

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, October 25, 2002

The House met at 10.30 a.m.

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PAPERS LAID

1. Report of the Auditor General on the accounts of the Environmental Trust Fund for the year ended September 30, 2001.
[The Minister of Planning and Development (Hon. Dr. Keith Rowley)]
2. Report of the Auditor General on the accounts of the Mayaro Civic Centre for the year ended December 31, 1997. [*Hon. Dr. K. Rowley*]
3. Report of the Auditor General on the accounts of the Mayaro Civic Centre for the year ended December 31, 1998. [*Hon. Dr. K. Rowley*]
4. Report of the Auditor General on the accounts of the Mayaro Civic Centre for the year ended December 31, 1999. [*Hon. Dr. K. Rowley*]
5. Report of the Auditor General on a Special Audit into alleged misappropriation of funds collected in pursuance of Sections 12(1) and 56(2) of the Legal Profession Act, 1986—Act, No. 21 of 1986. [*Hon. Dr. K. Rowley*]
6. Report of the Auditor General on the accounts of the Diego Martin Regional Corporation for the year ended December 31, 1995. [*Hon. Dr. K. Rowley*]
7. Report of the Auditor General on the accounts of the Diego Martin Regional Corporation for the year ended December 31, 1996. [*Hon. Dr. K. Rowley*]
8. Report of the Auditor General on the accounts of the Diego Martin Regional Corporation for the year ended December 31, 1997. [*Hon. Dr. K. Rowley*]
9. Report of the Auditor General on the accounts of the Government Employees' Provident Fund for the financial year ended September 30, 2000. [*Hon. Dr. K. Rowley*]
10. Report of the Auditor General on the accounts of the Government Employees' Provident Fund for the financial year ended September 30, 2001. [*Hon. Dr. K. Rowley*]

11. Report of the Auditor General on the accounts of the South West Regional Health Authority for the period December 19 to 31, 1994. [*Hon. Dr. K. Rowley*]
12. Report of the Auditor General on the accounts of the South West Regional Health Authority for the year ended December 31, 1995. [*Hon. Dr. K. Rowley*]
13. Report of the Auditor General on the accounts of the South West Regional Health Authority for the year ended December 31, 1996. [*Hon. Dr. K. Rowley*]
14. Report of the Auditor General on the accounts of the South West Regional Health Authority for the year ended December 31, 1997. [*Hon. Dr. K. Rowley*]
15. Report of the Auditor General on the accounts of the Cocoa and Coffee Industry Board for the year ended December 31, 1995. [*Hon. Dr. K. Rowley*]
16. Report of the Auditor General on the accounts of the Cocoa and Coffee Industry Board for the year ended December 31, 1996. [*Hon. Dr. K. Rowley*]
17. Report of the Auditor General on the accounts of the Cocoa and Coffee Industry Board for the year ended December 31, 1997. [*Hon. Dr. K. Rowley*]
18. Report of the Auditor General on the accounts of the Cocoa and Coffee Industry Board for the year ended December 31, 1998. [*Hon. Dr. K. Rowley*]
19. Report of the Auditor General on the accounts of the Point Fortin Borough Corporation for the year ended December 31, 1992. [*Hon. Dr. K. Rowley*]
20. Report of the Auditor General on the accounts of the Point Fortin Borough Corporation for the year ended December 31, 1993. [*Hon. Dr. K. Rowley*]
21. Report of the Auditor General on the accounts of the Point Fortin Borough Corporation for the year ended December 31, 1994. [*Hon. Dr. K. Rowley*]
22. Report of the Auditor General on the accounts of the Point Fortin Borough Corporation for the year ended December 31, 1995. [*Hon. Dr. K. Rowley*]
23. Report of the Auditor General on the accounts of the Point Fortin Borough Corporation for the year ended December 31, 1996. [*Hon. Dr. K. Rowley*]

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24. Report of the Auditor General on the accounts of the Point Fortin Borough Corporation for the year ended December 31, 1997. [*Hon. Dr. K. Rowley*]
25. Report of the Auditor General on the accounts of the Agricultural Society of Trinidad and Tobago for the year ended December 31, 1988. [*Hon. Dr. K. Rowley*]
26. Report of the Auditor General on the accounts of the Agricultural Society of Trinidad and Tobago for the year ended December 31, 1989. [*Hon. Dr. K. Rowley*]
27. Report of the Auditor General on the accounts of the Agricultural Society of Trinidad and Tobago for the year ended December 31, 1990. [*Hon. Dr. K. Rowley*]
28. Report of the Auditor General on the accounts of the Agricultural Society of Trinidad and Tobago for the year ended December 31, 1991. [*Hon. Dr. K. Rowley*]
29. Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the audit of the accounts and financial statement of the Assistance to the National Drug Abuse Demand Reduction programme for the year ended 2000 December 31 as required by project Document AD/TRI/96/910 between the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago and the United Nations International Drug Control Programme (UNDCP). [*Hon. Dr. K. Rowley*]

Papers 1 to 29 to be referred to the Public Accounts Committee.

