects and he continues to do that to assist the people in Toco. *[Interruption]* Mr. Speaker, this is what we want. *[Interruption]*

Mr. Speaker: May I appeal to the Member for Diego Martin Central, the Member for Toco/Manzanilla, the Member for Arouca North and the Member for Tunapuna to cool it while the Member is on his feet. It makes it extremely difficult for the reporters to take everything when we get this number of voices speaking at the same time; apart from it not being right and contrary to the Standing Orders.

The sitting of the House, hon. Members, is suspended for half an hour.

4.30 p.m.: *Sitting suspended.*

5.07 p.m.: *Sitting resumed.*

Hon. M. Ramsaran: Mr. Speaker, just before we took the teabreak, I was trying to give an overview of what was said by Members opposite. I repeat that there are one or two Members of the Opposition who write to and talk to Ministers of the Government to see how we could assist their communities and distressed persons who live there. I will not go into the names of the Opposition Members who do this, but today, when one hears the Member for Toco/Manzanilla saying things in response to his request when he asked for certain things—I told the Member to drop me a note so that I could have the Ministry investigate the matter and see if it could assist the Member.

Mr. Speaker, to hear the Member saying today that by doing that he will be assisting the Minister of Social and Community Development and Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs and he wants a part of the salary increase, I think the Member is making a mockery of Parliament. The Member should get up and advocate his responsibilities. A Member of Parliament is supposed to serve his or her constituency. The Opposition is going to tell people in their campaign that they were going to do this and that for the people but they cannot do it because the UNC is in office.

As I said before the tea break, the Member should offer his resignation and tell the Member for San Fernando East that he has had enough.

Mr. Boynes: Is it not a fact that I told you that your office in Sangre Grande is non-functional?

Hon. M. Ramsaran: Mr. Speaker, the Member did tell me that and my Permanent Secretary who is in charge investigated the matter. Mr. Speaker, you will know more than anybody that the Government of the day is dealing with policies to see how it could influence the Ministry to go in a certain way and, it is for the civil servants and the Permanent Secretary to look at how these policies are carried out. When I asked my staff at head office, they told me that all was well in Sangre Grande.

Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition said that he left this Government with a solid foundation in 1995. Yes, he left high unemployment; poverty at 35.9 per cent; unpaved roads; huge potholes; water for about 14 per cent of the people of Trinidad and Tobago; high cost of living; and no security for employees. I have to thank my friend, the Member for Nariva, for ensuring —this is where the difference lies between governments; this Government looks at the poorest people in this county to give them a good standard of living—the minimum wage is \$7.00 an hour. The Opposition could not have done that for the five years it was in office. The Opposition talked about it and tried everything but it could not do it. It took the little giant from Nariva to ensure our workers got \$7.00 an hour, which is the minimum wage in this country. *[Desk thumping]*

Mr. Speaker, we want to hear an apology from the Member for Diego Martin East—school in the bush. The Government will talk about that later. I am sure the Minister of Education will do that. There were no school places for 7,000 to 10,000 students per year. This is a solid foundation indeed. There is no reason why the crime rate is so high today.

Dr. Rowley: The crime rate is high!

Hon. M. Ramsaran: As the Minister in the Ministry of Social and Community Development and Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs we did studies. As far as I am concerned the Government has to develop a society and prepare our young people for life ahead. If there are 10,000 children leaving school and battling on the streets, what kind of education is that?

The recent World Bank Report showed that children without education have no chance competing for jobs in the open market. Mr. Speaker, what would those children do? They will turn to crime. Today, this Government is correcting that evil. As I mentioned before, our coaching programme has produced fruit in that we have won the Youth Championship in the West Indies and the Under 19 team

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did very well in Guyana. So our programmes are paying off, whereas the Opposition programmes—if they had any—did not pay off because today there are criminals in the streets. I have always asked the question: show me a criminal who is four and one half years old and I will admit that yes, this Government has failed. This Government policy would bear fruit in the next 10 to 15 years.

Mr. Speaker, one has to understand that when the Opposition talks about leaving a solid foundation in this country it is indeed the one which I have spoken about. One of the hallmarks of the Opposition in office—as alluded to by the Prime Minister this morning—is the increase of taxes every year. In this country there was a culture where people used to rush to listen to their radios in their motorcars and running home to listen on television for what taxes the Opposition would increase. What this Government did under the astute leadership of the Minister of Finance, Planning and Development is to do away with taxes and reduce it over a period of time. Yes, the Government perhaps did not increase salaries to workers over a period of time but their take home salary is more than before and it will be so this year after the tax relief is increased, which will impact on the salary that workers take home.

Mr. Speaker, for the Leader of the Opposition to say that they left us on a solid foundation is indeed trying again to hoodwink this population, but this population cannot be fooled. Recently I visited two or three senior citizens' homes and these people were telling us to tell their Prime Minister, thanks very much and they sent kisses and hugs for him. They know what happened to their lives over the last five years and, they were saying thanks to this Government. This Government did not only increase old age pension but gave the people a better standard of living.

Mr. Speaker, the Ministry of Social and Community Development and Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs has established a section to deal with especially the aged people in this country. I want to repeat again the words of the Minister of Finance, Planning and Development that this Government is succeeding because of the way it treats our elderly people in this country.

In 1999 the Government celebrated the year of the elderly and with our programmes the Government has ensured that people throughout the country are now aware of what our elderly need and what they deserve. So, what the Opposition must do before it goes and campaigns is to apologize to this nation for its failure between 1991 to 1995. The foundation that the Leader of the Opposition left us—we would not like to leave this country when this Government demits office sometime in the year 2020 and beyond.

Mr. Speaker, we inherited a country that was in despair and there was a sense of hopelessness. If you could throw your mind back you would have felt that. The people were crying for a change and they wanted to ensure that they would get good governance and this is what this Government offered the people over the last five years and the Opposition cannot change that. *[Interruption]* We would like to thank everybody who voted for us and we thank the nation. I want to say that next election we will be thanking people from Tunapuna and Arouca North. *[Desk thumping]* I am confident about that. They will vote the people of the UNC into Government. So we thank the people in advance very much. This is what this Government is about. We are grateful for people who have supported us and at no time anybody could say that this Government was ungrateful. *[Interruption]* This Government did try to establish what was happening.

Mr. Speaker, I was just handed a note. The figures that I got with respect to old age pension will be across the board—so when the Members for Tobago speak in their debate they must understand that it is not only infrastructure this Government is concentrating on but also human beings. This budget 2000—2001 is about developing the people in this country. I have here 29,046 persons will be recipients of old age pension to the value of \$3.6 million, public assistance, \$6.89 million.

5.15 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, we talk about public assistance. The previous government increased public assistance, as was said again by the Prime Minister this morning, by 27 cents per day. Their increases are to make a mockery of our poor people in this country. When I came into office, I immediately talked to our people and they said there were certain discrepancies in the whole question of public assistance. We appointed a task force to look into that, and the task force reported and we implemented, this year, a substantial increase to the recipients of public assistance—something they could not do and would never do!

As far as I am concerned, growing up in the poorer part of the country, that government never cared about poor people. The then Prime Minister, now Leader of the Opposition, said so in his debate. He is looking at helping the middle class. All they are doing, as far as I am concerned, is looking for votes, feeling that could influence some people to vote for them.

Mr. Speaker, the Member for Toco/Manzanilla talked about our national youth policy and sport. He tried to give the impression that this Ministry was shut down. I want to tell him that for the first time, the Ministry of Sport and Youth

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Affairs, over the last five years, under two Ministers who care about the young people of this country, has moved like never before.

When we look at some of the highlights, we have passed the sport policy. It is now being implemented. The Government, through the Public Sector Investment Programme has expanded the facilities throughout the community by providing new infrastructure for youth and sport. Construction of new swimming pools throughout the country; construction of indoor sporting arenas in major communities; creation of a national hockey centre; multipurpose youth sport facilities; refurbishing of existing sporting facilities, thus keeping them on par with international requirements and standards; and creation of community sporting programmes such as the Super Five Sport Development Programme.

Mr. Speaker, our mission at the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs is to deliver quality sport services to the citizens for the development of sport and youth. This Ministry sees itself at the forefront of human development in the field of sport and youth, and has focused not just on individuals, but also on the community. This thrust will enhance the quality of life and result in a more acceptable and healthier individual, all of which contribute to civil society and the national good.

We will continue to provide this country—and when one goes throughout this country, one will see the improvement in what we are doing as far as sporting facilities are concerned. We will continue to build indoor sport arenas, community swimming pools, community-based turf pitches. This Government has built over 20 turf pitches in the last two years and we will continue to build turf pitches. We will build one in Toco/Manzanilla, at Sangre Grande at Ojoe Road. We will be constructing a modern pitch there.

I feel that as the Minister of Sport, we could have all the coaching necessary, but if we do not have proper surfaces, our cricketers will not improve. With respect to cricketing facilities, we will be assisting the academy. We turned the sod last Saturday and we will ensure that the academy is built within the next four months so that our young cricketers, Under-19 cricketers, would use that venue to improve on the quality of cricket. So, this Government is doing as much as we could do to ensure that our young people are given priority in this community. We could go on: regional recreation grounds, hard-surface courts for netball and basketball, youth facilities for recreation and social education.

Mr. Hart: On a point of clarification, please, just for my edification, I want to know what is a modern turf pitch.

Hon. M. Ramsaran: Mr. Speaker, we have had, over time, turf pitches that were not built in accordance with what we do now. If one does not construct a turf pitch in a certain way and plant the grass—in his time, they built turf pitches and the grass would never grow. We are looking at working with the University of the West Indies, ensuring that when we build these turf pitches, certain surfaces will be different from others. We are trying to build turf pitches to assist faster bowlers and slower bowlers. We are using a lot of technique into developing our turf pitches so our young people will understand that there are different pitches for different bowlers. This will improve the quality of cricket.

Mr. Speaker, I know that that was an apology for how they did things in the past, but this Government is moving ahead into the next Millennium. We are talking about modern turf pitches as opposed to those bare, dry pitches that they built. We will also continue our coaching programmes. I am happy to announce that Cuba, through the bilateral agreement signed with our Minister of Foreign Affairs, the boxing and volleyball coaches have arrived in this country and are working throughout the length and breadth of Trinidad and Tobago to ensure that we improve our stock of volleyball and boxing athletes so that these people could now take the place that they belong to, at the head of Caribbean sports.

I want to thank the Member for Toco/ Manzanilla for espousing my projection from last year to make Trinidad and Tobago the capital of sport in the West Indies and the region. I said that last year and I want to thank him for reminding this House that Trinidad and Tobago will be the sporting capital of the world. We are building our four stadia, together with improving the Hasely Crawford Stadium, for modern—he might ask what is modern—facilities to deal with our people to ensure that they become good athletes.

Mr. Speaker, this is another thing which I want to stress. In our Ministry, we are not only looking at building facilities, but we want to continue to help them. We have introduced school coaching programmes which involve netball, football, basketball, tennis, volleyball, hockey, track and field, and so forth. We are into rural coaching.

Last year, I had my cricket coaches visit the areas that were not coached by the Trinidad and Tobago Cricket Board of Control, and our coaches went into the far-off places like Biche and Point Fortin—areas that were left out. Do you know what they did? They discovered somebody who had never played organized cricket before and just introduced him to the national selectors—a person from Biche—and he made the national Under-15 team.

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We are not competing with the Trinidad and Tobago Cricket Board of Control, but we are, indeed, supplementing what they do. We work closely with them. This is something they could not do in the past. I want to put something on the record, Mr. Speaker. I know it will anger people. Sport was not given any help from the last regime because the then Prime Minister said that one plays sports when one has nothing else to do.

Mr. Speaker, sport, as you would know, would put us on the international map. It will give our young people areas for development. Just recently, someone wrote something in the press about coaching, not knowing what is happening. It was reported in the press, maybe in a small part, but indeed, recently we sent six young people to study in Cuba in the area of physical education and sports. They have all gone and they are in Cuba studying, given scholarships by the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs.

As for the Ato Boldon fund, it was supposed to start in the year 2000; it will start. We were concentrating on assisting Ato Boldon over the last three years, giving a substantial amount to help in his training. We also give the other athletes. We did not stop at Ato. We helped Neil De Silva and other athletes who approached us for assistance in their preparation for the Olympics.

Mr. Speaker, we have started to place emphasis on lawn tennis, swimming and volleyball. I dare say that people are boasting that they take part in the fastest growing sport and we will help in these three areas. Of course, our Super Five sport programme is continuing and we continue to promote sports, as facilitated through the issue of grants made available to sporting organizations. Grants cover up to 50 per cent in the case of local and overseas projects and 100 per cent in the case of approved coaching and other sport development programmes.

We could go on and on. We have instituted coach education, physical education and sport leadership programmes and we continue to offer community coaching assistance to our communities across the country. We work with the different sporting organizations to afford coaches to go throughout the length and breadth of this country. I will not be surprised, as I said earlier, to feel the impact of what we are doing in this country in the field of sport and youth.

Mr. Speaker, we will continue to assist our communities in training. We are placing special emphasis on women in sport. Again, I want to thank the former Minister for attending the first Women in Sports Conference, and it continues with our Deputy Director of Sports who will attend these functions to ensure that we give the women in this country that impetus to take sport seriously, as was done in the past.

I remember when we honoured our 100 sport achievers from the last century and we heard of the contribution made by our women in the 1950s, and so forth. It was quite impressive and I wondered why, in Trinidad and Tobago, we have not maintained that, especially in the sport of hockey. Today I am sure that with all the facilities being built across the land, facilities alone cannot do it, I agree, but with the coaching and support programmes we are putting in place, I am sure that we will improve the quality of our sportswomen.

Mr. Speaker, again our Minister of Finance mentioned the expansion of the fiscal incentives to our sports activities. As we continue to support the development of sport, we have embarked on a programme to expand our plant infrastructure in ways that will benefit the largest possible public participation in the field of sport. When we first won the bid to host the most prestigious international sporting event in the history of Trinidad and Tobago, we decided that not only would we provide football field seating and other auxiliary accommodation for the event, but to include provisions for track and field, rugby and a myriad of other sporting disciplines. When these four stadia have been completed, they will again be to the benefit of the young people of this country.

We have been performing, as far as sport is concerned. It is no accident that our football team is doing well. Our cricket team has suddenly started to improve in their performance. It is because of what we are doing out there in the field. I am sure in the year 2001, or even later this year when we take part in the limited-overs competition, we will do well.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I ask the question, what did that Government in office between 1991—1995 do in the field of sports? What did they do?

