

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES*Saturday, September 22, 2001*

The House met at 10.30 a.m.

PRAYERS[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]**DEFAMATION BILL**

Bill to revise the law relating to defamation, to repeal the Libel and Defamation Act, Chap. 11.16 and for other related matters [*The Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs*]; read the first time.

**APPROPRIATION BILL
(BUDGET)**

[Fifth Day]

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on question [September 14, 2001]:

That the Bill be now read a second time.

Question again proposed.

The Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs (Hon. Ramesh Lawrence Maharaj): Mr. Speaker, I rise to address this honourable House in the debate on this budget for the year 2001—2002. Much has been said about the budget by several honourable Members, and in my view, a generally high level of debate has been maintained by all concerned. Mr. Speaker, I consider it my duty as Attorney General and, as a Member of the House, to join this debate.

First, I would like to join the debate in respect of informing the House and the national community, based on the budget, how the work of the Ministry of the Attorney General would be affected, so that the public would not expect too much from the Office of the Attorney General. Secondly, I would like to deal with some of the issues which have been raised and, thirdly, I would like to deal with the issue, specifically of corruption which has been a major plank of the budget presentation and which, as Attorney General, I consider it my duty to deal with.

Mr. Speaker, in respect of the allocation for the Ministry of the Attorney General, in respect of recurrent allocations to the Ministry, the following are some of the major implications. Under the sub-item for vacant posts without bodies, the sum requested was \$10,155,696. The sum provided is \$5 million. This is 50 per cent of the allocation that was requested. May I tell this honourable House that

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this would have adverse effects on the functioning of the office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, the Chief Parliamentary Counsel Department and the Solicitor General's Department. I will at a later stage indicate to this honourable House what I consider to be the importance of the Office of the Attorney General and the role it plays in safeguarding any possible misuse and abuse of power.

The second allocation I would like to deal with is the allocation to provide for the settlement of arrears to public officers. The amount requested was \$3.9 million and the Ministry got \$700,000. This will hamper the payment of bonds to the persons who enjoyed short-term employment, three months as in the Registrar General's Department in respect of most of the projects which are being done there.

In respect of the Ministry's training vote under recurrent expenditure, the Ministry received a very small vote, \$100,000 on the side of the office of the Attorney General and \$45,000 in respect of the Registrar General's Department and other aspects of the Ministry. This will seriously affect the implementation of the Ministry's training plan.

In respect of the Public Sector Investment Programme (PSIP), the Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs requested \$111,402,000 for financing existing and ongoing projects for the fiscal period 2001—2002. However, the sum of \$22,590,000 is the total allocation being proposed for financing those projects, ongoing and new. So it would mean, therefore, that the Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs will be receiving only 20.3 per cent of the total amount of funds requested and, based on the allocations at the various Government Ministries and departments, the Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs will be receiving only 1.7 per cent of the total budgeted allocation under the PSIP.

It is my duty, Mr. Speaker, to inform this honourable House that the funds which have been provided in respect of some of the major projects, although some funds have been provided, are still insufficient. Take, for example, the new project entitled Institutional Strengthening of the Ministry of the Attorney General, which is a critical project for the Ministry. It is one of the new projects which did not receive any funding whatsoever. However, it is to be noted that projects of a similar nature put forward under other heads have been provided with allocations.

If it is that lawyers and the Ministry have to perform their role in underpinning development and promoting openness, transparency and democracy, then in my respectful submission, the public ought to be informed, otherwise they would think that the Minister is responsible for any handicaps which occur.

Mr. Speaker, let me go with some of the projects which we requested moneys for and give you and the national community some idea as to what has been allocated. With respect to the construction of the Sangre Grande Magistrates' Court, \$4 million was requested; \$1.5 million was allocated. These moneys will only be sufficient for the mobilization fees for the contractors to commence the work.

The establishment of a family court. This has been in the air for some time but they have now got a Bill which is before the Cabinet after many reforms to the Bill. This is regarded as an important project in order to promote family life in the country. The funds requested was \$1.5 million, and the funds allocated is \$300,000. In respect of the upgrading of the San Fernando Magistrates' Court, the funds requested was \$2.7 million, the funds allocated was none. In respect of the construction of the Chaguanas Magistrates' Court, none was allocated. In respect of the construction of the Siparia Magistrates' Court, none was allocated.

In respect of the revision and printing of the laws of Trinidad and Tobago, the funds requested was \$1.1 million, the funds allocated was \$400,000 which cannot effect the project. In respect of the services at the new Huggins building, there has been no funds allocated and the funds requested was \$10.5 million. This will affect all of the reform works which are being done in order to provide better services for the public in respect of those duties. In respect of the establishment of a population registration system, this project was started but the funds requested was \$19 million and the funds allocated was \$8 million. I think with that we could still try to see what we can do.

So, Mr. Speaker, that gives hon. Members and the national community some idea of what the Attorney General will have to battle with during the next year, and they would know that if we cannot deliver, it is not the fault of the Ministry and all of the great public servants who work in that Ministry; but it is really because of the lack of resources.

Mr. Speaker, I think it is very important for me in the context of what I am going to say to put what I consider to be the major duties and functions of the Office of the Attorney General under our system. I think it is sometimes forgotten that the Office of the Attorney General consists of legal officers who are independent of the Government, who are answerable in respect of their terms and conditions and, in respect of discipline—well in respect of discipline and removal to an independent service commission.

In that office, the head of the civil department is the Solicitor General and that office holder's duty is to advise the Attorney General on matters relating to law.

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Whether the Attorney General likes the advice or not, it is the duty of the Solicitor General to advise the Attorney General and, based on that advice which is on record in a file, the Attorney General then has to consider that and then advise Cabinet and Ministers accordingly. The reason for that set up, Mr. Speaker, is to prevent any Attorney General, any government, from manipulating legal advice.

So, if an Attorney General is reckless, if he gets advice from the Solicitor General and he does not take that advice but he recklessly advises Cabinet in a different way, records have shown that those persons can be prosecuted for misconduct in public office. The reason for that safeguard is to ensure the public interest is protected so that no holder of the office of Attorney General can, without facing consequences—political, legal and otherwise—manipulate legal advice to the Cabinet and to ministries.

You also have the Chief Parliamentary Counsel. Her duty or his duty—the holder of that office—is to ensure that when the laws are being drafted, they are so drafted that the public interest is protected and that person would also advise the Attorney General. Then you have the office of the Director of Public Prosecutions who has the sole discretion in determining who to prosecute and who not to prosecute, but the Attorney General, as head of the department, can refer matters to him; but the Attorney General cannot tell the DPP who to prosecute and who not to prosecute. That is his sole discretion under the Constitution of Trinidad and Tobago.

Then you have the Chief State Solicitor who, in respect of vetting of legal documents like leases and so forth, she is also independent. So when there are any moves—direct, indirect, intentional or unintentional, conscious or unconscious—to take away these functions in any way, it has serious effects in undermining the Office of the Attorney General; not the individual, but the Office of the Attorney General and the safeguard to the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Speaker, at a Commonwealth Law Ministers' Conference in 1993, the Commonwealth Law Ministers had this to say, and they unanimously agreed and this has been adopted by heads:

“The pivotal function of the Attorney General is providing advice to Government as to what the law was and to ensuring the full extent of his or her authority, that Government took place within a framework of law.”

Now, quite apart from what the instruments of the Attorney General says, when he got his appointment, he is responsible as the Minister for civil litigation and also for criminal litigation.

If an Attorney General is responsible for these matters, then one would expect that if there are reports in which *prima facie* there are allegations or findings of corruption and misuse of public office, the first office that should be approached by a Minister is the office of the Attorney General. [*Desk thumping*] Mr. Speaker, as an Attorney General, I cannot sit or stand in this Parliament without dealing with this issue, because in the budgetary statement made by the Minister of Finance—which I did not see before he made it and which is quite obvious—he dealt with an aspect relating to the functions of the Attorney General which I did not see before he made it.

I want to say that I consider that not the individual, but the Office of the Attorney General should have been involved in respect of the ISS report from the very first moment that any issue arose in that report. [*Desk thumping*] Mr. Speaker, it may be that the public interest has been jeopardized by not doing that, because if one wants to investigate corruption, one does not publish the facts to the whole world and then investigate it nine months later. [*Desk thumping*] What that does is give opportunity for persons to cover up trails.

Mr. Speaker, the Attorney General, by law, is the person responsible for mutual legal assistance in criminal matters. Under that legislation, an Attorney General, under this Constitution and the laws of Trinidad and Tobago, has the power on the basis of what he gets and on the basis of the advice he gets, he can request another country which has an agreement with Trinidad and Tobago to give assistance. Let me tell you, Mr. Speaker, what that assistance includes.

That assistance includes the other government and law enforcement agencies taking steps to go to court to get the bank account, to get evidence as to the paper trail and everything else, and that evidence then becomes admissible in a court of Trinidad and Tobago. That is one of the major reforms as Attorney General I had the privilege of piloting. The reason for that is that persons who are corrupt, whether they are ministers, whether they are ex-ministers, whether they are public officials, whether they are ordinary persons—they would not be able to escape the law. [*Desk thumping*] That has been the reason for that.

Mr. Speaker, notwithstanding that, I want to say that in respect of the ISS report, some member of the public—I joked one day and I said it is a member of the media, because I know that the media had it—gave me or sent me that report. I want to say that I consider that I have a duty to the people of Trinidad and Tobago, and I have taken steps in the central authority of the Ministry of the Attorney General that notwithstanding whatever prejudice may have been done to the investigations, to get whatever evidence in order to see whether persons who

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have broken the law can be brought to justice in Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

If it is the duty of the holder of the office of the Attorney General to ensure that the Government took place within a framework of the law, then if there is a North West Regional Health Authority report, then I would have thought that common sense demanded that the Attorney General's office should be called in. What happens then is that the Director of Public Prosecutions, the Solicitor General and, if it is impossible for the Attorney General to be there he sends somebody; the matter is discussed and then you have the relevant law enforcement agencies. A strategy is devised in order to get the evidence and, in order to ensure that evidence is not lost. But when these matters are published, statements are made and all sorts of things happen, what happens is that it means that it may be that we have unconsciously allowed the public interest to be prejudiced.

10.50 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, I am not going to allow anyone, as long as I hold the office of Attorney General, to undermine or subvert the functions of the Attorney General. [*Desk thumping*] I want to announce that in respect of that authority, I have taken the position that there should be a full commission of enquiry in respect of that report, the North West Regional Health Authority (NWRHA) and any other state enterprise which has gone that route.

Mr. Manning: Including the airport?

Hon. R. L. Maharaj: Yes, I will talk about the airport later.

Mr. Speaker, I have information. I do not know if it is true, but it is my duty that in light of what I have, to cause it to be investigated. I have information that funds from the North West Regional Health Authority were used for political purposes and for personal purposes. I have information that a top public official who was employed as a public servant at the Office of the Prime Minister got two salaries in respect of while he was getting a salary and in respect of getting money from the NWRHA.

I am sorry, Mr. Speaker, I cannot, in the light of that kind of information, cover up or hide it under a carpet; I cannot do it. [*Desk thumping*] So I have taken steps to have those matters investigated.

When one looks at what the Commonwealth Law Ministers said about the functions of Attorney General, it states:

“The challenge facing everyone was to assert, by personal example, the traditional leading role of the Office of the Attorney General, as guardian of the public interest and upholding the fundamental rights of every citizen and, if appropriate, actively representing the cause before the courts. The personal qualities of the office holder and that person's commitment to meeting the highest expectations of ordinary people in terms of personal integrity, impartiality and steadfastness, in the face of pressures from whatever quarter.”

I want to give the national community and this honourable House the assurance that whatever pressures are put on this Attorney General, he is going to resist it and whatever the consequences he has to face he would face them. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, the Attorney General does not have investigative powers and the Attorney General is aware of that, but the Attorney General, as the head of that Ministry, has the powers to facilitate investigation.

In the last budget debate, when the Opposition raised allegations of corruption, I was so sick of those allegations that I spoke to the Minister of National Security at the time and right in this House we decided that we would have an anti-corruption squad set up in order to investigate those allegations. There were three main areas mentioned by, I think, the Member for Diego Martin West. They were the Airports Authority, the InnCogen issue and the desalination plant.

Mr. Speaker, no moneys were given to me. I decided that on the interpretation of the law that I put on it, that moneys which were in my vote, I could use that money in order to retain a forensic expert from abroad. I took it upon myself to retain Mr. Bob Lindquist, the gentleman who investigated Mr. O'Halloran. I retained him and I made available for that squad, the services of a special counsel, Mr. Karl Hudson-Phillips and they assisted this squad in the investigation.

Mr. Speaker, the preliminary report came to me and it showed that there was no way that the report should be made public, because the contents of the report needed further investigation. Those investigations, I understand, are continuing. I should say that that report was given to the Minister of National Security, who is the present Prime Minister, he is Prime Minister and Minister of National Security.

I want to make it clear that the role of the Attorney General in that squad was to facilitate lawyers to assist the police. It was not that the Attorney General was taking over responsibility for the police. It was to facilitate lawyers to assist the police and since the vote at my Ministry was used for the payment of Mr. Lindquist, it would mean that if I had to continue it, I needed more money in that vote.

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Mr. Speaker, may I point out that I took a note to Cabinet, a few months ago, two or three months ago, asking for moneys to be provided for forensic investigation. Based on what was told to me by the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP), he believed that there should be a vote for forensic investigation and he believed the vote should be under the Attorney General's Ministry. I decided that I would forego that and I would allow the vote to be under the Ministry of Finance and for the Cabinet to agree as to whether there should be such a vote. I have not seen any allocation for that vote. I checked yesterday and I understand that it is still before the Cabinet.

I think I would want to say something about investigations. I have been very privileged. I have been a lawyer for several years and I have appeared on all sides: prosecution and defence. On the issue of corruption you cannot really find a person guilty by mere allegation. When one goes to a court of law, one has to adduce evidence to show that the person is, beyond doubt, guilty.

The police needs help. In the present age, in which people when they steal they would not keep the money in their bank account, they would not even take the money in their own name, they would take it in different ways, so you have to check the paper trail. Then the police would have to get help to do this. Accountants cannot help in this respect. They must have people who are specially trained in forensic investigations.

With the greatest respect to some of these accountants, as to whether you do audit or not, that is, as to whether you would see whether there was a vote for this and it was done in this way, but there has to be specialized training. In the international community you have that and in this country there are people who can do that. So if we are serious about investigating corruption, one of the first things that we have to do is to assist the police by giving them this help. The function of the police is to investigate crime; not the function of any auditor.

The auditor does not investigate crime. The function of the police is to investigate crime. So if we want to get at corruption, we have to get at corruption to determine whether a person has a conflict of interest. An auditor would not decide that; he cannot investigate that, he would not know that. That is a matter for the police. The DPP indicated that he would like to get that kind of assistance and based on that I had taken the note to Cabinet.

Mr. Speaker, as I listened to the Budget delivered by the hon. Minister of Finance, what struck me most were these words: Corruption strikes at the heart of economic growth and development. That struck me and I agree with him. But the

Budget would be meaningless unless we really take steps, genuinely, to get at the root of corruption.

I want to say that in recent years there has been a phenomenal growth of interest in issues relating to governance and corruption. This reflects, in part, the increasing international acceptance that poor governance and corruption are corrosive of economic, social and political development.

At the Commonwealth Heads of Government in Edinburgh in 1997, heads of governments underscored the importance of good governance, including increased openness in economic decision-making and eliminating corruption through greater transparency, accountability and the application of the rule of law. A group of experts was appointed representative of the Commonwealth's diversity to undertake a study on these issues and to recommend ways in which the Commonwealth could promote good governance and fight corruption.

The expert group presented a framework of Commonwealth principles on promoting good governance and combating corruption. The group recognized that good governance is not a luxury, but a basic requirement for development. Corruption which undermines development is generally an outcome of a symptom of poor governance. Good governance cannot be achieved unless allegations of corruption are investigated and persons who are involved are brought to justice in accordance with law. A government cannot achieve maximum development unless it investigates the allegations.

By investigating the allegations, the evidence would then be obtained in order to bring the persons involved in corruption to justice. Corruption is generally defined as the abuse of office for private gain. There are many types and levels of corruption, including grand corruption which involves huge sums paid by major businesses to high level politicians and/or government officials and widespread systemic corruption, which takes the form of substantial bribes to public officials to receive benefits.

All forms of corruption entail economic and social costs. Transaction costs are increased, public revenues are reduced, resource allocations in budgets are distorted, investment and economic growth is retarded and the rule of law is weakened.

Corruption materializes in different forms: bribery—this involves the promise, offer or giving of any advantage that improperly affects the actions or decisions of a public official. Embezzlement, theft and fraud—thrift of revenue by persons entrusted with authority and control over government property. Extortion involves

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coercing a person to pay money or provide other valuables or personal favours in exchange for acting or failing to act. Exploiting a conflict of interest—influence peddling, insider trading, engaging in transactions, selling influence or acquiring a position or commercial interest that is incompatible with one’s official role and duties for the purpose of illicit enrichment. If it is thought that conflict of interest is not corruption, it can amount to corruption determined under circumstances: favouritism and nepotism; assignment of appointment, services and resources according to family ties, party affiliation and other preferential grouping.

Mr. Speaker, this is important, because I do not want it to be thought that this is something which has just come out of the sky. Governments have recognized that this is a serious matter. The United Nations, through its global forum on corruption, has requested countries to take steps to recover the profits, assets and wealth derived from corrupt acts of officials.

I want to give you an idea. I am reading from the Global Forum on Corruption Report of 1990, at page 91:

“The large-scale illegal transfer of funds by corrupt public officials and political leaders, their relatives and their close associates has long been a serious problem. The former Shah of Iran was alleged to have misappropriated some US \$35 billion during the 25 years of his reign, largely disguised by foundations and charities. Papa Doc Duvalier and his son, Jean Claude Duvalier, as Presidents of Haiti from 1957 to 1986, were alleged to have extracted between \$500 million and \$2 billion from the state, an estimated 87 % of government expenditure, being paid directly or indirectly to Duvalier and his associates between 1960 and 1967. The case against the family members of former President of the Philippines, Ferdinand Marcos, is still ongoing, almost 15 years after he left office amid allegations that he misappropriated at least \$5 billion of state assets.

More recently, a Pakistani court convicted the husband of former Pakistani Prime Minister, Benazir Bhutto, Asif Ali Zandari, of accepting \$9 million in kickbacks and he is known to have channeled \$40 million of unexplainable origin through...private banks...In Nigeria...”

And it goes on and on. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Chaitan: What about the PNM?