30. The Value Added Tax Order, 2002. [*Hon. Dr. K. Rowley*]
31. The Provisional Collection of Taxes Order, 2002. [*Hon. Dr. K. Rowley*]

**APPROPRIATION BILL
(BUDGET)**

[Third Day]

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on question [October, 17, 2002]

That the Bill be now read a second time.

Question again proposed.

The Minister of Works and Transport (Hon. Franklin Khan): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In this my maiden speech in this honourable House, let me start by

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thanking the people of Ortoire/Mayaro for electing me their representative for the next five years. [*Desk thumping*] And I want to assure my constituents and the national community at large that I will serve in this Parliament with sincerity, hard work and decorum, [*Desk thumping*] qualities that are synonymous with the long tradition of PNM representation in this honourable House.

It is also a pleasure and an honour, Mr. Speaker, to serve with my colleagues here in the House of Representatives and in the Cabinet of Trinidad and Tobago under the distinguished leadership of our Prime Minister and Member for San Fernando East. [*Desk thumping*] Let me also take this opportunity to congratulate you, Mr. Speaker, on your elevation to this high office in the land.

At this point, I want to take this opportunity to support this Bill and to extend my congratulations to the hon. Minister of Finance for an excellent and an all-encompassing budget that seeks to improve the quality of life of all the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago. The key word there, Mr. Speaker, is “all”.

The measures outlined by the hon. Minister of Finance will certainly form the foundation for transforming Trinidad and Tobago into a fully developed nation on or before the year 2020. It is obvious, and it goes without saying that the goal of attaining developed-nation status is closely linked in the advance and continuing building of the infrastructure of Trinidad and Tobago for which I have the distinguished responsibility as the Minister of Works and Transport.

Before I delve into my portfolio and what we have planned for this year and for the next five years and beyond, I just want to make some comments, as the first Speaker on the second day of the debate, as to my first impressions of yesterday.

Mr. Speaker, there were approximately eight speakers from the Opposition and eight from the Government, and it is obvious that they found little to criticize in the budget or to give any penetrating analysis of where we fell short. However, I was able to detect two themes that were almost ubiquitous in all the contributions from the Opposition and let me take this opportunity to put my own spin on some of their concerns.

First and foremost, there seems to be a fixation by the Opposition that we have presented a welfare state budget and a soup kitchen budget, but I want it to become abundantly clear that what has been presented here is an all-encompassing budget that deals very specifically with the economic drivers of the nation, the energy sector, the productive sector, the manufacturing sector, tourism, and agriculture. We have dealt with the social infrastructure, we have dealt with

education and health, we have dealt with modernization of our educational system, we have dealt with science, technology and tertiary education.

What we have done, Mr. Speaker, is to give a balanced perspective to development. What they wanted us to do is to neglect the very foundation of democracy. Since I was in high school I have learned that democracy is government of the people, for the people and by the people. Hon. Members, those who forget the people will always sit on that side of the House, and the reason we are here today is because we listened to the people.

Mr. Ramnath: Try and be polite. I have to come after you.

Hon. F. Khan: This is not being polite. It is being factual. We have listened to the people and we have delivered what the people of this country needed, and hon. Members, it is for that reason and for that reason only that we have delivered what we have delivered in the last nine months.

The second theme that I detected quite clearly, and it seems to be a major concern that we would like to really put to rest in the next five years, hon. Members, is the issue of what is really the paranoia of the Opposition about discrimination and equality. It was central to the theme of the deliberations of all the speakers yesterday.

