

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES*Thursday, May 24, 2001*

The House met at 1.33 p.m.

PRAYERS[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]**ELECTIONS AND BOUNDARIES COMMISSION REPORT**

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, I have received from the Chairman of the Elections and Boundaries Commission the Report on the 2000 Parliamentary Election. The report, which would be laid on the Table, is being circulated to all Members of the House.

FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT**Presentation**

The Minister of Finance (Sen. The Hon. Gerald Yetming): Mr. Speaker, I beg to present the Second Report of the 2001 Session of the Finance Committee of the House of Representatives of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on proposals for the supplementation and variation of the Annual Estimates 2001.

ORAL ANSWER TO QUESTION

**Maintenance Contract
(Airport Terminal Building)**

7. **Dr. Keith Rowley** (*Diego Martin West*) asked the Minister of Transport:
- (a) Has the Government or any of its agencies entered into a maintenance contract with any person or company for the supply of such services to be carried out on the recently constructed airport terminal building?
 - (b) If the answer to (a) is in the affirmative, could the Minister:
 - i. identify the company which received the contract;
 - ii. state the total sum of the contract and the period covered;
 - iii. explain the process used to select the company or person and the date on which the contract was entered into?

The Minister of Transport (Sen. The Hon. Jearlean John): Mr. Speaker, yes, the Airports Authority of Trinidad and Tobago ensures that:

- (a) The airport remains in compliance with all International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) safety and security requirements.

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- (b) The terminal apron and taxiway components of the new terminal facility provide for safe aircraft operation.
- (c) The passenger safety comfort level of service and security is maintained.
- (d) The operational integrity and reliability of the apron and terminal operations are maintained.
- (e) The Airports Authority's investment in the state-of-the-art specialized airport equipment and building support systems is maintained.

I need to specify that the Airport Specialized Equipment and Building Support Systems Maintenance Contract does not involve building janitorial or landscaping but includes the maintenance of the following equipment and systems. If you will bear with me, Mr. Speaker, I want to answer completely and truthfully. The equipment and systems are:

- 14 three-tunnel boarding bridges
- 14 aircraft pre-conditioned air units
- 14 pre-conditioned air hoses and hoses cabinets
- 14 400 Hz aircraft frequency converters
- 14 400 Hz cable retrievers
- 5 security baggage X-ray units
- 3 passenger security magnetometers
- 9 escalators
- 2 elevators
- Terminal-wide telecommunication system
- Terminal-wide public address system
- Centralized security control station
- Security cameras
- Security readers and door control devices
- Flight information display monitors
- 3 inclined plate baggage make-up devices
- 6 Convey power curve

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1,000 ft. of baggage conveyors

4 baggage claim conveyors

Terminal-wide emergency power system

Terminal-wide structure wire/fiber optic systems

Runway and taxiway lights

Apron lighting units

110 common use terminal equipment computers

56 common use terminal equipment ticket/boarding pass printers

Ramp-control tower electronic equipment

Within the building system, the maintenance contract includes:

Terminal wide interior lighting

Terminal exterior lighting

Fire alarm systems

High voltage electrical panel boards

Medium voltage electrical panel boards

Dry electrical transformer

Terminal area electrical distributor

Energy management system

Waster water treatment plant

Water and fire pumps

Sewerage lift stations

Triturator

Water storage tanks

Sewer manholes

Fire hydrants

Storm water systems

Underground water waster water and fire pipelines

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Sewerage ponds
Hot and cold water piping systems
Condensate drain water system
Terminal-wide sprinkler system
Terminal-wide air-conditioning piping
Air-conditioning centrifugal water chillers
Air-conditioning cooling towers
Air-handling units

The Authority entered into the Airport Specialized Equipment and Building Support Systems Maintenance Contract with Calmaquip Engineering Corporation.

The contract sum is determined by an annual cost of US \$5,071,000 to be maintained over a 10-year period. Over the life of the contract it amounts to a total of US\$50,710,264.

The tender procedure which was utilized—the methodology:

The construction package was tendered under a finance, supply and install procurement arrangement. In order to ensure that the airport systems to be installed were properly maintained a requirement of the tender was that the successful tenderer was to enter into a contract with the Airports Authority for the maintenance of the equipment.

A selective tendering process was used. Firms pre-qualified by the National Insurance Property Development Company Limited were invited to tender. In addition, the international embassies in Trinidad were contacted about the upcoming tender.

2. Invited tenderers

Ten firms were invited to tender:

Calmaquip Engineering Corporation
Caribbean Engineering/Intelcom
CCS Technology
Honeywell Airport Systems
Le Gendre and Company
MDC-UM Business and Home Furniture

Securicor Services

Soares Da Costa

Sovam S.A.

Thomas Peake

3. Tender Chronology

- Invitation to tender was issued on November 16, 1999.
- A Pre-Tender Conference was held on December 07, 1999.
- A Public Opening of Tender was held on December 20, 1999 at which two bids were received:
- Calmaquip Engineering came in at TT \$183,864,475.10
- Soares Da Costa TT \$213,112,215.08

Tenders were evaluated by the project consultants, Birk Hillman Consultants who reviewed the tenders based on the following criteria:

Qualifications and experience

Compliance with tender requirements

Compliance with technical specifications

Pricing proposals

Birk Hillman Consultants indicated that both parties met the tender and technical requirements and that the low bidder was Calmaquip Engineering Company.

The financial proposal was evaluated by the Ministry of Finance and Calmaquip received the highest score.

Based on the evaluations by Birk Hillman Consultants and the Ministry of Finance, Calmaquip Engineering Corporation was recommended for Award of Contract.

The Maintenance Services Contract was signed on August 15, 2000.

Dr. K. Rowley: Did the Airports Authority give any consideration to the fact that awarding one contract to one contractor for the range of services, from fiber optics, to sewer, to light bulbs, was eliminating all local suppliers from services?

1.40 p.m.

Hon. J. John: I am sure they did. However, the maintenance contract, as a part of the original contract—there was a variation. I think—and maybe I ought not to answer completely at this point; I may come back and respond to that question on another occasion. Can I do that?

Dr. Rowley: You had better do that. That is good advice.

With respect to the fact that all the specialized equipment covered by these contracts and services would carry some element of guarantee or warranty, how does the Airports Authority relate that to a US \$50 million maintenance contract?

Hon. J. John: You would bear in mind this contract has a lifespan of 10 years. Guarantee and warranty will span probably between six months to 24 months. That has been factored in and they have a database of their consideration under the warranty period. But it goes beyond the warranty period.

Dr. Rowley: Let us take one firm like Thomas Peake, an air-conditioning supplier who bid on this package, was it the expectation that Thomas Peake would do maintenance and sewerage and other matters in the Airports Authority?

Hon. J. John: I cannot respond to that at this time.

Dr. Rowley: Finally, given the fact that the Airports Authority has no surplus revenues and the Minister of Finance has indicated that we are limiting Government's borrowings, where is this US \$50 million going to come from to pay for this contract?

Hon. J. John: The Airports Authority revenue. The lease arrangement is on a cost-recovery basis.

Dr. Rowley: One final question, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Please. That is the final question.

Dr. Rowley: Final question. Is the Minister aware that with respect to the Airports Authority's budget, as per the last budget 2000, the Airports Authority has no surplus revenues and has to rely on \$75 million of Government subvention, even before this contract was entered into? The Airports Authority is relying on Government subvention since it has no surplus revenues. So therefore, where is this money going to come from?

Hon. J. John: I wish to assure the Member that the leases now entered into between the Airports Authority and all of its concessionaires are on a cost-recovery basis and the maintenance of the facilities are included.

**FINANCE (SUPPLEMENTATION AND
VARIATION OF APPROPRIATION) BILL**

Bill to supplement and vary the appropriation of the sum of the issue which was authorized by the Appropriation Act, 2001 [*The Minister of Finance*]; read the first time.

Motion made, That the next stage be taken later in the proceedings. [*Hon. G. Yetming*]

Question put and agreed to.

**FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT
Adoption**

The Minister of Finance (Sen. The Hon. Gerald Yetming): Mr. Speaker, I beg to move,

Be it Resolved that this House adopt the Second Report of the 2001 Session of the Finance Committee of the House of Representatives of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, on proposals for the supplementation and variation of the Annual Estimates 2001.

Mr. Speaker, the Finance Committee of the House of Representatives met on Monday, May 21, and approved a number of proposals. The proposals include:

- (1) The Variation of the 2001 Appropriation as follows:
 - (i) Recurrent Estimates \$931,194,138
 - (ii) Public Sector Investment Programme \$140,498,398
- (2) An increase in the 2001 Appropriation in the sum \$606,536,265.

Given the increase of \$606,536,265 the 2001 Appropriation will now be \$16,898,696,311.

The variations in the Recurrent Expenditure reflect the amended schedule of responsibilities of Ministers as assigned by His Excellency the President, acting in accordance with the advice of the Prime Minister.

The reallocation of funds under the 2001 Public Sector Investment Programme (PSIP) is due to a revision of the PSIP as well as a reassignment of responsibilities of Ministers.

A review of the performance of the 2001 PSIP was undertaken in February 2001 and it was found that while several performed as forecast the utilization of resources on some were lower than anticipated.

On the basis of this review exercise, it was recommended that a reallocation of funds among programmes and projects be undertaken.