Hon. R. L. Maharaj: Minister Chaitan has asked, what about the PNM? Yes, Mr. O'Halloran, but the fact of the matter is I am quoting this because it is no answer for a government in dealing with the issue of corruption, to say others

have done it. [*Desk thumping*] We are in Government; we are the Ministers; we would have to be accountable and, therefore, we have a duty also. If there is anything wrong with any other person, we investigate it, but we have a duty to ensure that matters are investigated. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker, I want to be very fair. When I became the Attorney General, one of the matters with which I felt that I ought to assist the public was in respect of its fight against corruption. I had the privilege of piloting several pieces of legislation in this Chamber and in the other place. There can be no doubt—and I am on record as saying—that no government has put more legal framework than we have put in respect of the fight against corruption. As a matter of fact, this has been recognized; but it is also recognized that legal frameworks alone are not essential, that other matters have to be done.

Mr. Speaker, for the record, this Government passed a new integrity law. This Government passed laws to facilitate parliamentary committees. This Government passed laws for the freedom of information. This Government passed laws for equal opportunity legislation. This Government has before the Parliament, a law to amend the corruption ordinance in order to create an agency to fight corruption. This Government has passed a law in order to take the assets of those who are corrupt, to confiscate those assets.

As Attorney General, one of the first things I did in 1997, was to recognize that there was something wrong with the procurement process of goods and services. I drafted a National Tenders Bill which took into account all the modern reforms. The Cabinet appointed a committee and I am still trying to see whether we can get that Bill to the Parliament. That Bill will reform the laws of procurement in order to ensure that the procurement process is improved.

Mr. Speaker, I took the matter to Cabinet; a committee was appointed; the Attorney General was not a member of that committee. That committee has been appointed; it has been working, I am told. I got charge of it again and I am hoping to take the Bill before the Cabinet in order to have it introduced in the House.

There was also concern about political parties and the law in respect of political contributions. The Law Commission has taken steps. There is a paper and political parties have been invited to make their comments on those matters.

11.10 a.m.

Mr. Speaker, from 1997 to now, I have not been very happy with the question of how effective we were dealing with corruption, but I recognize that no Government can be perfect. Therefore, as Attorney General, in my speeches from

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1997 to now, I obviously probably shared some of my frustrations with the national community, but I want to say that laws alone are not enough. What has happened over the last few months is that there have been revelations which must cause the public to perceive that Government and public officials are corrupt, and that includes the perception against the Attorney General.

I have taken the position that although we have passed those laws; although we have done I think what no country in the Commonwealth has done in passing laws, that as a Government we cannot sweep this matter under the carpet. We cannot merely say, “get the evidence and deal with it.” [*Desk thumping*] My position is, the only way to deal with these matters at this time is for commissions of enquiry to be appointed so that the evidence could be got, forensic assistance can be provided to the commissions, so that the evidence could be got in order to determine whether persons are corrupt. [*Desk thumping*]

I have taken that position; I have said it publicly; I have said it in certain quarters. If it is that I am wrong and if it is that I am unfit to be Attorney General for saying that, so be it. But what I am saying is that, that is my duty as an Attorney General. [*Desk thumping*] I cannot see why, at this time, that we have political parties—there is one side; there is the other side—but the issue of corruption is not a party political issue. [*Desk thumping*] It is an issue which affects the national community; it is an issue in which moneys which should be given to poor people are being taken away and put in the pockets of officials. I cannot support that. [*Desk thumping*]

There are some specific matters I want to deal with: state boards and state authorities. There can be no doubt that most of the allegations of official corruption relate to the functioning of state boards and state corporations. If the practices continue whereby the same persons who are suspicious of being corrupt are put on state boards, then you would not solve the problem. If it is that you continue a practice in which persons are on one board and the same persons go on several boards, you have interlocking directorates. If it is that the persons who are on these boards come from a particular financial grouping or backing, then it is even worse. [*Desk thumping*] We cannot deal effectively with corruption unless we look at the whole question of how we appoint state boards and state corporations.

Mr. Speaker, the issue of the Employment Training Programme has been raised here and I want to say that based on information which I have got, I have referred matters to the Director of Public Prosecutions. I cannot support the contention that nothing is wrong with the ETP. I cannot support it. As a matter of

fact, just two days ago a gentleman walked into the office of the Attorney General and gave me certain information. I requested a certain lawyer to see the person and to take him to the DPP. We have volumes of letters in which there are allegations of corruption. We cannot hide the fact that the ETP is perceived to be used for even the party's purposes in party elections. [*Desk thumping*]

As I understand it, Ministers are not supposed to come to the Parliament and if something is existing, say that it is not existing, unless the Minister is convinced that it is not so. But, Mr. Speaker, things are before our eyes, and the Employment Training Programme, it cannot be seriously said—because we have to remember that when we leave this place, we have to face the public; we have to face our families and we may have to face the law. So that we have to be very careful with what we say. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker: The speaking time of the hon. Member has expired. [*Interruption*] Order, please! Order, please! Member for Caroni East caught my eyes. [*Interruption*] Member for Laventille East/Morvant, we will not conduct this House—this is the second morning—with your staying in your seat and yelling these things. I am asking you very early in this session today to conduct yourself in a better manner.

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

Question put and agreed to.

Hon. R. L. Maharaj: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The issue of a G3 licence was raised by the Member for Arouca South. I want to say that that is a case where a special licence—well, there is an attempt to grant a special licence pursuant to a Cabinet decision. The matters came to my office some time ago, and I think I should, in the light of what has been raised, say that I have looked into the matter; I have asked the Solicitor General to look into it, because I understand the practice is for the Solicitor General to vet those licences and those agreements, but it was not done by the Solicitor General. I have given instructions to the Solicitor General that if it is not done that steps should be taken not to have it granted and for the matter to go back to Cabinet for reconsideration.

In respect of the CLICO matter, I think I owe a duty to also say that some time ago some documents were sent to me. I had correspondence with the Minister of Finance, but I considered that it was my duty in the light of what was raised, that I also ought to pass it to the Director of Public Prosecutions, because in respect of any insurance company which may be technically insolvent, it is a question as to

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also whether criminal offences are being committed. Therefore, I considered it my duty to pass it to the Director of Public Prosecutions. [*Desk thumping*]

In respect of the Caroni rum distillery matter, the Solicitor General and the Ministry raised concerns about that transaction. That was a transaction of the sale of 49 per cent of the shares of Rum Distillers of Trinidad and Tobago to Angostura Limited. I wish to say that yesterday evening—I did not have the chance to talk to the Minister yet, but the position taken by the Ministry is that that decision and the process is null and void and of no effect and as Attorney General, that matter would have to be taken back to Cabinet. [*Desk thumping*]

In respect of the Tanteak transaction, the department also looked at it and I am also of the view that that process and decision is null and void and of no effect. [*Desk thumping*] That matter will have to be taken back to the Cabinet.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: If the Minister would give way. I would just like to ask a question in relation to those two transactions. In the budget debate the Minister of Finance indicated that those transactions were open, above board, and whatnot, and that the media would be allowed to come in. In the light of what the Member has said, what is the effect of what was said in the budget debate?

Hon. R. L. Maharaj: All I can say is that a decision has been taken by the office of the Attorney General that those decisions are null and void and if the Minister or the Ministry wants to disobey that, they can, but there are certain consequences. [*Desk thumping*]

11.20 a.m.

Mr. Speaker, one of the matters that has attracted my attention, in the light of all these matters, was what should be done in respect of the expenditure of public funds. I do not think that I could support the proposition of not voting for the budget because innocent people should not be prejudiced. It would mean that public servants, police officers and persons who are not involved in this process would suffer, therefore, I have a duty to support the budget. However, supporting the budget does not mean necessarily that I agree with certain matters, but I think, as Attorney General, I have the functions and duties to do certain things.

Mr. Speaker, I have had discussions with my Ministry and I would be taking the position that the office of the Attorney General and Ministry of Legal Affairs would request and expect to obtain details of all tendering procedures and the award of contracts which are not awarded by the Central Tenders Board. I, together with my office, would personally look into these procedures to ensure

that they comply with law and if there are any corrupt practices or misuse or abuse of public office, I shall refer them to the appropriate authority.

I have decided that the Attorney General also has the power to take proceedings in court on behalf of the public interest [*Desk thumping*] and that if it is that the Attorney General believes that the public interest is violated or adversely affected in any one of these matters and public officials do not want to adhere to the advice and to the views of the Ministry, then I would take proceedings to prohibit the action in a court of law. I would also appoint a team within the Ministry in order to ensure that these matters are monitored and that there would be proper accountability.

Mr. Speaker, there are certain principles of equality in governance which I have always supported. The playing field must be level. I am not against business, or even big business. As a matter of fact, I support business and big business, but no one group, not even a business group should be able to exert influence and control over any government. [*Desk thumping*] This is a principle, I am not making any accusation. This is a principle of governance which is accepted throughout the world.

Mr. Speaker, when I joined the political struggle in 1991 that is what I went throughout Trinidad and Tobago advocating: a struggle against powerful interests and groups. No clique should have great powers and control. Party and government must not provide a front for them. They must not control the show. The people have the power, not those people. Interlocking directorates must not exist in order to promote that control. A government must not be a puppet government controlled by any clique.

Mr. Speaker, I think it is my duty, as Attorney General, to say a Minister cannot have two employers. He cannot! [*Desk thumping*] Under the system we operate, when a person becomes a minister he must not have two direct employers. He has to sever all ties with all business connections. [*Desk thumping*] As a matter of fact, I do not think this is the place to quote political and legal principles, but if a minister does not sever such ties and has two employers, serious consequences can flow not only to the government but to the minister. I am not making any threats, I am just stating, as the Attorney General, what I should say.

Mr. Speaker, a minister cannot have his own business and participate, whether it is a legal or equitable interest, or whether it is in the name of his brother, a company or a trust, and participate in decisions of Cabinet which may affect that

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business. He cannot do it. That is influence peddling and conflict of interest and can amount to corruption.

Public officials cannot take two salaries. As a matter of fact, I have been told that certain important public officials who are employed in ministries are getting a salary from the State but they are also getting a salary from a certain company. They are on contract and that is wrong. That is wrong and I intend to take steps, in respect of the information which I got, to have the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) look into the matter and, obviously, the police would have to look into it.

Mr. Speaker, the funds of the State must never be used for political or personal purposes. Whether it is the PNM, UNC or NAR in government, there is a distinction between government, State and political party. You cannot have a set-up whereby public offices are being used to fund party or political purposes. I do not want to quote it, I have said it when I was in Opposition and I say it again, Indira Ghandi and other ministers—if you check the West Indian reports—have gone to jail for doing that.

I cannot close my eyes to the fact that there are certain public officials who have suddenly become rich. There are certain members of boards who, before 1995, could not pay a rent or their mortgages, but they got new homes, big cars and new lifestyles. Public officials can now send their children abroad to school. They can have credit cards where other people are paying for them.

Mr. Speaker, one of the ways in which corruption is effected in the world today—if we follow what is happening, the United Nations has asked for a special convention to deal with corruption so that countries will have to take certain measures. Why they have done that is because it is recognized that corruption is linked to bad governance. One of the ways in which companies and rich people corrupt public officials is not to give them a lot of money, but to facilitate, either with a credit card, education of children, entertainment, expensive gifts or things like that. These are matters in which it has nothing to do with personalities, it has to do with issues for the country.

Mr. Speaker, I have had many nights in which I had to decide what I am going to do today. On the one hand, I thought whether I should walk; on the other hand, I thought whether I should remain. On the other hand, I thought whether I would, in effect, be doing wrong if I remain and say what I had to say, but I have checked, read and looked at other countries and I believe that my duty, regardless of the consequences, is to stand up and fight. [*Desk thumping*] I have not run from any battle. As a matter of fact, I think the public perception is that we have allegations of corruption and there are certain Members of the Government—we

cannot hide it—who feel the matter should be dealt with in a certain way and others believe it should be dealt with in another way. We would allow time to go to see whether the situation would improve and then we would, obviously, have to review situations, but, at the present time, unless removed, the Attorney General is going to stay.

11.30 a.m.

Mr. Speaker, in respect of the link between corruption, governance and economic growth, I want to read from a book, *Governance, Development and Globalization*, at page 156:

“The Link Between Corruption, Governance and Economic Growth

Securing democracy, alleviating poverty and human suffering, and sustaining investment and commerce, are inextricably dependent upon curbing corruption in most of the developing nations and across Central and Eastern Europe.”

The parties to the convention, which is the Council of Europe, at their Criminal Law Convention on corruption stated that corruption:

“threatens the rule of law, democracy and human rights, undermines good governance, fairness and social justice, distorts competition, hinders economic development and endangers the stability of democratic institutions and the moral foundations of society.”

This book shows that the Organization of the American States by all its conventions have shown, and the leaders have decided, that there cannot be true development unless one deals effectively with corruption.

There is a convention on corruption, which is being drafted. While all of us hope for the perfect society, few of us, I believe, are so naïve to think that every official has the same level of soul and consciousness in the discharge of his or her public duties, dispassionately for the benefit of the public.

In some countries of the world it is said that corruption is a catalyst for development. In certain countries unless you pay a bribe, you cannot get a birth certificate, a driver’s permit or even a death certificate. In certain countries public life is so honeycombed with corruption that budget speeches are no more than pious platitudes and a ritual mouthing of insincerity.

I do not accuse the hon. Minister of Finance of any insincerity, far from it. But I do say that with respect to each and every project, experience has demonstrated that unless there is absolute and total transparency at all levels of the process, the

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objectives will either not be achieved or, if achieved, at far greater cost than should be the case.

I am of the view that corruption is a cancer which does more than merely enrich the corrupt. It is a cancer that eats away the moral fibre of the society. It is a cancer that preaches that there is no reward for just and honest labour. It is a cancer that preaches that the name of the game is to put one over and get away with it as much as possible for as little effort as possible.

Mr. Speaker, corruption is like fire in a canefield, once it starts, if it is not beaten out immediately, it burns beyond control. So important is this issue, Mr. Speaker, that it is my view that any government has a special and particular responsibility to put in place procedures and mechanisms in an attempt to void the incidents of corruption. We have done that with putting the legal framework. No government has done that, but more than that, it is a prime responsibility of the Government to vigorously seek out, examine and enquire into all allegations of corrupt dealings. I am not thinking about a witch-hunt. I am talking about the political will to stamp out corruption and to demonstrate by one's actions that one will not tolerate corrupt practices in Government.

It is not good enough for the public to be invited to bring the evidence. It is not for the public to bring any evidence; it is for the Government to find it wherever it is. It is the responsibility of the Government to be constantly on guard, vigilant and proactive, reacting to every suspicion of corruption in order to give the public confidence that the highest moral and ethical standards are being maintained.

None of the projects mentioned in the budget will do any good to this country if they are carried out or executed amidst the swirl of corruption. You might finish the project at twice the cost, but then it remains a living monument to the corruption and moral debasement of this society. If that is done, every time one sees it or goes into the project carried out with corruption, one is reminded of it. It is not a question of only delivering the project, but of the kinds of protections and safeguards that can be put in place to protect the expenditure of public funds from corruption and abuse and misuse of office.

I am convinced that for any society to survive, based on noble ethical principles, the Government must be proactive and aggressive, if need be, on the issue of corruption.

In closing, in the final declaration on the Global Forum on Corruption on May 31, 2001, this is what was agreed:

“We are all deeply concerned about the spread of corruption, which is a virus capable of crippling government, discrediting public institutions and private corporations and having a devastating impact on the human rights of populations, and thus undermining society and its development, affecting in particular the poor.

We are determined to prevent and combat all forms of corruption.

We are convinced that examples should be set: by governments in ensuring the integrity of their officials; by political parties in promoting transparency in their financing; and by the private sector in applying high standards of accountability.

We are convinced that safeguarding integrity is not only a matter of enacting correct laws and establishing an independent, effective and efficient judiciary committed to upholding the rule of law, but may also require in some cases changes in attitude and in long-standing practices.

We are aware that corruption cannot prosper in the full light of openness. Transparency and impartial forms of public control as well as co-operation by the private sector are of the utmost importance. Independent and investigative media have a vital role to play.

We recognize our responsibility to adopt policies aimed at reducing or eradicating corrupt practices at the national and international level.”

Unless this is done, the people would have no trust in governance. If there is no trust in governance, democracy and the rule of law can be affected.

Mr. Speaker, I conclude with these words. Honesty and integrity are the first chapters in the book of wisdom. Honesty and integrity are the foundations of civil society and all lasting relationships. The greatest gift we can leave for our children is a legacy of honesty and integrity.

I thank you.

The Minister of Communication and Information Technology (Hon. Ralph Maraj): Mr. Speaker, for more reasons than one, I had not really intended to participate in the debate. One of the reasons is that I am under the weather, I am suffering from the flu. My driver tells me the flu is called the “Gang of Four”, so I am suffering from the “Gang of Four”. I do not mind suffering from the “Gang of Four”, Mr. Speaker.

I rise because of the very inspiring address we just had from the hon. Attorney General. I have been in this Parliament for about 10 years and there are certain

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landmark speeches. I think that the distinguished Member for Couva South has given us a fundamental landmark speech, which will pave the way, I think, for the behaviour of all Attorneys General in the future. That is what is important.

We need our politics to evolve. That is one of the things that we should be engaged in. The politics of Trinidad and Tobago is stagnating and if there are people who are unwilling to challenge the process and avoid the stasis, then we are going to be in a situation where our institutions will not develop. The good governance that we are talking about will not develop. The transparency that we want will not develop.

I am very proud to be associated with Members on this side of the House who are, at the moment, challenging a particular process and helping to evolve the democracy. We are doing it in the Cabinet. We are doing it in the party. I have no doubt that the people, in the final analysis, will benefit.

We cannot depend on individuals to run our lives. We must have institutions. It is only by institutions will there be justice, equality, transparency, distribution of resources and economic democracy. You name it, it is through the institutions—the institutions of government, the institutions of organizations; the institution building in political parties, the democratization of our process. We must remember always that democracy is not a state, it is a process. It is our responsibility to ensure that it goes deeper and deeper. It must grow. It must grow in the government. It must grow in our political parties. It must grow in our village councils, our sport organizations, our cultural organizations. Without that, how could we unleash the talent and the energy of our society?

This country would have heard this cliché over and over, that this country is brimming with talent. We know that, but if our institutions do not develop we will not be able to unleash that inner energy of the society to ensure that we chart a course and to ensure that we are in a position that we are empowered to compete outside in this very cruel world.