I want to quote from the Prime Minister's budget statement that this vision of the People's National Movement is rooted in upholding and advancing the human dignity of every individual irrespective of race, colour, religion, culture, ethnicity, gender or social origin. Mr. Speaker, we on this side of the House really do strongly believe in that statement and we want to give the assurance to the Opposition and the nation at large that this country will be governed with equity, fair play for all the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

Last but not least, before I deal with issues relating to the Ministry of Works and Transport, I must say I was slightly amused by the contribution of the Member of Parliament for Tabaquite. I want to assure him that his landslips will be repaired because they are listed here in certain parts of the development programme, and if the Ministry of Culture and Tourism does not build your campsite, the Ministry of Works and Transport will build it. The Member spent 75 minutes, and at the end of the day that seemed to be his major theme. We will build it for you. Do not worry.

Mr. Speaker, the programme for the Ministry of Works and Transport for fiscal 2002/2003 will play a critical role in improving the quality of life of all the

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citizens in Trinidad and Tobago. In our development programme we have estimated to spend \$107.68 million and on the recurrent side, \$938.439 million.

The programme of works for fiscal 2002/2003 must not be viewed in isolation, but as a five-year continuum that is driven by our 2020 vision to make Trinidad and Tobago a developed country, and the Social and Economic Policy Framework document that was laid in this House on Monday, October 21, 2002.

In other words, Mr. Speaker, by the end of this five-year term—or should I rephrase that and say, by the time we commence our third consecutive term in the year 2007 this country will be well advanced on its way to the following: A modern transportation system, improved air and sea transportation and a modern road infrastructure network.

A modern transportation system that will include a comprehensive national transportation plan guiding the development of the sector triggering investment, informing plans and policy formulation. A transport division that will be reengineered, business oriented and customer-friendly with computerized systems. A public transportation system that will be greatly improved and the very likelihood of the first stages of a mass transit system into Port of Spain.

We will see improved air and sea transportation systems with the introduction of safety oversight regulation; the acquisition of a high frequency, fixed communication system for the Civil Aviation Authority; rehabilitation of the runways at the Piarco and Crown Point International Airports; an upgraded Crown Point terminal in Tobago; improved air links between Piarco and Crown Point; improved civil aviation training at Mausica. We will have an upgraded Caricom Jetty in Port of Spain; a new ferry service between Trinidad and Tobago and improved management of the shipping services between Scarborough and Port of Spain.

Within this five years we will see modernization of the road network; an expanded road system in areas such as San Fernando to Port of Spain, a new highway; a new highway from San Fernando to Princes Town, Barataria to Chaguanas, from O'Meara to Sangre Grande, St. Joseph to the North Coast and the Diego Martin Highway.

Mr. Speaker, over the last eight to nine months, under the stewardship of my predecessor, Sen. Arnold Piggott, we have completed a number of projects aimed at improving and modernizing the infrastructure base of Trinidad and Tobago. I am very happy to report that in July 2002, Cabinet appointed a steering committee for the preparation of a comprehensive national transportation study for Trinidad

and Tobago. We plan to complete that study in the coming months and we have allocated \$1 million for the study. I want to draw to the attention of the House that this will be the flagship study that will guide the development of the transportation sector in Trinidad and Tobago. It will be a flagship study of which this nation would be proud.

Mr. Speaker, my ministry will continue to pursue its mandate as the building and civil engineering consultant to the Government of Trinidad and Tobago. It will continue to function as Government's regulatory arm in the construction sector. As such, it will insist on the widespread adherence to rules and procedures in the industry. It will ensure that the best industry practices and industry code of ethics are followed.

Mr. Speaker, as you may be aware, the Ministry of Works and Transport, because it is the Government's arm for building and civil engineering and construction, is usually the custodian of some of the largest projects in Trinidad and Tobago including the construction of the airport terminal at Piarco. Never must it happen again in this country, the type of things we are hearing at that Commission of Enquiry. We in the Ministry pledge that rules and regulations will be adhered to. There will be transparency in the process like you have never seen before. The end does not justify the means. I say no more on that.

While we strengthen the policy and planning framework for transportation and construction, there must be some measure of continuity. To this end, the Ministry will continue its road infrastructure development under the National Highways Programme. This programme which began in 1996 is funded by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) and the Government of Trinidad and Tobago. It involves the strategic combination of trunk roads expansion, roads and bridges rehabilitation, routine road maintenance and institutional strengthening.

Under the development programme for this year we have allocated \$63.5 million for the National Highways Programme—roads and bridges rehabilitation. During fiscal 2001/2002, rehabilitation of 10 bridges was completed at a cost of \$27 million. In this fiscal year an initial sum of \$20 million has been allocated to continue works in this element of the programme.