Mr. Narine: You will hear tomorrow. It is coming!

Hon. M. Ramsaran: I hope you do not go and fix up some figures. Mr. Speaker, I want to talk a little about the national youth policy, because it is quite unfortunate to hear the Member for Toco/Manzanilla. He was right in one aspect. We started two years ago to ensure that the young people of this country participate in our national youth policy.

We had 77 consultations throughout Trinidad and Tobago with more than 8,000 people participating. Then we finished that off. After those 77 consultations, we then had a draft national policy—the Member for Port of Spain South has it in his hands. Then we came down to three national consultations in Tobago, Port of Spain and San Fernando.

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We invited people across the board. We invited all Members of Parliament. We put national advertisements on radio, television and the newspaper and the turnout was quite good. Mr. Speaker, the PNM took part at the very last hour of the final consultation. I had already left and I understand that the Member for Tunapuna went there and insulted the young people of this country. He walked in with a pair of short pants and a jersey and there were some unruly young PNM people who voiced their opinion. They did not read the document. They went in there and tried to create an impression that nothing was done and nobody took part in the consultation, but over 8,000 people took part in the initial stages. We have not finished as yet. We are still inviting people to participate, because we know that at the end of the day, the national youth policy will be for the benefit of this country.

Mr. Boynes: I just want to ask one question. Are you then saying, Mr. Minister, that you are totally pleased with this document? Do you not find this document vague? Is this what the young people of Trinidad and Tobago want?

Hon. M. Ramsaran: Mr. Speaker, that is why we had consultations. That is why we are still in the process of consultation. We are still meeting with people. We do not want to push things down people's throats. We took our time with this and had 77 consultations, three of which were national consultations. When we did our final three consultations, we had the World Bank report that was presented hand in hand with the national youth policy, to see how that policy could influence our own national youth policy.

5.30 p.m.

When we come up with other drafts, we, again, will be talking to people to see how that could influence the final document to be presented to Parliament. We are not rushing it. You did nothing when you were in office and today we have something you criticize. Is that what you want? That is not what we want. When you see the other draft, I am sure you will be impressed with the changes that have taken place; but this is a draft policy.

Again, when Members opposite come to this Parliament, they must tell us what they did between 1991 and 1995 because now it is election season. They say this is an election budget—all over the place. Well, Mr. Speaker, that is the first government in my living memory that never presented an election budget because, apparently, the Prime Minister did not know when the election would have been. They did not even present an election budget and we presented six, according to them. This is a government that is working and they should apologize. Imagine, they want to win votes and they could not even present an election budget.

Mrs. James: Why must we do that?

Hon. M. Ramsaran: Why must we do that? Because I remember since 1961, the media used to say, "This is an election budget." Whether it was true or not, I do not know.

Dr. Rowley: Confession is good for the soul.

Hon. M. Ramsaran: Our commentators would say, "This is an election budget." You said it for five years, "This is an election budget", but it is the first time you proved all the pundits wrong; the first time you went into an election and did not present an election budget.

To me, it says a lot about how this party in Opposition cares about the people of this country. They regard nobody because they know when this Government came into office after a few short months, it increased old age pension by more than twice the amount they did in five years. We had nothing new. The Treasury was the same. Within the first year in office, we cleared up all the public service debts. We are a government that contribute to the development of this country and today a lot of noise was made about our figures, whether it was 5 per cent or whatever per cent.

I put on record what we have been doing to alleviate poverty in this country. When we assumed responsibility for this country, we put things in place that would impact on the reduction of poverty. In 1995, the then Minister of Social Development attended the Copenhagen Summit and came back with certain information to use to influence the poverty reduction in this country. But, again, the Prime Minister called election early so nothing was done. The new administration went to Cabinet, came to Parliament and put things in place to deal with social development in this country and, today, nobody opposite could stand and be fair in criticizing this Government about what we did to reduce poverty in this country.

I spoke earlier about old age pension and public assistance. We have programmes in place—the SHARE programme. We have expanded a programme to be fairly distributed throughout this country. We ensure that every constituency, according to our political demarcation, would have a minimum amount of SHARE hampers. We have done that to ensure equity in this country. We have continued to build institutions for our children. We came to this Parliament with laws to protect our children because we care about the future of our country.

We will continue to look at our laws and legislation to ensure that our people are not incarcerated after a first offence, with the Community Service Orders Bill

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and with the Community Mediation Bill. We will be looking at a family court shortly and a drug court to follow.

Mr. Speaker, we have a vision. We know where to take this country and how to take it. We decided early that once there is money again in this country, once there is economic activity, the social activity must quicken to ensure that we have a fair balance of our socio/economic state in this country. I am happy to say, look at this budget and you would see there are three billion-dollar ministries and mine is not too far behind. The social sector in this country has been given that shot in the arm to try to come to grips with what is taking place in the country. I will repeat that it is a budget that is people-centred and people-oriented. It is a budget that you really cannot criticize. That is why the Members on the opposite side would rehash their speeches week after week as to what—

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

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

Question put and agreed to.

Hon. M. Ramsaran: Mr. Speaker, just to continue on what this Government has done to deal with poverty alleviation, I put on record that this Government has, in its own way, reduced poverty across the line. Nobody could deny that, because when we look around the country today, if people are honest, they will see what has taken place in the various ministries. This is another area in which this Government must be congratulated because we saw the need for all Ministers and their civil servants who would have any impact on poverty to work together in a council to deal with poverty eradication. This has been working well for us. We look at the whole question of the Change Management Unit and what we have been doing.

I put on record some of the approaches that this Government has made towards the reduction of poverty. I mentioned the SHARE programme. Approximately 75,000 food hampers were distributed to needy families. It is important to note that the SHARE programme is expanded and integrated with the relief centres programme.

Under the Ministry's social rehabilitation project, approximately 50 grants were made to persons in difficult social circumstances, including recipients of welfare, probationers, victims of domestic violence and so forth. We continue to allow training to be an important part of our services.

In collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme, a poverty methodology study is being conducted to identify indices which could be adopted to facilitate monitoring and measurement of the impact of the poverty alleviation programme.

One of the successes of my Ministry, although it is only in 19 communities, has been our "Adopt a Community Programme". Recently, we had a function where PowerGen adopted two communities in Trinidad and Tobago and I will repeat it again here today. One was in the Brasso Venado area, where in 1997 or 1998—I cannot remember the exact year—when we went into that community, people were still moving aside water that was green in colour to drink in the late 20th Century. That was an insult to us all. When we looked at those children who received awards on Saturday gone, it would have brought tears to the eyes of anyone who had any compassion and who could understand what poverty was.

The Minister of Public Utilities was there with us and he, too, shared his approval for that programme which has taken 500 children out of poverty through education, given scholarships so they will now attend primary or secondary schools. This is what eradicating poverty is about, not only the middle class as alluded to by the Member for San Fernando East.

We would continue to deal with the problems in our country. For the first time in this country, treatment and rehabilitation programmes to deal with our drug problem have been taken seriously. You all know about Piparo and other centres that have been opened over the last five years to deal with the treatment and rehabilitation of our poor drug addicts. Again, they were not four and a half years old. These are people who have gone through the system and suffered over time.

Community centres. Since 1984—and I put it on record and somebody challenged me—the Ministry of Community Development never delivered a community centre to this country and, today, we have delivered over 53 community centres over the last two years. The Member for Arouca North will say, "Well, we built a couple." Yes, they did, but the Ministry of Community Development could never have delivered a community centre.

Mr. Narine: So what happened to St. John's Road?

Hon. M. Ramsaran: Again, this was because of the disregard for this Ministry by previous Prime Ministers and previous governments to deal with the people of our communities.

Mr. Speaker, I could go on and on but I underline the fact that the Government that was in office between 1991 and 1995 and even today, during

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this debate, after listening to the Member for Toco/Manzanilla, the Member for Diego Martin East and the Leader of the Opposition, they still cannot understand how to deal with poverty in this country. Imagine, they could stand here and criticize the \$100 increase in old age pension. They would try to put that together with some alleged corruption somewhere. That is cruelty. But, as the Prime Minister said this morning, to cross off one name from the education list, I want them to tell one old age pensioner, "Do not receive the \$100 increase." That is what that Opposition is trying to tell our people; but they cannot succeed. Our people will not be fooled. I am confident that we will be seeing so many new faces on that side come December or January, or whenever elections are held—

Dr. Rowley: I agree.

Hon. M. Ramsaran:—because of the performance of this Government and the non-performance of that government.

I let you know that we are indeed happy to work with a government that cares; to listen to a budget that impacts on the social development of this country; that impacts on health services; on housing; on national security and on education.

Mr. Speaker, this Government must be congratulated and I dare say the next speaker who gets up would tell us—and maybe the country will forgive you—that yes, this Government has done something for the poor people in this country. They increased old age pension by \$41; public assistance by \$23 over five years. We could go on with what we have done and every time they get up, they left us on a sound financial footing. That is all they say. They left us with sound unemployment and sound poverty. As far as I am concerned, they left this country in a state of disrepair that could only have been brought back by divine intervention in the person of our hon. Prime Minister and the Government that has been in office for the last five years.

Mr. Speaker, I promise you that we will be in government for the next term and we will continue to ensure that we improve the quality of life in this country so that our people will record us as a government that cared for the development of the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you.

Mr. Hedwige Bereaux (*La Brea*): Mr. Speaker, I join the debate on this Bill to provide for the service of Trinidad and Tobago in the year 2000/2001, commonly called the Budget. However, before I get into my contribution, the irrationality of the Members on the other side never fails to amaze me.

The hon. Member for Chaguaramas chided those Members on this side who indicated that nothing was done in their communities. *[Interruption]* He chided them. If you do not understand what that is, get a dictionary. They always believe we do not know where places are. Brasso Venado is in the constituency of Tabaquite. As far as I can recall, the constituency of Tabaquite has always been in UNC hands, or ULF hands, or permutations of that. *[Interruption]* I did not disturb you. You noticed I did not.

It has always been in their hands and at one time, during the period 1986—1991, that constituency was in government yet, he comes here complaining that when he went to Brasso Venado, some people were moving green water in order to get good water. That was good representation by the people who represented Tabaquite all along. Those persons who represented Tabaquite did not do their work and I will tell you something about Brasso Venado. I knew it before you. There were pipes in that area and it was because of their slackness, the slackness of your Members, that they did not see that the pipes were upgraded. Please, I know there, too.

5.45 p.m.

Then he speaks about community centres and so on, but I am going to get into that later. The hon. Member for St. Augustine came here, and I think I heard him say for the years 1992—1994 Trinidad and Tobago Mortgage Finance Company Limited did not grant any mortgages. I do not know. I cannot believe that. I have the *Annual Report of the Trinidad and Tobago Mortgage Finance Company Limited* which says:

“During the financial year ended December 31, 1992, a total of 308 loans in the aggregate sum of \$44,265,200 were granted—24 per cent over the pervious year.

During the financial year ended December 31, 1993, a total of 332 loans in aggregate, a sum of \$59,025,142 was granted.

During the financial year ended December 31, 1994...”

[Interruption] I did not disturb you and I would prefer if you did not—

“During the financial year ended December 31, 1994, a total of 271 loans were granted.”

Mr. Speaker, that is for the records. That is for Trinidad and Tobago Mortgage Finance Company Limited. Mr. Speaker, I have dealt with that.

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I will now get to the budget statement. It can be easily characterized and described in three words: dishonest, desperate and despicable. [*Desk thumping*] It is dishonest because it is laced with misstatements, inaccuracies, attempts to conceal the truth and blatant lies. It is desperate because it represents a last-ditch effort by an administration that has involved itself in the most brazen discrimination, nepotism, victimization, corruption, maladministration and now in a last-ditch effort, as I said: they are trying to put a human face on their stewardship.

It is despicable because the national budget statement is a government initiative which is expected to embody government's plans to mobilize the productive activity as a means of resolving the socio-economic problems of the nation.

It is supposed to be a blueprint for the country which business and investors, both foreign and local, can look to as a guide as to where the country is going. When it is not only devoid of any such guidelines or policies but also is misleading in key indicators, it is indeed a betrayal of trust and a national disgrace, and the perpetrator of such action is to be despised. [*Desk thumping*] These are indeed strong, harsh words. Normally I would not want to speak them, but you can rest assured that I have not uttered them either in jest or for effect only. I shall, in the course of my contribution, satisfy the House and the national community as to the veracity of these statements.

I begin at page 2 of the Budget Statement. Page 1 of the Budget Statement has some introduction. Page two states:

“We took our children off the street and sent them to school;”

Which school? Name 10 children you took off the street and sent to school. You asked us to name, name one. No, you did not put children in any school.

Page 3 states:

“We reduced the public debt;”

Well we have had enough about that. The reality is that the public debt is increased by \$12 billion. [*Interruption*] Please, you noticed I was not disturbing you? Not you. I was speaking about a Minister, not you. I was speaking about a Minister, your boss, the Minister of Finance, the man in charge of running the country.

They are saying we are better off today. The fact is that in the *Review of the Economy* on page 20, it shows that during the period October 1999—June 2000 food prices rose by 7.6 per cent. Mr. Speaker, it would appear that the hon. Member for Chaguanas did not read the *Review of the Economy*. It said that food prices rose by 7.6 per cent. When you are checking on whether somebody is better off or not, you have to see what is the price of food. Take page 20 and look at it.

Miss Nicholson: Tobago might be 50 per cent.

Mr. H. Bereaux: Today our reserves are much more than our debt. This is not true. Even if this debt is only as they said—I am going to start to deal with him now.

He spoke about pensions, that they increased old age pension by \$100. As it is always with this Government, it is not so much as what they say as what they leave out. I just want to go back to a previous budget, the 1998/1999 Budget Statement, delivered in this honourable House on October 05, 1998. I am going to read from this budget. Page 34 states:

“Further, to take account of increased incomes, the National Insurance System classes will be increased from 8 to 12.”

They increased the individual payments from \$6.45 to \$7.28, \$6.45 to \$9.10, \$6.45 to \$13.02, \$6.45 to \$17.08, \$6.45 to \$19.32 and \$6.45 to \$22.68. They increased all the payments. Everybody had to pay more. Then they came and said—Mr. Speaker, I am reading from the 1998—1999 Budget Statement. I quote:

“Mr. Speaker, in order to make the National Insurance System benefits more meaningful, I propose to increase the benefits payable under the System...”

This is the budget. We are supposed to believe this.