The overall effect of the supplementary funding and variations in allocations under the respective Heads is as follows:

Head of Expenditure	Amount Increased
	\$
Head 01—President	50,000
Head 02—Auditor General	640,000
Head 03—Judiciary	1,683,500
Head 04—Industrial Court	805,000
Head 05—Parliament	1,283,000
Head 06—Service Commissions	530,000
Head 07—Statutory Authorities Service Commission	100,000
Head 08—Elections and Boundaries Commission	9,300,000
Head 09—Tax Appeal Board	288,000
Head 11—Registration, Recognition and Certification Board	70,000
Head 12—Public Service Appeal Board	45,000
Head 15—Tobago House of Assembly	71,317,010
Head 16—Central Administrative Services, Tobago	297,000
Head 17—Personnel Department	400,000
Head 21—Ministry of Integrated Planning and Development	43,139,447
Head 22—Ministry of National Security	204,502,615
Head 23—Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs	11,190,402
Head 26—Ministry of Education	14,059,398
Head 28—Ministry of Health	37,941,832
Head 31—Ministry of Communications and Information Technology	63,909,052
Head 32—Ministry of Enterprise Development, Foreign Affairs and Tourism	152,612,062

Head of Expenditure	Amount Increased
	\$
Head 33—Ministry of Human Development, Youth and Culture	313,600,142
Head 34—Ministry of Transport	193,270,341
Head 36—Ministry of Housing and Settlements	17,261,893
Head 37—Integrity Commission	25,000
Head 38—Environment Commission	142,475
Head 39—Ministry of Environment	37,144,690
Head 40—Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries	427,917
Head 43—Ministry of Infrastructure Development and Local Government	323,992,125
Head 45—Ministry of Community Empowerment, Sport and Consumer Affairs	76,580,265
	<u>1,576,608,166</u>

Mr. Speaker, there will be decreases under the following:

Heads of Expenditure	Amount Decreased
	\$
Head 13—Office of the Prime Minister	10,348,489
Head 18—Ministry of Finance	192,410,894
Head 25—Ministry of Food Production and Marine Resources	44,141,504
Head 30—Ministry of Labour, Manpower Planning and Industrial Relations	5,065,169
Head 41—Ministry of Culture and Gender Affairs	31,861,009
1.50 p.m.	
Head 42—Ministry of Local Government	280,250,792
Head 44—Ministry of Public Utilities	113,448,027
Head 46—Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs	85,980,355

Head of Expenditure	Amount Increased
	\$
Head 47—Ministry of Foreign Affairs	75,674,035
Head 48—Ministry of Trade and Industry and Consumer Affairs	34,542,796
Head 50—Ministry of Tourism	30,598,133
Head 51—Ministry of Public Administration	20,913,289
Head 52—Ministry of Tobago Affairs	5,947,086
Head 53—Ministry of Training and Distance Learning	38,890,323
Total	\$970,071,901

The explanations for the variations and allocations of both the recurrent expenditure and the Public Sector Investment Programme have been circulated to Members. The major part of what is proposed and approved by the Finance Committee has to do with the variation of the 2001 Appropriation which has resulted because of the reallocation or the reconfiguration of ministries as recommended by the Prime Minister and approved by the President.

I would like to comment on the supplemental funding which totals \$606,536,265 of which \$471,941,854 or 77.8 per cent represents public servants' salaries, arising out of the new wage agreements which have been concluded by the Chief Personnel Officer (CPO). The balance of the supplemental funding of \$134 million is required for goods and services, debt servicing and other commitments which cannot be avoided.

In the case of the public servants' salaries, the Chief Personnel Officer concluded negotiations on salaries, wages and other benefits with all the public sector unions and associations, as well as the representatives of the Government's hourly, daily and weekly paid employees. The cost to the Government for the three-year period 1999–2001, which is the period of all the agreements for wages and salaries, totals \$927 million. In the case of allowances and benefits for that three-year period, the cost to the Government would be \$230 million. This means that the Government now has to find \$1.157 billion to satisfy the terms of these agreements.

Even taking into consideration the \$471 million that we are asking for in the supplemental funding and what has been budgeted for in the appropriation for

2001, the Government will still have to find approximately \$300 million in next year's budget to fully satisfy the three-year agreement with the public servants' unions. As I said, it totals \$1.157 billion. I wish to report that there is still an outstanding matter under discussion and negotiation between the CPO and the Public Services Association (PSA), relative to an arrears of increment going back to 1987. It is in a state of negotiation, the CPO having written to the Public Services Association with a buyout offer.

The other major item in the supplementary funding has to do with the Tobago House of Assembly (THA). In this supplementary proposal, we are seeking to provide the THA with close to \$50 million arising out of discussions with the Chief Secretary of the Tobago House of Assembly. On the assumption of office of the new Chief Secretary, the Prime Minister had a number of discussions with him in an effort to forge a closer working relation with the THA. Arising out of that, the Chief Secretary met with the Minister of Finance and reported that on assuming office, he had assumed outstanding debts to the tune of about \$150 million. He sought to get some relief for that debt that was assumed, from the central government and the Minister of Finance.

Just for recap purposes, \$70 million of which he reported he inherited was in the form of overdraft with a commercial bank. In addition, \$50 million represented outstanding bills of the Tobago House of Assembly that had not been paid for a while and, some bills were long outstanding. He claimed that if this was not paid, it would result in the shutdown of a number of businesses in Tobago. A sum of \$12 million out of that \$150 million had to do with other unpaid commitments. A sum of \$70 million had to do with outstanding liabilities for scholarships which were illegally granted by the former THA.

The Minister of Finance agreed to provide an additional subvention to the Tobago House of Assembly, in order to liquidate part of the debts assumed by the new THA. The Minister of Finance agreed to work closely with the Assembly to ensure that the orderly takedown—let me say first of all that we have agreed to provide them with additional funding to the tune of approximately \$50 million. We have agreed to work with the Assembly in order to ensure an orderly takedown of the \$100 million which would be remaining. We should do that through the annual allocation being provided to the THA, commencing from fiscal 2002.

2.00 p.m.

The Tobago House of Assembly, through the Chief Secretary, gave me the assurance that he would restore financial discipline and prudent financial

management at the Tobago House of Assembly. I just want to read from a letter that the Chief Secretary wrote to the Minister of Finance, if only for it to be recorded in *Hansard*. The letter is dated May 1, 2001 and it reads:

“I refer to your correspondence dated 19th April 2001, with respect to additional financial support to liquidate the debts inherited by the present Tobago House of Assembly.

I am heartened to note that Cabinet has accepted the proposal discussed at our recent meeting and I wish to record the Assembly’s appreciation of the urgency and sensitivity with which your Ministry and the Central Government treated with this critical issue.

I wish to advise that my administration has already started the process of initiating measures that would restore financial discipline and prudent financial management to the operations of the Assembly.”

Mr. Speaker, we have provided responses to the questions raised at the committee stage, and a number of the concerns raised would be elaborated on by other Members on this side.

Mr. Speaker, I beg to move.

Question proposed.

Mr. Kenneth Valley (*Diego Martin Central*): Mr. Speaker, I open my contribution by thanking the hon. Minister for the responses he gave on the issues raised at the Finance Committee meeting on Monday. They dealt with some of our concerns, and I want to record my thanks to the Minister and to the public servants who put those responses together.

Mr. Speaker, with respect to the matter before us, Item I deals with the consequential transfers arising from the reallocation of ministerial portfolio and, of course, this is not going to cause us any trouble. One expected that.

The issue with which one has to deal is the supplementary appropriation of some \$606.5 million. The first issue we note as the Minister of Finance said in his contribution is that some 77.8 per cent of that is owing to the increases to public servants.

Mr. Speaker, you would recall, I am sure—and it is the question I would have liked to pose to the former Minister of Finance because I thought he had assured this House that, in fact, he had made some appropriation for public servants’ salaries when the budget was developed last year. You would know also, that he

made ample provision for Ministers' salaries and so forth but, public servants, I am told by the newspapers, received a 10 per cent increase effectively over a 10-year period. Therefore, it is difficult for me to understand why the Minister of Finance in his budget preparation could be wrong by some \$471 million. And, if I am to understand what the Minister is saying, that is not the end of the picture. There is some \$300 million that is deferred to the next fiscal period. I think, therefore, we have to say thank God that Minister is no longer with us. That was the first issue we wanted to record.

The second issue, however, has to do with this Minister because this Minister has been telling us that there would be a moratorium on borrowing for the next five years.

On Monday when we sought clarification, we were told that the moratorium related to the direct borrowing by the Government. That, in fact, there were a few state companies that may still have to go to the market.

I want to, first of all, deal with the Government's issue because when we looked at the budget documents presented last year, we noted the then Minister of Finance planned to borrow some \$3.1 billion and that was required in part to effect repayment on loans amounting to some \$2.7 billion. So my simple question is: Have our projected revenues for this year increased to such an extent that we can now repay that \$2.7 billion in outstanding indebtedness which is falling due in 2001 without going to the market? Have revenues increased to such an extent that it can also pay for this additional expenditure of \$606 million? We heard nothing about revenues.

The Minister came and told us that his expenditure has risen by \$606 million. He did not take us into his confidence and now tells us this is how he intends to pay it. We are left to assume that oil prices are still high, and they are going to pay for it from that. But if that is going to pay for that \$606 million expenditure, how are we going to repay our debt? I hope we would get a response at some point in time because the national community—obviously, if the Government is going to reduce borrowing, we would all be happy. As long as we have the revenues, or as long as we can cut our expenditure so to do—but if we are talking about cutting expenditure, then we ought to know where we are cutting and, in fact, what we are seeing rather is an increase in the expenditure, so we are not cutting the expenditure. If we are not cutting the expenditure, would the Minister tell us whether he plans to default on his debt obligations? I do not know, but we need some answers with respect to that, rather than during the year we find ourselves in

serious difficulties. That was the first issue I thought we should deal with. Before I go to the second issue I want to deal with another issue with respect to this debt.

Mr. Speaker, the direct borrowing is one thing, but what this Government has been doing over the last year and a half or perhaps, two years, is getting the state companies out there to do its borrowing. Last year for example, the new deputy political leader in waiting went ahead and got Tidco to borrow some \$900 million to run up and down the place to try and win the election.

2.10 p.m.

That is not direct borrowing, that is, borrowing by state companies. We are seeing the same thing happening at the Urban Development Corporation of Trinidad and Tobago Limited (UDeCott). Mr. Speaker, here we have put some companies in place with one assignment; Tidco is supposed to market Trinidad and Tobago in trade and tourism. Suddenly Tidco is a financier; it is out there borrowing money to undertake road paving in Trinidad and, perhaps, in Tobago too, before the last election. UDeCott is doing the same thing; somehow that company is now borrowing money for port development.

Mr. Speaker, a new thing has developed lately in this Parliament and outside in the national community, where it is said that if a Member comes to the House and lays charges then he must have evidence. Honestly, up to a year ago or even a few months ago, I thought that proof and so on was for the courts. I thought that the framers of the parliamentary system knew the importance of the freedom of speech of the Members of Parliament, and I thought our friends in the media, who ought to have been doing investigative reporting, would have done some work after Members of Parliament speak. As I said, Mr. Speaker, the new thing is they want evidence. Mr. Speaker, since they started asking for evidence it seems as though I would have to enlarge my postbox.