It should be noted that the design of 75 kilometres of road has been completed and construction will begin in December 2002. Designs for an additional 40 bridges and 120 kilometres of roads throughout the country are in progress, and construction work on this phase is expected to commence early in fiscal 2003/2004.

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Relating to the trunk roads expansion, this year we have allocated the sum of \$14 million to continue the extension of the Diego Martin Highway from Sierra Leone to Wendy Fitzwilliam Boulevard, and that project will commence in mid-November 2002.

Another key project for 2003 which is expected to begin in January is the dualling of the Churchill-Roosevelt Highway from O'Meara to Santa Rosa. Currently, preliminary works are being undertaken and the award of tender for the construction of the Santa Rosa Bridge will be made in November 2002.

It should be noted that the following projects have already been approved by the IDB for addition to the list of trunk roads: The construction of a highway from Antigua Road to Sangre Grande and the construction of a highway from San Fernando to Point Fortin. At present, procurement of consultancy service for feasibility studies and design are in progress for these two projects. The prequalification report has been submitted to the IDB. Upon approval of the prequalification report, works are expected to continue.

Another key project, Mr. Speaker, during the course of this year, would be the reinstatement and stabilization of failed slopes. In other words, a landslip repair programme. Here I refer to my friend, the hon. Member for Tabaquite. Remedial work on the North Coast Road and the Moruga Road has been completed at a cost of \$6 million and \$4.2 million, respectively. Presently, construction works are ongoing at Mount Saint Catherine at a cost of \$2.8 million and will be completed in November 2002.

In 2003, \$5 million has been allocated to undertake the repairs of 33 failed slopes throughout the country, including the North Coast Road, the Tabaquite, Brasso and Mayo roads, the Todd's Station Road and the Sir Solomon Hochoy Highway, Toco Main Road, the Arima/Blanchisseuse Road and the Mundo Nuevo, Cunapo Junction and Bon Air roads.

We will also be focusing through the IDB programme on institutional strengthening. The main output is the consultancy for restructuring the Highways Division into a road management organization. The main output of this will be a computerized, routine maintenance management system, bridge maintenance management system, pavement management system and the installation of weight stations in various parts of the country to facilitate reinforcement of axle loading.

Another key project, Mr. Speaker, during this year's development programme will be the Southern Road Development Programme. Under this programme, we are currently working on the extension of the Sir Solomon Hochoy Highway from

Toruba to Cipero Road, San Fernando. Those of us who drove to San Fernando every day will know that that work is in progress and is expected to be concluded by March 2003.

Mr. Speaker, I now move to one of the major projects of the Ministry of Works and Transport last year that will continue into this year, which is the Programme for Upgrading Road Efficiency (PURE) which is being handled by Nipdec. This programme is expected to continue this year and we have done a study of all the roads that are in need of repair and we are presently, without bias and with fair play and equity, continuing to rehabilitate and pave the roads in Trinidad and Tobago that need paving. It has absolutely no relationship to where the roads are and who lives in close proximity to the roads. It is based largely on the need for repairs.

I can give you my own experience, because during the UNC road paving frenzy of 2000 where close to \$1 billion was spent on road paving—over \$1 billion was spent—the two worst roads in Trinidad and Tobago, which were the Moruga Road and the Penal Rock Road were not paved. Today, probably the reason I am sitting here in this honourable House is that because of this programme, we have paved the Moruga Road and the Penal Rock Road. [*Desk thumping*] That has absolutely no bearing because those roads were in a very dilapidated condition and in need of paving and the people of Moruga today are very happy because we have paved those roads.

Another key project, Mr. Speaker, is the widening of the Churchill Roosevelt Highway from the Curepe intersection to the San Juan Bridge. In an effort to reduce traffic congestion along the East West Corridor, the Ministry commenced work in fiscal 2001/2002 on the widening of the eastbound and westbound carriageways on the Churchill-Roosevelt Highway from Curepe intersection to the San Juan Bridge. The westbound carriageway was completed on October 01, 2002 at a cost of \$8.1 million, while the eastbound carriageway is currently 60 per cent complete. The total cost of this project is estimated to be \$14.1 million and completion of the eastbound carriageway is carded for the end of November 2002.

Before I leave roads, Mr. Speaker, it will be remiss of me if I do not address what is a key and sensitive project in Trinidad and Tobago, which is how do we deal with the Churchill-Roosevelt Highway/Uriah Butler Highway intersection.