All of these things the Attorney General has been talking about, really. That is one of the underlying themes of his speech and I associate myself completely and comprehensively, without equivocation, with the speech of the Attorney General. Everything that he has said I fully support. That is my main reason for standing here today.

The entire community knows my position on corruption. I have said it over and over in public debates. I have made a statement on corruption to the media saying that if I am not satisfied with the way the Government is handling the

corruption, I will resign and I maintain that position. Of course, I was chastised for it, but I do not mind that.

My position is that we must deal with this business of corruption in a frontal, transparent way. There is no other way. When you develop Mickey Mouse systems to deal with corruption, you are not convincing anybody. I, myself, previously have supported the idea of a commission of enquiry. I support the Attorney General in that as well. We must have a commission of enquiry, financed and empowered, given the forensic capability and so on, to deal with corruption. I can put it no other way. When there is corruption, you take away food from the mouths of the poor.

Some people do not understand what is going on. They say that people are corrupt, they have just taken some money and put it in their pockets and that they should be given a chance. We cannot have that because when people are corrupt they deprive the masses from developing. It is the poor who suffer, not we who walk along the gilded corridors of power. It is the poor who suffer, the powerless, the defenceless, the vulnerable. They are the ones who suffer. So we must take corruption seriously. It is not a question of just a few people enriching themselves. That is the point I make about this matter of corruption.

We must face this frontally. I would have liked to have seen in the budget some resources for dealing with corruption. I would have liked to have seen that. My position today on corruption is not a sudden one. It is something that I have been talking about all my life. I have been talking about anti-corruption all my life. Thank God, I am not a materialistic person. I am not enamoured or inspired by materialistic pursuits or office. I am prepared to walk myself if I have to walk. I have no problem with that at all.

This position that I am taking is not sudden. I have a speech here that I gave at the Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference, 1999. In that speech, as in many speeches I have made, there is an underlying theme of economic justice, liberation of the people, the idea of power versus freedom, the threat to our democracy.

We talk about corruption and the pilfering of public funds and enriching the few, but one dimension that we need to consider very, very seriously is the threat to democracy that comes from corruption—the threat to our very democracy. We live in a world where political parties need funding. They may need massive funding to get their messages across. I am glad that the Attorney General is looking at this question of campaign financing. Because of that situation, you run the risk of facing a situation where, when investors invest in the political party

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and they get into government, that group of investors then has the political party in its back pocket.

11.45 a.m.

Mr. Speaker, that is the situation that you face, especially when you are developing; when you are small; when you are vulnerable and when you do not have the institutions! Institution building is absolutely important! We cannot depend on individuals! So we have situations in developing countries—
[*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: Order. Order please!

Hon. R. Maraj: We have situations in developing countries where, and I am not necessarily talking about Trinidad and Tobago. There is a point I made in a speech to the Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference—as you know, Mr. Speaker, the Commonwealth is made up of a lot of small, vulnerable countries. I was telling the parliamentarians:

“Your responsibility is also to protect your democracy from the criminal elements that abound almost everywhere. Though not an entirely new phenomenon...”

And I was talking about the Thusian policies.

“The threat is that your democracy could be usurped by evil cabals and that kleptocrats and hoodlums could rise to the positions of power, prominence and influence. In developing countries where institutions may not be yet strong, the threat is stronger, the situation more grave. There is no doubt that today, more than ever, money oils the political machinery, as political parties have to rely more and more on high-powered campaigns to get across their message. Political parties are therefore more vulnerable than ever to predators, who thereafter demand their pounds of flesh, taking the food from the mouths of...”

That is the point I want to make, Mr. Speaker, this is not a sudden conversion. For me, it is what I have been saying all my life in public. If you look at my plays—I had that career in another life—all my writings, everything that I have been talking about, has to do with this important matter of an enlightened—
[*Interruption*] Well, I wrote “O Prime Minister” and so on. An enlightened society, using the resources of the country for the benefit of all of the people.

Mr. Speaker as I said, I had not intended to speak, but now that I am on my feet, I think I owe it to the national community to, at least, speak about what was

once the Ministry of Communications and Information and Technology. [Laughter] It is now the Ministry of Information and Communications Technology. As you know that Ministry suffered some truncation some time ago, but, I think, divinely or fortuitously, I had in process the preparation of a document dealing with the work of the Ministry, which I have circulated to all my colleagues and so on, it is called the “First Seven Months”. I just want to run through that document very quickly without going into too many details about what this ministry had been doing in the last seven months.

The first thing we had to do was develop a ministry. It was a new ministry that had never been in place before. We had to get resources, staff, technology and office space and so on. This ministry was established on January 04, 2001. I am very proud to say with the help of my permanent secretary—a very hard working lady—we were able to establish this ministry and have it running by the end of January. So that by then we were already having our weekly heads of department meetings. We established what we called the senior management committee to oversee the ministry. This ministry, Mr. Speaker, is made up of 12 various satellites: there was the Telecommunications Authority, National Information System Centre, e-Government Unit, the Freedom of Information Unit, Telecommunication Division, Information Division, TTPOST, NBN, Government Printery, TSTT, Film Censor Board, National Archives and so on. It was a fairly big ministry. We established it within one month, and we had the senior management committee up and running, developing the synergistic values and interaction between the various aspects of the ministry, trying to mould these spirit elements into a coercive whole and succeeding very well in doing so.

At the head office—which was the brain centre of the ministry—during the first seven months we set up a Policy Planning and Research Unit, which was the core operating system of the ministry’s head office. This unit had the responsibility to develop the strategic plan for the Ministry. I am proud to say that we held a retreat during this period and we had a draft strategic plan in the works, which would have positioned the Ministry to move forward in a very creative and dynamic way. Some elements of the draft strategic plan, I am sure, are still applicable to the truncated ministry which I now hold.

During the last seven months I was privileged, really, to pilot a pivotal piece of legislation in this Parliament. This legislation is known as the Telecommunications Bill, which really is geared towards liberalizing the sector and introducing competition into the telecommunications sector. We had an extensive debate, especially in the Upper House and I remember that 12-hour marathon, in

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particular, when we were in the committee stage. What I liked about that entire process, Mr. Speaker, was the fact that we were able to develop national consensus. It was a very contentious issue. There were various sectors and interests entering into the discussion, trying to influence the way the Bill came out. In the final analysis what we emerged with was a bill which received unanimous support in the Upper House.

The Bill, of course, had an unusual passage here when the distinguished Members of the Opposition absented themselves suddenly during that debate. What has to happen now—I already had that before the Cabinet—is that the Telecommunications Authority has to be established. I made recommendations to the Cabinet about three months ago, I think, but you know something has to be done, because as the Minister involved, I am constantly besieged by people who are wondering when we are going to have this regulatory framework in place for the management of the sector. It all depends on the establishment of the Telecommunications Authority and indeed, Mr. Speaker, we want to get that going.

Another important development over the last seven months has been our attempts to establish the e-Government Unit, which as you know is intended to create an electronic relationship between the citizenry and the public service, by establishing what is known as a public service intranet so that there will be greater flow of information, decision-making and so on. That matter is something that we have been pushing for the past seven months. The Central Tenders Board has looked at the potential providers and they are now in the process of negotiating. So I expect, Mr. Speaker, that before too long we would be able to put it in place and to get on the ground, that e-Government Unit, which will be initiated through some various pilot projects in the government service.

What is happening is that the sector is moving on two tracks. There is the electronic public service; the liberalization of the private sector and I have no doubt that they will merge eventually. When this public service backbone is put in place, there will be tremendous opportunity for a lot of value-added services down the line so that the private sector would then find an opportunity in the reform we are putting in place in the public sector.

Mr. Speaker, one of the units, which I lost in the severing, was the Freedom of Information Unit. I am very proud of the fact that we took that up from scratch. We appointed the unit after various interviews. We set it up running. The unit ensured that designated officers in various ministries were appointed so that they could deal with requests for public information. They embarked on the massive programme of public sensitization in Trinidad, and in Tobago, talking to the

public service, talking to the private sector and NGOs, briefing them about the Freedom of Information Act and the opportunity that now comes to move from secrecy to openness and transparency with this Act.

One of the others, which I lost, was the Information Division. May I say, Mr. Speaker, I was very saddened by that because during the last seven months under my stewardship, the Information Division was tremendously productive. During that period, 150 television programmes were produced for public dissemination of information, and 412 radio programmes were produced and aired. Mr. Speaker, I am not even talking about the photographs and so on. That is a tremendous thing. Over 1,000 assignments were covered by that division which had the paucity of resources, in terms of human resources and technology and equipment. Mr. Speaker, every Monday morning I used to meet with them and inspire them, plan with them in detail and they were able to move. I want to pay tribute to Roy Rique, Yvonne Chrysostum and all those people in that Information Division who heeded my call for productivity and dissemination of information.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say this. I told them very, very plainly: “I am not here about government propaganda, I am here about information and if it is that we have to do a programme in which there are particulars about a government programme or a government policy and so on, let it happen. Let it happen!” Because a government is supposed to be secure! It needs security! It is only when you are insecure that you are afraid of criticisms and afraid of a challenge to your ideas. [*Desk thumping*] I told them very plainly!

Mr. Speaker, so we embarked on what we called the community connection—that was one of the highlights of the last seven months—where we took the Government’s “Nine Point Plan” and went throughout Trinidad and Tobago: St. Joseph, Petit Morne, Chaguanas, Couva, Toco, Penal, Oropouche. We were going to San Juan/Barataria when my wings were clipped, Mr. Speaker.

The point is that when we went to these places we discussed the Government’s “Nine Point Plan” and we told the villagers: “Do not be afraid to air your views. Speak your mind! Get on board because we want to learn from you! We want to hear how you feel about what is going on!” So we produced about 21 or 31 programmes out of these community connection programmes. I must say I am very, very proud of what we did there.

Mr. Speaker, TTPost was another one that came under me and when I went there, the reform process had been already on. I gave them the new mandate of profitability—because as you know TTPost has not come into profitability—

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modernization and expansion. I told them plainly that you have got to become modernized, you have to get into technology, you have to get into the information sector because you have to diversify your offering, so when the sector is liberalized you are going to be in a position where other people would be offering the services that you are offering and so you must diversify to ensure that you are able to compete. I told them to use the position of being near Piarco to also consider expanding into the region so that they can also become one of the regional players.

12.00 noon.

I must say that TTPost has responded very, very positively and the whole process of reform is continuing, Mr. Speaker. Offices are being relocated to where people live, work and shop to attract customers to the post office, to generate more revenue and, in spite of this, several traditional offices were not raising enough income but they are moving on. Franchises, commonly referred to as TTPost centres have been introduced and therefore are offering the same—we are also rationalizing as well, Mr. Speaker, the personnel in the TTPost and I have no doubt that is going to play a key role as we move to profitability. The important thing is that they have been given their mandate of profitability, expansion and modernization. They have accepted it and they are on board.

I now come to the National Broadcasting Network (NBN). I was very pleased, Mr. Speaker, to have NBN under my control. When I went there, NBN was in a state, in a real state. A certain kind of perception had developed of NBN, especially TTT, and we did a diagnostic. I immediately commissioned a diagnostic and it revealed all the reasons why NBN was not able to compete with its competitor. It was being outstripped, Mr. Speaker, losing revenue, losing audience appeal and so on. So, based on that diagnostic, I took to Cabinet a Note recommending the setting up of an interministerial committee to make recommendations on the future of NBN.

I deliberately recommended that the hon. Minister of Finance would chair that interministerial committee and it would be comprised of Mr. Assam, Mr. Harry Partap and so on. Today I want to pay public tribute to my dear colleague, Minister Yetming, for the leadership that he gave us in that interministerial committee, the result of which is that now the Cabinet has before it a Cabinet Note, a report, which could take NBN into a dynamic future. The new Minister, who is the hon. Prime Minister, now has the responsibility to ensure that those recommendations are either heeded, discarded or modified.

Mr. Speaker, I can go on and on but I am running out of steam here. The Government Printery is also something that comes under my Ministry. We are undergoing tremendous reform in the Government Printery. One of the things that I am seeking to do at the moment with the Government Printery is to ensure that all this pressure and all the logjams that come are eradicated. I have asked the printery to decentralize, load-shed, because in today's day and age, Mr. Speaker, where you have computers and in-house printing capabilities and so on, the Government does not need to centralize its printing.

We have therefore asked all ministries to take on the kind of printing that they can do and leave the core work, which has to do with security and so on, to the Government Printery, so that department itself can be modernized. So that we are doing that kind of reform with the government printery whilst, at the same time, we have commissioned a diagnostic from the Commonwealth. I have a feeling that, by the time the Commonwealth gives us its report, the reform process would have already been on. So the Government Printery is on its way.

We have already given it more equipment but I want better conditions for those people. I mean, I have visited that place there, it is terrible those conditions under which they work. [*Interruption*] Yes, a modern printery and a modern building. I do not know if you heard what I have just said but I have encouraged them in load-shedding so that, you know, ministries can be doing their own printing and the core work will be done by the Government Printery.

Well, TSTT is virtually on its own, Mr. Speaker. It is autonomous, it is moving, it is expanding, it is modernizing, it is facing up to the competition, it is preparing for the competition and it is expanding its mobile network with the construction of eight new cell sites and so on. So there is another area, during the last seven months, where we have been moving on, Mr. Speaker.

The National Archives also came under my Ministry at that time. I initiated some reform; we continued the building. The new building should be finished soon and handed over to the new Minister, but the point I made to the National Archives is that computerization must step in to make those resources in the archives more accessible to the public. I would like to see a situation where the viewers' room, the search room, is a modern room that people can go into and easily access all this wonderful archival material, and that is the kind of thing that you need to have a sustainable tourism thrust. When we develop the cultural dimension of our tourism in a more comprehensive way, Mr. Speaker, I have no doubt that the National Archives will play an important role, not only for the tourists but, of course, for all the children in the schools and so on who need to

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tap into those wonderful, ancient, historical data for their own enlightenment and for them to understand themselves.

The Film Census Board as well we are trying to give them a new building out of which to operate, and we are looking at the legislation at this point in time to deal with the presence of the video and the Internet and so on, while we still battle with this archaic concept of censoring films. So that is the dilemma that we are facing there with this Film Census Board. We have already discussed it at various levels and I have no doubt that the legislation will be a modern piece of legislation.

There are other things that came under my purview, the Telecommunications Division, the National Information System Centre and so on, but I would not go into all of that. We have done our work with them and this book testifies to it. One of the important things that I think we did during the last seven months, Mr. Speaker, is to set up the telecommunications advisory team.

When I became the Minister, I decided that I needed to be insulated from those who were seeing opportunity in this sector and seeking to influence me, so, I wanted a team of experts who would filter information and filter requests so that there would be no unilateralism in decision-making. If it is one thing you must avoid it is unilateralism in decision-making in this sector, which is so lucrative, Mr. Speaker, and which has the potential for creating so much wealth. We set up this telecommunications advisory team and this team has been giving yeoman service, helping the Minister, helping the Ministry, to deal with very knotty problems, technical problems, assessments and so on. We are, at the moment, may I say, in the process of reviewing the broadcast policy for Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Speaker, I thought I would give you this bit of information on the work of this Ministry during the first seven months. It has been a pleasure working with those who have now left, due to no fault of their own. I wish them well under the new Ministry and we in the Ministry of Information and Communications Technology continue to focus on our core problems, our core vision, because we feel that this sector has a critical role to play in the development of the economy. I have made the point before that this sector has the potential for being as pivotal and as lucrative as the energy sector for Trinidad and Tobago. We must therefore have the regulations in place; we must have the systems to ensure transparency and to ensure that the wealth that we generate trickles down. Well, I hate that word trickle—flows down to the people. We cannot talk about trickling any more.

The State must intervene, and, as you talk about State intervening, let me quote something that I said from this speech:

“But be careful. We can lose control. The market is efficient but without a soul. It thrives in a democracy but cannot protect it. As politicians we must remember always that a nation is not a mere market place nor are its citizens mere buyers and sellers. A nation is also a home, where there is warmth and security, nurturing of the young, care for the elderly, equal love and treatment for all. Can we rely on the soulless market to achieve that for us? Let us use the market principles to generate wealth but let us be in charge. We cannot leave everything up to market forces.”

That is why, Mr. Speaker—[*Desk thumping*] That is why I have always made a distinction between private sector led growth and private sector led politics. Private sector led growth leads to efficiency in the economy, right, but private sector led politics leads to corruption [*Desk thumping*] and distortion of the resources. It distorts your democracy, Mr. Speaker. I have been led fortuitously to this part of my speech, which I gave, and I will just repeat these words:

“We must encourage private sector led growth but reject private sector led politics and we must have the discernment to know the difference between the two. One generates economic efficiency, the other encourages corruption and distorts your democracy.”

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

Mr. Fitzgerald Hinds (*Laventille East/Morvant*): [*Desk thumping*] Thank you very warmly, hon. Members. Mr. Speaker, this is indeed an historic day in the life of the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago and I am privileged to be here to be a part of it, as I am sure all Members certainly are. Not historic because we are meeting on Saturday—because we have met here on a Saturday before—but historic because I am reasonably certain that it is the first time in the history of the Commonwealth that an Attorney General would have had occasion to stand and to declare principles, principles that his Government appears to be ignoring in their entirety.

I was inspired by the speech rendered by the Member for Couva South and the Attorney General. I was inspired because what he said is true and truth is, of course, the highest principle. I was more inspired, however, by the fact that the Attorney General appeared to have joined the People’s National Movement and all that we have stood for from our inception, as we gave richly and lavishly to Trinidad and Tobago over 44 years. He seemed to have joined us in the house of high principle and we welcome him; we welcome him. The principles that he spoke of this morning are principles that we have expressed ad nauseam over time.

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In my own short time as a parliamentarian here, I have heard other speakers on this side, and I myself have repeated those principles time and time again, but when it comes from inside the belly of the Government, naturally, if I may be permitted a colloquialism, “de t’ing sweeter”. Naturally it is more credible and we have been saying the things that the Member for Couva South, the Member for Oropouche and the Member for Naparima have been saying to the national community through the last election campaign and for the past six years. Some members of the national community understood what we were saying and responded to our call; many others did not. Many others still understood what we were saying but, for the purpose of self-gratification and personal gain, when the Attorney General was griping and grumbling inside of the UNC about what was surrounding and engulfing him, others were running speedily towards it, not ignorant but selfish and opportunistic.

So while I am entirely happy, in a sense, I feel a bit of sadness. While the Attorney General was speaking, he made reference to public officials who were, whilst operating as public officials, enjoying two public salaries. It is our understanding that a current member of the Senate did that. He was enjoying a salary from the North West Regional Health Authority and one from the Prime Minister’s office on contract before the election.