- “ An individual earning \$1,000 per month and who would have been entitled to a pension of \$338 per month will now receive a pension of \$423 per month.
- An individual earning \$2,000 per month and who would have been entitled to a pension of \$338 per month will now receive a pension of \$606 per month.
- An individual earning \$3,600 per month and who would have been entitled to a pension of \$338 per month will now receive a pension of \$1,055 per month.

This means that the 38,000 existing National Insurance retirees will receive higher pensions than they now receive at no additional cost to themselves. A number of other benefits...”

and so on, would increase. What are the facts? The fact is, Mr. Speaker, I am a National Insurance pensioner. I declare an interest in this. The fact is that National Insurance pensioners receive \$475, just some \$100-odd more when they should have all been receiving \$1,055 per month.

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5.55 p.m.

We, the national insurance pensioners, are owed money by this Government, and I have worked out that this should have been done from February 1, 1999. I have worked out that they have 19 months' money for me, and for all the 38,000 other national insurance pensioners they have 19 months' money that they owe at \$575 each month, and that amounts to \$10,925.

You see me, Mr. Speaker, like most of the national insurance pensioners, I do not want any surreptitious increase in any money in my pay here as a legislator. I came here, I knew what my pay was and I am real happy with it. In fact, the way the suffering is going among wage earners in this country, I have said before that I am prepared to take certain steps, but they have to ask me first. All I am saying to you is that you owe me my \$10,000; so if you want to rob the country, line your pockets or give yourself a parting gift, take your parting gift, but give me my \$10,925 that you owe me. That is what I want—my money. The 38,000 pensioners, like myself, we want our money. [*Desk thumping*]

Do not try to promise me things next year or whenever—no. [*Interruption*] If you say so maybe, but you are not a PNM now and you are doing it. Since February 1, 1999 you have owed this money and you have not paid it. This is the same Minister who comes here and says, “I will do certain things in October; I will do certain things next year; I will increase your allowances next year.” Whom are you trying to fool? Some 19 months ago you passed a budget which raised the N.I.S. money and you have not paid. I am saying that the country has to judge you, not by what you say but by what you do; please.

Now, let us go further. It is not only that. If that was all, well it could be said that he must be looking to take some advantage of me, because he knows I am a national insurance pensioner, but he did it elsewhere too. You see, Mr. Speaker, in this budget he spoke about an agriculture disaster fund. Remember that? If you do not remember it, I will read it for you so that you will know.

He says here that there would be an agriculture disaster fund and an allocation of \$5 million, and in this one the farmer would be required to make a contribution. But the Minister always believes that people forget, and *en passant* he said, “Well, the fund was not set up last year, but we still spent \$3.8 million on it.” What he did not tell us was that he broke his word again. On page 31 of the 1999/2000 budget this is what it says, and he always starts with high-sounding phrases:

“Too often in the past Mr. Speaker, our farmers have been distressed, financially and emotionally, by the sudden loss of crops and livestock as a result of flooding.

To alleviate this perennial problem, I propose to establish, this year, an Agricultural Disaster Relief Fund..."

Mr. Speaker, I am so glad that I am a little older than him so we could never—*[Interruption]*—I am plenty older than you.

Sen. Kuei Tung: And I am better looking.

Mr. H. Breaux: And you are better looking than me. You do not worry about that. We never would have to move on the same women, because he has so much sweet talk that I would have no chance. *[Laughter]* I am being honest. Hear him again:

"I propose to establish, this year, an Agricultural Disaster Relief Fund to provide much needed support to our farmers in the event that they are affected by natural disasters.

The details of the operations of the fund will be worked out before the end of 1999."

We are in the year 2000 now, in a next budget "before the end of 1999".

"I have allocated \$15 million to start this fund."

He allocated \$15 million and not only did he not start it, but he reduced the money and tell them that they must pay. So daily he boasts and says that there is an agricultural fund but I do not know if it is the Member for Oropouche he does not like because he is the Minister of Agriculture, Land, and Marine Resources, and he should really be Minister of Finance, Planning and Development. He is a better economist than him. He is no good himself, but he is a better economist than him.

Dr. Griffith: He gave away all Petrotrin land. *[Crosstalk]* *[Laughter]*

Mr. H. Breaux: What first appeared as a gift in this budget, really turned out to be not a gift at all, but something they should have done a year ago and something which should have cost the farmer nothing, was promised to cost him nothing, and is now one-third of what it was supposed to have been in the 1999 budget. If that is care, you tell me.

Mr. Speaker, I am a person like this—when I am making my contribution on the national budget I like to be given an opportunity to make it. I would like you please to speak to the Member for Arima, he seems to be wanting to interfere with me. I do not know why. What was first a big thing, \$15 million, comes now to be one-third of it, and the people still have to contribute, but that is the behaviour of this Government towards agriculture.

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I was involved in having to compensate farmers, and this Government was compensated by the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources schedule. When they came into power, notwithstanding the fact that they have so many supporters in the agricultural areas, they reorganized the schedule and are giving the people less money today. Go into St. Johns in Fyzabad constituency—you should know it Member for Fyzabad—and a number of other places, less money for damage caused by the oil company. But I will deal with that later on when I come to the Green Fund.

They say one thing and then they do another. They do not even have shame. *[Interruption]* Imagine the great champion from Oropouche, the Member for Oropouche, the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources was reported in today's newspaper. I did not plan it, but I just saw it and I could not resist mentioning it:

“TT imports more livestock than it exports, says Sudama.”

Which is true. It states:

“The import level of livestock in Trinidad and Tobago is increasing and output in the local sub-sectors of the livestock industry is declining, according to the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources Trevor Sudama. The Minister revealed this at a Veterinary and Agricultural Exposition...”

Just to get to the other part:

“Sudama noted that the beef imports increased by 5.3 per cent while pork imports went up by 23.7 per cent. He said imports on goat also increased by 30 per cent and lamb by 8.4 per cent.”

From 1997 to 1999, that is correct. I just wanted to read what it says here. Pass it back for the Member for Arima for me, please.

Admit failure; it is 1997—1999, not 1995. The country was better off in 1995, better off in 1993, better off in 1994. You are a failure! This Government that talks about agriculture is a failure in agriculture!

Dr. Griffith: What happened under Dr. Rowley?

Dr. Rowley: Ignore him.

Mr. H. Béréaux: Why am I being disturbed by this grunting? Again, Mr. Speaker, more sleight of hand, that is how they operate. They operate on sleight of hand.

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When this Government came into power they met the On-The-Job Training Programme—let me look at this once again:

“School to Work Apprenticeship Programme”

The Government decides that:

“In order to broker a partnership between the private sector and our young people, I propose to introduce a separate Apprenticeship Allowance...”

Whereby employers who hire certain young people for a six-month period would receive certain credits.

When they came into Government they met the On-the-Job training going on, it was the same thing whereby young people would be employed and the state would help the employer and pay a portion of their salaries. There were several young people, scores of them—when I was employed at Petrotrin—who came in, and a number of other employers did it.

They wanted to corrupt it and interfere with it, but they found that it was well organized. They went ahead and stopped it, just like they did with the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC); just like they tried to do, and have done to some extent, with the youth camps. They did it willfully, and now they are trying to bring this in through the back door, because the Prime Minister got up in a political meeting and said that the PNM will only go out and talk about how the UNC stopped the Civilian Conservation Corps, how they stopped the youth camps and how they stopped the On-the-Job training. Now, they come back in and playing they are bowling political googly on the population and trying to bring it in as some innovation.

It is no innovation. You are unable to do anything properly. This Government is so crooked that it cannot lie down straight in bed.

Mr. Maharaj: You are not supposed to lie down straight; if you like down straight something is wrong. [*Laughter*]

Hon. Member: You gone far, boy.

Mr. H. Breaux: No, they cannot lie down straight in bed. It may or may not be. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Sudama: If you lie down straight you will lie on your head.

Mr. H. Breaux: They cannot even lie down straight in bed. Mr. Speaker, this Minister of Finance, Planning and Development has been boasting. He is fortunate that

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the country was in receipt of substantial oil revenues, and as a result of that they were able to do certain things. Let us look at what they have done. The very sector from which the revenues come, the Minister did not have a word edgewise in the budget about it. I will tell you why. They boast about employment and how much money they are raking in from the oil industry, but what they have not said is that in 1999, in the oil industry 2,600 jobs were lost. I know because I am feeling the effects in my constituency.

6.10 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, what has happened is that we are fast transferring from a gas-based petroleum sector to an oil-based petroleum sector, but although we are moving like that, the oil-based and the land-based petroleum sectors still have the ability to provide jobs and their self-confessed political appointee in Petrotrin, the President, Jagai—because I did not say he was a political appointee, he said it, so I am only repeating what he said—has been operating in that area in such a way as to impoverish the area and not to provide any sort of employment. Any employment, he brings it outside, his friends and whoever in their contracting business they deal with it.

So 2,600 jobs were lost that is why we are feeling the effect in Santa Flora, Palo Seco, La Brea, Erin, all of these areas. We are feeling the effect of the reduction in activity. Can you imagine that? The price of oil is almost \$30.00 a barrel and yet the drilling programme and the work programme are down? What kind of craziness is this? Not only are these programmes down, there is a system in the oil industry where in order to try to maximize the number of jobs, there is casual labour—that is what is called temporary labour whereby you split a job into three and you hire somebody for four months of the year. They will not work four months straight, but they will get the equivalent of four months, and these persons work over the years. What they have done now, is cut down those and therefore, that area is in real poverty. They are doing it willfully, and I will give you an example of what they did.

They have decided now that they are going to close down the club, but that is another one because, most likely we are going to court on that. Do you know that the Palo Seco Sporting Club which has the largest membership of 520 is the one they want to close? But the Penal Sporting Club which is the one with—I have the membership here and I have the board note too. The Penal Sporting Club which has 115 members, they are keeping that one open, and in their own memo, this is what they say, and I am going to read this into the record.

“PALO SECO SPORTING CLUB

This club possesses the largest velodrome in Trinidad and is the home of the annual Palo Seco Games. The nerve centre of community life and the main

hub of sporting activities in the deep South, this club has over the years nurtured many national sportsmen and women.

Over the last four years Petrotrin has spent between Three Hundred to Five Hundred Thousand dollars annually to operate this club, yet has not been able to maintain this extensive facility up to required standard.”

They made \$50 million in profit and gave to the Government, Mr. Speaker.

“In our estimation One Million Dollars is needed immediately as capital expenditure to bring it up to standard...

The Exploration and Production Strategic Business Unit needs to take decisive action in respect of this club. We cannot continue to spend significant sums on it while failing to address all its requirements.”

They want to close it down. The next thing they want to do, which is in their recommendation, is to give it to the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs to run it down more. I want to tell them—and you, Mr. Speaker, as an attorney-at-law of some years standing, will know—that part performance is an important element in a contract. In 1968, BP gave that club to the workers and they started to maintain it and started to run it and when Trinidad Tesoro came in 1969, Trinidad Tesoro took over the maintenance, so Petrotrin cannot give away that club, it is not theirs because even though it was not in writing there was part performance of the contract.

Mr. Speaker, it is more than just law, it is the community you are dealing with and if you all believe that you will come to Palo Seco and take that club or give it away, you have another thought coming. *[Interruption]* You do not worry about whether I threaten or not, any threat I make I could carry out. So you do not bother with that.

Hon . Member: You will take off your jacket.

Mr. H. Breaux: Not only take off my jacket, boss.

Forest Reserve, 256 members, but that is not correct because I know anytime you pass by Forest Reserve Club it is deserted, but it is a special clique in there and there is something else they want to do with Forest Reserve Club which I will reserve. I was saying that is how they have been treating the oil industry. If you look in the budget there is no provision made for the oil industry.

As I am in that area, I want to give some examples and to pinpoint some discrimination and victimization which have been going on in respect of my area. Take for instance, the Siparia/Erin Road from Los Bajos to Erin has not been

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repaired. When you drive in the potholes you could lose a big car because you could barely see the top.

Daly Village Community Centre, the people asked to do it self-help. I think the Minister is responsible for self-help. He did not give them the money and about a week ago called me in my office, trying to make a fool of me. He called me saying they had some money for Daly Village and he wants me to get the people to come for it. They had applied for more than three years, it was started and now they come a week ago playing election politics with me. But I will send the people to collect the money.

In 1995, the Los Bajos Community Centre—he is talking about how many community centres he built—the posts were put up and to this day, nothing is being done. They do it willfully.

Hon. Member: Who put up the posts?

Mr. H. Béréaux: PNM put it up. We will come back and finish it. They went to the Member for Fyzabad and he asked a series of things and when he realized it was in the constituency of La Brea, which they do not have as much chance as a snowball in hell of winning, they decide they are not going to do it, but in any event, I am in Santa Flora. My office is a community centre of its own and I built it. They gave pressure to the man where I had my other office and told him he would not get any contract if I remained there, so I moved, but I built one. The community is using it now as a centre, and I do not owe any money on it, and I did not use any Government labour to build it and it did not cost me \$300,000 like in Couva South and other places.

They talk about sports. They so want to give Béréaux pressure, Salazar Trace Pavilion, not done. The unkindest cut of all is in respect of Sobo, La Brea. There was a basketball court which was being constructed and do you know what happened? You may recall sometime ago you heard about persons who were dispossessed by an Order, they were squatters. The Member for Fyzabad took squatters from Fyzabad and took them onto the Sobo playing field on the basketball court and marked it out, he and some supporters from the Land Settlement Agency. They took them there and tried to put people on the basketball court and I told them do not play the fool in La Brea. I was about to put a rope on Petrotrin for allowing them to come there because the people had been occupying that land for more than 50 years and these people, totally disgraceful, without any regard for people and for the poor, tried to take it.

Mr. Speaker, that is the field on which Gus Logie, the same coach for the Under-15, played. He cut his cricketing teeth there and yet—Anthony Roget,

Philbert Jones all came from there and that is what they were trying to do. You all are motivated by malice and being motivated by malice, you cannot do anything right. Don't care what you do, all the tricks you try, we will catch you because it is said God do not like ugly, and when I say ugly, I mean ugly at heart. I am beautiful because I have a kind heart. Beautiful!

Mr. Speaker, that is the kind of behaviour you get from them so it is very important that we point out these things. Take, for instance, crime. As the honourable political leader indicated in his reply, this Government came into office with a slogan: "If you commit the crime, you must do the time." He started to say that people at one time when they heard about the budget they would be in a panic, now they do not panic when they hear the budget and I will tell you why. They do not have to deal with the exchange rate anymore because the PNM took care of that by having a managed floating exchange rate in April of 1993, so they did not have anything to do with that. We know they all like to pick up PNM initiatives and claim them as their own. They say in the budget that they have reduced taxes.