Hon. Members, I had the distinction of—I should not say distinction. I lived in Houston, Texas for approximately two years, 1995 and 1996, and Houston probably has the most traffic in the world and some of the most complex overpasses

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that you will ever see. Most of them built by Italian construction firms, who I understand are the best in the world, and for two years in Houston looking at all the overpasses, because some of them looked really nice, I have never seen any with an arch on it. [*Laughter*]

Hon. Members, as the Minister of Works and Transport, I want to assure you of one thing. Decisions in the Ministry of Works and Transport will not be based on the whims and fancies of anybody's own personal opinion. There will be no opinion engineering in the Ministry of Works and Transport. [*Desk thumping*]

Our decisions will be made by scientific decision-making, by the inputs of our technocrats, engineers and traffic management experts. [*Desk thumping*] I want you to understand, Mr. Speaker, that there is software available in the world today to simulate traffic flows, to look where the bottlenecks are and you can simulate various options and determine beforehand, by forward and backward modeling of these projects, what are the best solutions. And the solution has nothing to do with what we like or do not like. It is what will work in a cost effective manner. [*Desk thumping*]

From my preliminary look at what has been happening in the Ministry of Works and Transport over the last six years, we in the Ministry have decided to set up a new team to revisit this whole issue of the Churchill-Roosevelt Highway/Uriah Butler intersection in the next couple months and come up with what we feel to be the best engineering and traffic management solution to what the problems would be.

I can assure this honourable House that the decisions that we make at the Ministry and in the Cabinet of Trinidad and Tobago will not be prejudiced by any other factor but cost effectiveness and good and proper engineering. So let us leave it at that and we will report back to this House in due course as to the findings of the new team. It will not be a long, drawn-out study.

A lot of studies have already been done. We are not going to reinvent the wheel, but we will take a fresh and unbiased look at all the options that are available, because it is a key project, but too often in this country we have made wrong decisions on multimillion dollar projects because there was too much bias in the decision-making. We plan to wipe the slate clean and bring proper and meaningful decisions to the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

As I move on, Mr. Speaker, we will continue to place focus on the drainage system of Trinidad and Tobago. Everything cannot happen in one year, but in the five-year programme we plan a major drainage management study and project to

alleviate flooding in Trinidad and Tobago. The key project that was undertaken in 2002 is the construction of regulatory structures on the Honda Caparo River. This project is 65 per cent complete and is now moving apace and it will be completed in November 2002.

In the west, rehabilitation works on the Maraval River between Rapsey Street and CAREC are being undertaken. Additionally, 100 metres upstream of the Diego Martin River have been desilted, thus increasing the capacity of this watercourse. In the south we have focused on the agricultural catchment area of Oropouche—and the Member for Oropouche could take note—and to this end we have installed the St. John tidal sluice gates at a cost of \$2.6 million.

Mr. Speaker, we intend to continue to provide adequate draining and irrigation infrastructure along with coastal protection works in 2002—2003. To this end, we shall commence construction work at both Manzanilla and Mosquito Creek locations for which feasibility studies have already been completed.

I now move to public buildings. In 2002—2003, the Ministry, through the Construction and Maintenance Division, will continue to support the development and enhancement of Government's stock of buildings. Therefore, the Construction Division which includes Project Management along with its technical support service will seek to focus and monitor each project under its purview and ensure that the taxpayer is getting money for value.

In this report, therefore, the ongoing projects to be managed and monitored by the Construction Division on behalf of the Government agencies include the South Oropouche School, the Fire Services Stores buildings, the Sangre Grande Fire Station, the Magistrates Court, the National Libraries building, the Red House and the old police headquarters phase one, and we will continue the renovation and rehabilitation works on such buildings as Stollmeyer's Castle, Queen's Royal College and the President's and Prime Minister's residences and offices.

Mr. Speaker, I move now to sea transportation. On 16 May, 2002, Cabinet approved the acquisition of a passenger cargo roll-on/roll-off ferry to operate between Port of Spain and Scarborough. Procurement will be pursued through a selected broker. I therefore wish to assure this honourable House, but moreso the people of Tobago, that this Government will work expeditiously to ensure that this ferry is in service in the shortest possible time frame.