He ran up and down San Fernando East opposing the incumbent member, [*Desk thumping*] telling lies and trying to push himself, but he was roundly beaten at the election and in—[*Desk thumping*] and in demonstration of the anti-responsiveness to high principle, he was rewarded with a position in the Senate and is on record in the national community, on the newspaper, as saying he is no loser, he is a winner. Well, he must consider himself to be a winner when he finds himself in the company of materialistic opportunists where all that matters is their bottom line, what they can get like parasites at the expense of the poor and the downtrodden and the suffering in our community.

So when I look on the other side and I see the obvious opulence and wealth and public displays of well-being, I sat in this Parliament and saw Ministers of Government handing three and four and perhaps five blue notes to people who would visit them here—ETP specialists. I saw Ministers come to this Parliament like me, with the little that I can afford, and I have seen them spread like a green bay tree; but at the hands of the Attorney General and at the hands of all those in Trinidad and Tobago who are opposed to that kind of wickedness, they will wither like a herb at noonday. I am not afraid. So I do not have to call Sen. Moonilal’s name. The public will draw its own conclusions.

I am advised and I verily believe that the British government is prepared to assist the Trinidad and Tobago Government in its efforts to find those who have exported ill-gotten gains to that country and we welcome their assistance. [*Desk thumping*] We recognize from the Attorney General's contribution that there are those in his Government who are trying to frustrate the process so much so, he complained this morning that he took a note to Cabinet three or four months ago seeking moneys for further forensic investigations and no allocation was made in this budget for that important purpose. So when the Minister of Finance comes here, dressed—well, he does not look the part—and seeks our support for this budget and we understand that budgets are about inflows and outflows of public moneys, and he does not set aside a small amount for an insurance policy to ensure that the moneys continue to come in and flow out for the benefit of the people, he cannot reasonably expect our support. He knows that. By so doing he too has become an integral part of the unprincipled and corrupt behaviour that we have spoken about. [*Desk thumping*]

Whenever we came to this Parliament, whenever we went on public platforms and we expressed to the national community the circumstances as we saw them, the rot and the degradation and the selfishness and the deceit and the dishonesty that was passed on for government, they complained, "Oh, every day the PNM only talking about corruption, corruption, corruption." Well, we told them, "As long as you continue to be corrupt we are duty bound to continue to talk about corruption [*Desk thumping*] and we will not rest until all antislopers are found out and the honourable, as he then was, Dhanraj Singh, gets company as a burgess of the Tunapuna/Piarco Regional Corporation and a constituent of Arouca North in the caring hands of my friend, Mr. Jarrette Narine." [*Desk thumping*]

12.20 p.m.

I do not want to take away from the events of September 11, 2001 as they transpired in the United States. We commiserate in all sincerity with the American people, the government of the United States and all the families of the thousands who have perished in these ugly events and around the world. But this morning I listened to the Member for Naparima; yesterday the Member for Oropouche; today the Member for Couva South and, I listened to a lesser extent to the Member for San Fernando West.

I was reminded of the four aircraft that left from inside the United States and did the horrible deeds that they did. The only difference, of course, is that the payload that these gentlemen delivered today was not a horrible payload, but it was one of enlightenment and elucidation for the benefit of the people. So it was

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Oropouche who hit tower number one, Yetming! It was Naparima who hit tower number two, Carlos John. [*Laughter*] It was Couva South who hit the Panday pentagon. [*Laughter*] And of course, it was the Member for San Fernando West who reminded me of the plane that didn't make it to its target. It fell down in Pittsburgh, for he hit nothing. [*Laughter*] That is typical of the man and I shall come to him a wee bit later.

It was the former Member of Parliament for Princes Town, Reeza Mohammed, who was the first Member of the Cabinet and Government Minister who was found to be telling this Parliament demonstrable lies. It had to do with the hiring of a woman called Susan Harrysingh under a contract at the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources. The Member for Diego Martin West, in his usual forensic capability, demonstrated the lies of that Member and called on him to resign and he was given succour, he was given comfort, he was embraced by the Member for Couva North very early in that government's first term in office.

This week—last night—the Member for Arouca South, Mr. Speaker, you will recall, put on the table a document which demonstrated, inter alia, that the Minister of Infrastructure Development and Local Government, “Callous Carlos” as some people refer to him, but in this august Chamber, I refer to him as the Member for St. Joseph.

Mr. Manning: Hon. Member.

Mr. F. Hinds: Hon. Member. Well—hon. Member. [*Laughter*] The Member for Arouca South pointed out that he was the beneficiary. I am not afraid. He was the beneficiary of a \$14 million loan guarantee taken over by his purportedly former employer, CL Financial and his boss Mr. Lawrence Duprey.

All of this transpired and the Member for Arouca South brought it to the Parliament's attention. Because we were concerned that he had told this country that he was on secondment from that institution and sitting in this Parliament as a Member and sitting in the Cabinet. We understand immediately that that is an obvious conflict of interest, and the institution from which he has come has activities in all, almost every area of the economic stratosphere. Therefore, a multiplicity of issues will arise in Cabinet touching and concerning those economic activities, and the Member for St. Joseph, as a Cabinet member, will be required to bring to bear his thoughts on those issues. We raised that.

Let us retrace the developments of that for a moment. In 1999, the said Member was the Chairman of TIDCO, and the CEO of that institution was one Vishnu Ramlogan. A man we hear about a lot. He, at the same time, Vishnu

Ramlogan, was also the chairman of the First Citizens Bank, a state enterprise. I am advised that the Member for St. Joseph had at the time a loan of some \$11 million with the FCB and was not honouring his commitments as he should; and it was an unsecured loan.

I know many of my constituents who want to borrow \$5,000 or \$10,000 to change some galvanize on their houses and they cannot get the loan. The bank officer wants to know everything. To establish a bank account in this country today you have to provide three pieces of identification and all manner of information—to get a bank account. An unsecured loan of some \$11 million. And you know what, Mr. Speaker? He went to the said FCB and he asked for \$3 million more unsecured again and, he was granted that facility again. Bad pay in the first instance, bad pay in the second instance. A total of \$14 million! He must have promised them that when—because he must have known well in advance—that when he goes to the Cabinet, everything will be all right and he will sort his obligations out.

It was in July of 2000 that he was appointed as a Minister of Government by the Member for Couva North—in May of that year. Of course, bad pay. So he approached the bank to write off the loans. What did the bank do? The bank considered it and the document that was laid in the Parliament last night demonstrated that the loan consolidation and writing off of the Member, and passed on to his former boss at CL Financial was to be effected, and the reasons in the bank's documents that were stated was that Mr. Duprey was a very influential man in Trinidad and Tobago and he had given a personal guarantee for Mr. John's unsecured \$14 million debt. Of course, Mr. John is by now a Cabinet Minister and we call him rather loosely, and it turns out now correctly, the “Minister of CLICO Affairs”.

The second reason was that CLICO was a large borrower from the FCB and they had also given a guarantee of Mr. John's debt and, thirdly, that Mr. John was now a Government and Cabinet Minister.

When the Member for Arouca South highlighted this very damaging and discomfoting pattern of facts, the Member for St. Joseph, in an effort to defend himself, is reported in today's *Express*, today's *Guardian* as saying it was a lie and that he was not a Minister at the time of those transactions. How could one of the bank's reasons as stated in the documents be that he was a Minister at the time and he is now telling us he was not? For that lie alone, the Member for St. Joseph should resign! [*Desk thumping*]

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Since his colleagues on the other side, those who have not had the courage to declare their positions publicly like the hon. Attorney General, since they are all aware of those very discomfoting facts, they too should resign. In fact, I want to put it simply. This country will be far better off without the UNC Government.

Mr. Speaker: Let us break now for lunch. The House is suspended until 1.30 p.m..

12.30 p.m.: *Sitting suspended.*

1.32 p.m.: *Sitting resumed.*

Mr. Speaker: Member for Laventille East/Morvant; remember you spoke for 18 minutes.

Mr. F. Hinds: Thank you very kindly hon. Members and Mr. Speaker.

I began this morning by highlighting the fact that we are in a very historic moment in this Parliament today. I will begin my second phase by saying similar things. On July 27, 1990 we had a horrible experience in this Parliament and, of course, it is well known to all of us. I remember looking at the footage from London, where I was studying at the time and I saw the Leader of Government Business on his legs. I saw him take evasive action, and I am told from reports that he was asked, "Where is your leader?" Today, I want to ask my friends on the other side, "Where is your leader?" Where is he? This is the budget debate; important issues are being discussed and the Prime Minister is called upon to answer very serious questions. Where is your leader?

In fact, the Member for Oropouche said that when the parasitic oligarchy tells him, "Come," he cometh, and if they say, "Jump," he asks, "How high?" If they say, "Miami," he asks, "Which flight?" "When?" [*Laughter*] Maybe he is on his way to Miami, who knows.

Before we took the lunch break I made a very colossal error. In my sadness for Trinidad and Tobago, I was suggesting that the country would be far better off without the Government of the UNC. But I choked on my meal when I contemplated that the word that left my mouth was "with". Let me for the record make it quite clear, my sentiments are that this country would be far better off without the presence of the UNC in Government. [*Desk thumping*]

I am hearing the Member for Ortoire/Mayaro. While we are at it, let me give you a warning—yes, the caretaker Member—the honourable court in dealing with a certain matter, described a certain constitutional motion as ill-conceived. I want to warn you and your friend from Pointe-a-Pierre. Those who are now promising to finance that very expensive ill-conceived effort, ask them, at this stage, to

deposit the money in accounts that you can reach, because when you hear the mark break and they leave and go, they will leave you bankrupt. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Speaker: Member, you know that that matter is before the court right now. As an attorney I think you know that you cannot make mention of those matters before the court, particularly where it has to do with the two Members you are referring to. Please refrain from making those statements.

Mr. F. Hinds: I am obliged, Sir, and sincerely so. I was not dealing with the substance of the matter, but I am guided.

I was speaking, before the break, about certain activities at the First Citizens Bank (FCB). In my humble view, the thing goes well beyond the question of the possibility of a conflict of interest and the situation of a Minister using his office for personal benefit or gain; it goes well beyond that.

We saw a situation in this country where a certain airline went bankrupt; it “buss” and then it was funded to the tune of another \$100 million from the same FCB, a state operation. The Chairman of FCB, is the same Vishnu Ramlogan, of whom I spoke earlier, who was the Chief Executive Officer to the Chairman of the Tourism Industrial Development Corporation board at that time in 1999, that I referred to as well, the Member for St. Joseph. So what we are seeing is the possibility of interlocking directorates, as the Member for Couva South pointed out this morning, working in harmony in a well-oiled fashion to deceive the people of Trinidad and Tobago and to deny them their just due and proper share of the national resources.

The Tourism Industrial Development Corporation, a failed enterprise from the reports, spent a tremendous amount of public funds. Tidco became a specialist at paving public roads, rather than looking after industrial development and tourism; people in Tobago suffering as a consequence of that disaster with the airline, of which I just spoke; and somewhere inside of there, the same Vishnu Ramlogan.

When the Prime Minister hinted a few months—he used to say—when you see he and the lion in a fight, feel sorry for the lion. Well, in a debate shortly after that, I pointed out there was a hyena on his side and hyena could beat lion and tiger if it hold on to the legs. I warned him, he did not take heed, but he had indicated that he was thinking about going. I remember making some statements and the name Vishnu Ramlogan came up as a potential successor. So the thing is very, very serious, and people are suffering as a consequence of it.

I remember in this Parliament a motion was filed dealing with the gas station upgrade. The Member for San Fernando East in his response to what was

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supposed to be the Minister of Finance' budget, mentioned this question about the gas station upgrade, where we were supposed to see all NP gas stations refurbished. They were supposed to have cost this country \$7 million each. I remember the Chairman down at NP talking loud and tough; that project too has faltered. A lot of money has been spent; a lot of corrupt deals went into that, too.

When we brought the issue to the Parliament, the Prime Minister, rather than commission a public enquiry and do the right thing, again, he gave comfort, succour and protection to those who were involved. He caused the then Minister of Energy and Energy Industries to investigate the same activities in NP, so again it was a case of himself investigating himself.

I remember the Prime Minister coming to Parliament with a pile of documents, the report. He had it literally here on his desk and refused to lay it in this Parliament or make it public. The Prime Minister protected those who were engaged in small wrongdoing at that time and left them to be big wrongdoers later on, and today we now have the ISS report. [*Desk thumping*]

Out of Petrotrin—we cautioned him about the former Member for Pointe-a-Pierre. We used to call him—what kid we used to call him?—"Sundance kid". We saw the Prime Minister protect, nurture and comfort him, cradled him and then he went on to become the Sundance monster.

We told the Prime Minister about the Member for Caroni East; his failure to properly account to this Parliament about the activities surrounding InnCogen. On top of that, we lost \$400 million and many more dollars to come in the future; T&TEC is in the red and taxpayers and consumers will pay more for electricity because of that. Instead of dealing with that matter and commissioning a public enquiry, the Prime Minister then allowed him to go on with the desalination project. So that the Prime Minister has a lot of questions to answer. Why has he been protecting those people?

When he "ran his mouth" on Ken Gordon and he was taken to court and the judge dealt with him quite according to law and ordered against him, he was made, as he appealed, to make a deposit on cost in the sum of \$400,000. The Prime Minister reported that he paid the \$400,000. Where did he get that money from? Who paid it? Is it the same people who when they tell him to go to Miami he asks: What time? Which flight? Who paid it?

We saw all this happening all the time. We saw the family ties. We saw the relationships between all those friends of the Prime Minister. He rewarded Ken Soodhoo with a job in his office after that. Everybody who is accused of wrongdoing

in this country seems to be getting comfort and protection from the Prime Minister and rewarded with higher office and bigger opportunities to bleed the little people of this country of the things that they deserve. So it is lies upon lies.

On Wednesday, when the Member for San Fernando East presented to this Parliament and the national community, photographs of a certain house in Campden Court somewhere in West London, in Kensington to be precise, and highlighted facts surrounding it, every Minister on the other side—some were on the television—disavowing any knowledge, denying any knowledge of that house saying, “We never heard of it; we never saw it.” But we are aware that there are, at least, two Ministers of Government who hold places right in this Chamber, right in that Cabinet, whose daughters frequented that house and stayed for extended periods. *[Interruption]* I do not have to call names; the country will draw its own conclusions. But the hon. Attorney General assured us this morning.

We could talk about corruption, but the Prime Minister was constantly telling us, “Get the evidence; go to the police,” but what did the Attorney General, who should know, tell us this morning? That it is not for the public to get the evidence; it is not for the Opposition to get it. We do not have access to the books; we do not have access to the computer and the files; it is for the Government to source the evidence and to deal with it. So he was escaping all along, but the time has come. Now, when he and the lion are in the fight, you might want to feel sorry for him, but no sympathy, he has to be found out.

The PNM, from 1956, highlighted the high principle of morality in public affairs. We do not see—*[Interruption]* Mr. Speaker, I want protection from the Member for Nariva. *[Crosstalk]* We recognize that when you come to public service you serve. I want to say very publicly and without apology, I feel absolutely proud of the Member for San Fernando East, insofar as his record on public management and public funds are concerned; none of them could accuse him of being corrupt. *[Desk thumping]*

When he stood here on several occasions and said so, I felt a tremendous amount of pride. When I hear all the horror stories about corruption on that side, my pride is only enhanced. *[Interruption]* That is nonsense! The whole ethic of my colleagues on this side does not lend itself to corruption. I cannot imagine me or any of my colleagues coming to the Member for San Fernando East and talking about any corrupt deal. *[Interruption]* You just keep quiet, your royal shortness from Nariva. Mr. Speaker, I am being disturbed.

Mr. Speaker: Members on the Government Benches, the Member has a right to make his input. He is calling for my protection that he is being disturbed; I am

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appealing to you. By now all Members should know that the Standing Orders require you to remain quiet in your seat when another Member is on his feet making his contribution. I am appealing to you to allow him to make his contribution.

Mr. F. Hinds: Thank you very kindly, Mr. Speaker. We do not see government as an opportunity to make money. Government is not a business to make money in that sense. It is as if they were waiting in the wings, praying and hoping. They went around their constituencies lying to their constituents for 25 years, talking about race: how the PNM are racists; how the PNM do not love Indian people; how the PNM have something against Hindus, the furthest from the truth; how we do not like Indian people. They lied to people.

Take for instance the Member for Nariva, a citizen went to him a few days ago asking about water; he wanted a solution to his water woes. [*Interruption*] I said sit down, please.

Mr. Partap: Let me explain to you.

Mr. F. Hinds: No, I will not give way. Rather than send the constituent to his friend from Caroni East or the Member for St. Joseph, he sent the man with a letter for water to my friend from Port of Spain South. That is wickedness, because he knows that the Member for Port of Spain South has no responsibility whatsoever for that. It was his Government who promised water for all by 2000 and it was his Prime Minister who said that if Caroni East did not deliver, he would be fired. If I go through the line of persons who should be fired on his side, there would be no Government. [*Desk thumping*]

Today we are facing a situation where the Cabinet is split down the middle. According to the Constitution, two officers of the Cabinet form the Cabinet: the Prime Minister and the Attorney General. They are split down the middle. Does Trinidad and Tobago deserve that? I am quite happy, from a political standpoint that that is the way it is, but it is not good for Trinidad and Tobago. Therefore, we hope that it would really be a very short-term situation, while we recognize that the split has come because one side has decided to stand on principle—[*Desk thumping*—to join the PNM in the House of principle and take the position that we have been taking for the longest time.

Mr. Speaker, when the former ambassador of the United States, Edward Shumaker III, was about to leave Trinidad, after the completion of his distinguished tour of duty here, at an annual general meeting of the American Chamber of Commerce on March 9th, 2001, amongst other things, he said

something to the people of Trinidad and Tobago—Government Ministers were in attendance—and I want to quote him:

“To make Trinidad and Tobago a competitive global player, however, more than just open markets are needed. Trinidad and Tobago must adopt transparency procedures. This...means in tendering, bidding, procurement, and accountability.

If the award of contracts and tenders, etc. is not open and fair, the most desirable foreign investors and business partners may not trust the process and may take their business elsewhere. Human nature being what it is, even if a contract is awarded for proper reasons but in secret, losing bidders may assume the worst. In addition, there is a hidden cost to the taxpayers when a government unnecessarily procures or provides goods or services at lower quality and/or higher price.”

1.50 p.m.

Imagine that; very unusual. Ambassadors of foreign countries do not normally venture into the internal affairs of a country, but the honourable man found it necessary, as he was leaving, to chastise the Government for what obviously—after his three-year term, or whatever it was—he saw to be a gaping hole in their conduct, and he put them on notice. But that is of no consequence. The Government continues in its ways.