I also want to remind you that when you said that you reduced taxes in the last budget, you came with a subsequent Act and increased the taxes on the license fees paid by clubs. Do you remember that one? I remember it too. So that same budget you said that was tax-free, it was not. Again, you are pulling tricks, you are bowling googlies to the people. People are not in a panic for the budget, they are in a panic for their lives in this country. The hon. Prime Minister was so good, he pointed it out, even policemen are afraid now the way people are angry. Do you know why people are angry? It is not because—poverty alone does not cause anger, but when people see blatant misuse of money, uncontrolled and unbridled mismanagement, that causes them to get annoyed.

6.25 p.m.

Then the Prime Minister said there is a culture—what were his words? I want to be—[*Interruption*]*—a propensity to lawlessness. Well, he must know, Mr. Speaker. [Interruption]* He is bound to know that. I was never fined in any courthouse for doing anything improper, you know. I was never brought before any magistrate.

Miss Nicholson: [*Inaudible*]*—behind the man face.*

Mr. H. Breaux: What do you mean, behind his face? That is not my problem. He should be here. Is he not the Prime Minister of this country and is this not the budget debate? He should be here, and if he is not here let them tell him.

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You see, they did not charge me. *[Interruption]* Nobody questioned me on any murder. *[Interruption]* It is one of them. They know who was questioned about a murder.

I did not drive on any road on the left-hand side, on the shoulder, and then wanted to assault any Assistant Commissioner of Police. If I made the error for some serious reason and drove on the shoulder of the road and an Assistant Commissioner of Police was to stop me, I would apologize to him and say, “I am very sorry for having done such a thing, but I was in haste, and would you please excuse me and assist me?” That is what a PNM Member of Parliament would say. That is the quality we have, Mr. Speaker. *[Desk thumping]*

Mr. Speaker, I am getting on to crime. *[Interruption]* I am going to come to labour just now. Do not worry. The Member still has a lot of time. I am coming to labour too. As I was saying, on the question of crime, first they started by talking about how crime is under control, serious crime—murders—have been reduced, but, Mr. Speaker, there is in the 21st Century a big bank in Trinidad and Tobago saying they have to close the doors of one of their branches because of too much crime—robbery. That is the legacy that this Government is leaving.

Hon. Member: What constituency?

Mr. H. Beraux: I will not only say what constituency, I will tell you where it is. It is in La Brea, and the only reason—*[Interruption]* Wait, no; but let me tell you. It is 200 yards away from the police station, Mr. Speaker, and I am not talking about any bank situated where they are building schools, you know. I am talking about a bank just 200 yards away from the police station. They gave the police so many cars, they have E-999 and everything else but the bank still has to close its doors. That means the vehicles are either not working or the E-999 maybe is not functioning, because the bank is closed. When I suggested to the managing director of that bank that maybe it was because of money he said, “No; fear, fear”. This is the situation we live in, Mr. Speaker. This is like in the days of Judge Roy Bean, “No God west of the Pecos”. There is no law in Trinidad and Tobago. That is what they are leaving.

They talk about crime. *[Interruption]* That is worse than that. Do you know why that has to happen? You see, there is lawlessness going on. They are trying to bring down all the institutions of this country. Take for instance \$68.5 million allocated in the PSIP, Mr. Speaker, for public order and safety but only \$8 million to renovate 24 police stations. So you could imagine, it cannot be very much they are doing because that translates to about \$300,000 a police station. So it is not

much they are doing, Mr. Speaker. At the same time, they have allocated \$82 million or 11.5 per cent of that budget, yet resources amounting to \$8 million will be used to furnish and equip the new Attorney General's complex.

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

Motion made, That the Hon. Member's speaking time be extended by 30 minutes. [*Mr. C. Sharma*]

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. H. Breaux: [*Desk thumping*] I thank hon. Members for extending my time, all of which I will use, and I particularly thank the hon. Member for Fyzabad for moving the Motion to extend my time. You see, Mr. Speaker, that just goes to show, when Members in this honourable House have respect for their constituents and they hear another Member making a contribution, they usually try to encourage him to go on, but others who misuse the franchise of their constituents vote no, and I am speaking in particular to the Member for Arima. [*Desk thumping*]

As I was saying, Mr. Speaker, on the question of crime, it is not only—you know, I have had young people ask me why lawyers put on gowns and, in some cases previously, they wore wigs, and, why one is required to behave in a certain way. A lot of that, Mr. Speaker, as you well know, is to give to the population and the whole county a feeling that we are very serious in court. I say this because part of the problem with crime in this country is the breakdown of the respect shown to the Judiciary, and I put that directly on the doorstep of the hon. Attorney General, regardless of how good his intentions are alleged to be.

When we see the Attorney General and the Chief Justice in war, almost, in the newspapers, Mr. Speaker, we have a problem. When we have the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago attacking the President and *vice-versa*, after it was the President and the hon. Member for Tobago West who put him there, and people see that, they say that anything goes in the country, Mr. Speaker. That is one of the reasons we have such a propensity for lawlessness in this country, because at the higher echelons, especially—[*Interruption*] Well, that was for a worthy cause and I will do it again if the time comes around, so the Member should just leave that alone. [*Interruption*]

You see, the difference between he and I is that I know what I have done and I accepted the punishment meted out to me, because if it reaches to that again I will do it again. Do you know what happened as a result, Mr. Speaker? La Brea is

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getting water. I forced them to put it there. Right afterwards they put down a number of pipes so when I did it, it is not that I wanted to do it, it is “bad I bad”. That is why I did it. *[Interruption]* That is the difference between—*[Interruption]* No, a good shepherd will lay down his life for his sheep *[Desk thumping]* and that is what I was prepared to do. So, Mr. Speaker, as I was saying—*[Interruption]*—when—*[Interruption]*

Mr. Speaker: Order please, order please!

Mr. H. Beraux: As I was saying, Mr. Speaker, when the people in the country see this kind of behaviour, that is what causes the propensity to lawlessness. That is why we have crime like that. *[Interruption]* Yes, that is possible.

We now see, Mr. Speaker, that they came to this Parliament and put one cent for every dollar or every thousand, or hundred dollars, or whatever—they “fancy it up”—for a green fund. However, the problem with this Government is not what they do, what they appear to do or the spin they put on it but, really, it is how they behave in other cases. For instance, they are talking about the environment and a green fund and it is not to say they are spiting La Brea alone. In the constituency of Point Fortin, in Parrylands, there were emissions of H₂S, Mr. Speaker, and other poisonous gases. I, the Member for La Brea, because I know that should not happen, fought with the people, and right now they are still suffering the after-effects of those poisonous gases. This is the Government that is talking about the environment?

When one paves the savannah, digs up the green and causes flooding in Port of Spain, they make one a junior minister in charge of roads. They say, “You could pave”. That is what they did to Carlos John. *[Interruption]* Oh, he is a senior Minister. If I made a mistake it is because I really do not know what is the position of the hon. Sen. Carlos John, but the fact is that he was responsible for paving the savannah and ignoring the then Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources and the Minister of Culture and Gender Affairs. For that he was brought into Parliament, Mr. Speaker. He was promoted; and then they talk about the environment.

When the hon. Member for Couva North was on this side, where he will be soon again, he was the man running up and down and saying that there was an environmental problem in Point Lisas. I never attacked him because I sympathized with him. I said that there may be a point there. Do you know what they did, Mr. Speaker? As soon as they came into power they put more people and more plants in Point Lisas, to the extent that today the chances of someone getting asthma and

tuberculosis, if he or she lives in the Point Lisas area, is 534 per cent greater than if he or she lived elsewhere in Trinidad and Tobago. *[Interruption]* Mr. Speaker, as I was saying, it is 500 times more. *[Interruption]*

Do not worry from where I got the figure. Be concerned. You see, I always tell the Member, think about people. Be concerned about the persons who are likely to contract tuberculosis and asthma as a result of living in that area. That is what they have to think about. Think about the lives of the people there. Do not just ask me questions and try to bring me down. I am only the messenger. If they want to kill the messenger, kill him, but heed the message. *[Desk thumping]*

Mr. Speaker, they keep concerning themselves with and talking about the environment and whatnot, yet this green fund is only a trick to save those large state-owned companies that continue to pollute. The Guaracara River is one whole slush of pollution. Mr. Speaker—*[Interruption]* It did not only happen yesterday. It has been there all the time, but they are all “breaksin” from doing the job and spending the money, so they are trying to get other people who are not polluting the environment, like they are, to pay for that.

6.40 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, the Petrotrin fields are seriously polluted and the Erin River has no fish in it. No fish! The Member is talking about a Green Acre Fund.

Mr. Speaker: May I appeal to the hon. Members on the Back Bench, particularly the Government Back Benches, two of whom have already spoken, to allow the Member for La Brea to make his contribution. If you feel that there are things that the Member is saying that you want to challenge, pass it to another person who has not yet spoken and that person could do it, but please allow the Member to make his contribution. You may not agree with it but the Member has the right to say it.

Mr. H. Breaux: Mr. Speaker, as I was saying, the Government is not taking the necessary care of the environment. The next thing is the Government is so dunce. The Government went ahead and bought the shares in Trinmar and forgot about the big environmental cost involved in those platforms in respect of those rotted pipelines. The Government bought it. The ineptitude of this Government is history. Normally, when you buy an oilfield the value is based upon the reserves. The reserves mean that the expected reserves are multiplied by the price of oil. The Government waits until the price of oil is high to buy the oilfield. That is all the sense the Government has because when the price was \$8.00 a barrel the Government did not buy it, but they bought it when the price is \$30.00 a barrel and then the Government is talking about money.

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Mr. Speaker, I wonder what kind of crazy people they are? These are the persons who have the stewardship of running this country? That is a serious mistake. How the Government is going to buy that? Everybody knows the way to value an oilfield—and I am saying it slowly so duncy you could understand—is to take proof producing and probable reserves. Okay. What I am saying is you take the proof producing, a percentage of the probable—the proof producing and the proved—and work that against the price over a period of time and that is the value of the oilfield. So if when the price of oil is \$30.00 a barrel and one goes to close a deal one would obviously pay much more for it. The Government should have enough common sense to know to pare' and take time to negotiate so that the price moves downward. For every dollar the price moves downward the value reduces.

The Government did not understand what they were doing because it thought their political appointees knew what they were doing. It takes a little sense to handle that and they do not have it. Once they are listening to the Government they cannot have it. So that is what they did. The Government has bought an environment bombshell. That is like that Trinmar field. It is just as if you are walking through a minefield with environmental problems. That is what the Government bought. *[Interruption]* Well I do not know. The hon. Member for Arouca North has given me another spin on it, but I really do not have time to deal with that part. *[Laughter]*

Mr. Speaker, we are concerned about what this Government is saying and why the people appear to be concerned about what the Government is saying, notwithstanding what the Government alleges to be a bag of goodies. I will tell you why. In one of the daily newspapers there was a headline quite recently which says:

“Dear Carlos, Miss Universe charity begins with you”

Meaning obviously Carlos John.

“WHERE”S all that Miss Universe charity money, Carlos John?

Eleven Non-Governmental Organisations said they were still waiting on \$400,000 promised to them three months ago by the now-defunct Pageant Company.”

Hon. Member: Where the money gone?

Mr. H. Béréaux: Ask the Minister of Trade & Industry and Consumer Affairs and Minister of Tourism. The Minister is here. As soon as the company was finished with the pageant the Government dissolved the company—*[Interruption]*

Mr. Hart: They thief out all the things.

Mr. H. Bereaux: Well I do not know that.

Mr. Hart: Yes, they thief out everything

Mr. H. Bereaux: I am not alleging anything, once the Minister of Trade & Industry and Consumer Affairs is involved.

“Appeals were made by two of the NGO’s to Carlos John, former Chairman of the Pageant Company, now Junior Minister in the Ministry of Works.”

So this was not money from the Miss Universe contest *per se* because that contest did not make any money and the Government did not get any tourism from it. This matter was with respect to two activities.

“The funds were generated from the Caribbean Night Dinner in honour of the late beauty queen-maker Kim Sabeeney...and the Trinidad and Tobago Fashion Show, all held in May last year.”

So one year ago the Government bamboozled people and told them to come to the dinner and the money will go to charities and today the charities cannot receive their money. We are not talking about big money for this Government. This is joke. This does not approach the \$29 million Ish is going to get from the airport—

Mrs. James: As a bonus.

Mr. H. Bereaux: —as a bonus. I am not the person talking about it. It is the Foundation for the Enhancement and Enrichment of Life (FEEL).

“Artists Against Aids, the National Aids Hotline, Heart to Heart Ministries, Tobago Aids Society, Cyril Ross Nursery, Pour L’innocents Trinidad and Tobago HIV/Aids Alliance, Caritas...”

And so on.

Mr. Speaker, do you know why the Opposition will be victorious against this Government? It is said there are four sins crying to heaven for vengeance: willful murder; the sin of sodomy; depriving labourers of their wages; and oppression of the poor. You see what the Government is doing here by taking the charity money and not paying it? That is the problem. So I know where this Government is going. I know the Government is in trouble.

Mr. Speaker, I have been interrupted sufficiently by the Minister of Labour. I was not going to speak on it because he is a non-minister. It took me a long time going through the PSIP to see whether there was anything in it for the Ministry of

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Labour and I saw nothing there. The Member is a non-minister. The Minister has caused a lot of trouble but I am going to deal with that shortly.

This Government which is led by a former trade unionist has the worst record of any government in respect of labour. *[Desk thumping]* I will just tell you some of them. The Government went by night or very early in the morning—one o'clock or something like that—to arrest two trade unionists in their beds for allegedly making noise around the home of the Minister of Public Utilities, hon. Gangar Singh, because they were complaining about InnCogen or something like that. I do not know what it was really. Oh! Yes, I will tell you what was it. The workers were trying to get a share of the profits and notwithstanding the decision of the Industrial Court, Republic Bank employees got a share of the profits; Royal Bank employees got a share of the profits and a number of other advanced forward-thinking companies got a share of the profits. I am just showing you—

Mr. G. Singh: It is a moral right.

Mr. H. Béraux: I do not know what the Member is talking about moral right. *[Interruption]* No, I am not ready. When you are ready to get up you will have your opportunity to speak.

6.50 p.m.

They want a share of the profit. If he is saying that they were calling on it as a moral right, then sit with them and say, “Listen, this cannot be a moral right. You are selling your labour and we are buying it. Let us discuss and see how we could work it out.” That is what I expect. Not jail for them. Licks in the police van!