Here again I pause, Mr. Speaker, to indicate that we are very particular about these big purchases. These big purchases will not be made under the table. We are

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going to acquire a ferry at significant cost to the people of Trinidad and Tobago. We are going through the Central Tenders Board. It will be a very transparent process and all and sundry, the entire population of Trinidad and Tobago, will be kept apprised of when the Government makes these major purchases. [*Desk thumping*] This Government does not plan to spend significant sums of money at all without the people being very au courant with how their money is being spent. This is a major acquisition that we are going to make and the population will be apprised of it.

Mr. Speaker, I now move to air transport. Again, another very sensitive topic. In the previous nine months, a number of initiatives were taken by the air transportation sector. One must remember that this period was one in which emphasis was being placed on safety and security of the air transportation system following the events of September 11.

The Ministry, therefore, focused on those projects that strengthen security, communication and overall administration of the aviation sector. In this regard, one of the major projects that was approved by the Cabinet in August 2002 was the procurement of a high frequency, single side band communication equipment for the Trinidad and Tobago Civil Aviation Authority. I am happy to say that a contract was signed in September for the provision of the requisite equipment between the International Civil Aviation Organization and the representative of the selected tenderer, Thames System Limited of Canada. This system will allow for highly reliable high frequency communication between pilots and air traffic controllers within and beyond the Piarco flight information region, in this way, enhancing the safety of the said region.

Mr. Speaker, it baffled me to understand when I met with the Civil Aviation Authority people the problems that they were having, and one wonders how after spending \$1.6 billion on an airport terminal building that the Civil Aviation Authority and the air traffic controllers do not even have basic equipment to guarantee the safety of flights in and out of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

I mean, moneys in the region of \$5 million to \$6 million could not be found to buy safety equipment for tracking aircraft and we went ahead as a country and spent \$1.6 billion on a building. It baffles the imagination, Mr. Speaker.

It would be remiss of me if I did not address some of the burning issues of the day as they relate to the country's civil aviation capacity. Specifically, the Category 2 rating given to this country's regulatory capacity by the United States Federal Aviation Administration. I repeat, after \$1.6 billion of expenditure, the

Piarco International Airport was still given a Category 2 rating by the United States Federal Aviation Administration.

Somewhere along the line we were not spending the money on the right things, and hon. Members of this House, one of the priority projects of the Ministry of Works and Transport through the civil aviation function would be to get back the Category 1 status for the Piarco International Airport. [*Desk thumping*]

I now move to land transportation. This area includes the registration and inspection of all vehicles, the administration of traffic control devices, the operation of the Public Transport Service Corporation and the associated areas of vehicle maintenance and fleet upgrade.

Projects that will be done in this division in the coming year will include the upgrading of the driver certification programme which will include an element of defensive driving, a programme of traffic safety education for all road users, upgrading vehicle testing to include emissions analysis and law reform to modernize the transportation system.

Mr. Speaker, as we are all aware, this country has a very serious traffic situation. To modernize this country and modernize this society, it is an area that we have to deal with expeditiously. It is not only about traffic jams and traffic management. It is about our attitudes on the road, the regulatory system that deals with how we treat each other on the highways and byways of Trinidad.

Look at the number of road deaths in Trinidad and Tobago and we at the Traffic Management Division of the Ministry of Works and Transport intend to take a new look at the whole issue of traffic management and road safety. A key component of that, we may well go the way of making it compulsory that offenders, people who are convicted for traffic offences, have to go through a defensive driving programme. It is the only way that we can avoid the carnage on the roads of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, there are certain other state companies that fall under my purview. VMCOTT which is a new initiative that has been doing an extremely good job in vehicle maintenance for the police service and for other agencies of the government. The Maintenance, Training and Security Company (MTS) continues to perform yeoman service to Trinidad and Tobago in the field of security, maintenance for public buildings and project management for some of the major construction projects in Trinidad and Tobago, and will continue to keep close

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monitoring of these state agencies that fall under the purview of the Ministry of Works and Transport to make sure there is efficiency and competency as they perform their duties for the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Speaker, what I have outlined is the major policy thrust and the key projects for fiscal 2002/2003 for the Ministry of Works and Transport, but I also want to add that on the road to becoming a developed nation—and we continually speak about the big projects, the interchange, purchase of a ferry and various other key projects on the development programme—as I said, we have to learn to do the small things well also.

One of the symptoms or one of the attributes as a developed nation is that there are systems in place, there are efficiencies in place where the small things happen. We as a nation have focused too much on the big projects. We now have to revisit how we do the small things, the routine maintenance, and there will be a new thrust in the Ministry of Works and Transport this year under my stewardship.