I went home yesterday evening and I got a heaping lot of Cabinet Minutes and it paints a picture, Mr. Speaker. This is only some; I could not bring all. I will bring the rest the next time the Parliament is sitting. I would just like to point out some of what is happening. The first one—UdeCott—this is an interesting story. First of all, they were given approval to borrow some \$24 million for the Port Authority of Trinidad and Tobago. The port is reclaiming some land, they say, and they got a quotation, initially, of \$28 million but for some reason they did not like that and they decided that the expenditure on that project should be \$87 million. Mr. Speaker, let me read part of this Cabinet Note. It says here:

“Financing arrangements with respect to the Deepening of the Harbour at Port of Spain.

...UDEcOTT arrange loan financing in the sum of \$24,100,310 which sum represents the difference between the \$63 Mn previously approved and the contract price of \$87,100,310..."

It talks here about an initial price of \$28 million for the dredging, on an offshore disposal basis. It went to \$63 million and then to \$87 million. That is the first one. We are spending money as though we are finding it. Prices are going up all over. That is one of them, Mr. Speaker. This is not government borrowing.

Mr. Speaker: I think it would help if you would identify the documents and the page of the quotation for the record.

Mr. K. Valley: Whatever you want, Mr. Speaker. They told me they want evidence, I am going to give them evidence. From now on I am coming to the House with evidence.

Mr. Speaker: All I want you to do if you are quoting from a document is for you to identify the document and give the page number.

Mr. K. Valley: Whatever you want you are going to get, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. K. Valley: This is:

“Cabinet Minute No. 1558 of August 16, 2000

Business Plan of the Port Authority of Trinidad and Tobago for the Period 1999 – 2001”

That is one of them and the quotation with respect to the borrowing of \$24 million is on page 1 “Note for Cabinet WT(2000)33. (Rev.) 761”. That is one. I will give you the other one. This one is and I quote:

“CABINET MINUTE NO. 1502 OF AUGUST 9, 2000

Approval for the Port Authority of Trinidad and Tobago to borrow Funds to undertake Infrastructural Capital Projects and acquire Equipment over the Period 1999 to 2000”

Very interestingly, Mr. Speaker, this one gives the Port Authority of Trinidad and Tobago authority to borrow \$150 million for the same set of work. Well, not the same set, included in this is the dredging and that is supposed to be in this one. I do not know! They must tell me what is happening! I am just a recipient! I get them in my postbox and I read them.

This one talks about and I quote:

“Revision of the Cost of Implementation of the National Road Enhancement Programme to facilitate the Completion of the new Chaguanas Market”

This one alone, Mr. Speaker, was revised from \$210 million to \$205 million—the \$5 million to build the Chaguanas Market. Again, do you know who is borrowing? Not the Government—the Urban Development Corporation of Trinidad and Tobago Limited.

The next one, Mr. Speaker, “Revision of the Cost of Implementation of the National Road Enhancement Programme to facilitate the Completion of the new Chaguanas Market”. This is dated August 16 and this one is dated August 16. I have two copies. You see I am so good, they must have sent me your own copy too. Did you get any? [*Laughter*] This is better than when I was in Cabinet. The next one—like they sent me two of each? “Financing Arrangement for the Port.”

Dr. Rowley: They must have sent one for me?

Mr. K. Valley: Yes, one must be for you. I continue to quote:

“CABINET MINUTE NO. 1557 OF AUGUST 16, 2000

Revised Scope of Works for the East-West Corridor Flood Abatement Emergency Infrastructure Works”

Mr. Speaker, just before the election they increased the price from \$27 million to \$42.08 million to do a little work, in where? Let me tell you, Mr. Speaker. I continue to quote:

“...deemed necessary to put in place a more permanent and long term solution to the flooding problems in the San Juan/Barataria, St. Joseph and St. Augustine areas...”

Mr. Assam: Was that approved?

Mr. K. Valley: “agreed: to approve the revised scope of works...” Yes it was! You were absent! You are in the Cabinet and you do not know? What trouble is this? You are travelling too much! I am going to come to that too! You are travelling too much. [*Interruption*] He did not get the work done? It was approved. Let me tell you what the Cabinet Minute says. [*Interruption*] That is right, it has nothing to do with work. It says:

“agreed:

- (a) to approve the revised scope of works for the East-West Corridor Flood Abatement Emergency Infrastructure Works Project as set out in the Appendix hereto, at an estimated cost of \$27.099-Mn.;

This must be where they catch you?

- “(b) subject to budgetary constraints, that the said \$27.099-Mn. be included in the 2000/2001 draft Public Sector Investment Programme (PSIP) under Head 44 - Ministry of Public Utilities, Sub-Head 09...”

2.20 p.m.

Then Kuei Tung hits you a “zug”, you know. It was approved subject to—*[Interruption]*—and Kuei Tung said, “None for you”. It was not released.

Next one—“dis one interesting”. Resettlement of residents of Oropune Village, Piarco. I have here also, Mr. Speaker—I do not know who it is, but thank God for him or her, I do not know, but it is the same way I got the coast guard list. *[Interruption]* You see, this one I have also in a board meeting No. 8, a board paper—I am quoting for your benefit, Mr. Speaker—Board Paper No. 03/00 dated August 23, 2000. It says:

“The Chairman, Mr. Tyrone Gopee, mandated a management committee comprising senior managers of the Airports Authority...to deal with the issue of the Oropune village settlement.”

Then it lists the persons on the committee and the committee reporting that, “Friend, you see we, we cannot deal with that—too hot to handle because we have one price and they are about four times.” It says here that they want some four times the value of the houses. I will just read the committee’s opinion.

“It is the committee’s opinion that the...(Airports Authority) does not have the technical competence to determine the values of the houses in question. The...(Airports Authority) does not have a bargaining tool at their fingertips to expedite the settlement process as they were denied the ability to hire a private valuator who would have realistically quantified the values, which would lend credence to the entire exercise. Only two of the 42 Government valuations were accepted by the cooperative as being reasonable as the cooperative negotiated a higher value plus 20% enhancement for all the others. This Committee has brought all the issues and the facts on the table but no further action can be taken until further directive is given.”

Lo and behold, there is a Cabinet Minute No. 1851 of September 29, 2000 dealing with resettlement of residents of Oropune Village, Piarco and it says here

that it was agreed by Minute 1452 of August 2, 2000, which agreed inter alia that the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Development would source the sum of \$361,323,308.94 to fund the items of expenditure detailed therein in respect of the said airports development project, the Oropune Village relocation being one such item. No agreement, you know, but that is another one.

I am just giving you the evidence, you know, because the point I am making, Mr. Speaker, is that while the hon. Minister may have good intentions to have a moratorium, we do know how he is going to do it, given his obligations. We need to keep an eye on what is happening out there—the government agencies—because while he is trying to control that, all types of things seem to be happening out there, starting about a year ago with Tidco, with UDeCOTT, with, I think it is the maintenance company, and all of them—they are sending them out there now to borrow moneys and have a good time.

Okay, this is a simple one, I do not know—grant of reclamation licence and consequential lease of land situated at Western Main Road, Cocorite. This one they say—perhaps they just want me to know what is happening in my constituency.

Another one, Cabinet Minute No. 1844 of September 29, 2000:

“Payment for Works undertaken in respect of Contract 3 of the Roads and Bridges Rehabilitation Programme—Year 1, National Highways Programme”

Again they are talking about giving a whole heaping set of money, Mr. Speaker, you know—money, money, money—paying somebody for some work which was done outside the scope of the contract, you know. What is this:

“Jose Cartellone...be paid the sum of \$1.9 million...in respect of additional works undertaken on Contract 3 of the Roads and Bridges...Programme...”

Outside the scope of the thing.

“Cabinet further noted that in the light of the foregoing, the contract price of the project was increased from \$64.1 million...to \$66 million...”

Spending money, Mr. Speaker. We need to look at what is happening in the documents before us, and we got some response there. We note, Mr. Speaker, that the Airports Authority borrowed some US \$30 million. All the borrowing we are hearing about, the \$361 million here, there is this \$30 million, that is the first time that we know that the Airports Authority also borrowed some US \$30 million—some other work.

Now, Mr. Speaker, our revenue position is a little good, not because of our own doing but because of what is happening in the Middle East and so on. Oil prices are relatively still good and thank God for that, but that is no reason to waste that wealth. When you look at what is happening with that road paving that started sometime in July or August—and I understand the Minister is boasting about how many roads are being—I mean, the thing is atrocious, quite frankly! I mean, there is no preparation. They come, they put some asphalt on top of anything, and that is it. I mean, we went through this before and we ought to have learnt from that experience and if we are doing things now, it is important that we do them properly, Mr. Speaker.

I am going to move on because what, for me, is a most annoying item in this report is the allocation of some \$10 million to the Elections and Boundaries Commission. You know, Mr. Speaker, sometimes I wonder whether there is a new culture that is being developed here in Trinidad and Tobago where wrong is right and right is wrong. That is the only conclusion I can come to, when I see persons who ought to know better being critical of the PNM for saying publicly that the EBC failed to live up to its expectations with respect to the last general election and, you know, Mr. Speaker, there are some people in the national community who are saying something else. They are saying, “Listen, if you are a politician you must not say anything other than what is politically correct. It does not matter whether it is the truth or whether it is justice; it must simply be politically correct.”

Mr. Speaker, I want you to remind those persons in the national community of our prayer where we talk about truth and justice, and that is what we are about. We take an oath in this House to act without fear or favour, with ill will to no one, but the same way I am going to protect and would argue for the right for anybody from the EBC or the Prime Minister or whoever, to give their opinion, as long as I am in this House—as a matter of fact, as long as I am alive—I would say, if I believe something is wrong, I am going to say it as loudly as I can that it is wrong [*Desk thumping*] and it does not matter how you cut it, how you slice it, the EBC failed this country miserably in the last election.

You know, Mr. Speaker, on February 21, 2001 I wrote to the EBC telling them to list the deletions relating to San Juan/Barataria, persons who they took off the list. On the list of persons coming in, that is who went into San Juan/Barataria, the list of deletions, Mr. Speaker, on the total list, were some 4,700. The list of additions was roughly some 7,000. So that in a constituency with a voting population of some 23,000, there was a change in configuration by roughly 45 to

48 per cent. Mr. Speaker, up to today I am awaiting a response. I asked them two questions. I simply wanted them to assure me that, in fact, all of those transfers were made by the EBC. Up to today, in spite of the fact that they claim they respond to every query of the PNM, I am still waiting for them.