Mr. Speaker, the University of the West Indies workers were striking for weeks for 9 per cent. What happened? They got 7 per cent and the Ministers want to take 67 and 50 surreptitiously! They do not understand what it is to be up front and transparent. The only transparency they have is when they are victimizing people. They do not care if one sees or not.

The nurses are doing all sorts of things and we are hearing only about mistreatment for them. The teachers are called criminals and so forth, and that is the record of this Government. Above all, the one I remember now, most graphically, is the one with respect to the minimum wage. This Government boasted about how it introduced the minimum wage. There is a company in the south called Optimal Services Limited owned by Gopeesingh.

One of their workers came to me in my political office and told me that he was being underpaid by Optimal Services Limited, under the minimum wage. He

showed me both his pay slip and his card that the checkers use showing the number of hours he has worked. He told me that a member of the Minister's staff, a public servant called "Boodoosingh", had gone and investigated it and told him to not do anything with these people, they have high political connections with the Government.

I did not believe that because I believed the Minister, so I wrote him and I brought the documents to him and I said, "Look, this is what is happening". Mr. Speaker, it is months now and he has not done anything about it. Nothing! One could recall in this very House when they wanted to decriminalize the non-payment of the minimum wage and I said they were doing it for their friends. That just goes to show you. The man was speaking the truth. I have the documentary evidence, I have the originals and he has done nothing about it. That is how they operate, and they are sitting there talking.

Mr. Partap: What kind of lawyer are you?

Mr. H. Bereaux: Please say it again. I could have taken it to court. He is the Minister, he is collecting the money as the Minister, he is the man claiming he should get a pay raise, but he is telling me that when the poor man comes to me and I make a representation as the Member of Parliament, charge him to go to court! Why does he think I do not have to take money from him? Because I charge big fees! That is why. When I do it for him, that is the reason I do not worry about him, because I charge big fees. Where is he going to get the money to pay that?

I want to point out another thing. When they spoke about the model school, the hon. Minister of Education made a comment some time ago about the young people making zero in Composition. The only way they could make zero is if they write nothing. Composition is that kind of subject. I have taught for 10 years in two different countries, so I know my business and I am a trained teacher.

Then they always talk about no mathematics teachers, but I will give you the story here in this House, Mr. Speaker, because I also wrote the Minister on that. It was about a young lady named Susan Laird from Otaheite in South Oropouche. She came to this country in 1997, a Trinidadian born in England. They say if a cat goes in an oven and makes kittens, we do not call the kittens bread. Because of the provision in the Act, she is a citizen of Trinidad and Tobago.

She came to this country with a degree in biotechnology from the South Bank University in England. She has an advanced training certificate in secondary education from the University of London Institute of Education, and she applied to teach. She got a job in one of these private secondary schools teaching

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mathematics and applied to be a teacher. She butt her head all over. Do you know what they did? They first told her that she would have the same position as an assistant teacher, somebody in Trinidad with A'levels. She passed A'levels in England long time with two degrees and that is what they did.

All the efforts this young lady has been making for two years, she tried to see the Minister and everybody, but the only person she could get to see in that neck of the woods is Hedwige Béréaux, because he is the only real Member of Parliament down there. She came to see me.

Mr. Partap: She still has not seen anybody.

Mr. H. Béréaux: Mr. Speaker, there is a sinister plot going on in this country. I repeat it slowly for emphasis: there is a sinister plot going on in this country to keep down the people from certain areas, especially the young people, in subjects like mathematics.

A certain teacher told my son, "If you study 24 hours a day from now till examinations, the best you could make is an "E". Why? His name is Hedwige Béréaux too. He made four A's. [*Desk thumping*]

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Say it again.

Mr. H. Béréaux: I am saying that the teacher told my son that if he studied 24 hours a day, the best he could make in maths was an "E". He took the examination and he made four A's because his name is Béréaux. [*Desk thumping*] That is what they are doing. There is a sinister plot in this country to give pressure to certain people, and I want it to be made clear. That is what they are doing.

Miss Nicholson: Five years ago, I would have never believed it. I now believe it.

Mr. H. Béréaux: Believe it. I know it. As soon as certain people come, they tell them they cannot do mathematics, drop it! When people whom they feel would teach the children well, come, they do not hire them. You, Member for Tobago East, you better put that in your pipe and smoke it! [*Desk thumping*]

Dr. Job: Would the Member give way?

Mr. H. Béréaux: No! I do not have any time. You will talk eventually. Take notes and deal with that. I have a very short time still. Mr. Speaker, they talk about schools and about—let me deal with the water first. They started off by saying that they are giving water to 80 per cent of the population, but 69 per cent was getting water all the time, so it was 11 per cent, if they did that, and many places do not have water.

Mr. Speaker: May I suggest to the hon. Member that he should address me at this stage because he just has three minutes remaining.

Mr. H. Bereaux: Mr. Speaker, I take your advice and, at this time, I really would not go into another point; only to say—because I anticipate that the Member for Tobago East will get up to tell me something—I want him to recognize that he is a failure in this Government and they are using him. It is always said that if one represents people and one cannot make one's case properly, when one is making it—the hon. Member for St. Joseph prevented him and told him he should not be talking like that.

Tobago does not have a link with Trinidad today. The only time in living memory that I can recall that—and he should say *mea culpa, mea culpa, mea maxima culpa*. With those words, I say here, I do not believe in this budget. I cannot support it, and in fact, I am violently opposed to it. [*Desk thumping*]

The Minister of Tourism (Dr. The Hon. Adesh Nanan): Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of a Bill to provide for the service of Trinidad and Tobago for the financial year ending September 30, 2001. With no malice intended, in mapping the PNM record of performance in the tourism sector from 1991—1995, I can only describe it as totally monochromatic. [*Desk thumping*] It is grey and dismal.

The Member for Laventille East/Morvant, I want to put it on the record, accused the Minister of Education, myself at that time, of firing permanent secretaries. He is well aware that I have no power to fire any public servant, even permanent secretaries. Mr. Speaker, that power resides with the Public Service Commission, of which he is well aware, but he is a little mischief-maker like his colleague from Diego Martin West. [*Laughter*]

When I looked at the performance of the PNM during the 1991—1995 period, I looked intently to find any record of any kind of performance in that span and, as I said—no malice intended—I could not find any significant performance.

I want to make reference to one particular project that was on the PSIP for 1993, the facilities at the Caroni Bird Sanctuary. Since 1991, there was supposed to be construction of facilities at the now Caroni Lagoon National Park. It is this Government that completed the facility that was in the PSIP since 1991. That is the kind of performance I was speaking initially about.

Mr. Speaker, in my contribution on the Tourism Development Bill, I held up the Tourism Master Plan of 1995 and, to my surprise, the Member for Diego Martin Central had not even seen the Tourism Master Plan. Here we are with the Member for Toco/Manzanilla holding that up as a record of performance of the

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PNM and they had not even seen it. He is well aware of that and he knows I am speaking the truth.

The Tourism Master Plan was utilized as part of the framework for the tourism thrust, however, when we look at the performance of this Government over the last four years, from 1995—2000, we will see significant improvement in terms of putting Trinidad and Tobago on the map as a premier tourist destination. In my contribution, I will speak of those years because those are the years of performance, and I will show the kind of significant improvements in terms of attracting tourists to the island.

The Member for La Brea, as he normally does, said when he was speaking of the Miss Universe Pageant, that there is no tourism from it and no money from it. I want to put on the record this evening that following the hosting of the 1999 Miss Universe Pageant, significant businesses have been generated in Trinidad and Tobago, and they are identified as follows:

7.05 p.m.

Microsoft opened an office in Trinidad and Tobago. Computers and Controls Limited was offered a contract to create a website for the Miss Universe affiliated pageants. Sacha Cosmetics was offered a contract to be the official cosmetic provider for the Miss Universe affiliated pageants. Negotiations are in progress with a major international chain for construction of a hotel in Port of Spain. Trinidad and Tobago received exposure to some 80 million people in the United States because of coverage in newspapers and magazines, which carried stories, editorials and features on the pageant. Visits to TIDCO's website increased by approximately 200 per cent, from one million to three million, after the staging of the pageant.

A comparison of figures between the period January to March 1999 and January to March 2000, revealed that cruise passenger arrivals increased from 18,000 in 1999 to 40,000 in 2000, approximately 200 per cent. Carnival 2000 was the most highly attended.

Mr. Speaker, there were many other benefits in the area of trade and industry. Government's investment was \$70 million, and not \$100 million as the Member for Toco/Manzanilla said. I am sure he is not a mischief-maker like his colleague from Diego Martin East. It is expected that additional tourism and trade benefits will materialize over the next few years. When I think about the Member for Diego Martin East, I think of that song "Another Brick in the Wall", by Pink Floyd.

In terms of the tourism industry, governments around the world are recognizing that tourism is an export industry: generating foreign exchange and creating jobs.

On page 24 of the *Budget Statement 2001* we will see that over the past five years there have been 39 hotel projects which will provide 1,463 rooms to the tourism plant at a capital cost of \$1.2 billion. The importance of this is that it will create 2,010 new jobs. This is what this budget is about: more jobs, better education, and more caring.

We have seen and mention was made about the World Beat Festival. I think mention was made by the Member for Toco/Manzanilla. I want to tell him that the World Beat Festival was a new event. It allowed opportunities for local artistes. It allowed institutional strengthening for artistes and also for production and management.

As I am on that topic, I want to deal with another area that is opening up in the tourism sector, that is a film desk. The film desk was established in April 1999. To date, the film desk has facilitated over 30 film vide projects since its inception. Music videos, documentaries, television commercials from France, the United Kingdom, United States of America, Germany and Japan were shot on locations in Trinidad and Tobago in the past 12 months. I do not know how many of the hon. Members on that side are aware of that. The film desk also facilitated the motion picture “Shells”, directed by local filmmaker Anthony Maharaj, in October/November 1999.

On the revenue side the film desk introduced an expenditure form for completion by foreign production on locations in Trinidad and Tobago. In a two-month period, film and video projects recorded revenue in excess of US\$300,000 spread across a range of goods and services from hospitality to technical services.

Mr. Speaker, Trinidad and Tobago is being marketed in such a way that we call “Terrific Trinidad, Tranquil Tobago”. Mr. Speaker, the destinations are being marketed in terms of niche marketing. For Trinidad, this includes culture and events, cruise, eco-soft adventure, meetings and incentives and game-fishing. For tranquil Tobago, dives, weddings and honeymoons, eco-soft adventure, meetings and incentives, game-fishing, golf and culture.

Mr. Speaker, from 1995—2000, there was investment of \$1 million for press and travel agent educational tours. Return on investment to date, US\$30 million or 190 times the investment. In this current financial year TIDCO has invested \$500,000. The return on investment is in excess of US\$1.3 million from North America only.

I want to talk about scuba-diving because it is an area that is being marketed for international recognition and, of course, global competition. I want to talk

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about dive arrivals and give some idea of the dive market and what we are doing for the dive market. With respect to dive arrivals by air, in 1995 the total number of divers was 1,313; in 1996—1,866; in 1997—2,931; in 1998—3,912. We are looking at a percentage change from 1995—1998 of almost 200 per cent.

The dive market has been targeted in such a way that we are now poised to receive divers and encourage a billion-dollar industry. An international dive advertising campaign was conceptualized and advertisements have been placed on a consistent basis in targeted, established dive magazines. TIDCO has conducted approximately 100 dive sales calls to travel agents in major cities in the United States, Canada and Europe, in order to raise awareness among the travel trade, about Tobago as a premier Caribbean dive destination.

7.15 p.m.

Over the period the Tourism Industrial Development Corporation in conjunction with the local dive industry hosted approximately 60 press and travel trade educational tours all aimed at raising the profile of the destination.

Mr. Speaker, another area that is being targeted is the cruise industry. Regarding the figures for the cruise arrivals, we see in 1996: 50,952 passengers; in 1997: 31,880; in 1998: 43,188. There was an increase in head tax and that is why there was a decline. However, in 1999 we saw 63,251 cruise passengers.

Mr. Speaker, the Tourism Industrial Development Corporation in conjunction with the Port Authority of Trinidad and Tobago has consistently attended the major cruise promotional shows. These have included the Florida Caribbean Cruise Association, cruise conferences and cruise-a-thons. As a result of consistent attendance at the cruise promotions and ongoing sales calls to major cruise lines such as Carnival and Royal Caribbean, cruise calls from major cruise lines are now being made on a consistent basis. This includes calls from Carnival Cruise Line, the biggest cruise lines in the world, Royal Caribbean and Sea Wind Cruise Line.

Mr. Speaker, the Tourism Industrial Development Corporation also developed an advertising campaign for the cruise niche and advertisements have been placed on a periodic basis in major international cruise magazines. Trinidad and Tobago has also received press coverage in *Cruise and Ferry International* as well as *World Cruise Industry Review*.

Mr. Speaker, we have also seen the yachting industry grow, and we are well aware of the Angostura Yachting Regatta and, of course, the “Millennium Round

the World” race which all aim at improving the profile of Trinidad and Tobago's accessibility as a premiere yachting destination.

Mr. Speaker, weddings and honeymoons: we remember in 1997 the amendment to the Marriage Act which moved the time from 14 days to three days. I also want to quote some figures here with respect to that particular measure. Registered foreign marriages in Tobago have climbed steadily since 1996. This, again has been attributed mainly to the amendment of the Marriage Act. In 1996, 72 registered foreign marriages; 1997, 147 registered foreign marriages; 1998, 196 registered foreign marriages, and 1999, 278 foreign marriages.

Mr. Speaker, I go quickly to another area gaining significance in terms of the destination and that is birdwatching. Trinidad and Tobago has established its presence, and, along with Asa Wright Nature Centre and Pax Guest House has helped to increase the overall number of birdwatchers to the island over a five-year period. Here are some of the statistics from the Asa Wright Nature Centre—1996—July 1997, 1,571 foreign visitors to Asa Wright; July 1997—June 1998, 2,066; and July 1998—June 1999, 2400.

Mr. Speaker, in 1998 the Tourism Industrial Development Corporation facilitated the filming of a wildlife programme called “The Life of Birds” by the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC). The world renowned naturalist David Attenborough hosted this programme. Approximately four million people in the United Kingdom saw this show.

The lifeblood of any tourism industry is airlift. Great emphasis was placed on getting airlines to consider flying to Trinidad and Tobago. *[Interruption]* I do not think you would laugh after what I tell you. TIDCO has negotiated with several airlines for increased service with good success. American Eagle commenced service to Tobago in 1996 and to Trinidad in 1999. Caledonia Airways (JMC) introduced service to Tobago in 1996 and currently has two flights weekly. British Airways introduced scheduled flights to Tobago in 1998 and a second in March 2000. Condor, a major German airline, commenced service to Tobago in 1996 and added a winter flight 1999/2000. Canada 3000 began direct biweekly flights from Toronto to Trinidad in 1998.