To make matters worse, whenever we raise these issues, they say we are only talking about corruption, corruption, corruption; they are tired hearing about corruption. The other thing they are very hasty to do is to say that the PNM did nothing for 30 years. I want to refer you to the *Trinidad Guardian* editorial of March 29, 2001, under the rubric: “SEA: Dr. William’s legacy”. The editorial was alluding to the fact of the transition from the Common Entrance Examination to the restructured SEA, and the writer said, and I quote:

“The objective of the SEA is the same; the difference between the two is more of style than of substance in that the approach to the test is not the same.”

He was referring further—the writer; he or she, or they—to the Minister of Finance who had spoken some days before in the Senate. The article continues:

“No wonder in the Senate on Tuesday, Senator Yetming, the Minister of Finance, was scornful of the PNM’s performance in office. The only accomplishment the PNM could speak of, he declared, was the Brian Lara Promenade.

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His party leader, Mr. Panday, would not have fallen into this error. At the opening of the Williams' Collection in 1998, Mr. Panday spoke of Dr. Williams' sterling contribution to the life of the nation and of the late leader's stated concern for national unity in this diverse society."

So that the editorial of that *Trinidad Guardian* newspaper found it necessary to take on the Minister of Finance and to describe his suggestion as rather shortsighted, foolish, petty and amateur, and we wish not to hear any foolishness about the PNM never did anything.

The Minister of Education, in her very disappointing contribution a couple days ago in this debate—because she was unprepared; she just spoke and she gave us another dose of her usual platform rhetoric, uttering the words that I have heard so many times from her and her Prime Minister. That is not the way we expect a Minister of Education who would have been spending millions of dollars of public funds upgrading secondary schools, to account to this Parliament and this country in a budget debate. But her head is hot, because shortly before her contribution I had asked a question in this Parliament about the Ibis High School—model school so-called. I understood that that shed was purchased. The Member for Diego Martin West touched on it in his contribution, and I had thought, wrongly, that they had spent—because it was reported—\$7 million to refurbish the shed that nobody would buy before, and then they purchased the shed for \$11.7 million. So that would total \$16.7 million.

Then recently, under some serious complaints from staff and students, and Cariri had to conduct an investigation down there for pollution; and the place flooding, and no ventilation, and the children discomforted—a failed project—the Government undertook to spend another \$7 million to make the building suitable for transferring information from teachers to students therein.

So on the basis of those figures that I had known about, I assessed the whole cost of that failed project to be \$16 million plus \$7 million; roughly \$23 million. So I asked the Minister right here before her budget contribution, whether she could confirm that the Government had spent in excess of \$23 million on that failed project. She ducked the question, and according to *Hansard*, she said if I filed the appropriate question we will get the answer. Well, it transpired that we got the answer from her own Cabinet notes which one of our Members got in his mailbox.

When I was thinking about \$23 million, I was off target. In fact, it is \$35 million! We could build a new school with that, in a proper place. [*Interruption*]

On their figures, because they have been spending about \$34 million per school in this country. That school does not have recreation grounds, nothing—and \$35 million! But they will be called to account.

I heard that she jumped in the opening of the Under-17 Football League and made a big speech, a song and dance, and she congratulated herself for the achievements of some of our A'level students. I want to ask her now that I am on my legs: What does the Member for Siparia or the Government of the UNC have to do with that? I was asking her to demonstrate to me, rather simply, show this Parliament what did she do as Minister of Education to yield those results? She said wrongfully, however, that those were statistics from the world. In fact, it was Commonwealth students, not the world. So she was wrong in telling this Parliament that the assessment of the students was a worldwide assessment; a minor matter, but she got it terribly wrong.

I will do what we are supposed to and deal with some of the matters surrounding education. I am not here to give any platform talk like the Minister; I am here to deal with serious issues. There are approximately 761 schools across this country, primary and secondary schools. There are about 120 secondary schools at the moment. When you hear a minister of Government get up in this Parliament and say the PNM never did anything—the Member for Siparia said for the four years, 1991—1995, the PNM did not build a single school. That is not true! The PNM constructed 16 primary schools in this country, between 1991 and 1995. [*Desk thumping*] But why would a minister just get up and say that? I remember the story of the scorpion and the crapaud, you know. It is their nature! They cannot help telling untruths. We have built three in Siparia, I am being advised.

So the Member just gets up here, like the Member for Nariva, who got up here and said that he had information that the Member for Diego Martin West—

Mr. Speaker: The speaking time of the 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. F. Hinds: I was saying that there are approximately 760 schools. If the United National Congress, whilst in Government, constructed 10 or 12 secondary schools, where did the others come from? They behave as though, according to the Member for Laventille West, the world stood still before the coming of the UNC. They behave like Columbus. They did not know that this was the West Indies; they thought it was India, but it existed long before they came.

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2.00 p.m.

Something was happening. You benefited from what was happening. The university was there long before you. All the schools that you went to were there long before the coming of the UNC, so I do not want to hear intelligent people speak in that way again. Cut it out!

Mr. Speaker, more than that, what the Minister did not want to tell the country—and what I must put on record here today—is that between 1991 and 1995, the PNM, in a true democratic way, conducted a survey of the education scenario. It resulted in the White Paper on education, a 10-year programme for the development of education from 1993 to the year 2003. That was done between 1991 and 1993. So, before we ventured to rearrange and make fundamental changes to the education system, as we found out was necessary, we conducted a survey of the scenario. It resulted in the White Paper which you said you would accept as policy, and there you met it. You met a track upon which to run. You met the benefit of a tremendous amount of thought and time, as good government should do it.

More than that, Mr. Speaker, before leaving office in November 1995, we still had time, between 1993 and 1995, to negotiate a loan with the World Bank for the construction of four new secondary schools. From that consultative process we recognized that we needed another 23 secondary schools in order to place all the children and to de-shift those secondary schools that are now running a two shift system. The PNM managed, in addition to conducting that important consultative process, to go to the World Bank, negotiated and signed the loan and left this Government with the money to construct four schools. What is their record? To this day only one of those four schools has been constructed, the one in Cunupia. So, when they went around the country telling people who do not know better, that they did this and they did that for education revolution, revolution what? It was the PNM that introduced free secondary education in this country. It was the PNM—

Mr. Partap: For some.

Mr. F. Hinds: Yes, you see? You just bob up and down like a wooden toy; like an animated object. Just be quiet.

It was PNM that introduced universal secondary education. We have evidence of a sitting minister of Government who, in November 1995, before they came to office, wrote a bounced cheque to a grocery for \$560-something worth of goods; for a basket of food. Today, the same minister, as the Attorney General hinted this

morning, can buy the whole supermarket. He could not afford \$560-something worth of food then, today he can buy the supermarket and the owner. So, it demonstrates the point I am about to make, that the country may have been able to afford “X” amount of secondary schools at one point in its history and today it could afford more. When, for example, we had 30,000 children writing the Common Entrance Examination but there were only places in the secondary school system for 22,000 that was the extent that Trinidad and Tobago could have gone and we did not want to write any bounced cheques like you.

Mr. Ramsaran: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, Standing Order 36(5), ministers writing bounced cheques.

Mr. F. Hinds: You all have forgotten how to write bounced cheques now. They cannot bounce again.

Mr. Speaker: On the point of order under Standing Order 36(5), you are suggesting that the Member imputed improper motives to a minister for wilfully and knowingly writing a bounced cheque, I have to override that. First of all, he did not refer to a specific minister and I want to remind Members that this is Parliament and there is a certain amount of freedom of speech which must be exercised here. [*Desk thumping*] Order, please.

I also want to assure those Members as well, who are very quick to thump their desks, that if a specific Member is implicated, or any motive of wrongdoing is imputed against that Member I so rule. On this occasion it is not my interpretation that that has been done, therefore, I am overruling that point of order. Please proceed.

Mr. F. Hinds: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Minister did not tell us that in 1969, 1970, 1971 and beyond there was an explosion in the construction of secondary schools in this country, junior secondary, comprehensive and senior comprehensive schools, all in an effort—as we received more money from oil—to increase the number of places.

She criticized the shift system, but the shift system still exists in this country five years after the UNC came into office. Right now, as she criticizes the double shift system, there are children who still attend double shift schools in this country. What does it say? You must construct more secondary schools to create more places, which is what the government was attempting to do in those years—to create more places for our children. We could have only done it on the basis of the resources of the country at the time and so secondary schools were constructed around this country. In some parts of South America there are three-

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shift school systems. That was recommended to us when we did it. We opted for two. Had it not been for the shift system many of our children would not have gone to secondary schools at all.

Dr. Nanan: Mr. Speaker, we heard from the Member for Laventille West who said that her daughter passed for Belmont Junior Secondary School and she did not want to send her because of the shift system you are speaking about.

Mr. F. Hinds: Mr. Speaker, I really do not think the Member for Tabaquite deserves a response.

Mr. Speaker: Please proceed, Member.

Mr. F. Hinds: I do not want to take my time to go through that, but I suffice it to say that all the schools you met when you came into office in 1991 were not constructed by the United National Congress. Somebody else put them up. *[Interruption]* No, I am not giving way to you.

Beyond that, Mr. Speaker, I want to say that in 1984 the allocation for education in the then budget was \$1.9 billion. That was the highest this country ever got to. In 1989, during the restructuring and adjustment years when we were encumbered by responsibilities to the world institutions, the budget went as low as \$.78 billion for education. Again, I am making the point that it all has to do with what the country can afford. You have no concern for what the country could afford. You have concern for only one thing; what opportunities you could have to get your hands on the Treasury. That is the point.

Mr. Speaker, the White Paper that I spoke about represented hope, development and progress. This Government has derailed it. I challenged the Minister several times. I have a copy of the White Paper and I have studied it closely for the last five years. Bar the Dollar for Dollar Programme, and bar the model school, there is not one single thing that this Government has purportedly done for education that was not a recommendation of this consultative process. Not one! It is this that recommended 23 new secondary schools. It is this that recommended training for principals. It is this that recommended school boards. Every single thing. The only two ideas that came from the UNC in Government was the model school, which I have properly described as a failed project, not only in terms of the physical building, but also in terms of the concept. I have pointed out time and time again that we were moving away from a situation of labelling children as model school children and putting them as a crew apart.

2.10 p.m.

The idea in modern education is to incorporate them; bring them into the main stream even if they are slow learners and, with improved learning techniques, they

too will learn. It was not about labelling them in a little institution. They will be forever known as model school children. This year they took no new children into the Ibis High School. I do not know why. Of the 487 students they took last year, only 129 were assessed as ready to move on to true secondary education.

She came to this Parliament, went to the country and spoke untruths to the country and said that she had achieved universal secondary education, when she knew full well that many of those children were going into secondary school buildings, but they were not undertaking secondary school programmes. They were doing remedial work, which was what was happening before in the post primary system. They fool people. *[Interruption]*

They were on the streets? I will tell you something about the streets. I remember, Dr. Hans Gizer of United Nations fame launched a report on a study entitled, *Trinidad and Tobago, National Human Development Report, 2000*. When this document, entitled Youth at Risk, was made public by the United Nations, I heard the Member for Siparia say that this report should be scrapped because it was full of untruths. I heard the Prime Minister say so too.

Why would they have reacted like that? At page 44 of that report, under the heading, Primary Education, Enrolment Ratios and the Dilemma of “Missing Children”, this is what the report had to say. This report came against the backdrop of the same Member for Siparia and the Prime Minister and all of these ill-informed Ministers running up and down the country saying that 30,000 children wrote the exam, only 22,000 children got places, so 8,000 or 10,000 children fell on the dung heap. Those were the Prime Minister’s lines. They were telling the country, the region and the world that 10,000 children per year for the last 10 years were falling on the dung heap. Those were their words.

The report said, and I am quoting from page 44:

“In spite of the widespread nature of the public primary schools, these gross figures leave at least 13,800 children or 7% of the 5 to 11 age cohort out of the school system (public and private) and unaccounted for. The number therefore represents children who have never been to school—‘missing children’ from the formal system and possibly, in time, from the country’s formal social system as well.”

[Interruption]

When they heard these words—it is their public utterances that in part informed this—and when the chickens came home to roost, they said that this should be withdrawn and rejected. I have always pointed that out to the national

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community so those who have eyes would see and those who have ears would hear. I have time and time again told the national community that the figure of 10,000 came out of the head of some convoluted thinker—unreal, some drunken sailor, Bay Rum infected.

Talking about that, the Minister of Finance came close to being dismissed from office. He raised the price of alcohol. If he had only touched Bay Rum! [Interruption] Mr. Speaker, I am a sober and clean brother. I can tell him that, but now is not the time for private discussions. We deal with morality in public affairs. Your private life, you can keep that. When public money is being spent and public accountability is being demanded, it is there that we talk. So, you stay right there.

Mr. Speaker, from time to time I have pointed out that this 10,000 figure is a lie. I pointed that out to the Minister from her own Ministry's statistics—and this is a typical year—this was for 1998—1999. Of all the children who wrote the exam 66 per cent went into state secondary or state assisted schools; 15 per cent went into the post primary system. They did not meet the required standard for the transition to secondary school, so they stayed in the post primary system, did remedial work and then moved on. Ten per cent repeated the exam and 3 per cent went to the private secondary schools across the country—the Corpus Christi School, St. Martin Girls' High and so on. That totals 94 per cent, leaving 6 per cent. Six per cent of 30,000 is not 10,000. These were children who, it was quite clear from their performance, they would have been unable to access secondary level education, making below 30 per cent of the required mark of the exam. [Interruption]

I do not know, but we had trade centres; we had all the institutions around to deal with them and to send them into the areas that they needed. You see, this Government did not want that. This Government wanted to tell lies to the country and embarked upon a project so to do. They did it. They abolished the Common Entrance Examination. That was one of their boasts—that they abolished the Common Entrance Examination.

I pointed out to you many times and I will do it again. The examination got the name Common Entrance Examination in 1961. Prior to that, you could have written the exam for any secondary school or college to which you wanted to go, so it was not uncommon for a child to write four exams and whichever exam he passed, he would have gone to that school.

When Dr. Eric Williams and the PNM came, they rationalized the entire education system and established a common exam for all the children of the

country to write and so it got the name Common Entrance Exam. Today the Secondary Entrance Assessment is still an exam that all the children write for transition to secondary school and in that sense it is still common. All that has happened is that it has been restructured because the same Common Entrance Examination was restructured time and time again as the learned folk in the business of education understood the need to restructure it.

For example, there was a time, in 1961, that there was no multiple choice component, there was no science and social studies component and there was no essay writing. It was about verbal ability. So, the exam has time and time again been restructured. What has happened and again it is the White Paper on Education that recommended a restructuring of the exam. So, nothing new has come from you.

We have heard again in this debate this dollar for dollar talk. They went on the campaign trail and they told the country that if they put a dollar, the Government would put a dollar. What do the figures show? The figures show that tuition represents only about 30 per cent of the cost of education for the year. There is board and lodging, transportation, meals, books and miscellaneous expenses. At the end of the day when we look at a typical student's annual study programme, we realize that what they are really getting is not dollar for dollar because they are only giving 50 per cent of a small component of all the expenses, which is tuition. They are getting about 20 cents. The programme should be renamed "you put a dollar, I put 15 cents".

That is the reality of it. More than that, in this very expensive and glossy manifesto—when I saw it during the campaign I said, "Boy look public money, eh boy!" I followed the Member for St. Joseph on the Sunday before election. Everywhere he went, I went behind him with my crew removing the mask of the UNC and telling them what a bunch of dishonest people was asking for their support. If you had seen gloss and paraphernalia he was handing out. Fellows showed me cellular phones and sneakers, crisp blue notes. That is no joke. That is not fun. I am not lying. I saw that. I followed him around the Sunday. I saw this glossy magazine, but, you know something, they could easily have afforded it because it is taxpayers' money turn round cut their skin or, possibly, insurance policyholders. We will come to that.

As was already pointed out, they promised for both at home and abroad. Now they are telling people that it is only local and regional students that could get it. More than that, I was trying to find my advertisement, there was a full-page advertisement every day in the newspaper—*Newsday, Express, Guardian*. The

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Wire escaped because they have now come. They told the people tuition and books. They are dishonest and there are too many gullible people in our society. They need to be insulated with the power of the Almighty Father like me, so that when you come with your hideousness, I recognize it at a glance and set for you. You cannot fool me. There are too many gullible people in this country and this is what we end up with. This country has paid and will continue to pay a serious price for bringing the United National Congress to government.

Look at the clipping I was talking about earlier: “Dr. Moonilal: ‘I am no loser. I am a winner.’” Winner, what?

This is the ad I was talking about.

“It’s called ‘Dollar for Dollar’

What’s that?

Let’s say your child’s tuition and books at University or Technical College cost \$10,000, and you are willing to make up half, the UNC government will pay the other half.”

It is as clear as that. [*Interruption*] Lies! And they take people’s money to do that. Mr. Speaker, it is available if you wish to see it.

Telling untruth has come quite naturally as the scorpion’s sting. This morning a man told me a joke. A frog wanted to cross a stream, and a scorpion, too. The scorpion could not swim too well so he asked the frog for a lift. The frog said, no, if I put you on my back partner, you will sting me.” The scorpion said, “No, I will never do that. If I did that, both of us will die.” The frog was taken in by it and said, “Let’s go!” When they reached mid-stream the scorpion rested it on him. As he started to sink, he said, “I thought you told me you would not do that.” The scorpion said, “I could not help it, it is my nature.”

Lying has come naturally.

In the middle of the campaign, Shawn Douglas, the journalist, *Express*, the Prime Minister of the country, 75 new buses in January, after the election you know. The only bus we have now is the “buss” up: they “bussing” the country up and about 75 old yellow buses.

When the Prime Minister went to India he bought a second-hand cane-crushing machine from Dhanpur so he came back here grinning with it after we spent money on his passage and the passage of all the entourage—not the oligarchy that time. He came back grinning telling us that he met Sai-Baba. That

is when I told him he could not have met such an honourable man. [*Words Expunged*]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, I think you know that that is improper. Strike that off the record.

Mr. F. Hinds: When he came back here with his dysfunctional cane crushing machine from Dhanpur, some firm called Midland Red in England, seeing Trinidad and Tobago and seeing how the leaders of our country are so misguided and dotish, they did not wait for the Government to approach them with some second-hand old buses.

2.25 p.m.