I have asked certain other questions publicly and I am going to put them on the table this afternoon because, you see, the EBC is too important an institution and before the last general election no one questioned the integrity of the EBC. That is the reality of the situation. However, before the last election, the PNM provided certain information to the commissioners. They were rebuffed. The PNM informed the commission that they had information that a particular senior officer had accepted a cheque for \$250,000 and the commissioner, who is out there speaking, said that he heard about it and when he was asked, "What did you do about it?" he did nothing about it, Mr. Speaker.

An institution as important as the EBC, an institution that ought to be concerned about its transparency and its accountability, got a report like that from a recognized political party, got evidence, did nothing about it, and we must say nothing because they have to hold elections next time? I would be up and down this town saying that we need changes in that institution because something is rotten in the State of Denmark! [*Desk thumping*] That is the reality of the situation, Mr. Speaker.

You know, I want to ask you, I want to ask members of the media, I want—you know, Mr. Speaker, long ago there were one or two persons who used to do investigative reporting. I wonder whether, just like our calypsoes where all you have now is "wave yuh hand" and all this sort of thing, you do not have the good art form any longer, we seem to want in the reporting now only bacchanal. You understand? [*Interruption*] Boy, no sacred cows! You understand? Listen, let me tell you, as I said, what is wrong, it must be said that it is wrong, without fear or favour, and if it is wrong, it is wrong. With the calypso, Mr. Speaker, do you know what I did? I opened "mih own" Caribbean corner, so every night "dey bring calypsonians I want to hear and ah sit dong and ah hear dem".

I cannot do that with the media because "like all those who do investigative journalism gone! It look so!" Nobody is doing it. Imagine, they are asking an MP, a Member of Parliament, to bring evidence, to bring proof and give them! They do not want to go out and do it, you know. I must bring proof and give them. I do not understand this thing. It is the first time, you know—and they do not even understand how silly it sounds.

2.35 p.m.

You know, it is so marvellous. I have never seen that yet. But listen to this, Mr. Speaker. The fun about it—I am having fun this evening. They will criticize me for that too. I cannot even say I am having fun too, you know. I will get an editorial for that.

Mr. Assam: So you are against the press?

Mr. K. Valley: I am not against the press. I am against what is wrong. Listen to these questions, Mr. Speaker. The first one, I asked the Elections and Boundaries Commission (EBC), why did they fail to post out the polling cards. Traditionally, we would post out poll cards, but on this occasion they did not do that. They found some other method to distribute the poll cards so they would never reach. I understand that a gentleman from Ortoire/Mayaro had a whole bunch, and as people came out of buses, he was handing it to them, “Go and vote”.

Question No. 2, why was the electoral ink in some polling stations deficient? Is that a fact? Is that my fantasy? Did that really happen? They got special ink. They were not using anything else at all. They do not even trust the EBC’s ink. They bring in their own ink. You understand? As a matter of fact, on polling day there were certain persons whose job was “voter”. They were moving from constituency to constituency and voting, and that is not fiction. That is fact! The fiction is also 24,000 registering.

I am still on the point, Mr. Speaker. It is an allocation here I am talking about because I do not know what they are going to do with that \$10 million.

Mr. Speaker: It must relate to Head 8 and the questions you raised under Head 8 to the hon. Minister. If that is the case, I am waiting to hear when we will come back to that Head 8. So press on, please. I am still waiting.

Mr. K. Valley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am making a simple point. This is a waste of \$10 million at this time. A complete waste! The EBC would have us believe, or they tell us, that they were asking for this funding for some time since 1999. I remember my colleague, the Member for Diego Martin East, in this House raising questions with respect to funding for the EBC so that they can carry out their work. The government did not find it possible to give it to them before the elections so that they could ensure a correct list because that was not in their interest. Complete waste!

Mr. Speaker, to give it to them after the fact, that is not the story coming out of the EBC. [*Interruption*] You take it up with them. I have my own battles with

them. If you want to battle with them, you are free, but they are saying that they asked for the funds since 1999 and they did not get them. The Minister, on Monday, mentioned that it was not possible; that he had his priorities and, of course, EBC was not a priority, especially since it was an election year.

So, it was not given before the election. It is now given, and understand what they are doing, Mr. Speaker. The same field officers who are suspect—and I am not saying that everybody in the EBC is corrupt, but I am saying that that level of corruption could not have occurred without the willing compliance of the EBC. That is what I am saying.

Understand, the field officers are coming out and doing the same thing. Whoever they meet at the house, they ask, “Is so and so living here?” and the person says yes and that is it. They tick it off and they go. Mr. Speaker, not one of us can open a bank account in that way. Not one of us! If one goes to open an account in the bank, they ask for some type of evidence to prove that, in fact, what one is saying is correct, whether it is a WASA bill, a TSTT bill, what have you. Here you have an organization charged with the responsibility of maintaining the voter's registration and they simply ask, “Are you living here?” because they are not police and that is what they say. You understand that? Understand that!

In England they tell me that once per year, in September or thereabout, they update the electoral list. I understand also that the UNDP approached the government—the government or the EBC—telling them that they are willing to finance the registration exercise on the condition that it be supervised by the British. They did not want that. They said no. They ran and gave them \$10 million. Understand what is happening.

Mr. Speaker, we need to know what went wrong in the EBC and why it went wrong. In some polling stations on election day, persons were voting without identification cards. They were not swearing to anything. They just came in and they did not have to swear. You know, the whole thing one could have seen.

Mr. Assam: Did you report it?

Mr. Valley: There were reports. Nobody was taking on the reports. What about this acceptance of transfers on other than the prescribed form, as in San Fernando? Ask my friend from San Fernando West whether he is aware that thousands of transfers were done on other than the prescribed form; the prescribed form that was copied. How could that happen? How did it happen?

The critical one, Mr. Speaker. Here they have evidence that one of their senior persons accepted a bribe and they say that no, they did not investigate it. They left

it alone, and we need to have confidence in the EBC and there was a *Trinidad Guardian* editorial talking about—what did they say? That the PNM intervention was to suggest that destruction of the legitimacy of the EBC is now the settled policy and that this party is now reduced to damming the bridge it has crossed by seeking to discredit the EBC.

I want to tell them that nobody needs to discredit the EBC. They did an excellent job in the manner in which they conducted that 2000 poll. [*Desk thumping*] Nobody has to do that. They did it on their own. That is the reality of the situation. You know, Mr. Speaker, I think it is an *Express* article which said that the whole thing suggested that we did not do our work beforehand. We provided the EBC with that information. The same information I provided to the EBC on the 21st. That is part of what was used in the courts to get leave of the court for the judicial review, and we will continue to pursue that matter until we can get a commission of enquiry into the EBC to find out clearly what went wrong and why it went wrong. [*Desk thumping*]

If we are to live in a democracy, it is extremely important that the Elections and Boundaries Commission must be staffed with commissioners in whom the whole country can have trust. Mr. Speaker, honestly, if I were a commissioner on the EBC I would have resigned long ago. I really do not know what they are waiting for. I do not understand it. There seems to be nobody prepared to take responsibility for action and I do not know where we are going; but I want to tell my friends in the media that some of us do not care how often they write editorials. We will continue to say what is wrong is wrong. Our view! And they are entitled to have another view.

Now, there are other issues, Mr. Speaker. Page 21 of the report talks about the payment to Southern Finance, and of course this brings us back to that whole Maritime issue. I have to go back to the Maritime issue because I was the Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee that looked into that matter. I understand that some \$69 million has been paid and I am asking the Minister of Finance once more that there ought to be some audit point to ensure that, in fact, those funds went into the hands of the persons intended rather than falling to the bottom line of Maritime's account. All right?

I am asking. That is the taxpayers' money and he has a responsibility to ensure that those funds went for the purpose—the stated purpose, not the hidden purpose—because shortly after that, we saw newspaper reports of moneys flying out of the country via certain individuals. Not so? To the Cayman Islands and so forth. Who was it? The former Minister?

Finance Committee Report
[MR. VALLEY]

Thursday, May 24, 2001

Mr. Speaker, in the current UNC campaign somebody said, my good friend, who was it? Was it my good friend from Naparima who said, “This party is not for sale”? How could it be for sale when it was sold already? [*Desk thumping*] Gone long time! It is as though every five years the party leases out the Treasury. First five years it was Ish, Brian and Steve and now, let me not call any names because they might send me to the Privileges Committee.

Mr. Maraj: Again!

Mr. K. Valley: You understand. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the speaking time of the hon. Member 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. K. Valley: Mr. Speaker, that is their business. Let them lease out—it is not their business. It is really our business, but until the rest of us understand what is happening, we will have to leave it so. On page 21, also, there is this BWIA matter—outstanding issues—and I have noted the comment of the Minister, because I must tell him that I was about to file a question.

Persons are coming to me, employees of old BWIA who are now no longer with the airline, and they are saying, “What is happening with our shares?” So, I am glad that that is being finalized, but another issue, Mr. Speaker, I have noted in the comment of the hon. Minister on this matter—if I can just find it here quickly—where he says that there is some committee from the Ministry of Finance looking at the restructuring surplus. I do not understand that concept.

Going further, speaking about how the outstanding issue is the finalization of the restructure surplus. Officials of the Ministry of Finance and BWIA are currently meeting with a view to resolving this issue. The pension fund surplus has been utilized; the benefits payable under the 1971 pension plan, as well as the agreed enhancement. However there is a residual balance which is to be distributed to the former members of the pension plan, but what is this? I do not know what is this restructuring balance.

As I understood it at the time, when we dealt with that matter with respect to the pension plan, the Government got its part and the rest was left in the pension plan for the members of the pension plan. Part of it was used to purchase—the part the Government got—the 15.5 per cent shareholding in BWIA for the union

members, and the rest was supposed to accumulate and provide benefits for members. I hope they will enlighten me on the concept of the restructuring surplus.

Mr. Speaker, very quickly I want to move to page 22 and the Attorney General, \$11.4 million. The aspiring deputy—no, he is not the aspiring deputy; he is really aspiring to Prime Minister. I mean, that is what he is really doing and I think they all know that and that is why they are all supporting Carlos. You see? Because they know they do not want him. They do not mind him as deputy, but it is the Prime Minister they are afraid of, even on the streets. That is why I told them earlier that they are gone through.

On the streets they say, “Oh God boy, I 'fraid Ramesh”. Mr. Speaker, I am telling you, somebody told me, “Could you imagine they send you to Privilege Committee on a mistake. Could you imagine if he is Prime Minister? He will jail you at the drop of a hat!”

2.50 p.m.

Mr. K. Valley: He will be

Hon. Member: He is a judge.