Mr. Speaker, in terms of legislation to strengthen the platform for sustainable development of the tourism sector, we all remember the Tourism Development Act that was debated in this House and passed and which has been assented to by the President. That particular Act allows projects outside of hotels and guest houses to be the beneficiary of tax incentives. An important aspect of that

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particular Act, which is now gaining momentum, is the opportunity for the “man in the street”.

I listened to the Member for La Brea when he spoke about the oppression of poor people and that we are oppressors of poor people. How could he make a statement like that? I would not say anything about the Member for La Brea in terms of that statement and what it means in terms of his position, but with respect to this Government and the position that we have taken, we are trying to improve the quality of life of the people of Trinidad and Tobago; that spectrum is from the poor man right up. The Tourism Development Act deals with the initiative for taxi drivers. There are certain incentives in there so that taxi drivers would be able to improve their stock.

There are also areas outside of hotels and guest houses where the entrepreneur can get involved, so we are providing that kind of incentive for entrepreneurial development. That Act also has a schedule with respect to the contribution by nationals and the amount of money that the nationals would put into the particular project.

Mr. Speaker, the other piece of legislation that we all remember is the waiver of the departure tax if anybody comes into the country and leaves within 48 hours. Again, all that is to improve our relationship with people coming into the country, by providing that kind of facility. Mention was made in this particular House by the Member for Diego Martin East about our giving away so much revenue at the Airport Authority stage, and I said that it would boost the tourism sector and promote multi-destinational tourism. I still stand by that statement.

Mr. Speaker, I want to turn quickly in my contribution to domestic tourism, and what we have been doing in the domestic market. We have seen facilities, and I could go to the Opposition Members to show how they have benefited. Of course, we remember the hyperbaric medical facility in Tobago, it was commissioned at Roxborough and is currently operational. Again, this would be a fillip to boost the fast-growing dive industry; the renovation and refurbishment of the Chagaramas Hotel and Convention Centre.

What about the beaches and tourism facilities for the period 1995—2000? The Maracas Beach facility; facilities at Manzanilla and Vessigny Beach; the South Oropouche Jetty and religious ceremony site; the Mayaro Beach facility; Quinam Beach facility and vending booths; the Pitch Lake Visitor Information Centre, as well as the Valencia and Caura River sites.

Mr. Speaker, a renaissance district has been established in St. James. The St. James Theatre in the St. James renaissance district was completed in December

1998. The theatre is the entertainment anchor of the renaissance district and has a seating capacity of approximately 300. The second renaissance district was developed at George Earl Park in St. Joseph, and several of the tourism products of the town were enhanced. The third renaissance district was launched at Chaguaramas and involves the construction of a recreational park to be used as a cultural and entertainment centre.

Of course, to promote tourism awareness there is the National Schools Tourism television quiz for both primary and secondary school students. In 1998, 133 primary students participated. We also have teacher training workshops. An important concept is signage, which is an important aspect of interpreting the destination's appeal and educating the visitor, as such, interpretative signs were positioned along 10 nature trails in the North Coast to guide visitors through various points of interest.

As stated in the budget speech of the Minister of Finance, Planning and Development, several students have been trained in the hospitality industry at both the Trinidad and the Tobago campuses. A needs and assessment analysis of the hospitality industry has been conducted. Arrangements are being made for students who have successfully completed their Associate Degree in hospitality management to be eligible to take a two-year programme at the St. Augustine Campus of the University of the West Indies which will lead to a Bachelor's degree in hospitality management.

Other industry training conducted during 1995 and 2000 included foreign language training in Spanish, French and German for frontline agencies: taxi drivers and tour operators. Workshops have been conducted in customer service training, quality service management, marine resource management for persons from both the private and public sectors in Trinidad as well as Tobago.

Mr. Speaker, the youth development apprenticeship centres would reopen on September 18, and new and innovative programmes would be introduced. As most of his pronouncements are misleading to the House, that is the Member of Parliament for La Brea, the youth camps, except Chaguaramas, are alive and well.

Mr. Speaker, as I wind up I want to deal with the Member for La Brea when he referred to the Brasso Venado area, which is, of course, in my constituency, but I do not know what he spoke about. The Member of Parliament for Diego Martin East in his contribution, again, just said that we are building schools in the bush for parrots and wild animals. I would ask him, if he were here: are the children of rural constituencies parrots and wild animals?

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Brasso Venado is in a rural constituency, and because of gross neglect over the decades by previous administrations, he is not even aware that the Brasso Venado Government Primary School never had toilet facilities. The students used outhouses. It is because of the adopt-a-community project by the Minister of Social and Community Development and PowerGen that I am proud to say in this House that the Brasso Venado Government Primary School pupils will be using proper toilet facilities, all under this Government.

Mr. Speaker, once again, it is a pleasure to be participating in this debate. [Interruption] I thank you.

7.30 p.m.

Mr. Jarette Narine (*Arouca North*): Mr. Speaker, I join this debate on the budget presentation and a number of persons have said that this budget debate is an election manifesto. I sat here thinking that this budget debate was not really an election manifesto, as I see it, but a eulogy to the UNC. This is the time for elections and they will keep this as a document of their past life and may their soul rest in peace. The United National Congress has come to the end of the road and the sun has set for them, finally. As soon as elections are called they would know where the grass grows in Arouca North and I will come to some of their presentations that were made in a short while.

The number of hidden things that are in this budget; it is now the habit of the Minister of Finance to come to the Parliament, read a document and approximately eight pages of this document actually deal with revenue and expenditure for the fiscal year. The rest is fairytale. A good friend of mine in analyzing the budget said that the Minister of Finance felt that this was a “flat nose and chinkey eye” budget, so that you could not see what was written into it.

It is fortunate that we have a very alert media and some of our Members went into the document and saw many hidden agendas in the budget. Nobody has said that in the term of office of the UNC/NAR coalition, they had taken a 400 per cent increase in their housing allowance and nobody knew about it until months after, when it went up from \$1,000 for Ministers and Parliamentary Secretaries, to \$5,000.

Mr. Speaker, what we are seeing here is what was done already under the table. What we are seeing of the budget document of increases for Members of Parliament, according to the Salaries Review Commission’s Report, is actually put into the document so that they can take their pay rise and go away in peace.

I would like to congratulate, like the Member for St. Augustine, the Member for Siparia on her acting appointment, but I could not believe the situation. I sat

here and I heard about it and I thought about George Orwell's *Animal Farm*, that political satire, where Napoleon took Boxer, his very hard-working and old warhorse, as he describes him, and at the end of his career did not put him to pasture, but sent him to slaughter, so that they could use his horse for making glue.

I also heard in the budget that they were saying, "No looking back", and some of my colleagues on this side said that we were going forward over the precipice. I am saying that, obviously, the way that this Government has operated over the last five years, if they look back, it would be like Sodom and Gomorrah and they will turn into pillars of salt. They have caused this country enough pain and we will see the back of them very shortly.

As I turn to the environment, it was said before that there is no commission for the environment; that there was some purpose for delaying the implementation for this commission and that some reason was given for no building to house this commission. This commission comprises a couple of persons and they can meet anywhere in any ministry. So that excuse is very flimsy. What I am saying is that the Town and Country Planning Division, which impacts on the Ministry of the Environment, is now taking agricultural land and transforming it for other uses, like residential; and most of the schools that are being built are on agricultural land. We are yet to know who has bought these lands and resold them to the Government. We are still asking, for instance, in Piarco, where the Baboolal farm was, who bought those lands and resold them to TTPost. We are still asking those questions. But the time will come when these questions will be answered, when we would have the opportunity to look at these deals which were made during the last five years.

The Member for Diego Martin East indicated—and I am of the same opinion—when you look at that school that is being built in Cumuto and you look at the area there near the Caroni River, between St. Marie Manuel Road and the Coryal Road, it is a swampy area, and I can tell you that the Cumuto population is very small. Over the last few years, the East/West corridor—when you pass Tunapuna, going up—has changed by leaps and bounds into residential areas. For example, in Castleton North we now have housing in Cazabon; housing on Henry Street; we have 900 lots already available; about 700 houses are already built in Bon Air West.

The NUGFW housing is now taking up something like 400 houses on the Lopinot Road and there is a lack of secondary school places in the area. So that the children from my constituency and neighbouring constituencies have to go to

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Biche, to Cumuto and to Carapichaima because secondary schools are not available for them close to their area.

A number of parents came to me during this vacation and told me, “yes, my daughter or my son passed for Carapichaima, how am I to get my child to and from school?” Some of them attend the second shift. They have to leave Carapichaima sometimes in the night to return home. Can you imagine a young child travelling from Carapachaima to come to Arouca? This has to change. The ministry must look seriously at the persons who have been placed far off and try to get them closer to their homes.

If you are going to build schools in Biche, Cumuto, Cunupia and Carapichaima, then, of course, Arima, Arouca North, Arouca South and Tunapuna, between these built-up areas where we have a school population, should at least have better secondary schools. In Bon Air Gardens, at one time, there was an area allocated to build a secondary school. That never happened.

The Member for Chaguanas keeps saying—it was not that representations were not made to all the ministries. I wrote the Minister of Works and Transport indicating to him at that time all the projects in Arouca that were started and left in abeyance. Nothing was done during the last five years. All the projects which had begun were not restarted and none has been completed.

I visited the Member of Parliament for Chaguanas on behalf of a paraplegic girl who lives on the Lopinot Road. She worked during our time in the URP because she had six O’levels. She had to hire a car to take her to and from work every day. But it was an opportunity to work. She did not work for the five years. Her wheelchair was no longer worthwhile. I asked the Member for Chaguanas if it is possible that the ministry could help her. He must remember her name, Miss Massiah.

When I was written to, they said that the ministry would provide \$1,500 and that she would have to provide the rest of the money, but there must be a guarantee that this money would be available. That was two years ago. I wrote back to the ministry saying that I would pay the \$1,100. I held myself responsible for paying that \$1,100 and up to this day, no wheelchair. *[Interruption]*

Hon. Member: Go ahead. “Doh study he.”

Mr. J. Narine: Mr. Speaker, if it is one thing, I do not lie when coming to these things. The Minister is quite aware that he was written to. I gave him the guarantee that Mr. Laquis had given. He had two quotations. Mr. A. Laquis had given a quotation for \$2,600-odd and I was going to pay the rest of the money. Up

to now, no wheelchair, and that young lady who had to pay transport to go to the ministry, had to go about three or four times and she got fed-up. Right now she has no wheelchair and we are still asking and looking to see if we get that wheelchair from the ministry.

A number of persons who spoke in this debate spoke about the green fund taxation. One of the environmentalists said the collection would be \$34 million; another said \$50 million. I went right through this Draft Estimates of Revenue for the Financial Year 2001, and I do not know, but maybe—the Minister of Finance is not here; his junior Minister is taking notes for him—they could identify anywhere in this document how much money will be collected by the green fund.

The Minister of the Environment spoke for 75 minutes. He spoke about everything else but the Ministry of the Environment. He probably spent only about 15 minutes on his ministry. He spoke about why he lost so much sugar in the froghopper crises at Caroni when he was the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources; he spoke about wheelchairs, contact lens, education, everything else but the environment. He had nothing to say. I told him when he got demoted that he had a one-door ministry. He is now coming here to say he has nothing to do. So he only had 15 minutes to speak out of 75, on the budget, and could not say anything much about the green fund. I am saying that somewhere in these estimates there must be how much money will be collected by this tax.

7.45 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, nothing is on the draft estimates. Probably the Minister got up one morning and realized that the environmentalists in the country are giving some problems and he had to put something in the budget, so he put one page in the budget about the environment but then nothing was put in the revenue. He put a tax on, but nothing was said as to how much money will be collected. We already heard how the money will be spent. The money will be spent in the horticulture department of the Ministry of the Environment. *[Interruption]* The horticulture department is in the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources to plant trees and to mow lawns and all of that belongs to the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources so I cannot see why they are taking a Green Fund to do horticulture and leaving it in the Minister's hands.

He has done nothing for the past five years. He has made the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources almost go through the crack. The new Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources, the Member for Oropouche, has said that he met a mess but fortunately he is there now and he is trying to

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revive it and that they would hand that money to some sort of people to do—he said that in this House before. Just as how the Minister—*[Interruption]* When he first came in as Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources he said very little was done because he was now going to put plans and procedures in place to get things done. In other words, he was saying that they sat there for three years and more, and did nothing. Nobody has to read and spell for him.

The people who are going to pay this tax—I have had discussions with some business people—they do not mind paying this tax but what they are saying is that the Minister of Finance gave with his right hand and he took back with his left hand. If they are going to pay—I was at LB’s Supermarket this weekend and Ms. Lena Bachew was telling me about the deplorable condition of the roads around her supermarket, and that is in the Tunapuna constituency. She said that where she lives in Arouca is so bad and she pays over half a million dollars a year in taxes and it is unfair to them to pay all this money, then that money is put into the hands of a Government and no one is sure that it would be properly administered. They are concerned about this. They do not mind putting money for the environment but they are not sure that there has been monitoring of the funding that was available to the Government of Trinidad and Tobago over the five-year period by way of taxation, by way of revenues collected for this country. Over \$60 billion has been spent over the five-year period, and that is a conservative figure, and they are not satisfied with what they had received over the five-year period.

The Member for St. Joseph spoke about all the roads that were paved in St. Joseph. I am happy for him. I wrote the Minister and the new Minister, Sen. Carlos John, indicating that these roads in Arouca North are very bad and I did it with priority. I told him that I wrote the Minister of Works and Transport in 1996, 1997 and 1998, suddenly got fed up and did not write again, and that these roads need to be repaired. Imagine, in the Lopinot Road area, the Spanish Heritage Festival is held there. Some Ministers went there in the deplorable conditions. The Prime Minister went up the Lopinot Road to visit “mas camps” during the last carnival season and he took almost two hours. When he got to Lopinot he told the people who had the band up there—and incidentally, they won the band of the year, Mr. Speaker. He told them that he felt so bad that they had to come from Lopinot down that roadway that when they reached Arouca, carnival would have already finished, and that it took him almost two hours to get up there—seven miles. You know the area, Mr. Speaker—because of the deplorable condition of the roads.