They approached the Government of Trinidad and Tobago—the hon. Member for San Fernando West—and palmed off 75, 12-year-old buses! The regulations of this country say that I cannot import a vehicle more than five years old. This Government broke the law and brought 12-year-old yellow buses—rural transport, up and down the road. Where are those buses today? Mr. Speaker, he still has the gumption, the temerity, to go and tell the people in the election campaign: “75 new buses by January.” Where are these buses? “But yuh all are like de scorpion! It is your nature! Yuh cyar help it.” And as for malice, they are well known for malice too—malice aforethought.

Mr. Speaker, as I wind to my conclusion, they talk a lot about performance, performance beats “ol’ talk” anytime. Nothing I have said here this afternoon is “ol’ talk”, everything is demonstrable as fact! Everything! Everything that we have said on this side so far can stand scrutiny, from the house in Kensington to the US \$50,000 cheque; all of that can stand scrutiny! You all are just creating opportunities for people to rip-off.

I cannot conclude without saying something about the Election and Boundaries Commission. Mr. Speaker, I want to say—and I mean this from the bottom of my soul. I believe—and it is yet to be proved—that persons tampered with the electoral process in this country. [*Desk thumping*] [*Interruption*] We are not the Government and we cannot institute a commission of enquiry! This is why we demand that the spokespeople for the EBC be very guarded in their comments!

I have a copy of a so-called, Field Operations report. This came out of the office of the Party Administrative Support Unit (PASU), the UNC’s strategy office

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during the last campaign—the voter-padding crew. In here, there are some very interesting details. The Member for Caroni East, in the minutes—I have it here, you know, and I am prepared to lay it on the table. *[Interruption]*

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, you have two more minutes.

Mr. F. Hinds: Okay. Mr. Speaker, you will remember that the EBC told this country that 53 people were to be charged for voter padding. It was the EBC that told the country and the PNM that, and sent their names to the police! It was not the PNM! It was the EBC! It means that they must have known that there were persons illegally transferred. *[Interruption]* If you want to believe that each of those 53 people acted independently and separately of each other, you could believe that! I believe they acted in concert! It was part of a conspiracy! *[Desk thumping]* I saw a couple more persons were charged this week.

Mr. Speaker, the persons who decided to tamper with our electoral system, set Trinidad and Tobago on a path of certain disaster! Tampering with the electoral list and procedure means, dissatisfaction with the results. Dissatisfaction with the result means, non-acceptance of the results! Non-acceptance of the results could quite easily lead to social upheaval! Those of you who gave birth to the thought and put it into play—those persons in that PASU office, let me tell you—Susan Seepersad, the sister of Caroline Seepersad-Bachan; who chairs the NP board; Steve Ferguson, Fazal Karim; the man they had in charge of the Self-Help operations; a big man in the UNC, Rodney Charles; their chief spokesman whom they have now put in charge of the South—they sat in air-conditioned rooms with computers and they perpetrated serious mischief in this country. It is a crime! It eats at the heart of our democratic tradition. Mr. Speaker, the one thing that the UNC will be known for, in the history of this country, is setting our country on a path of disaster, encouraging the likelihood of violence in elections because of the dissatisfaction that would have come!

We call on the Attorney General, among his list for commissions of enquiry to do whatever he can to get a commission of enquiry instituted into the EBC. *[Desk thumping]*

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, your time has expired.

Mr. F. Hinds: Mr. Speaker, I just have the last sentence.

Mr. Speaker: All right, I will grant you that.

Mr. F. Hinds: And as for—Mr. Speaker, I am winding up, just in closing.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, you have spoken for your extended time. As a matter of fact, I gave you an additional two minutes.

Mr. F. Hinds: I am most grateful to you, Mr. Speaker. Hon. Members, I am grateful for your attention, and hope that the Government would take heed. I wish to thank you greatly. [*Desk thumping*]

The Minister in the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries (Hon. William Chaitan): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I feel very honoured this afternoon to make my first contribution. [*Interruption*] Last is always the best. I feel very honoured this afternoon to make my first contribution and I hope there will be many more to come.

Mr. Valley: Mr. Speaker, please.

Hon. W. Chaitan: I feel honoured to debate a Bill entitled an Act to provide for the Service of Trinidad and Tobago for the financial year ending on the 30th day of September, 2002.

Mr. Speaker: Are you on a point of order?

Mr. Valley: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. W. Chaitan: Let me finish reading this, please.

Mr. Speaker: No, no, take your seat; the Member is on a point of order.

Mr. Valley: Mr. Speaker, as you know, last night the Leader of the House and myself agreed on a certain speaking order. The Member was supposed to speak last night; I think he came to you. My understanding is that that Member had decided he was not participating in the debate. That was an agreement with the Leader of the House and you, Mr. Speaker. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: Order, please!

Mr. Valley: I find this rather irregular; Mr. Speaker, and I wanted to make the point. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, the fact is that under Standing Order No. 94, there was an agreement, with leave of the Speaker, to a speaking pattern last night. The Member who is currently on his feet indicated he did not want to speak last night. I do not have before me today, the order of speeches. I have not been privileged to receive that from the Leader of Government Business or the Chief Whip. Therefore, if the Member changes his mind, which is what he has a right to do, and if he wants to speak in this honourable House, which he has a right to do,

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and I have no list before me, I have no choice but to allow the Member to make his input. [*Desk thumping*] Please proceed, hon. Member.

Hon. W. Chaitan: Thank, you, Mr. Speaker. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: Order, please! Member for Arouca North, when I ask for order, I am asking for order. Allow the Member to make his contribution. Please proceed, hon. Member.

Hon. W. Chaitan: Thank you, again, Mr. Speaker. As I was saying, Mr. Speaker, our Members on this and the other side said that today was a historic day in the life of the people of Trinidad and Tobago. I feel very honoured to add to that history.

When I saw this document and read it, Budget statement 2000, I congratulate the hon. Minister of Finance and his staff for the great job they have done. [*Desk thumping*] The graphics on this front cover are gears—graphics is a real word—and gears are associated with engines and machines that take people places. Mr. Speaker, this document will take the people of Trinidad and Tobago places in the future. [*Desk thumping*] Only the United National Congress Government will be able to do that.

On page 2 of this document the Finance Minister said.

“...his budget has been guided by the needs and aspirations of people and the theme is ‘One People, One Nation: Leaving No One Behind’. This Government will ensure that every man, woman and child of this nation share in the benefits of the country’s success. In this context, Mr. Speaker, I want to emphasize that this budget is not simply about numbers...this budget is about our future, our people...every citizen in Trinidad and Tobago, whether UNC, PNM or politically unaligned.”

I will like to add to this debate today under these terms of reference. I also want to cite a document prepared by PricewaterhouseCoopers on the 2002 budget memorandum. I read from page 35 in which this document accounted for comments of people on the street. One of the comments read was:

“Reduction in Corporation Tax and Income Tax miniscule though welcoming. Happy to know that the economy is performing well. He really tried to address the social welfare of the country.”

This was said by a business professional. These are the people who contribute a lot to the economy of this country. They are pretty happy with this budget. Further down on that page it also says and I quote:

“A budget that appears to be steering Trinidad and Tobago to becoming a more developed nation and fast tracking the country.”

This is a statement from a small businessman. Mr. Speaker, small business also add to the economy of this country. They are the driving force behind this nation. Further down on the same page, Mr. Speaker, another comment, and I quote:

“I do not believe that old people should have to pay tax therefore, I was impressed with the reduction of taxes for them and the fact that they are now allowed to travel on all buses ‘free’.”

This was a comment made by a senior citizen.

Mr. Speaker, the United National Congress Government is looking after old people who have paid their dues to the nation. On page 36, another comment which says:

“How could he increase taxes on alcohol, cigarettes and gambling? Is he trying to do the work of parents? I think that he should let adults be adults and let parents take care of their children.”

This is from a man in Bobby’s Bar. Mr. Speaker, there are all kinds of people in our nation and we have made an impact on the people of this nation. Again, I want to congratulate the Minister of Finance for a great job, and I look forward to the Ministry of Finance and this Government to deliver to all the people of our nation.

Mr. Speaker, this is my ninth month in this Government and in this Parliament and I have learnt a few things that I would like to share, some are good and some are bad. Since I took office after I was appointed by the President, this Government is stymied by talk of corruption, and the election of myself and my colleague, the Member for Ortoire/Mayaro. We have been bombarded! We have been attacked! We have been called names in public and in private. Today, and in the last few months, we have been insulted many times over and in different ways. We have not had a chance to govern this country. I am asking Members of Parliament to look at yourselves, see if we are doing the functions and the job of the people who have elected us.

I came forward to serve the people of Pointe-a-Pierre—I have been doing an excellent job right so far—and the rest of the nation and the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries. I feel very hurt because the majority of talk in our nation is corruption. Corruption, I associate, with filth and mud and we are going to be overwhelmed with corruption. We must rise above that and, again, seek out the

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business of the people of Trinidad and Tobago. My talk later on would focus on what the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries, which is the driving sector of our economy, will do for our people in Trinidad and Tobago.

2.40 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, it will be remiss of me not to cite another reference from *Hansard* by the Minister—sorry—by the Member for San Fernando East, and this is what I read here.

“May I remind the national community that the general elections held on December 11, 2000 are not yet complete. The process would be completed only when all the election petitions are finally determined. These petitions are listed for October 1, 2001. This Government is aware that it is merely a caretaker government, an interim government, if you prefer. The Government’s strategy is most transparent. They are desirous of forcing an election before the final determination of the elections petitions in the hope that the padded voters list would guarantee their victory.”

He went on to talk about, later on in his contribution, “a former member of the board of Petrotrin, now a Member of Parliament for the time being”. Mr. Speaker, when he says “a Member for the time being”, it means that he is telling me that he has information that my time is limited here. [*Interruption*] Throughout time, the Member for San Fernando East has been predicting very accurately the outcome of the court matters and I am saying, should I not be successful with this petition, he may have access to information that none of us is privileged to. Mr. Speaker, if this is a fair and just society, would that be considered corruption? [*Desk thumping*]

Many Members of this House speak of corruption. Corruption has so many dimensions. I do not know where to stop in determining what corruption is. I have gathered in this debate that the minute there are some expenses, some expenditure or some project, corruption is associated with those activities. That is not a good feeling for any government and for the people of Trinidad and Tobago. I have purchased a new car, which was delivered on Tuesday, and, the minute I received it, people have associated corruption with that vehicle. Mr. Speaker, I am not in corruption but I welcome any investigation into corruption. It is in our culture to believe that, whenever there is any prosperity, corruption goes with it. We must eradicate that from our vocabulary and our minds.

I will now go into some of the substance presented or prepared by our ministry. I wish to introduce my comments in this honourable House this afternoon by expressing my gratitude to the hon. Finance Minister for the

excellent work he has done, which was clearly reflected in this budget statement. I say this not only because I support some—sorry—that I support the same objectives for Trinidad and Tobago, but in recognition of the many pressures that were impinging upon the Minister of Finance in the process of preparing his budget presentation. In my view, it was a job well done and I wish to congratulate him for an excellent presentation, which lay the groundwork for the achievement of this Government's objectives in the next fiscal year.

Mr. Speaker, in my remarks today I wish to focus on some of the more operational aspects of the energy sector in Trinidad and Tobago. As most present would be aware, the Trinidad and Tobago energy sector is experiencing a high and sustained level of activity both in its roots and in the adoption of sustainable macropolicies by the previous incumbent. That the sector is so vibrant is a true testament to the clarity and holistic nature of this Government's goal for this very important sector of the economy. The performance of the energy sector is germane to the achievement of the vision for Trinidad and Tobago, as stated by the Minister of Finance in his budget speech. As he reiterated, the energy sector continues to be the main engine of growth and a significant contributor to the generation of wealth. It therefore behooves the Government to ensure that the sector performs competitively in the global arena in order to sustain growth for the benefit of future generations.

In this regard, the level of competitive advantage achieved by the energy sector of this country has been receiving the attention of the world during the recent past. Many international energy publications have been singing the praises of how well the Government has managed the energy sector. Over the past few years, almost every major international energy event has seen Trinidad and Tobago receiving special attention and well deserved acclaim from international energy experts across the entire spectrum of energy activities, whether it is about production sharing contracts in the upstream sphere or LNG in the downstream end of business.

Mr. Speaker, this elevated status in the world of energy has been earned through the design of an effective policy framework and meticulous implementation of the specific policy measures. It is appropriate and relevant at this time for me to acknowledge the hard work and commitment of the staff of the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries, who have often performed beyond the call of duty. I want to congratulate them. If the energy sector has performed well, it is in no small measure due to the resoluteness of the performance provided by the Ministry's staff.

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I want to go back and cite the *Hansard* of the Member for San Fernando East where he says:

“In the fiscal year, 1993, the structure of the supplemental petroleum tax was revised to include tax credits for well workovers with a view to stimulating oil production and arrest the downward trend in that production. The incentive worked, such that crude oil production, which reached a low of 44.6 million barrels in 1994, rebounded to 48.1 million barrels in 1995. The absence of further fiscal stimulus, coupled with the corruption surrounding the Soldado West Field, have resulted in annual declines in oil production since 1996, to an estimated 41 million barrels in the year 2001. This trend is expected to continue in the year 2002.

So crude oil production is down.”

Mr. Speaker, I want to tell this honourable House that incentives and corruption do not add oil production. What adds oil production is drilling and exploration and I want to speak now on some of the exploration ventures our country has been undertaking.

As Trinidad and Tobago crude oil production fields onshore and offshore become more mature, it is a reality that production levels will eventually decline. However, the rate of decline has been limited to some extent by new production due to drilling and remedial well work. As a result, oil production has been declining gradually in the recent past with crude oil production from January to the end of August 2001 averaging 111,300 barrels per day. It is noteworthy to point out that oil production from Petrotrin acreage, inclusive of Trinmar, joint venture activities, lease operatorships and farmouts now contribute over 58,000 barrels per day. That is more than 15 per cent of the country's crude oil production.

In the East Coast marine area, decline in oil production has been partially stemmed by increases in crude oil and harnessing production from newly developed gas fields such as Amherstia and Mahogany. I wish to point out that amongst the strategies implemented to restrict declining oil production, the continuation and expansion of the lease operatorships and farmout programmes has also afforded local entrepreneurs the opportunity to participate directly in the oil and gas business and to contribute to the generation and distribution of wealth. Mr. Speaker, the natural resources of Trinidad and Tobago also belong to our small business people and entrepreneurs.

Thirteen production sharing contracts (PSCs) were signed over the period of 1995—1998. The work that was done on the PSCs added to the country's

hydrocarbon reserves. During 2000, a total of five exploratory wells were drilled in the PSC acreages. One was drilled in Block 2C by BHP—the Aripo well Number I; one by Exxon—the Adelpha I well in Block 25; and three wells by Enron Oil and Gas Limited, (EOGT) Limited—the Tanager I, the Motmot and the Osprey. Continuing in 2001, an additional three wells were drilled; two by BHP—the Spitfire I and Kairi I in Block 2C. The third well, Dynamine I, drilled by Exxon, was in Block 26.

It is significant to note that Shell and Exxon drilled in the deepwater blocks where water depths averaged 3,000 to 3,500 feet using the Jack Ryan Drillship, the first of its kind being used in our local petroleum industry. Mr. Speaker, of the three wells that were drilled in 2001, the Kairi well in Block 2C drilled by BHP was successful in finding oil. At present, field appraisal is in progress. Preliminary evaluation of reserves from this discovery is estimated to be 157 million barrels of new oil.

Mr. Speaker, let me tell you a little about our forecast. It is expected that more exploratory work will be done in the PSC blocks. Nineteen exploratory wells are expected to be drilled within the last quarter of 2001 and the first quarter of 2002. A breakdown of number of wells and companies drilling them is as follows: BHP will drill five wells, BP will drill one well; Exxon two wells; Shell, two wells; and British Gas, nine wells. Also, development plans are in place for British Gas, based on Starfish I and Dolphin Deep I discoveries. EOG Trinidad and Tobago is also hoping to get its platform online during this year so that it would be in a position to deliver gas by 2002.

In respect of Petrotrin, its lease operator and farmout programme has continued to show its worth in bolstering the company's production. There are 17 lease operator companies operating in 25 blocks and six farmout companies operating in nine blocks. Together, these companies have contributed 11 million barrels of new oil from the inception to date. A total of 187 wells have been drilled with total footage to date of 361,000 feet. The number of ministry-approved workovers performed to date is 274. These companies have over 400 permanent employees and the direct employment generated due to spin-off activities is more than 300 persons employed. These companies achieved a production of 4,700 barrels a day of oil during the year 2000. This production last year was the result of an expenditure of TT \$14 million. The lease operators and farmout production for January—August 2001 averaged 4,678 barrels of oil per day.

Mr. Speaker, the joint venture programmes, which have been one of the successes of Petrotrin, continue to be an area of growth for production investment.

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The following areas are those in which Petrotrin is engaged in joint venture projects: Brighton Marine, Moruga West, South West Peninsula, Point Ligoure, East Brighton and the Central and Eastern Blocks. To date, three of these blocks have already had successful exploration programmes. Two have been oil discoveries in offshore areas and one has been the gas discovery on land in the Central Block. Joint venture companies have contributed an average of 2,000 barrels of oil per day during the period January—August 2001. They have over 100 permanent employees. Both employment and production levels are expected to increase as discoveries move to the development stage.

The use of new technology in Trinidad is also another achievement of the joint venture agreements. The joint venture agreement for Parrylands Block E between New Horizon Exploration, Incorporation of Dallas, Texas and Petrotrin employs the use of an enhanced oil recovery process referred to as a “SIX PAC”. It uses a combination of directional drilling, steam generation, artificial lift and sand control. The production from this project is expected to exceed 1,000 barrels per day within the next three years. In this project, drilling activities commenced in July 2001 and 10 wells were drilled to date.

Mr. Speaker, let me talk a little about Trinmar. During the last financial year, Petrotrin acquired the additional one-third share of Trinmar. Trinmar is now a strategic business unit (SBU) of Petrotrin and the unit has been focused on an aggressive workover and drilling programme which has already resulted in a 10 per cent increase in production during the first half of this year. These efforts will continue so that the Trinmar SBU can continue to add greater value to the merged company. I would also like to add that Cabinet has agreed that Trinmar and Petrotrin find a joint venture partner to team up with an aggressive exploration and development programme in all of Trinmar. This will include 3D seismic and aggressive exploration drilling to increase production.