Mr. K. Valley: He will be. Mr. Speaker, I must tell you before I come back to the Attorney General, somebody else met me; they said that before the election—*[Interruption]*—“ah telling you”—

Mr. Maraj: How people meeting you so?

Mr. K. Valley: People “does” meet me boy. “Yuh tink it easy.” The lady met me. *[Interruption]*

Mr. Maharaj: A lady?

Mr. K. Valley: She told me, “Mr. Valley, you remember before the election when the Prime Minister say when you go in the ballot box nobody watching, talk to your God and vote for the PNM; the party eh send him before the Privileges Committee; he make mistake and nobody eh send him. How come they sending you?” Interesting times.

I told the lady that that party have nothing. “They doh have Privileges Committee; they doh have party; they doh have general council; they doh have nutten.” All they have is one man who say that Ministers could fight and everybody start scrambling. Ministers “cyar” fight; “dey cyar fight”. *[Crosstalk]* *[Laughter]* Could you imagine that, Mr. Speaker? *[Interruption]* “Ah coming back.”

One man get up and say, “All of you, come down to the learning centre, I want to lecture you all,” and everybody put their—man give me a chance. You all have no concept of democracy. I am coming back to the Bill, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Manning: They say Carlos as deputy and they vote for Ramesh.

Mr. K. Valley: I am coming back to the Bill, Mr. Speaker. No, that would never happen. They say Carlos for deputy and they “go” vote for Carlos. Sheep to the slaughter. Yes, I am on this \$11 million, Mr. Speaker. [*Laughter*] [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker, this is a very serious issue, because we have seen that my friend from Couva South likes to run to England, at the drop of a hat, to bring down QCs on all types of matters which he ought not normally to be concerned with. We have a situation which one would normally consider to be a private matter between two parties; the matter relating to my friend from Ortoire/Mayaro and my friend from Pointe-a-Pierre. But my good friend is spending State's money to bring down QC and even when QC win, QC complaining—[*Laughter*]—funny thing. You win a case but you are appealing, and the State has to pay for that. Then we sit in Trinidad and we laugh; we make joke. As Chalkdust said long ago, “In Trinidad you really have to learn how to laugh”.

I want to tell my friends at *Newsday* and so on, when you see me laughing, I am laughing because if I only get serious, “allyuh” would not like to see Ken Valley; honestly. [*Crosstalk*] I do not understand. They say they do not want me to have fun. They say I have too much fun. [*Crosstalk*] [*Interruption*] Leave the media alone. Let me tell you, I am not looking for anything.

Let me say something else, Mr. Speaker. He comes; he brings QC, winning case and appealing, but here he has a matter that falls squarely in his lap, in Mayaro, with his colleague. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: That matter is before the court.

Mr. K. Valley: No it is not.

Mr. Speaker: Yes it is.

Mr. K. Valley: It is no longer before the court.

Mr. Speaker: It is before the court as far as I know. I took the opportunity, just recently, to circulate a document which extensively explains to the Members of this House the sub judice ruling. I want to caution you to refrain from making statements on that matter before the court.

Mr. K. Valley: Mr. Speaker, I am not making the matter—

Mr. Speaker: Let me finish. Would you please get back to the matter that we are debating and refrain from making statements about this matter that is currently before the courts of Trinidad and Tobago. That is my ruling to you.

Mr. K. Valley: I am sorry. Mr. Speaker, I was on the criminal matter relating to voter padding in Ortoire/Mayaro. As far as I know, that matter has been determined by the court. That is the matter I am now on; and there are no appeals. Do you understand, Mr. Speaker?

The point I am coming to is that while our friend from Couva South gets into matters that do not concern him, here he has a matter that concerns him, but he did not bring a QC. No QC was in Mayaro prosecuting the matter. [*Interruption*] No, it was Israel Khan who was representing my good friend from Ortoire/Mayaro.

Having said that, I must tell you that anybody who tells me anything, I say that I am glad. I do not think anybody really would want the Member or anyone to be sentenced for six months for a matter like that. I mean, that is the reality of the situation, but I am talking about the principle. How come you could do it here, but you cannot do it here? [*Gesticulating*]

There are some other issues from the Auditor General's Report talking about Government spending and so on. I just want to quickly look at page 38 of the Auditor General's Report: "Official overseas travel". [*Crosstalk*] It says here in paragraph 2.3 of the Auditor General's Report for the financial year ending September 30, 2000:

"By Circular Memorandum dated 1999 March 15, the Minister of Finance informed all Ministers, Permanent Secretaries and Heads of Departments that the system of accountable advances for official overseas travel had been discontinued and was replaced by a per diem allowance. This was a non-accountable allowance to cover the cost of hotel accommodation, meals, travel within the country and related expenses. Expenditure as reflected in the Appropriation Accounts of Ministries/Departments for the year ended 2000 September 30, for this item was \$12,248,642.93 while expenditure for the corresponding period ending 1999 September 30 was \$9,751,119.20. Appendix H refers."

I want to make the simple point, Mr. Speaker. You changed the system; no longer do you have to account; your expenditure goes up by \$3 million. But more than that—[*Interruption*]*—non sequitur*, such a system could allow, one, senior persons to go to London, stay in a hotel, fail to pay the hotel bills of \$69,000—

Mr. Manning: That's the figure, \$69,000!

Mr. K. Valley: —have the mission paying it, although he got—*per diem*—hotel money and so on. I am just saying that the mission has to pay it; call back Trinidad to get back their refund, but now Trinidad—how could they go and tell a highfalutin' individual, "Look, you have this to pay." So they "fraid". All I am saying is that such a situation can allow for a situation like that.

You know I have to be very careful now in this House with what I say. [Interruption] Call names; I am saying that this is a situation that could happen.

Hon. Member: Malabar, Couva.

Mr. K. Valley: You understand. [Crosstalk]

Dr. Rowley: Call name "ah go" whistle. Call place "ah go" whistle.

Mr. K. Valley: I am from Couva.

Dr. Rowley: You from North or South?

Mr. K. Valley: Me? I am from North. I live in Mc Bean, on the north side. You understand? Yes, that is a north. [Crosstalk]

I want to go to page 221.

Hon. Member: Bob Linquist.

Mr. K. Valley: That is another story. Not me "nuh"; I am before the Privileges Committee. "Allyuh" want to join me? Tell them. [Laughter] [Crosstalk] "Allyuh 'fraid Privileges Committee?" [Laughter] Page 221, Mr. Speaker, Chap. 13, "Tobago House of Assembly, ADDA Investment". I am bringing this to the Minister of Finance, paragraph 13.02 says:

"A request was made on 1999 September 30, by the Minister of Finance acting under section 9(5) of the Exchequer and Audit Act, Chapter 69:01 to provide him with certain information on the utilization of TT \$12,620,152.15 by the Tobago House of Assembly. An investigation was conducted by the Auditor General and a Report submitted to the Minister of Finance on 1999 October 13. The Minister of Finance subsequently reported to Parliament as required by section 9(5) of the Exchequer and Audit Act. That Report was referred to the Public Accounts Committee for its attention and a Special Report of the Public Accounts Committee on the matter was laid in the House of Representatives on 2000 October 15, and in the Senate on 2000 October 19.

The Ministry of Finance has been requested to indicate what action has been taken with respect to the recommendations made by the Auditor General in this matter.”

I want to ask the hon. Minister—also, this is from the Auditor General—what action has been taken, to date, on this matter? The Public Accounts Committee looked at it. We spent quite some time and we would just hope that the report would be given some consideration.

The Ringbang Concert is the same thing. I am extremely happy that the Minister of Finance found in his heart the wisdom to provide the THA with \$50 million, but, at the same time, we need to right the wrong, the wrong which occurred in the ADDA investment and in the Ringbang Concert. They fall squarely under the Ministry of Finance and I hope you are going to take action, Mr. Speaker.

I want to end, again, just giving a little counsel to my good friend, the Minister of Finance. I ask him to note the last couple sentences in the Central Bank semi-annual report, *The Economic Bulletin*, February 2000. It says:

“The main risks to macro economic stability arise from the substantial public sector deficit and the likely spillover associated with excess demand into the external sector. This imbalance will therefore need to be contained if growth is to remain sustainable and its benefits preserved beyond the short-term.”

Word to the wise.

Up to this point you can say, *non est factum*, it is not my deed, but from here on you are in the hot seat and they would come to you. When they want to win internal elections they would want to pave road in Toco/Manzanilla all about. Do you understand? Your job is that purse string. Okay?

I thank you.

3.05 p.m.

Dr. Keith Rowley (*Diego Martin West*): Mr. Speaker, I join this debate for the simple reason that I wanted to raise a couple of issues with the Minister of Finance. The last time he was here, on his maiden occasion, I did join the debate and I raised a matter with him and I got the impression that he took some notice. That is why this evening I want to raise another matter with him, maybe the same matter, because I get the impression that, unlike some of his colleagues, he has an intention to, probably, spend a long time in this country and, therefore, appears to

think that there is some merit in securing the long-term future of Trinidad and Tobago.

He made a comment this evening that I think the entire country should take note of. In his presentation this evening, *en passant*, he made the following comment, in determining how the national pie was being distributed. He referred to the amount of Government expenditure that had to go towards the public sector and he said: "With respect to debt services, we cannot renege on that." In other words, to paraphrase him, he was saying, notwithstanding other demands we have on the national pie, the debt servicing is something we cannot negotiate. The Minister of Finance is right.

If Trinidad and Tobago is to maintain its position as a developing country, with aspirations of becoming a developed country. I will go further. If the quality of life in this country is to be improved, the people of Trinidad and Tobago have to take note about how this Government is spending our money; because it is in the spending of our money that the question of revenue and debt come in.

Mr. Speaker, these are the good times. Currently, as a result of the effort of previous administrations, the economy of Trinidad and Tobago is relatively sound; international circumstances: we have fair oil and gas prices, and we have good resources out there in the ground. So these are the good times and any change from today one can expect a worsening of the situation. So why is this Minister of Finance having to announce to us that he has seen it fit to put a muzzle on Government borrowing? The reason is that the situation is serious if we look at Government's finances in the context of the quality of life and the potential for any improvement in the quality of life in Trinidad and Tobago.

The Minister of Finance is quoted in the newspapers as saying that the debt situation today is the same as it was in 1995: that this Government has maintained the same level of borrowing. I do not know that that statement can be substantiated. It might require further clarification, but the impression that he was giving is that the accusations against the Government about runaway borrowing and loose expenditure are unjustified. However, the last Minister of Finance was worse. He stood up in this House and actually told us, in the presentation of the last budget in October, that the public debt has actually decreased. What are the facts?