In our four years, Mr. Speaker, 23 corners—seven miles from the Eastern Main Road to the settlement. *[Interruption]* It took almost two hours because of

the condition of the road. Let me tell you something. They are going to hold the Heritage Festival on October 1. They have already written the Minister and the insulting letter that they got—last night on the phone they were telling me he would see what he could do. After five years of nothing and after writing every year religiously, he is now going to see what he could do. I widened 35 corners on that road during the four-year period the PNM was in office.

We had equipment on one of the corners at the four-mile mark, Mr. Speaker. When this Government came in they removed the equipment and nothing else was done. All that was done was that a little part of La Pastora was paved and it was done by local government because last year in the local government elections they thought that they would have gotten some support there. They had a maxi-taxi picking up the people every night to carry them to Chaguanas and other areas for political meetings, but that did not cause them to win any seat. Arouca North is going to wait for the PNM to rectify all the problems that we have had over the last five years. It is only unfortunate that we did not have these five years to do more work in Arouca North.

So to come here and talk about no representation and things like that is not saying the right thing. As I was saying, the business people are afraid to put good, hard-earned, cash dollars into this Government's hands through any Green Fund. I say also that they are asking, "What about the state agencies that do more harm to the environment than good?" There are numerous newspaper clippings that will tell us—this one is saying two state agencies are the biggest water polluters in the country and nothing has been done in five years to alleviate this situation. I say to the Government, people do not mind paying the taxes but they are saying that there are companies like the oil companies that have lots of oil spills and there is the Point Lisas Industrial Estate where, if someone parks a car there for six months, they would not recognize it because of the flying steel dust all over the area. Someone would lock up their car but the steel dust would still get through the cracks, through the windscreen creases and onto the seats.

There was a TB outbreak that was last reported at Ispatt. I had a son working there. He started to bleed through the nose and I told him to leave the job because nobody can pay him for his health. The salaries were okay but what about the boy's health? He is a young man. He left the job and six months after he left the job we started to get reports about tuberculosis in Ispatt's compound and the workers demonstrated because the environment there is terrible. We say, Mr. Speaker, that other ministries impact on the Ministry of the Environment.

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Take for instance the Ministry of Local Government, the forestry department of the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources and the Town and Country Planning; the point is that this fund is going to be used to reforest areas that have been cleared and the Minister, not this Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources, the former Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources, gave away blocks of teak in this country. He brought Tanteak to its knees. He gave away all the land and those areas have not been replanted. Are they saying now that after giving away those blocks of teak and making the private sawmillers buy teak at a cheap cost and selling it at the rate at which teak was selling, that they did not replant the place, that the poor communities now are going to be given something from the Green Fund to replant these areas? Is that what will happen?

We no longer have the Civilian Conservation Corps in operation. The Civilian Conservation Corps was intended to do these types of things in the Northern Range. If one takes an aircraft from Piarco to go to Tobago and flies over the Northern Range one will see the vast areas that have been cleared and the Civilian Conservation Corps did an excellent job, Mr. Speaker. [*Desk thumping*] The young people did an excellent job to have these areas replanted.

The reforestation section has been doing its part and these young people from the Civilian Conservation Corps were also the people who were used in the dry season, when the bush fires started, to monitor these bush fires in the Northern Range and in other areas in Trinidad. They were there to put the fires out before they got out of hand. They were monitoring this situation at all times. However, they were sent home and now the people who are underprivileged, who cannot send their children to school, who are not employed and who cannot feed their families are being asked to form themselves in groups to replenish the hillsides which have been sold to friends and families of the Government.

Mr. Speaker, recently I had the opportunity to visit China at the same time the Minister of Finance was there. In Beijing at that time, in May of this year, there was dust blowing from the north section of China. When we got to Beijing we heard that they were spending billions of dollars to bring back, environmentally, areas that were denuded. They took off all the trees and now in the north and the north-west of China they are going to spend a lot of money to replant trees and bring the area back to its former state so that they would not get this tonne-load of dust blowing into Beijing. It is not like that in China and it is not like that in Honghu where we visited, but the northern section is like that. When we were there they said the water level was dropping in those areas at one metre per year. I

am speaking about no watersheds so that when they bore waterholes they said every year it would drop at the rate of one metre if it was left like that.

Are we going to wait until this happens to us? Are we going to tell the poor people in the community to replant trees on the hills? I say, Mr. Speaker, that—*[Interruption]* The Member was not listening all the time. I never spoke against the collection. I am speaking about how it will be executed. What about those that do more harm to the environment? The Green Fund is going to be charged to persons who have hardware stores, who bring in materials from outside and sell at a profit and they are going to pay that Green Fund from their sales, which means what they put out and their profits. Is this Green Fund going to include VAT? Will VAT increase if it is going to include VAT? Because if that tax is added to sales and it is VAT inclusive, is that 0.1 per cent going to be paid inclusive of VAT? This was never explained.

The Minister said that the board of management of the Green Fund will comprise the private sector, labour, the community and the EMA. However, looking at this Government's performance over the period of five years, every time they institute a board in Trinidad and Tobago we always find that there is preferential treatment for certain persons who will now administer the fund and who will now talk to every Member of Parliament on that side and see what they have to do, and when someone else writes letters, nothing for them.

8.00 p.m.

So this is the kind of thing that would happen. *[Interruption]* Not for long—the Member should enjoy it while it lasts.

Mr. Speaker, you will remember that in 1996 there was a clean-up campaign. The Member for Chaguanas went all over the country and picked up two old stoves from some drain in Chaguanas and said that flooding is a thing of the past.

Mr. Hart: Yes, the Member said that.

Mr. J. Narine: There was flooding up to last week and the Member went on the media and said that flooding is a thing of the past. The NAR had a "Lend A Hand" campaign when it came into office. The UNC coalition with NAR went on the beaches of Trinidad and Tobago and cleaned up five years ago, and since then there were no more clean-up campaigns. Why? The Government is not getting anybody to work free again for them. People have lost confidence in the Government. There might be a clean-up campaign in Caroni, but the Government will not get a clean-up campaign support if it is in Manzanilla—that is another situation I need to talk about this afternoon. The Government will have to carry

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Caroni people to Manzanilla—like the people the Member has Ramayan with and the people from the Unemployment Relief Programme who work for him. That is the kind of people that will go up there to work for the Minister.

Mr. Speaker, the Government is saying that the country is better off today. Who are better off today? The people who did the Piarco Airport are better off today; InnCogen is better off today; the desalination plant is better off today; and TTPost is better off today. These are the people who are better off today. The National Flour Mills lost \$30 million in rice and they are also better off today. Who are better off today? Which country! The Dhanpur Sugar Mill that the Minister brought from India is better off today, because it is lying down doing nothing. Who is better off today in Trinidad and Tobago? Mr. Speaker, I am not going to call the names of persons who are better off today—the financiers of the UNC can be called on one hand.

Hon. Member: Call the names.

Mr. J. Narine: I am not going to call the names. The Member knows who are the financiers.

Mr. Assam: Who are the PNM financiers?

Mr. J. Narine: We are not building any airport; we did not bring any desalination plant; and we did not bring any InnCogen plant. Where will we get financiers? They are the Government financiers. They are better off today. They are plenty better off today than they were in 1995. I can tell you that. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, I now come to the paving of the Queen's Park Savannah. [*Interruption*] This is a little newspaper clipping where the Minister at the time asked: who authorized the paving of Queen's Park Savannah? The Minister is now the Minister of the Environment. He was the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources. The Minister was the one in charge of the Queen's Park Savannah. The Member did not know what took place and no one from the Government side could say who gave the authority to pave the Queen's Park Savannah, and it is payback time now. The person who took the blame for it is a Minister today. This is what is taking place here. Is this Green Fund going to correct that situation in the savannah? How is this Green Fund going to correct it? Will someone please tell me how this Green Fund is going to correct the paving of the savannah? Tell me! The Government has already damaged the environment in Port of Spain. There are flooding problems and they did not start when the savannah was paved.

Mr. Hart: Jarrette, what about the mangrove?

Mr. Assam: Every park in the world has a paved area.

Mr. J. Narine: Not like here. Have you ever travelled and seen that nonsense that was done here? If you go to Hyde Park you will see something different, not what we have here.

Mr. Hart: The Government will go and pave the savannah “just so”. Do you think a man can go to the United States of America and pave a place “just so”?

Mr. J. Narine: The Queen’s Park Savannah was paved and nobody wanted to take the blame for it. One person took the blame and nothing was done to him. As a matter of fact, that person was promoted and given one of the top Ministries in Trinidad and Tobago to work with. The Member now sits in a run-down Ministry and the person who took the blame for paving the savannah is working in the Ministry of Works and Transport.

Mr. Mohammed: Did you ever have a Ministry?

Mr. J. Narine: It does not matter. I will work whether I have or I do not have and the Member for St. Joseph will tell you that. *[Desk thumping]* I am not a glutton for anything. *[Desk thumping]*

Mr. Hart: The Member is not looking for anything.

Mr. J. Narine: I am looking to serve the people who elected me to represent them here in Parliament. Mr. Speaker, we were talking about the Toco Ferry. *[Interruption]* It is a “fairy” in a true sense and not a “ferry”. It is a fairytale if the Member wants to say “fairy” and not “ferry”. *[Laughter]* There were two feasibility studies done on that ferry service. One was done by the PNM and the other by the NAR. The two feasibility studies indicated that there was no need to get that ferry service started from Toco to Scarborough. The both feasibility studies indicated that. According to a speaker on this side, one just has to wait for an opportunity where large sums of money are spent and someone will say, “I am going to do that whether you like it or not.”

Mr. Speaker, when there were by-elections for the Member of Parliament for Tobago East, it was said in Tobago that there was a plan—the Pearl of the Americas—which was brought here by the present Minister of Finance, Planning and Development. A company from Canada was coming here to acquire the whole eastern coast to develop it into eco-tourism, inland and down to the Orinoco, the Amazon and the Essequibo River from Balandra Bay. That was the plan. They were going to take tourists from Tobago and bring them here through the ferry

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service from the Grafton Beach Hotel and so on. One will understand that one of the developers has already bought the Matura estate of 750 acres of land, and Winsure has lost money doing the Balandra Beach Resort, which is another 600 acres of land.

Mr. Speaker, a couple weeks ago, the Member of Parliament for Diego Martin Central had a question here in Parliament—and we are quoting figures here: \$68,240,666 was paid to Maritime. This money was obviously not to pay their debts but to be used for the development of the area. If the people in Toco are against the ferry service it would have been moved to Balandra or a point lower down. Why? Why should that happen? That is the real reason for saying that the ferry service has to go on “hell or high water”.

If I leave to go to Toco it is approximately two hours to get there. If you drive a little hard it will be approximately one hour and a half.

8.10 p.m.

I am saying that if someone—and where the population really starts is at Valencia—wants to go to Tobago, it is 15 minutes away from Piarco and half an hour away from Arima if the person goes down the priority bus route—*[Interruption]*. He did not build a new road in Trinidad. His Government did not build one single road in Trinidad, so do not forget that the priority bus route is there.

I travelled by the ferry from Port of Spain recently when we were delayed in Port of Spain until 5.00 in the afternoon from since 11.00 a.m. I was there when the cameras were there and the workers were saying that they were not paid overtime, and so forth. I went up by ferry. I can tell you that the feasibility studies said no way, but there is a plan and they are not going to back away from this plan.

When I said that, the Prime Minister replied stating that nothing will happen with the ferry service to Tobago unless consultation is held with the Tobago House of Assembly, but one day after, the Minister of Works and Transport indicated—probably he did not know that the Prime Minister made a statement—full speed ahead with the ferry service. As you are quite aware, and we have heard before, where the new highway is going to lead to that Toco area, it is an area that has been bought up by certain persons, so that when they put a highway to Toco, they will develop their lands.

I love the road between Roxborough and Parlatuvier. I passed on that road about three weeks ago. Beautiful! It is better than any of the roads I have in my constituency. When one passes a house at Roxborough, one has to almost get to Parlatuvier before one meets another house. I was wondering why. The Minister

of Finance was wondering why, but he said that the development must take place and probably those at the Tobago House of Assembly thought that it was a good project.

Mr. Speaker, my colleague, the Member for Toco/Manzanilla, said today that there will be damage to the environment if that project is to continue. I hope that good sense will prevail. Other developments must take place before we look at that project of a ferry service between Toco and Scarborough. We must do that.

Last Sunday I had the opportunity to travel with the People's National Movement to Mayaro. We had an excellent day at Mayaro; a rally. [*Desk thumping*] A very large rally! [*Interruption*] Were you there? I know nothing about any bottle.

Mr. Humphrey: I know about bottles. Royal Oak!

Mr. J. Narine: You had your chance. I was amazed when I passed on that Manzanilla area, Mr. Speaker. As one passes that area where the cemetery is on the right-hand side, the entire left side of that beach near the facility has been graded off.

Mr. Imbert: Land for sale.

Mr. J. Narine: Land for sale! Not a coconut tree. I saw that probably a year or two ago, but what I saw last Sunday was that on the right side, where the mangrove was to take that water into the sea and filter the water that was coming in, it is now being graded down and they filled the entire swampy area there. I understand that they graded into the cemetery too and bones and skulls were coming up.

The developer there—I would like to know, when one sends a plan asking for approval to the Town and Country Planning Division, and it is a paper which indicates where one will put housing and what other areas, nothing there tells if there is a mountainside? Anything like that? And approval is given. What happened on the Bye Pass road in Arima is happening at Manzanilla at this present time. They are collecting money for a Green Fund. Who will correct that when they have made the mistakes?

At Arima Bye Pass, a private owner, a financier of the UNC who owned the land then, was taking earthfill to fill the Piarco airport. When they said that Piarco was a dust bowl and the Bye Pass was a dust bowl, I wondered where this earthfill was coming from. When I went there, it was the Herde estate. What I knew as a young man as the Herde estate has now changed hands. They used to mind a few horses there near the Blanchisseuse river.

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Over the river there, they graded off that entire piece of land for one of their colleagues. Three weeks after there was an advertisement in the newspaper offering 97 lots for sale! The gentleman got paid for the earthfill. They cleared the earthfill off of his property and made 97 lots available for him to sell on the real estate market.

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

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

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. J. Narine: Mr. Speaker, what has happened there on the Bye Pass road of Arima, not a sound was heard from the Member of Parliament for Arima. Apparently he could not go over the head of the UNC person, the financier, and say that this was going to be a problem.

The Member for Tabaquite just spoke about the Asa Wright Nature Centre. If one takes a drive up to the Asa Wright Nature Centre, one would realize that about four of the quarries that were dormant years ago are now reopened. They are going to pollute that river to the extent that the last time they did it to Arima—that Blanchisseuse river has a very rare variety of crayfish. They call it the silver crayfish.