Mr. Speaker, what I wanted to add here to the—or what I want to explain to the Member for San Fernando East is, it takes aggressive drilling, exploration and technology to increase production, and not only fiscal incentives. I am also—
[*Interruption*]

Mr. Manning: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. Member for Pointe-a-Pierre for giving way. I wonder if the hon. Member will agree that, in the first instance, people are in the oil business not to produce oil but to make money and, therefore, any aggressive drilling programme or aggressive activity of which he speaks—and he is quite correct in that regard—must begin with the appropriate incentives, and therefore, if a proper tax structure is not in place, then none of that will happen.

Mr. Valley: You understand?

3.00 p.m.

Hon. W. Chaitan: I now wish to say a few words to highlight what initiatives the Government has undertaken in respect of the La Brea Industrial Estate, and these are positive comments. Construction of the La Brea Industrial Estate commenced in 1995. The original prospective tenants which were heavy gas-based industries relocated their proposed plants to alternate sites in 1996. The focal points for use of this estate were subsequently shifted to small to medium industries, and the pursuit of alternative areas of business that could be supported by the available infrastructure that had been developed on the estate.

Development works have been carried out on phase one of the estate which encompasses 380 acres out of a total of 1,600 acres. The phase one area is located between the Pitch Lake and the Gulf of Paria. As the Government continues its efforts to encourage further exploration, it is important to note that only 38 per cent of the total marine areas available—Mr. Speaker, forgive me. I have skipped one page. [*Laughter*] This is a correction here.

Mr. Manning: You read page five before you read page four?

Hon. W. Chaitan: Never mind. I would not be a student for too long. [*Desk thumping*] The phase one area is located between the Pitch Lake and the Gulf of Paria. The LABIDCO strategic plan identifies the following areas of business activity which are presently being pursued.

Mr. Breaux: That is what I wanted to hear.

Hon. W. Chaitan: I know that is what you want to hear.

- (1) Leasing of the industrial land. There are currently three tenants on the estate. The first tenant was established in 1998. The total area leased by those two tenants is 25 acres out of the phase one area. The income earned from the lease of land for 2001 stood at \$1,139,302 at the end of August, 2001.
- (2) Bioremediation of petroleum waste. LABIDCO owns an 8-acre facility which is used to treat petroleum waste using bioremediation techniques. This facility was part of the original estate facilities and LABIDCO took the opportunity to offer commercial bioremediation services to third parties beginning in 1998. Two of its key clients are Petrotrin and Trinmar. Net income from bioremediation operations for 2001 stood at \$694,064 at the end of August.

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- (3) Port operations. The Brighton Port is a full-fledged port of entry into Trinidad and Tobago. LABIDCO manages the operations at the Brighton Port and utilizes the construction dock and marshalling yard to service cargo vessels. The income from port operations for 2001 stood at \$1,055,205 at the end of August.

Mr. Speaker, it is thus clear that LABIDCO is beginning to fulfil its new role and is generating reasonable revenues based on the business opportunities available. For the future, it is envisaged that business activity and use of the estate would continue to grow over time. Based on the interest shown by prospective tenants and users, the potential for growth is good.

I would like to also let this House know that there is interest in the fabrication yard for offshore production of steel structures and production plant forms, and so forth, in the works for this area. I am pretty sure that the Member for La Brea would be happy to hear that.

Mr. Speaker, let me touch upon some of the future activities in the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries. A new phase of competitive bidding commenced in April 2001 and was completed on September 3, 2001. The bid round involves seven blocks off the North East, East and South coasts of Trinidad and Tobago in water depths ranging from 75 to 2,000 metres. I am happy to report that we closed bids as projected on September 03, and we received bids on four of these blocks. These are as follows:

Blocks 23(a) and 23(b)	Total Fina Elf/Conoco
Block 3(a)	BHP Billiton/Talisman Energy/BG International/ Total Fina Elf
Lower reverse "L"	EOG Resources.

Mr. Speaker, Blocks 23(a) and 23(b) which are off the North East coast of Tobago is an area where there has not been any commercial discovery as yet. The potential here is mainly for oil finds, but one cannot discount the possibility of major gas strikes as well. It is foreseeable that Tobago would be in a good position to be a supply depot to provide support and ancillary services for exploration work going offshore the island. The Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries is hopeful for the success of exploratory work in these areas, especially as there may arise potential synergies for Tobago-based entrepreneurs. There are opportunities around Tobago and I believe it is time now that Tobago should prosper from the riches that underlie the shores and the waters around Tobago.

Mr. Speaker, I have just outlined some of the things that are taking place in the energy sector which is a very dynamic part of our economy and, I hope that it will continue in a robust manner. I wish to close by saying that I thank the Members on both sides of this House for giving me support during my contribution.

I thank you very much.

The Minister of Finance (Sen. The Hon. Gerald Yetming): Mr. Speaker, I would like to start the close of this debate by thanking all those who have congratulated this Minister of Finance on the budget presentation including Members from the other side. I think that whether the budget was good, bad or indifferent, it was very kind and showed some civility by Members on the other side for giving me their congratulations led, of course, by the Member for Arima. Then we had from the Members for Laventille West, St. Ann's East, Port of Spain North, St. Ann's West and Tobago West.

Mr. Bereaux: Do not leave me out. I congratulated you too!

Sen. The Hon. G. Yetming: And La Brea, Mr. Speaker. I never really expected anyone opposite to have anything good to say about the budget, and where the leadership of the Opposition is concerned, they did not disappoint.

May I begin by talking about the events of September 11, 2001. I think there is a suggestion that after the events of September 11, some of those developments would have been factored into the budget statement. This thing took place last week Tuesday, Mr. Speaker. Wednesday I think the country was still in shock and, while we recognized in my opening statement the development, it was impossible at that stage to have done anything about the budget statement or about the numbers to present to this House.

The recent terror attacks on the United States will have significant economic, political, and security repercussions for countries around the globe. While at that time it was much too early to make any assessment of the potential impact of these events on the world economy, on our own domestic economy, developments over the last week clearly indicate that there is going to be immense fallout, the magnitude of which can only be determined with time. Indeed, uncertainty surrounds the nature of the US response and the nature of the counter attacks by the perpetrators, making any attempt at estimating the potential impact of these events an extremely difficult one.

Mr. Speaker, following on the attacks, immediate effects were felt by the international airlines stung by tighter security measures and nervous travellers

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catching flights. Over the last week, we have also seen significant plunges in world financial markets, notwithstanding interest rate cuts by the US Federal Reserve and major Central Banks across the world.

In the face of risk and consumer uncertainty about the future outlook, there can be little doubt that the impact of these disruptions would be felt throughout the United States economy and beyond, by way of sizable job losses and lower economic activity across several industries. There is even concern that the economic slowdown evident in the United States economy over the last year may well be transformed into a recession. This notwithstanding, there is a strong view that the United States economy is resilient enough to survive the short-term impact on this, the worst terrorist attack in history. Balancing the gloomy scenario is a prospect of various relief and stimulus measures aimed at assisting the country in its effort to rebuild its economy.

Mr. Speaker, in the interim, we recognize that events in the global economy have a clear potential for dampening the short-term outlook for economic growth in Trinidad and Tobago. Given our strong trade links with the United States, a slowdown in the rate of economic expansion in the months ahead seems inevitable. Trinidad and Tobago, as an export-driven economy, dependent on international sales of its hydrocarbon resources is sensitive to world economic conditions. The economy has been growing strongly and is projected to expand at about 5 per cent in 2001 and 2002. This outlook needs to be reassessed in the light of recent developments in the world economy.

Mr. Speaker, the outlook for the domestic energy sector is not seriously affected by recent events. Most of the output of the energy sector is sold on contract. In addition, as a relatively low cost producer, Trinidad and Tobago is better placed than its competitors to withstand downward fluctuations in prices of energy-based export products. In the case of oil, the likelihood and direction of any price changes are unclear.

On the one hand, the declining world economy could act to depress prices, but world oil supplies are now relatively tight and this should help to offset downward pressure. On the other hand, an outbreak of hostilities could lead to a spike in oil prices, but OPEC has committed itself to oil price stability under such a scenario.

On balance, therefore, it appears unlikely that there will be significant changes in oil prices from their current levels. This means that there is little danger to the budgeted oil price of US \$22 per barrel. Thus, natural gas prices are expected to

increase only marginally over the next two to three years. In the case of natural gas liquids, since these are substitutes for crude oil refinery products, they are expected to follow the market for crude oil closely. Prices of these products are thus expected to increase very marginally over the same period.

With respect to the tourism sector, the current difficulties faced by the airline industry in the United States can pose further problems, especially in light of the recent pullout of several major airlines from the Tobago route. However, tourism is a relatively small contributor to domestic output.

In the case of non-oil exports, global recession could impact significantly on Trinidad and Tobago by way of a reduction in exports to Caricom. Regional economies, particularly those based on tourism, are especially vulnerable to global economic trends. About 25 per cent of Trinidad and Tobago's exports are sold to the Caricom region. Of this amount, approximately 60 per cent represent the non-oil sector. There is, therefore, some level of risk for Trinidad and Tobago from this source. Overall, the adjusted outlook for the Trinidad and Tobago economy seemed slightly threatening in the wake of the events of September 11 and, given the potential global slowdown. Consequently, the 2001—2002 budget fundamentals now appear to be in slight jeopardy.

Mr. Speaker, I will continue to be watchful of events as they unfold and will do all that is necessary to minimize the fallout to our economy from the shock of September 11. This will include the maintenance of prudent budgetary management so as to keep expenditure in line with revenue. By virtue of the Exchequer and Audit Act, the Minister of Finance is empowered to limit or suspend any expenditure if, in his opinion, exigencies of the financial situation require such action. I will endeavour to do so if this becomes necessary.

Mr. Speaker, we can take comfort in the fact though that our economy is on a relatively sound economic footing. Over the last five years we have made tremendous strides in diversifying our economy away from its traditional dependence on specific commodities. While there is a real possibility of a short-term decrease in foreign investment to various sectors, such investment to our petroleum and natural gas sectors is unlikely to be greatly affected. On balance, the medium to long-term prospect for growth certainly remains cautiously promising.

At this point, Mr. Speaker, I just want to touch on the question of allocations, because two Members on this side of the House made reference to the low allocation of funds to their respective areas.

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3.20 p.m.

I just want to say, Mr. Speaker, that this Minister of Finance, as with every other Minister of Finance, will always have difficulty in allocating the financial resources among those competing for them. In the case of the Public Sector Investment Programme (PSIP), I had requests for about \$6.5 billion of funding. The PSIP for this year is \$981 million.

There is not sufficient investment in the development of our infrastructure. I attempted to have that \$981 million increased and the first figure that we were able to come up with was \$1.24 billion, which would have meant an increase in excess of 20 per cent. I subsequently had that figure increased to \$1.34 billion to cater for another \$100 million I requested to provide in some specific areas for the diversification of the economy. What that meant was that the PSIP had to be fixed on the basis of requests for \$6.5 billion to the \$1.34 billion. I think everybody in this House would recognize that that would have been an extremely difficult exercise.

In the case of the recurrent expenditure, we had to cut up to about \$10 billion of recurrent expenditure from the requests coming in from the various ministries and that too was an extremely difficult task; but as we would normally do at mid-year, we would reassess our projects, our expenditure and our income flows and make whatever adjustments are required to accommodate the ministries that require the funding the most.

In the case of agriculture, last year I think the Minister of Food Production and Marine Resources in his contribution made reference to the fact that his allocation for access roads was only \$5 million for this year. As a signal of the Government's intention to place considerably more focus on agriculture, his allocation for access roads and water management out of the additional \$100 million that I was able to find for increasing the PSIP, \$25 million of it went to food production. Clearly, the intention is that the areas of the economy in which the diversification is expected and planned to take place will have to be given substantial increases in its funding.

In the case of education, we have spent, over the past couple of years, substantial moneys on education. The Minister of Education has emphasized that the thrust from this day forth would be on tightening the management and on the matters that deal with equality education. What that would mean is that the resources that we have been putting into education would, therefore, not have to be to the extent that they have been for the past couple of years; and the areas which will receive additional focus would clearly be agriculture and, in my view, national security.

In response to the submissions made from the other side, if I could begin with the response by the Member for San Fernando East. I do not know why it is that every time this Member gets up, as a leader of a political party, he has to talk about Meiling and about Westmoorings where I live. [*Laughter*] I would not have expected that from the Leader of the Opposition. I do not know what he has against talented designers who are now trying to find a fashion place in the world for Trinidad and Tobago, but continues to come to the House to ridicule the people. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker: Order please!

Sen. The Hon. G. Yetming: In fact, he spoke publicly about the fact that his 20-year plan was stolen by this party and embodied in this budget.

Mr. Manning: I never said that.

Sen. The Hon. G. Yetming: But when the team of private sector people, the unions, the Inter-Religious Organization and other non-governmental organizations went for a three-day session to develop a strategic direction for Trinidad and Tobago, what was outlined in the budget came from that three-day session in Tobago. I am not aware that anybody ever took the time to read that 20-year vision that the Leader of the Opposition spoke about.

Mr. Speaker, he also spoke about the debt service being 59 per cent of revenue. I would just quote the actual numbers for the record. The Central Government debt service for fiscal 2001 is estimated at \$5.3 billion, while recurrent revenues are estimated at \$14.029 billion for a debt service ratio of 38 per cent. For fiscal 2002, the debt service is projected at \$4.2 billion, while recurrent revenue is projected at \$15.122 billion, for a debt service ratio of 28 per cent.

Mr. Manning: I thank the hon. Minister of Finance for giving way. I just wondered if those figures include any explosion we might have, in terms of contingent liabilities, that is, government-guaranteed debt of state enterprises.

Hon. Member: It does not include everything.

Sen. The Hon. G. Yetming: Mr. Speaker, when we speak of the debt stock at 60 per cent of GDP and debt service, we speak about the debt stock and debt service of the entire government sector.

Mr. Valley: Mr. Speaker, I would ask the Minister of Finance to check again on that statement he has just made, because that is obviously not correct.

Sen. The Hon. G. Yetming: I have not sat.

Mr. Valley: That is not correct.

Mr. Speaker: Member for Diego Martin Central. [*Crosstalk*]

Sen. The Hon. G. Yetming: The debt service ratio for the year 2002 is now 28 per cent of revenue versus 38 per cent for 2001.

Mr. Speaker, the Member for San Fernando East is a master at deception. He attempts to light fires and hope they catch. He named a number of projects which he called his top 10—which he claimed he named last year—and he named another top 10 for this year. He did so to suggest or imply that there is corruption in every single one of them.

What the Member is refusing to accept, whether it be for the Dollar for Dollar programme or the four stadia, is that there is no way he could attack those projects, because they benefit the country. Instead he tries to give the impression that there is corruption underlying each one of them.

Furthermore, he raises the question really with the only intention of planting in the minds of the people that I could have been involved in some matter involving RGM. I just want to place on the record what the Member for San Fernando East is attempting to do, which is to try to tarnish my character and integrity and, in so doing, mislead the House and the population.

He attempted that when the report of the Attorney General for the NWRHA was laid. The Member went publicly to say that this Minister of Finance tabled doctored reports—the Auditor General's Report. He went to fool the population. [*Interruption*] I think that the day for that will soon come.

In the case of the RGM matter and the conference centre, I will just give you the sequencing of the events of that. UDeCOTT, in consultation with the Ministry of Planning and Development, agreed to a feasibility study for the international conference complex and that decision took place in September of 1996.

Other RFP inviting was done through public advertisements and 12 firms submitted proposals to UDeCOTT and were evaluated by UDeCOTT's tender committee. Of the 12 firms, RGM was ranked the top proposer. The feasibility study agreement was signed on January 23, 1997, long before I came into this Government. The RGM team included Design Collaborative, who are architects, ENCO Engineers, PricewaterhouseCoopers, CM Fojo and so on.

The feasibility study report was completed in August of 1997. The Cabinet report on the feasibility study was done in April 1998. In 1998, by Cabinet Minute

851 of April 09, 1998, Cabinet agreed to adopt the proposal for the implementation of phase one of the Port of Spain International Conference Complex Project.

The point is, Mr. Speaker, that where that international conference centre is concerned, this thing took place long before I came into this Government. With respect to the four stadia, which were also done by RGM, that was awarded to RGM in December of 1999, also long before I came into this Government. Mr. Speaker, the Member for San Fernando East knows that very, very well, but he came here in the budget debate and raised the point to appear to caution me about conflict, but it is really to plant a seed in people's minds that I could have been implicated in such a matter.

Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about the contribution from the Member for Diego Martin West. I do not know why the Member had to open his contribution by attacking me personally. He talked about having lost respect for me. Well, I want the Member to know that the feeling is mutual. [*Desk thumping*] It makes no difference between us; I lost respect for him a long time ago—[*Desk thumping*]—because when he invited me to be part of his conspiracy to go after the Leader of the Opposition, I did not want to be any part of that. [*Desk thumping*] I refused to join you in that conspiracy. [*Crosstalk*]

As for this form that I signed to join the PNM, I spoke on this already and I do not know why they keep raising it. Why is it so important that they should be raising it every time, that I signed a form? In December of 1995, a certain gentleman from the PNM, Mr. Jerry Narace came to receive a contribution for the PNM. He walked with an application form. I was not involved in any politics at the time. He badgered me; he wanted to prove—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: I am sorry for interrupting you, hon. Minister, but for the reporters in the public gallery, there are a number of flashes that are constantly going and it is very distracting. I am asking, from here on in, to the end of this debate, desist from doing that please. Please proceed.

Sen. The Hon. G. Yetming: When Mr. Narace came with his form to collect the contribution that I was quite prepared to make to the PNM—I always subscribe to the view that in this country you need two strong political parties; democracy requires it; I will support all; some maybe more than others—I had absolutely no problem giving it to him. He walked with his form. He badgered me, because he wanted to prove to his political leader that he had sway outside of the PNM [*Desk thumping*] and I granted him his wish; I signed the form.

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I have never participated in any party matter of the PNM. I have never been inside of Balisier House and I have had no meetings with anyone. Mr. Speaker, in spite of two invitations from the Member for San Fernando East to participate in his campaign, I have never accepted any; I rejected him on both occasions. [*Desk thumping*]

On one occasion, he wanted me to coordinate the activities of some of his constituencies and on the second occasion he wanted me to coordinate meetings with the business community for him to meet them. [*Desk thumping*] [*Crosstalk*] I did no such thing. [*Crosstalk*] The Member for Diego Martin West shares my view that the current leadership of the PNM will take the party nowhere. [*Desk thumping*]

The Member for Diego Martin West made a very, very severe charge against public servants in this country. He referred to one of the reports that came out of the budget; I believe it might have been the *Review of the Economy*. He referred to a report of the Central Statistical Office (CSO) which dealt with the population numbers by age group and he referred to the fact that last year, in one particular age group, it was one number and this year it is another number.