Only recently the report of the Auditor General on the accounts of Trinidad and Tobago was laid in this House. This is the Government's account, and these are the words of the Auditor General. For all those who want to play fast and

loose with the numbers with respect to the finances of Trinidad and Tobago, I draw your attention to this document under Statement of the Public Debt, Item 1.09. It says:

"During the financial year ended 2000 September 30, the Public Debt increased by \$2,359,204,129.55 from \$18,390,209,138.68 as at 1999 September 30, to \$20,749,413,268.23 at 2000 September 30."

This is the public debt, in so far as it deals with Government borrowings. I will come to the other aspect of the debt. So \$20 billion, as of October last year and if you look at the same report of September 1995, on page 44, it says the public debt was \$16.3 billion. So no Minister of Finance in this country, under any circumstance, should ever be telling us that the public debt has gone down. The Government's documents are here, they are clear that the Government has been increasing—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Assam: What about the ratio?

Dr. K. Rowley: I am not talking about the ratio. I will come to that. The document we got last week went on to point out that over and above the \$20-odd billion, in addition to the borrowing of the State, the State has been utilizing the build/own/lease/transfer and design/finance/construct mechanisms to finance capital development. These amounts when quantified will form part of the public debt.

My colleague, a moment ago, pointed out how the Government has been getting around the borrowing restrictions and how the Government has been allowing the agencies to borrow large sums of money. Let me give you a rough idea, Mr. Speaker. Over and above the \$20 billion audited, we have to look at WASA, where the Government is exposed to almost \$ 1 billion; Caroni, almost another billion; the Airports Authority had records in the last budget of a borrowing of \$1,028 million to build a building, not an airport, you know. With all the carryings on tomorrow, it is a building that we built on borrowed money for \$1,028 million. And as the Cabinet Note that I have read here this evening pointed out, an extra \$300 million is being borrowed for that building and its appurtenances. So we are talking about borrowed money to the tune of almost \$1,400 million to go with that project.

Then we talk about Tidco and the \$800 million for roads. He did not mention the schools that started off at \$138 million. They have come in at \$500 million. He had not mentioned the stadium for the football tournament later in the year that started off at \$200 million, coming in at almost \$500 million. What is the

story with the library? That is debt too. He mentioned UDeCOTT borrowing and he showed the Cabinet Note where while there was one Note approving UDeCOTT borrowing for the dredging, another Note was approving \$150 million to cover the same dredging. That might explain something I saw in this document. Under "Contingent Liability", the Auditor General had this to say:

“According to the books of the Treasury, the contingent liability relating to loans and credits guaranteed by the State totalled \$5,628,498,345.41 as at 2000 September 30. According to the records of the Public Sector Management Unit, the contingent liability on loans and credits guaranteed by the Government as at 2000 September 30, was \$7,395,595,578. This shows a difference of \$1,700 million between both sets of records... The matter is being pursued.”

Is it that Government borrowing is so cavalier that even within the Government system, the Auditor General is having difficulties reconciling Government borrowing where they are reporting to the Parliament a discrepancy of \$1,700 million between the two sets of books? If you have UDeCOTT borrowing for the dredging and the Cabinet is approving twice as much money for the Port to borrow for the same project, maybe that kind of management of public money could result in the Auditor General being in this situation, where they cannot determine a difference of \$1,700 million.

3.15 p.m.

It is not just officers in their offices having a discrepancy with their calculators; this is after the assignment has been done and they are reporting to the Parliament. It is all here before us. We are the parliamentarians. This is the Parliament; this is the report! They are saying to us the two sets of records indicate a discrepancy of \$1,700 million and they are pursuing the matter to see how it can be reconciled. No matter; I tell you these are the good times, and good times do not last forever. After good times, hard times can come.

If a little hiccup takes place in the international oil price, where will Trinidad and Tobago stand? For all those who believe that this is not their business, let me indicate to you, Mr. Speaker, how it is their business. You see, as a result of the country's debt situation, the Minister of Finance told us this evening: “and you know about our debt, we do not have any leeway with that; we just have to pay the debt. So the first slice of money from public revenues, we have to pay our debt.”

Table VI in this document shows that where we are today, even without taking into account the billions of dollars out there on the contingent liabilities which the

Treasury will have to pay—because WASA has no revenue coming to pay those moneys; Caroni (1975) Limited has none coming in to pay those revenues—as long as it is a Government contingent liability at Tidco, WASA, it is as good as being put on the Treasury. But even without taking all those billions into account which will come onto the books in the very near future, the current situation shows that in every dollar that the Government earns, 32 cents is going to pay debt.

That might mean nothing to any of you. But put in this context, when you bear in mind that only 9.5 cents is going to education—all the grandiose plans about education, we cannot have substantial increase in expenditure on education because the money is just not there, because 32 cents must first and foremost come out to pay that debt. As the Minister of Finance told us, that comes first. So expect no significant increase in education expenditure and expect nothing but mediocrity and decline, because with respect to their demands for modernization of our education system: to pay teachers better, to put better facilities in the schools; to put better curricula in place, there would be no money for that, since as of now, we are only allocating 9.5 cents in every dollar, to education.

What about health? Expect no improvement in the health system, because in every dollar it is only five and a half cents going to health, but 32 cents is going to pay debt!

National Security: The bandits are cutting our throats left, right and centre and they are ruling the roost in this country. Expect no improvement in allocation for that, because only nine cents is going to national security.

As for the social safety net, five cents. So what is the scenario? Whereas this public debt is eating up 32 cents in every dollar, it is eating up more than education, national security, health and social services, put together. As for Tobago, it is one penny in every dollar. When you add up to get to the equivalent of the public debt, you have to add up education, health, national security, social services and Tobago to equal what we are paying on the public debt.

Therein lies my concern. As long as this Government keeps borrowing the way it is borrowing and spending the borrowings the way it is spending them, there will be no significant increase in the quality of life for the people of Trinidad and Tobago because the equivalent allocation for the services to the people will not be there, because the revenues as they come in, will have to go to pay the debt they have run up.

What are they spending the money on? This evening we heard the scandalous revelation in this House, that over and above the \$1.4 billion we committed to

building the shed at the airport—there is nothing fancy about an airport building, you know. An airport terminal is a waiting room; it is open space; it is a shed with windows and a floor; nothing fancy about it. It is cheap construction; open space. We broke world record, \$1.4 billion of borrowed money, and then today we are hearing that the Airports Authority somehow contrived to put together a package contract to a sweetheart contractor to maintain the sewerage, the fibre optics, the water, the cooling. Every God in heaven thing in the airport came under one contract for Calmaquip, which incidentally has as its major participant, its major interest party, a financier of the ruling party—the said Calmaquip. The same Calmaquip that has been here, there and everywhere, approved by Birk Hillman—the same Birk Hillman.

When I came to this House and told this House that persons in the Airports Authority and Members of the Government partook in a US \$10 million largesse to a company called Overseas Communication Investment Corporation, the Airports Authority responded with public advertisement saying: “We have never heard anything about this company and we paid them no money.” Birk Hillman did not synchronize with them. They put a whole-page advertisement in the same newspapers saying: “The Airports Authority asked us about it and we gave them answers to their satisfaction, and we, Birk Hillman owners, are the shareholders of OCIC.” My investigations show that OCIC does not even have a computer in Florida; they do not even have a desk, but they are collecting US \$10 million from us in Trinidad and Tobago—borrowed money! The money we have borrowed is being spent in that way.

So while we are stuck with 9.5 cents for education and 5.5 cents for health, and we are seeing no improvement in the health service—in fact, we have the unseemly spectacle in the health service of a junior Minister going in there and telling us what we always knew, that the place is full of cockroaches, rats and crooks. We have the spectacle of an individual being appointed—I want to tell my friend from Barataria/San Juan, in case he has not noticed, this post called junior Minister has no *locus standi* in the governance of Trinidad and Tobago. It is a mechanism to give you money and perks. So he is not a Minister. There is no such thing as a junior Minister in the public administration of Trinidad and Tobago. The President appoints a minister, defines his or her portfolio and that is the Minister. Is that not so, Member for Caroni Central? And when you speak, let the jackass bray.

So you have a minister purporting to fire the head of the regional authority, having told us that he has found scandalous conduct in there. And what has

happened? The chairman said: "Let the jackass bray." And the Minister is now calling on the Cabinet; he says: "My feelings are hurt, he called me a donkey." He did not call him a donkey.

I am making the point that with respect to the expenditure that has been taking place in these agencies, the Government is behaving as though money is going out of style in Trinidad and Tobago, when, in fact, it is borrowed money and that borrowed money is threatening the prosperity that the current circumstances portend for us. I am putting this country on notice that overnight we can get up one morning and discover that the Government cannot pay its bills.

3.25 p.m.

The Minister of Finance has warned us this evening, that whatever happens, the cuts will not come in the public debt service. They would come in health, education, social services and national security, where you expect service from the State to impact on the quality of life.

When you go to the police station and they say that they have no cars, see it in the context of \$10 million stolen in one package from the airport project. OCIC got US \$10 million. *[Interruption]* When we did not provide cars we were paying down on the IMF loan of US \$560 million per year, when you were all about talking nonsense. That is why we should not be in this position because those loans have been paid down. One of the things that the Government of which I was a part did, was to tell this country, let us pay the debt. For four years we paid down the debt we met there. That was the borrowing from the IMF. Do you remember the IMF story? We borrowed from the IMF. We did not reschedule those loans because we knew that if we paid them off, there would be a period of pain and then there should be a period of gain. Now that we ought to be in the period of gain, unfortunately, we have a Government in office that behaves as though spending is performance. Any fool could spend himself into bankruptcy. *[Interruption]*

I agree. Quality infrastructure now. Yes. Go down to La Horquette Valley Road. While we are grateful for the paving, it did not have to be done like that. There is no law that says that we have to pave all our roads over an election season. To do so is to put us in an \$800 million debt that threatens what we spend on health and the schools. La Horquette Valley Road in my constituency has been smooth for a few days. It was paved for the elections. We all knew because I raised it in here with this Government. La Horquette Valley Road had to be dug up for new water pipes to be laid. Every 10 metres the water pipe breaks every

other day. It was paved, but if you go there now it is being dug up, not for water, but for laying telephone pipes, a few weeks after it had been paved by the Government. All I am asking is: Could we not have waited those few weeks, get the pipes and then pave? No man! Elections was in last December. Put the asphalt down! We will dig it up in May. That is how you are spending our money.