If they are going to get rid of the rest of the population of that variety of crayfish, then we will hold the Member of Parliament for Arima responsible, because he is saying nothing, he cannot say anything. He is on his last but he is still the Member for Arima and he is paid a salary to represent the people. He has to go there and tell the people who have reopened the quarry, tell his Minister of the Environment and let him accompany him and see what is taking place up there. The whole forestry department, forested areas around there, has dust in them. When rain falls it is washed out, but when the dry season comes next year, I will tell you that the people are not satisfied with how they are being treated.

Mr. Speaker, I come back to Manzanilla. When I passed and I saw those lands being graded, I wanted to find out what was really going on. I went back a few days after and I took my family to the beach facility, because I still have a daughter at school and as the vacation time is on, I thought that I would take her. Rain fell that day and that entire beachfront, about two miles, was only mud. It was as if one was seeing the Caroni river coming down after a heavy rainfall. That beach area was never like that. When the swamp emptied into the sea, the water would get black. It would not get brown.

Dr. Griffith: Which beach?

Mr. Narine: You do not know anything about beaches. You grow up by a cemetery in Arima. *[Laughter]* *[Interruption]* Potty! *[Laughter]* He is a colleague of mine. His nickname was potty. We were going down and on the right side of that main road.

Mr. Assam: Where did you grow up?

Mr. J. Narine: I am from King Street in Arima.

Mr. Assam: And you grew up by the beach?

Mr. J. Narine: My father had a motor car. *[Laughter]* *[Desk thumping]* I came into this world and met a 1947 Chevrolet. *[Desk thumping]* There are no beaches in Trinidad that I do not know. I have been taken to all, well before I was 12 years old. Mr. Speaker, the Member lived at Nettoville at one time. I am sure he was only going on outings and probably he started to go by the beach. He said that his mom was from the Toco area and he says nothing for the Toco people. He is staying quiet.

Mr. Assam: I left that to Mr. Boynes.

Mr. J. Narine: Anyhow, Mr. Speaker, I am saying that that Nariva estate, go down and one would see that the coconut branches are barred about two miles down the beach and I wondered what was taking place there, because I knew that that area was reserved for the manatee. What is happening there, the reservation for the manatee has now become a very profitable agricultural site. They are growing watermelons there on that site. Somebody must ask about this. I understand that instead of seeing the manatee and growing melons, they could get a medal, a national award for growing watermelons in Trinidad. They understand what is taking place. They better get up and get.

Mr. Speaker, when one goes to Paria in the north of Arima, there are seven miles to get to the Paria bay. It is a perfect pathway across streams, and it is something! When I was a young man, it was the first time I went there hiking and it is really suited for eco-tourism. Many people can visit that area in that serene place.

If we are to build a road between Matelot and Blanchisseuse, what will happen to that beach, I need not say. I am asking the Minister to stand up against the development of that area. Speak to the people! The only reason that project did not go on is that the person who bought out the land has died and probably, the good Lord is putting a hand to hold back the project so that when this regime is out, we are going to look at this situation again. *[Desk thumping]*

Mr. Assam: Do you not want progress?

Mr. Narine: The world has had progress and people are now leaving Germany, Switzerland and Austria to come to Tobago.

Mr. Assam: Do you know that Paria has one of the best beaches in the world?

Mr. Speaker: Order please.

Mr. Narine: I said that.

Mr. Assam: There is access to it.

Mr. J. Narine: There is eco-tourism. You can have access to it. At your age, you probably cannot walk the distance.

Mr. Speaker: I appeal to the Member for St. Joseph to convert this place once more to a Parliament and not a private drawing room where yourself and the Member for Arouca North carry on a two-way conversation. Please. It is the most important debate in the parliamentary calendar: the budget. Let us keep up the standard.

8.25 p.m.

Mr. J. Narine: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. But the Member for St. Joseph is quite aware of that beautiful bay at Paria, a one-mile beach, which is actually untouched. Anybody who visits there will actually clean the place before they leave because it is so beautiful. It is not like the drain that Minister Sadiq Baksh cleaned at Beetham and said he would make into a tourist attraction. I hope that he will go back today to see it.

But since my time is coming and I can talk about the mining, the wash plants in Turre up there, they have mined that area for years and they have not replenished the forestry they have taken out. They have no settling pond. We were starting that programme when we had Tapaná. We did all that. *[Interruption]* I am certain that you are quite aware of it. What are you doing about it? Nothing was said in the budget on mining of the wash plants.

You talked about upgrading NP stations costing \$7 million and when they took out the underground tanks right there on Richmond Street, they found lead. The lead poisoning there was so bad because of the seepage over the years that they had to take the materials out and it created a longer span for the project. But, where were they going to put it? That was the position. Were they going to do like what happened in Demerara Road? When they were moving the lead from the Industrial Estate in Arima, they carried it to the dump site in Aripo and the people

begged for it to make some sort of entrance because they were squatting, to make available roadways for the cars to go in and so forth. This is how it started.

Dr. Mohammed: Who was in government then?

Mr. J. Narine: The Government did not throw it there.

Mr. Speaker: Order please.

Mr. J. Narine: The people asked; they begged the trucks to dump it there. Ask the Member for Couva South. When the Member for Arima tried to get lands for them from the Member for Point Fortin, up at Wallerfield, the Member for Couva South went and told them, "Do not move." He was in Opposition at the time, obviously, and since they had this legal luminary telling them not to move, they would not move, because if he had to take the Government to court, he would have done it free for them.

Dr. Griffith: But who cleaned it up?

Mr. J. Narine: We had a programme to remove the people. You could not clean it up until you moved them. Are you so "dotish"? You had to move the people and they were told by the Opposition then not to move. Eventually, they moved and eventually, the task force that we had put in place had a report. Now, that place, you just have to seal it off or dig up the entire thing. But, where were you going to put it? That is the problem.

Recently, another battery factory was burnt in Arima. What happened? The materials from that battery factory were dumped in Wallerfield and you are going to have the same problem again. Why was it dumped? Because the company that had to get the materials removed from there could not pay the amount of money to have it well secured so they got a little transport man from Malabar, paid him a couple dollars and he took up the backhoe with everything and just dumped it in Wallerfield—I could carry you up on the runway—the same area that the Member for St. Augustine went and cleaned up after they got into government and had such grandiose plans for. Now, it is high woods again. Member for St. Augustine, I would like you to go and clean that area before election, please.

Mr. Humphrey: No. After.

Mr. J. Narine: Mr. Speaker, we even talked about the Public Transport Service Corporation that was supposed to bring in 30 CNG buses. I had the opportunity to travel in those buses in Shanghai recently.

Mr. Speaker: The Member has two more minutes to wind up.

Mr. J. Narine: To wind up? Yes, Sir.

What happened is, they brought old diesel buses and put them in the nice rural areas that we have in Trinidad; polluting all Paria. You talk about every part of Trinidad being polluted by these buses. What I am saying is that pesticides and insecticides have great impact on the environment. I had the opportunity just recently to go to the Caura valley.

Mr. Speaker: I am sorry. I was about to do you an injustice. I think I signalled to you that you had two more minutes. You do, in fact, have 13 more minutes. But, at this stage, if you do not mind, the sitting would be suspended for dinner. We will return at 9.15 p.m.

8.32 p.m.: *Sitting suspended.*

9.15 p.m.: *Sitting resumed.*

Mr. J. Narine: Mr. Speaker, because of the time I have remaining, I would like to address some of the concerns that I have in the Arouca North Constituency and surrounding areas. I would just like to remind the Minister of Finance that in last year's budget he indicated that the judicial complex in Arima was started. This was not so. That is very untrue. The judicial complex in Arima never started when he read the budget last year. Up to this point in time, the judicial complex in Arima has not been started. I do not know if it is about to be started, but it was a false statement in last years' budget debate when the Minister said that the judicial complex in Arima was started.

I would like to put on record—after raising matters here about the Arouca Police Station in 1996—I came to Parliament and asked questions on the Arouca Police Station. I also moved a Motion on the Adjournment, because I was quite aware that in the 1995 Public Sector Investment Programme (PSIP), the sum of \$1 million was allocated for the Arouca Police Station. One would understand that where the old Arouca Police Station is situated is an historical site; where Count De Lopinot had his first residence. Also, Baron Constantine grew up on that very area where the Arouca Police Station is situated. When I came in to Parliament in 1991 and tried to get the Arouca Police Station built, we had to do renovation.

In 1995, the sum of \$1 million was placed on the PSIP. I would like to read this letter into the record. The Member of Parliament for Tunapuna wrote to the Minister of National Security at that time asking for a police post in the Tacarigua area. This was the reply.

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“Mr. Edward Hart
Member of Parliament for Tunapuna
11, Eastern Main Road
Tacarigua

Dear Mr. Hart,

Reference is made to your letter dated May 01, 1995 concerning a request for police presence in the Tacarigua area.

Please be advised that the Arouca Police Station is to be resited in close proximity to a recommended site for the proposed Police Post.

The new location is Five Rivers Junction, at the Priority Bus Route and the Eastern Main Road intersection. This site will afford the police easy access to the housing developments and will provide the community with a more centrally located facility.

This station was scheduled for rebuilding in 1995. However, the acquisition of the new site delayed the project. There is now much progress in this direction.

The construction of the Police Post in the Tacarigua area is no longer necessary.

I trust that this information is satisfactory.

Yours sincerely,

Permanent Secretary
Ministry of National Security”

Mr. Speaker, after five years, and after making repeated representation on behalf of the people of Arouca, the station is now, probably, finally completed. I am still awaiting the opening of that station. As I said before, in last year's budget I was told by the Minister of Housing and Settlements that it will be opened. It is almost a year now. It took five years, but it will be opened for elections. But that will not make a difference for the PNM in Arouca: you are quite aware of that.

I would also like to read into the record a reply which I got from the Minister of National Security. While persons in Arouca were talking about television station and turning sod for library and for elections, I was asking to turn that area on the Eastern Main Road into a market facility. The Member for St. Joseph would

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understand the problems we had on that Eastern Main Road with the market facility. In local government we tried to move that facility. We did not succeed. It is still there creating the same problems that markets all over the Eastern Main Road have been creating.

It is very interesting because, as the Member of Parliament for Arouca North I felt—because of the building boom in and around Arouca—we needed a fire station. Last year I wrote to the Minister of National Security and got a reply on October 18, 1999.

“Mr. Jarrette Narine
Member of Parliament (Arouca North)
199, Eastern Main Road
Arouca

Dear Mr. Narine

This acknowledges receipt of your letter dated August 6, 1999 concerning the need for a Fire Station at Arouca.

In this regard, please be advised that a site opposite the Golden Grove Road owned by the Prisons Authorities was identified. The parcel of land is approximately three acres, and is bounded to the East by the Golden Grove Road, to the North by a secured area designated for the Prisons Training Centre, to the West by private lands and to the South by a river.

The Chief Fire Officer held discussions with the Commissioner of Prisons who agreed to handover the lands for use by the Fire Services for the construction of a Fire Station. This is being formalised and steps are being taken to have the land surveyed.

The proposed station will possess the facilities and equipment to provide the fire fighting capabilities required for the housing settlement in the area.”

9.25 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, the letter continues:

“The estimated project cost is \$11 M and the construction period is fifteen (15) months.

While no specific allocation has been made in the current fiscal year for the project, all attempts will be made to effect designs using a prototype and the Ministry of Works and Transport.

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Yours sincerely,
Joseph Theodore
Minister"

Mr. Speaker, I looked in this Public Sector Investment Programme document and I am not seeing anything for a fire station for Arouca. So, as usual, you keep writing letters, you keep making representation on behalf of the people who you represent, and this Government does not budge.

What has been happening over the last five years in Arouca is that we have efficient councillors who are very effective, and some of the roads that were paved came through the Local Government Authority; nothing came from the five per cent tax.

Regarding the Bonaire West community centre for that new housing area which was started about three years ago, I understand it was given out by contract. My latest information is that \$1 million was already spent there, and I cannot really see how you can spend \$1 million on a community centre and it is incomplete. They are saying that they need about \$500,000 more to complete that centre. I am saying that because of the length of time and the amount of letters that have been written by the community organization for that area, I think that the ministry should look into that matter and complete the Bonaire West facility before they go out of office, because it is an eyesore and the people are very despondent since they have no facilities there.

The next issue is the crime situation in Arouca which was replied to by the Minister of National Security. Very quickly I would like to tell this House that the crime situation in Arouca has escalated, and I will read the total serious crimes. This was question No. 69, Total Serious Crimes: murders, 1997, eight; 1998, nine; 1999, nine, and up to the point in time, April 30, this year, three; a total of 29 murders, Mr. Speaker. Detection was only 15.

When you go to "Woundings & Shooting": 37 in 1997; 16 in 1998; 34 in 1999; 12 up to April of this year, and of the 99 total over that period only 47 were detected. "Rapes, Incest and Oth. Sex Offences": 62 in 1997; 92 in 1998; 57 in 1999, and 14 up to April this year, a total of 225 offences; 97 detected.

Normally, they would come here and say that the detection rate is so high. I can go down the line, Mr. Speaker, with serious indecency and unnatural offences, burglaries and break-ins, robberies, fraud offences, larceny, larceny on dwelling houses, narcotic offences, and other serious crimes. There was a total of 5,875 serious crimes in Arouca during this period. The detection total was 1,271;

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a detection rate of only 25 per cent, but yet they come to the people of Trinidad and Tobago and tell them that crime has gone down. Certainly, crime has not gone down in Arouca.

This was the reply of the Minister of National Security, made here on question No. 69. It is unfair to the people of Arouca. It is not a lack of representation, but a lack of proper understanding by this Government, that because Arouca belongs to a certain political persuasion nothing will come to Arouca. As a matter of fact, the people of Arouca were promised that their community centre on Victoria Street would be repaired. This year is completed, it is not repaired and the chairman of that community council told me that the Minister said when you intend to support the UNC they will get what they want. They are not going to support the UNC, and for any election when you come to Arouca we will deal with you on the public platform. I cannot support these measures, Mr. Speaker.

I thank you for giving me this opportunity.

ADJOURNMENT

The Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs (Hon. Ramesh Lawrence Maharaj): Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this House stand adjourned to tomorrow, Tuesday September 5, 2000, at 10.30 a.m.

Mr. Speaker, I indicated to the Opposition Chief Whip that we will go a little later tomorrow until about midnight.

Question put and agreed to.

House adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 9.31 p.m.