I want to tell the Member that both numbers came from the CSO, and for him to stand and openly say that the people who dealt with this report are a bunch of crooks—his exact words—he has said that public servants are a bunch of crooks. [*Desk thumping*] He has said that public servants are a bunch of crooks. He is a wicked man! [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker: I just want to get some order in the House, please, while the Minister is making his contribution.

Sen. The Hon. G. Yetming: Mr. Speaker, the Member for Diego Martin West also spent some time talking about offshore banking. I just want to refer him to page 36 of the budget statement, where I stated that the Ministry of Finance and the Central Bank are moving to establish Trinidad and Tobago as a centre for international financial services; it is there.

I want to touch on the tabling of a report on Colonial Life Insurance Company, in this House yesterday. For a person who was aspiring to be Minister of Finance to table a 1997 dated report on CLICO, to me, is a most unfortunate thing. It is a most unfortunate thing that a dated report, which can create a run on the financial sector in Trinidad and Tobago, was tabled.

Mr. Speaker: Order please!

Sen. The Hon. G. Yetming: The Government had taken a position last year that it must improve the supervisory capability and supervisory framework for the financial sector in Trinidad and Tobago.

3.40 p.m.

The Government, through the Central Bank, engaged the services of a consultant, Laurie Savage and Associates, to advise the Central Bank and the Government on how it should centralize the supervisory function of the financial sector in Trinidad and Tobago. The plan is that the Central Bank, which currently does an excellent job at supervising the commercial banks, must be provided with the legal and other framework to supervise the insurance sector and pension plans, and the intention eventually is for the Central Bank to be the one regulator that deals with the entire financial sector, which will then include the credit unions.

Laurie Savage and Associates are currently in Trinidad doing this consultancy and they are currently in the process of doing a diagnostic study of the insurance sector. The intention is that once that diagnostic study is done, of the insurance sector, that steps will be taken to deal with all the companies in the insurance sector, based on their advice, but also—*[Interruption]*

Mr. Speaker: Member for Diego Martin West, that loud outburst of “what nonsense is this” is improper. Please refrain from those loud outbursts and allow the Minister to make his contribution. I am trying to follow what the Minister is saying. It was very loud. That also refers to other Members who are cutting in.

Please proceed, Mr. Minister.

Sen. The Hon. G. Yetming: Laurie Savage and Associates, an independent firm of consultants advising the Central Bank, are in the process of doing this diagnostic study of the insurance sector, on the basis of which report, the Minister of Finance would take appropriate action.

The fact of the matter is that the current insurance legislation is very dated. My understanding is that amendments to that Insurance Act have been in preparation now for the past ten years and the proposal is that very shortly we hope to come to the House with the legislation to amend the Insurance Act.

Mr. Speaker, I compare that to the contribution of the Member for Arouca South, and I certainly appreciate the fact that she was careful to advise that in any language I might use on the credit union movement, that it be such that I myself do not cause a run on the credit union sector. I certainly consider the advice from

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the Member for Arouca South to be very good advice. [*Desk thumping*] In fact, in all my utterances on the credit unions, I have attempted to be very careful in my language because I am very much aware of the consequences.

I want to talk about corruption for a minute. A number of Members in this House made reference to the statement I made in the budget about corruption striking at the heart of economic growth and development. That decision to put in a section on corruption—and I know the Member for Arouca South questioned why that was necessary. The decision to put that in was mine, because I felt, exactly as was stated, that corruption can strike at the heart of economic growth and development.

I certainly identify with all the principles spelt out by the Attorney General in his contribution to this House. I identify with all of them. The fact of the matter is, there are good people on both sides of this House. In any organization we would have the good, the bad and the indifferent, and this organization, as with the People's National Movement, is no different. You would have good people, bad people and indifferent ones in the PNM; there are good, bad and indifferent on our side. We have to recognize that as a fact of life. It is a reflection of the society that makes up our party. [*Desk thumping*] But when you listen to the contributions coming from the other side—some of them—you would get the impression that we just have angels on the other side and only devils on this side. That is not so. You have good people on all sides.

I simply wanted, in putting that statement in the budget, to really signal an intention by the Government and an intention by this Minister of Finance, supported by a Cabinet and a Prime Minister, to take a new approach to deal with this issue of corruption and to prevent it from happening, and a number of announcements have been made.

In my budget statement, I made reference to a Central Audit and Control Unit that Cabinet has agreed be established within the Ministry of Finance. I should add that the Cabinet's decision also was to include the fact that the reports of that Central Audit and Control Unit would be tabled in Parliament. That was the decision of the Cabinet. The Attorney General made reference to the fact that a note had come to Cabinet to provide forensic funding and his note did, in fact, say that the funding should be placed within the Ministry of Finance. I acknowledge the fact that that note is before a committee of Cabinet which I chair. The reason for holding the note is that at the time that the note came, we were considering putting a note to Cabinet for the creation of this Central Audit and Control Unit within the Ministry of Finance.

Therefore, the funding that the Attorney General was suggesting be placed for forensic audits within the Ministry of Finance, would have been used, or could have been duplicated, with the Central Audit and Control Unit that I was contemplating establishing within the Ministry of Finance.

Now that Cabinet has taken the decision to establish the Central Audit and Control Unit within the Ministry of Finance, the matter of the note from the Attorney General to provide forensic funding will be dealt with. [*Desk thumping*] I certainly appreciate the proactive work of the Attorney General in putting that note to Cabinet.

I also want to say that the National Tenders Bill that the Attorney General made reference to, was already considered by a committee of the Ministry of Finance, and we have already indicated to the Attorney General that we have absolutely no problem with the new National Tenders Bill as is being proposed, and we will support it going to Cabinet and then be brought to this House. I think that the Attorney General is aware of that.

I also want to say, because those matters were also raised by the Attorney General, that the matter of the Caroni Rum Division and Tanteak, I am hearing now that the selection of the two companies can be considered null and void. I would certainly await hearing from the Attorney General on that. Certainly, the process that was implemented by the Divestment Secretariat, made up of public servants and contract officers—and the Member for Diego Martin Central was always quick to point out that the Divestment Secretariat is a creature of his, and I have no problem with that. But we had deliberately opened up the files, so to speak, on the transaction involving Caroni Rum and Tanteak to the media, and I would await further word from the Attorney General on the reasons for those transactions being null and void. Once that is confirmed to be so, we would obviously have to restart the process which I have no problem with.

3.50 p.m.

I just want to deal with a couple of the issues raised by the Member for Diego Martin East which had to do with the Red House roof at \$45 million. He went through a number of calculations and when the Member for St. Ann's East was going to correct him to say that it really was not \$45 million, the Member for Diego Martin East was quick to point out to the Member for St. Ann's East, "Look, do not say anything about it."

Mr. Speaker, I did make an error in my budget presentation when I made reference to \$45 million being allocated for the restoration to or replacement of

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the Red House roof. I would only refer to page 76 of the *Public Sector Investment Programme 2002* (PSIP) in which it is clearly spelt out that the rehabilitation of public buildings in Trinidad would cost \$45 million, one public building of which is the Red House roof which has been allocated \$13.9 million. That was just for the records.

I also want to thank the Member for Diego Martin East for acknowledging the fact that VAT refunds have improved considerably and that it is the intention of the Board of Inland Revenue to have VAT refunds made within a four to six week period. Furthermore, if payments are not made within the prescribed period interest will be paid at the rate of 1 per cent per month. [*Interruption*] On VAT refund, yes.

I certainly take his word, which is following up a bit, Mr. Speaker, on the submission by the Member for San Fernando East—I also take his word—that although I retired from the place where I worked, the question of transparency is something that one needs to be very careful about. This Minister of Finance intends to be extremely careful about it, Mr. Speaker. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, I deeply appreciate the submission by the Member for Tobago West. I have tried to be extremely fair to Tobago from the very first day of the assumption of office of the new Tobago House of Assembly. The signal I got from the Prime Minister was that I should ensure that I treat Tobago with fairness in all respects. From very early o'clock, when the Chief Secretary of the Tobago House of Assembly came to me with the problem that he had of having assumed office with \$150 million in debt and outstanding bills, and how difficult it was for him to start a new administration with that around his neck, there was no question of my not coming to his help. I did and I came to this House for a supplemental of \$50 million and further gave him support for the borrowing of \$100 million to take care of the balance. I also made a commitment that help would be provided with his subventions so that he could get rid of that \$100 million debt.

Insofar as the allocation for this year, I have tried my best to give to Tobago what it had asked for within the constraints of the demands elsewhere, but also with the Dispute Resolution Commission (DRC) ruling in mind. The theme of my Budget Statement was “One people, one nation leaving no one behind”. Rather than it being dealt with on the basis of ethnicity or religion, this had more to do with Trinidad and Tobago, one nation notwithstanding the fact that we are a twin-island republic State—one people—and leaving on one behind meaning not leaving Tobago behind either.

I have agreed with the Chief Secretary of the Tobago House of Assembly that they could access grants from the multilateral institutions, and I have agreed, in principle, to the THA being able to borrow and we would have to work out the details of how that would happen. I am absolutely certain that we would be able to work out that in a manner that would be satisfactory to both sides. I renew my commitment to working with the Tobago House of Assembly in meeting their social and economic objectives. The Member for Tobago West made reference to their diversification plan and I certainly intend to work with the THA in understanding what they intend to do to diversify their economy and what assistance the central government could provide them to make that happen. While we have announced five drivers for diversifying the economy of Trinidad and Tobago—and while I am certain that those five drivers would benefit both islands—I certainly recognize the fact that Tobago would have its own plans and, therefore, I have a responsibility to work with them in their achieving their own goals.

I certainly wish to acknowledge the prudent approach that has been demonstrated so far by the Tobago House of Assembly in dealing with their financial affairs and I look forward to working with them.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to mention that the international conference centre that is intended for the waterfront is not intended to do anything about the tourism sector for Tobago. Rather, in my view, once you have a conference centre established and conventioners coming into Trinidad, there has to be a spin-off effect to Tobago. I am certain that conference centre in Trinidad would be complementary to the tourism development of Tobago.

I also want to say that this Government is committed to improving the air and sea links between Trinidad and Tobago and I think that Tobago could expect developments in both respects very shortly. I should mention that I have had to personally intervene in the matter of newsprint going across to Tobago. Newsprint was taken across to Tobago at \$0.35 per pound, I think, and there was a plan to increase the rate, by BWIA, to \$2.66 per pound which would have made it prohibitive for newspapers to get across to Tobago and also for post from TTPost. I consider newspaper and post to be vital to the link between Trinidad and Tobago and I have, therefore, intervened to ensure that the cost of the newsprint and post going across to Tobago remain at acceptable levels to parties concerned. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, in the contribution of the Member for Toco/Manzanilla, with all the drama and what have you, he accused me of being a negative influence on

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youths. I stood here and made my three-hour Budget Statement and doing so did not want to get moved by the occasion, but he accused me of getting excited when I made reference to salt fish and tampons. I do not know how he could have arrived at that. If it is one thing he shall never see is this Minister of Finance getting excited. [*Desk thumping*]

I may smile occasionally, I may laugh from time to time, but he is never going to see me excited and I certainly was not excited on the day in question. [*Laughter*] In his childlike dramatic activities he made reference to my wishing to outsource the drafting of the Mutual Fund legislation and called on me to apologize.

4.00 p.m.

Governments in the past have all outsourced the drafting of legislation. In my view, the intention is not to bypass the Attorney General's Office. I am intimately familiar with the process and, at the end of the day, the legislation still has to go through Cabinet. It still has to go through the Chief Parliamentary Counsel Office of the Attorney General. It is just that I announced it was my plan to do it because the financial institutions that will be affected by that piece of legislation were anxious for it to happen. In fact, one suggested that they were prepared to pay for the drafting of the legislation to have it expedited. I saw no problem in accepting, and certainly Mr. Speaker, it is my intention, at the appropriate time, to consult with the Attorney General when we are ready to do that. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: Order, please! Order!

Sen. The Hon. G. Yetming: The Member for La Brea cautioned about FUNDAid and I will take him up on it. He appears to have had some concern with FUNDAid and the manner in which they charge interest on their loans. With the grants the Government intends to give to them, certainly that requires a look. I thank the Member for La Brea for drawing that to my attention. I promise him that the matter will be looked at.

Finally, there is the submission from the Member for Point Fortin. I left it for last because it was the worst contribution in the House for the past few days. He rated the budget "F". My question is: Would the people in Tobago rate the budget "F"? No! Would the business community rate the budget "F"? No! Have manufacturers rated the budget "F"? No! Would individuals who would have received a personal income tax deduction, who would have more zero-rated items on VAT and who would have received their 5 per cent interest, rate the budget "F"? No! Would single parents who do not have to pay tax on their alimony payments, maintenance and child support rate the budget "F"? No! Would senior

citizens who would have received an increase in their pension, who would have received bus passes— *[Interruption]*

Mr. Speaker: Last night I suspended the sitting to allow Members time to think about what they are doing. I do not think I need to do that again today. Let me appeal to you. The Minister has a right to make his input. He is winding up the debate. I ask you to allow him to do that. If I cannot get your cooperation, I will suspend this sitting until such time he has the full opportunity to make his presentation. *[Interruption]* So do I. That is why I am appealing to you to allow the Member to make his presentation. Please carry on.

Sen. The Hon. G. Yetming: I was asking whether senior citizens, who would have received an increase in their pensions by \$80 a month, who would have received improved bus passes, who would have received a personal allowance increase in their taxation, who would have received a reduction in the 6 per cent tax in the insurance premiums, have rated the budget “F”? No! Have the disabled, who got their disability grant increased from \$520 to \$600, rated the budget “F”? No! Would the hearing impaired, particularly those of poor parentage, who would get free hearing aids from the Diagnostic Research Education Training Centre for the Hearing Impaired, rate it “F”? No! Would students who are now able to access tertiary level education, through the dollar for dollar plan, rate the budget “F”? No!

Mr. Speaker, I would say that the Member for Point Fortin cannot judge a budget. He probably cannot judge anything.

Mr. Speaker, I beg to move.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a second time.

Sen. The Hon. G. Yetming: I beg to move that the House do now resolve itself into committee to consider the Bill clause by clause as well as the estimates.

Mr. Speaker: Before I resolve the House into committee, the Finance Committee of the whole House is normally done in private, so I will have to ask persons in the public gallery to please vacate.

Mr. Speaker: The House is now resolved into committee.

Bill and estimates committed to Finance Committee.

4.08 p.m.: *House resolved itself into Finance Committee.*

4.43 p.m.: *House resumed after Finance Committee.*

Appropriation Bill (Budget)

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Bill reported, without amendment.

Question put, That the Bill be now read a third time.

The House divided: Ayes 19 Noes 14

AYES

Maharaj, Hon. R.

Panday, Hon. B.

Assam, Hon. M.

Persad-Bissessar, Hon. K.

Humphrey, Hon. J.

John, Hon. C.

Sudama, Hon. T.

Maraj, Hon. R.

Rafeeq, Dr. The Hon. H.

Baksh, Hon. S.

Panday, S.

Singh, Hon. G.

Peters, Hon. W.

Nanan, Dr. The Hon. A.

[Interruption]

Mr. Speaker: Members, we have a division going and the Clerk must get the response clearly. Can I ask you to be silent?

Division continued.

Partap, Hon. H.

Ramsaran, Hon. M.

Khan, Dr. The Hon. F.

Chaitan, Hon. W.

Sharma, Hon. C.

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NOES

Valley, K.

Manning, P.

Imbert, C.

Robinson-Regis, Mrs. C.

Narine, J.

Bereaux, H.

James, Mrs. E.

Joseph, M.

Boynes, R.

Hinds, F.

Williams, E.

Rahael, J.

Beckles, Miss P.

Achong, L.

Question agreed to.

Bill accordingly read the third time and passed.

ARRANGEMENT OF BUSINESS

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, normally we would take a tea break at this point, but what is your wish? We have a very short Bill. Do you wish to finish the Bill now, and then we break? [*Assent indicated*] Is that the consensus of all? All right, well, if that is the consensus.

TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO CRICKET BOARD OF CONTROL (INC'N.) (AMDT.) BILL

Order for second reading read.

The Minister of Community Empowerment, Sport and Consumer Affairs (Hon. Manohar Ramsaran): Mr. Speaker, I beg to move,

That a Bill to amend the Trinidad and Tobago Cricket Board of Control (Inc'n.) Act, No. 34 of 1989, be read a second time.

Cricket Board of Control
[HON. M. RAMSARAN]

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Mr. Speaker, this amendment seeks to add to section 4 a new paragraph (d) which is as follows:

“to raise or borrow money and to provide security for such borrowing.”

This amendment has become necessary so as to give the Trinidad and Tobago Cricket Board of Control the power to, as this amendment proposes, enable the board to borrow money. The cricket world has moved from mainly an amateur sport to one that is now professional and highly technological. The board is in the final stages of building its own academy to improve the quality of our cricketers.

Mr. Speaker, I could say much more but, because of the intensity of the last four days, I will answer any question that may arise.

Mr. Speaker, I beg to move.

Question proposed.

4.50 p.m.

Mr. Hedwidge Bereaux (*La Brea*): Mr. Speaker, I just want to ask the hon. Member one question. Should he not have in that amendment the right of the Cricket Board of Control to pledge their assets and so forth, or to give security and so forth, for that money? Because I think that is a problem. [*Interruption*] Do not argue. I am talking about something I know, and maybe it is an omission if it is not in there.

Mr. Speaker: I recognize that as your input in the debate?

Mr. Bereaux: Yes, that is it.

Mr. Speaker: Do I recognize anybody else?

The Minister of Community Empowerment, Sport and Consumer Affairs (Hon. Manohar Ramsaran): Mr. Speaker, the answer is yes. The parent Act provides for that and they are accountable to the Ministry of Sport and Consumer Affairs.

Mr. Speaker, I beg to move.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a second time.

Bill committed to a committee of the whole House.

Cricket Board of Control

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House in committee.

Clauses 1 and 2 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Question put and agreed to, That the Bill be reported to the House.

House resumed.

Bill reported, without amendment, read the third time and passed.

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 Thursday, September 27, 2001 at 1.30 p.m. On that day we shall do the Excise Duty (Alcoholic Beverages) Order, 2001, the Excise Duty (Tobacco Products) Order, 2001 and the Provisional Collection of Taxes Order.

Mr. Speaker, we had attempted to put this for Friday but the Opposition did not want to give up its Private Members' Day so we had to settle for Thursday 27 at 1.30 p.m.

Question put and agreed to.

House adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 4.55 p.m.