We asked the Minister of Infrastructure Development and Local Government, what was the approval in the budget last October for—paving? Remember, this Parliament agreed that we must have a law which imposes a tax on users of gasoline which is supposed to raise \$50 million on an ongoing basis for road maintenance. It is not to say that we had nothing in place. We have the Road Improvement Tax providing a minimum of \$50 million and whatever else the Government had to put. *[Interruption]* No. The man who was managing it, is in the jail now. I agree with you. He did not do anything with it.

The Minister of Finance told us that even after Parliament approved \$200 million—because that is what we thought the budget could bear for that period—this Government saw it fit, operating as a Cabinet dictatorship, independent of the Parliament, to allow the Minister of Infrastructure Development and Local Government to spend \$800 million. Some of it was by telephone and some by fax. What is the point in having a Parliament, coming here, having a budget and approving \$200 million for road paving? If the Prime Minister and his famous son are going to spend \$800 million without reference to the Parliament, we might as well close the goddamned Parliament down. If the Parliament approves \$200 million, how did he approve \$800 million?

When we asked, hear the reason! Members of Parliament were asked to put in five roads. There are 36 of us. So, we all put in five roads. Thirty-six by five is what? 180. If we assume that we spend \$2 million on every road, one hundred and eighty by two is how much? \$360 million. How did we arrive at \$800 million? Remember, we are not building these roads. We are simply resurfacing them. Many of the 180 roads would be short streets. I am being generous. Let us say that you apportion \$2 million for every road, you would end up with \$360 million. The Minister of Infrastructure Development and Local Government found a way to spend \$500 million more. This Parliament sits here, like we are all eunuchs, and we are supposed to praise that as performance. That is not performance. That is scandalous misspending of public moneys!

The first thing that they did was to pay at a price that was way above market price. God alone knows about the tonnage. Look at what he told us! He was the

person who told us how he got to \$800 million. Can we accept that, when in every school in this country, there are deficiencies? Our standards are falling. I have two daughters who are going to so-called prestige schools. Every day I have to go out with my wife to look for teaching for them outside of the school. In the school system we—as a country—are not paying sufficiently attractive wages or finding people who can provide the level of teaching required in those schools. The standards are falling. In some of our prestige schools today, there are A-level students who hardly understand their own exam trying to teach our best students. This country would pay a price for that in the very near future.

While no money is there for that, a renegade Minister of Infrastructure Development and Local Government who has the gall to regard us all as fickle ones, goes to Nariva—because he is carried there by an imp who believes that if he kisses up to him in the URP or whatever programme, he would be his favoured son if he comes into his kingdom. In a party election he is promising his constituents \$50 million of work. What an obscenity! He is using public money to further his case in the cause of a political party's internal election. When somebody raised that with the Prime Minister, he said that it is his portfolio. *[Interruption]* This country would pay a price for putting you in office! You and the likes of you. You all are threatening us with despair, where prosperity was on the horizon. For 30 years we moved this country. *[Interruption]* Ask the Minister of Finance why he joined my party in October 1995? He does not agree with you. *[Interruption]* You did not know what was good for you.

Mr. Speaker: Order please. The noise level is getting too high.

Dr. K. Rowley: I am just clarifying with the Member for Tunapuna, that the current Minister of Finance will not agree with him. All the denigration he would heap in the PNM's direction, the Minister of Finance, a man who assessed things in October of 1995, saw the UNC and the PNM and, quite correctly, decided that the party that he should join if he wanted to advance this country was the People's National Movement. What happened after? I do not know. I do know that he would not agree with him that the PNM did nothing in this country for 30 years.

I am saying now that if the PNM did nothing for 30 years, that is not my problem. My problem now is their scandalous conduct and fiscal irresponsibility that threaten my children's future. *[Desk thumping]* You come to tell me about Tidco. Tidco commissioned its own report to see how it was performing. Those of you who read the Chamber of Commerce's, *Contact*, the newspaper, would see an article on the front page written by Anthony Fraser outlining the findings of the report.

3.35 p.m.

The report confirmed that Tidco wasted \$200 million in its attempt to promote Trinidad and Tobago. The money was largely wasted. That is in the report that Tidco itself commissioned, and after that, this Government took the decision to promote Tidco from the Industrial Development Corporation to road paving corporation, because if one cannot promote Tobago, then pave roads! At the same time Tidco became paver of roads and a paver of finances as a Ministry of Works and Transport, Tobago is facing shut-down and close-down because airlines that service Tobago. Tobago as a destination is ceasing to be on the horizon for travellers. Tidco's performance was so fantastic that Tobago is now moving into oblivion and the airlines are pulling out. We are going to pay a price for that.

Tidco has abandoned its primary responsibility and is now paving roads, as we have observed, four times above the parliamentary approved \$200 million; so they can go ahead and behave as though money is no object. All I can say to the people of Trinidad and Tobago is, when the crunch comes, those Members would have long gone; some to the far beyond and some to the streets and vagrancy. It is the children who would have to pay.

Caroni (1975) Limited—I had the distinction, honour and pleasure to serve this country and I had the signature of the Member for Couva North on a consensus as to what we should do about the sugar industry. I read in a document today that the Governor of the Central Bank made a comment about the dramatic improvement in the agricultural sector in the current period, because the sugar industry produced 100,000 tonnes of sugar in the last outing. I want to ask whoever wrote that kind of nonsense: if we were to praise Caroni (1975) Limited for producing 100,000 tonnes of sugar in the year 2000, is one aware that Caroni (1975) Limited was producing 127,000 tonnes of sugar in the mid 1990s? But under their stewardship, ministerial irresponsibility.

Do you remember the famous froghopper behaviour? It went down to 80,000 tonnes and as a result of that the Treasury had to come in and use moneys that should have gone to health, education, social welfare and national security. The Treasury had to provide hundreds of millions of dollars in cash as well as government guarantees for borrowings in the commercial banks today. Caroni (1975) Limited, that we made debt-free in 1992, is now right back into a billion-dollar debt with the chance of paying back not one cent! The Government would have to pay every cent of that because Caroni (1975) Limited is generating no

surplus. You did that, so when you talk about performance, that is what you are talking about. You did that!

You met the debt-free Caroni (1975) Limited, a Caroni that was borrowing in the commercial banks and servicing its loan, like any decent company would do, with a programme and a pathway agreed to and signed by no other person but the Prime Minister of the country and you abandoned that. And I hear you now talking about new Caroni initiatives. I am waiting to see what those are going to be, because that is just going to be so much “ol’ talk” because one is viewing Caroni as a basket of electoral support, and one does not have the will or the common sense to do what is required and Caroni will remain there, sucking the Treasury of hundreds of millions of dollars that ought not to have come out of the Treasury for that purpose while we still have a sugar industry.

Then that was not good enough. The Prime Minister must tell us the role he played in getting a “reject” from Trinidad Cement Limited—who likes to travel and gets in trouble—to become the CEO of Caroni. When “dog learn to suck egg”, it is hard for them to stop. The board is now having to send the CEO on leave! I ask: after the board disciplines Caroni’s CEO and he returns to office, what moral authority would he have to discipline any Caroni worker? So what can we expect of Caroni (1975) Limited? A further deterioration in the performance of the company, because he would be a laughing stock before all the workers.

So today, on behalf of all those whose moneys are being used to prop up that company, I am saying to the board of Caroni (1975) Limited: it must dismiss the CEO, not suspend the CEO. It cannot be suspending a CEO like some ordinary common or garden labourer. If the CEO behaves in a manner that causes one to have to suspend him, then go the whole way and dismiss him and if the Prime Minister vex, who vex “lorse”! This thing about friend, family and brother and cousin—this country is paying too high a price for that.

I heard reference this evening to the Chaguanas Market. If ever there were a scandal, that is it. The only comfort I take in that is that the chief architect is behind bars waiting for his friends to come and join him. If this Government were serious—the people of Chaguanas had to have a market—we say yes, build a market in Chaguanas. But what do you do? You invite tenders after you have had your drawings and you award a contract and a contractor is paid to build a market. But that does not facilitate thievery on the scale they would like. Do you know what they did? They set about building the market through the URP; the Unemployment Relief Programme is building the Chaguanas Market. A market which should have cost four or five million dollars.

What is a market? A shed with stalls and some amenities. And after they spent \$14 million of URP money on the market, we are now hearing in the context of the debt problem I was talking about earlier on, this shameless Government is going to borrow money to complete the Chaguanas Market. Whereas, if they had approached it properly in the beginning, there would have been a market for a fraction of that cost operational long time, and the Minister who is now in jail might have been here with us today. But it is said, “birds fly high but they ‘don’t die high’. Fly your flag!

I understand so much money was stolen at the airport, that some of them grew wings. There is a song, “I believe I can fly”. You believe you can fly? You make the mistake and let Couva South not win on June 3rd, and you will know why you will fly.

If Manning wins, I could live with that. If the hon. Member loses, you cannot live with that. Today, I am calling on the current Attorney General to take careful note as he goes to the opening of the airport tomorrow to carry on with this farce, this obscenity; to take his pen and take their names. Take careful note of all who will be in the first two rows.

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

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

Question put and agreed to.

3.45 p.m.

Dr. K. Rowley: Thank you, very much, Mr. Speaker, I was advising my colleague from Couva South to go to the opening tomorrow and take the names of all the persons in the first two rows. Having done that, Mr. Speaker, he should strike out members of the clergy, strike out the [Inaudible] and all that is left, pass it to Mr. Linquist and you would find an interesting correlation between vulgar display of nouveau riche behaviour and comments from Mr. Linquist.

Mr. Speaker, developing countries have a habit of not learning from their predecessors. What the PNM has been able to do in this country is to steer Trinidad and Tobago away from the automatic path followed by many developed countries. This Government is hell-bent on changing that. There are many developed countries with resources; some have copper, some have oil, some have gas, some have timber. Because of the handful of people that the population had the misfortune to put into office or who imposed themselves on the population as

dictators, many developing countries saw their population suffer and the quality of life decline to the point where the people are now pariahs in their own land. That is where this Government is threatening to take us.

Mr. Speaker, how do you explain the Ministry of Infrastructure Development and Local Government, the Government's experienced agency, doing estimates as to how much it should cost to build a secondary school? And the Cabinet is advised that those 10 schools would cost \$138 million, in an environment where we are boasting about the steadiness of our low inflation rate. How do you explain a jump from \$138 million to \$500 million to build 10 schools? How are you going to explain that?

We said, yes, we would hold the football tournament in Trinidad and Tobago. We would build four stadia and we would renovate the stadium. We never thought that would cost us \$500 million! There were those, however, who felt that here was another opportunity to take money out of the Treasury. Mr. Speaker, there is no limit to which they would not sink.

How could you explain to the population of this country, people who are struggling every day to make ends meet; people who, after they have saved their entire life and they get their gratuity which does not come to \$69,000 that a public official takes an advance in cash, which he does not have to account for, goes abroad, refuses to pay his bill, then uses his power of coercion to have the bill paid elsewhere from the State? Why are the people of this country being subjected to that kind of obscenity? Mr. Speaker, \$69,000 to a multimillionaire is just greed. There is a feeling, however, that the more people get money, the more money they want; and some of the things they would do for money would make you wonder.

Trinidad and Tobago needs to pull up its socks, otherwise the promised prosperity would pass us by and we have to ask ourselves if we deserve that. The people of this country do not deserve that. The average citizen of Trinidad and Tobago is a hardworking person making sacrifices and making do, in some instances, with little or nothing. The privileged few—and the Cabinet must consider itself privileged because the people of this country make certain sacrifices. Even though there is a view that Cabinet Ministers are not well paid as compared to colleagues elsewhere, the bottom line is that compared to the average person in Trinidad and Tobago, they are in a privileged position and what they are doing is failing the people of Trinidad and Tobago. When you spend their money in this cavalier manner, you are failing to change their future in a positive way. When you deliberately set out to create avenues to leak money from the Treasury

into the pockets of your friends, what you are doing is denying many people an opportunity to have a peaceful night's rest, to have a job somewhere, if the money was spent differently. Why is it that nobody in the Government could get up and tell us how the Maritime's \$60 million is being spent?

The question I asked about the airport maintenance contract—a simple question: Has the Government awarded a contract? It took the Government one month and two extensions in the Parliament to answer a simple, straightforward question. When they decided to answer the question, they tried to “bramble” me with all kind of things like what they would maintain and what they would not maintain. Then they entered into a 10-year contract for \$300 million! A 10-year contract? Where you have an Airports Authority that exists for the purpose of doing what that contractor is supposed to do! If the Airports Authority exists to operate the airport and the air-conditioning breaks down, then they should call in air-conditioning specialists and pay them for their services or award a maintenance contract to them. If there is a problem with the optics cable then you call in those specialists and you pay them for that. If there is a problem with the sewer system then you call in experts. All the calling in is to be done by the Airports Authority, an agency for which we have allocated over and above their own revenues, an extra \$75 million in the last budget. No, that is not going to meet your needs.

Over and above, Mr. Speaker, they have saddled this country with a \$300 million 10-year contract for maintenance of a building—

Mr. Hinds: That is performance man!

Dr. K. Rowley: And you want me to accept that? Then the Prime Minister comes here playing best little bad dog in the Parliament saying that for the last five years he took a lot of attacks from the Opposition but this time he will not do it. Let me advise you all, on every occasion that information comes to us which we think the population should know, we would tell the population and we would tell you what we think of you. [*Desk thumping*] We are not afraid of you. We bear no malice toward you. We, however, hold you responsible for the operations of the State.

3.55 p.m.

When the Cabinet does not intervene to prevent functionaries from raping the Treasury in the way it is being raped now, then we hold the Cabinet members responsible for the loss of the State's resources. “And you doh like it?” Then, sorry. That airport which tomorrow you will go out there and waste more public

money with public relations campaign talking about the Prime Minister's birthday party, I want this country to understand that that birthday party tomorrow is, in fact, a multi billion dollar scandal! [*Desk thumping*]—Scandal!—and the moneys borrowed for that building is over a 20-year loan and over 20 years the interest payment on that loan will be over \$2,000 million.

Ask yourself, suppose we had used \$500 million of that to expand the university? Many of your children and your constituents' children would have got a university education. Suppose we had used \$1 billion of that to build a community college to take in a thousand students? What would that have done to our development? Suppose we had built a road—because this Government has not built any roads in this country, you know. My friend, my constituent from St. Augustine, one of the first announcements he made as a UNC Minister was that this Government was going to build a highway from San Fernando to Princes Town on to Mayaro. Not one foot of it has been built but moneys have been spent, billions of dollars spent—Birk Hillman, a carpetbagging, two by four company, comes to this country and became multimillionaires and, as we know from Justice Deyalsingh's Report, colluded with friends of the party to defraud the public in Trinidad and Tobago.

Justice Deyalsingh said there was collusion and if tomorrow—if on June 3, 2001 the Attorney General is voted down as the deputy, it could not happen to a nicer guy because, you see, you cannot be convenient with principle. I heard you on the radio talking about how you fought for “fellas” in Guaracara when their house “burned down”. It sounded very impressive. However, I also know that as Attorney General you pole-vaulted on your principle and stayed in the Cabinet when you advised them that the airport contract was null and void and of no effect and you allowed them to carry on and rape the Treasury.

Mr. Speaker: Member, I think you have been going along fairly well, but when you begin to insult another Member in that language, it is unparliamentary and I am asking you to withdraw it.

Dr. K. Rowley: I have insulted no one.

Mr. Speaker: I ask you to withdraw it.

Dr. K. Rowley: I have nothing to withdraw. [*Inaudible*]

Mr. Speaker: You have nothing to withdraw?

Dr. K. Rowley: I have not—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: Well, if you have nothing to withdraw, you will discontinue your speech for the rest of the debate. *[Interruption]* Let us move on. Next. *[Interruption]*

Dr. K. Rowley: I have—*[Inaudible]* *[Interruption]*

[Mr. C. Imbert rose]

Mr. Valley: I—*[Inaudible]*

Mr. Speaker: Member for—*[Interruption]* Member, would you keep silent?

Mr. Valley: I—*[Inaudible]*

Mr. Speaker: Member for Diego Martin East, take your seat. Take your seat, Member for Diego Martin East. Member for Diego Martin East, take your seat.

Dr. K. Rowley: Please!

Mr. Speaker: Member for Diego Martin West, that outburst is an insult to the Chair. *[Interruption]* I am warning you, you have to refrain from those insults and when I am speaking, keep silent!

Mr. Valley: “Oui papa! Oh goooooood!”

Mr. Hinds: What!

Dr. K. Rowley: I respect the Chair. *[Inaudible]*

Mr. Speaker: And you are threatening me? Members, under Standing Order 43(3) *[Interruption]* I am asking the Member for his behaviour, which is insulting and disrespectful to the Chair, to vacate the Chamber and do so forthwith! *[Interruption]* Forthwith! Standing Order 43(3).

Mr. Hinds: Let us hear. Which Standing Order? What is the procedure?

Mr. Speaker: And the Member for Laventille East, you keep silent. I am on my feet!

Mr. Hinds: I am entitled to know which Standing Order!

Mr. Speaker: I said—Standing Order 43(3) and I am not about to enter into an argument—to vacate this Chamber and do it forthwith. So you are disregarding my ruling? Well, if that is the case, I am going to ask the Leader of Government Business that Dr. Keith Rowley, having been instructed as a result of his conduct of behaviour under Standing Order 43(3), to move a motion that the Member be suspended from the House—suspended from the service of this honourable House.

The Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs (Hon. Ramesh Lawrence Maharaj): Mr. Speaker, I do move, in accordance with the Standing Order, that the hon. Member be suspended for disobeying the order of the Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the question is that this Member for Diego Martin West has been suspended—

Mr. Valley: “What we staying here for? All yuh mad in this place, you know! All yuh mad in this place.”

Mr. Speaker:—from the service of this House and you are hereby suspended.

Mr. Valley: “Look, you ain't have no right to even be in”—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: Those in favour say “Aye”. Any against? The ayes have it. You are suspended.

Mr. Hinds: “All yuh crazy, man. Yuh sickening.” [*Inaudible*]

[*Opposition Members proceed to leave Chamber*]

Mr. Valley: You see why I have to laugh in this place? You see why I have to laugh? “Because all yuh really don't want to see me when I vex, yuh know! All yuh really would not want to see me when I vex!”

Mr. Speaker: Member for Diego Martin East, you will conduct yourself in a proper manner.

Mr. Assam: Central.

Mr. Speaker: Diego Martin Central. Minister of Finance, please, let us proceed.

The Minister of Finance (Sen. The Hon. Gerald Yetming): [*Desk thumping*] Mr. Speaker, the debate relative to this Motion would appear to have come to an end and there is little to respond to. I beg to move. [*Desk thumping*]

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved:

That this House adopt the Second Report of the 2001 Session of the Finance Committee of the House of Representatives of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, on proposals for the Supplementation and Variation of the Annual Estimates 2001.

**FINANCE (SUPPLEMENTATION AND
VARIATION OF APPROPRIATION) BILL**

The Minister of Finance (Sen. The Hon. Gerald Yetming): Mr. Speaker, I beg to move,

That a Bill to supplement and vary the appropriation of the sum of the issue which was authorized by the Appropriation Act, 2001 be now read a second time.

Mr. Speaker, I beg to move. [*Desk thumping*]

Question proposed.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a second time.

Question put and agreed to, That the Bill be read a third time.

Bill accordingly read the third time and passed.

TELECOMMUNICATIONS BILL

Mr. Speaker: Let me just say that on the last occasion on the Bill on telecommunications—for the regulation of telecommunications in Trinidad and Tobago, the Member for Port of Spain South was on his feet and he had 30 minutes. He is not here, so, Attorney General—

The Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs (Hon. Ramesh Lawrence Maharaj): Mr. Speaker, I did say on the last occasion that we will only do this measure, so they did not come prepared to do the Telecommunications Bill because we had anticipated that this measure would go on today and probably on Monday.

Mr. Speaker, I also know that there are Motions on the Adjournment which I would have no problem in putting for tomorrow, Friday, which is Private Members' Day.

ADJOURNMENT

The Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs (Hon. Ramesh Lawrence Maharaj): Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that the House do now stand adjourned to tomorrow, May 25, 2001 at 1.30 p.m.

Tomorrow is Private Members' Day, and the Opposition Chief Whip had asked that tomorrow—he insisted that he wanted to do Private Members' Day tomorrow and it is Private Members' Day.

Question put and agreed to.

House adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 4.06 p.m.