I ask the question, what is the sense of constructing a new highway when we do not have a system in place to cut the grass on the edges? What is the sense in constructing a new office complex when it falls into disrepair after a few years because we do not have a proper maintenance system to clean the window panes? And it is in this light I see the recurrent side of the budget of the Ministry of Works and Transport.

On the recurrent side it is close to \$1 billion to be expended during this year. On the recurrent side we have 5,710 daily-paid workers and 2,854 monthly-paid workers, and that is a tremendous resource base that has to be optimized.

We have to go back to a higher level of efficiency as there was in the past. I do not want to say under the colonial period, but we have to go back to proper maintenance. We have to have a system now that the response time for patching potholes and cleaning drains and providing the basic maintenance facilities for this country have to be improved.

We at the Ministry of Works and Transport have \$1 billion to do that and I would make sure and I want to give the assurance to you, Mr. Speaker, and this honourable House, that we will be putting a “hawk’s eye” on the maintenance of the facilities of this country through the billion dollars that have been allocated on the recurrent side of the budget. Too long in all these debates everybody speaks about the development programme and billions and billions of dollars are being spent on the recurrent side of the budget and we do not get value for money. So

we are going to look closely also at the recurrent side of the budget to make sure that we get the proper value for the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Singh: Talk to the union.

Hon. F. Khan: Everything is to be managed. Mr. Speaker, based on the span of projects that I have just outlined, it will be clear that the Ministry of Works and Transport will be performing a fundamental task in this year as this country takes its first steps towards becoming a developed nation on or before the year 2020.

I thank you.

Mr. Winston Dookeran (*St. Augustine*): Mr. Speaker, may I too offer my congratulations on your election as Speaker and to the Member for Ortoire/Mayaro, congratulations on your maiden speech here in this House.

On the last occasion that I had the opportunity to speak in this Parliament, I remember too well the circumstances which led to a major attack on this parliamentary democracy of ours. At that time, I was one of the defenders of that democracy. Today, we are in a different situation, but I want to assure this honourable House that we on this side of the House continue to defend our democracy and continue to work and speak on behalf of the national interest of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Interruption*] The triviality with which serious matters have been dealt with is being expressed by the Member for Diego Martin Central.

Today I come back after many years of absence to comment on the budget proposals of 2002/2003. I believe it is true that we can look at our budget proposals and based on the debate that has taken place over the last day and a half or day and a part, there will be three basic objectives. A budget proposal is first and foremost a tool of economic management, Mr. Speaker. It is an instrument for the allocation of resources, and we have heard a lot of that, and in this particular case, it has outlined a strategy for poverty and development. And it is in that context that I intend to make my contribution.

What has emerged when I look closely at the documents, and I look closely at the supporting documents, is that this budget proposal appears to be very short on the issue of economic management. On the issue of the allocation of resources it has raised a big debate as to the equity of the allocation of that resource and the purpose for which resources have been allocated, and on the question of the poverty issue, it has raised a debate as to the approach to dealing with the issue of poverty.

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I would like in my contribution to raise some of these issues to assist in the articulation of a comprehensive programme for Trinidad and Tobago, but let us put the setting in place, first of all. There appears to have come from the other side suggestions that the economic situation in Trinidad and Tobago was in the doldrums over the last few years, and they have come to rescue it. [*Interruption*] Mr. Speaker, the impression has been created that under the stewardship of the United National Congress, the economy had slipped and collapsed.

Mr. Manning: Who said that?

Mr. W. Dookeran: The impression has been created, Mr. Speaker, and I can go back to the budget speech where he talked about the inheritance which we had, but let us first of all put that situation to rest.

The hon. Member for St. Joseph, in his splendid contribution, did his part in putting the fiscal situation in place. The *Annual Economic Survey* published by the Central Bank of Trinidad and Tobago had this to say. This was in 2001.

Mr. Manning: Himself to himself.

Mr. W. Dookeran: It is an institution, my friend.

“The economy's solid performance was marked by fiscal and balance of payments surpluses and continued stability of the exchange rate in the context of rising external reserves.”

Mr. Speaker, that statement was further reinforced in the Review of the Economy, in Appendix 2 in which the figures for the growth of the gross domestic product were outlined, and these are the figures for the record, Mr. Speaker. In 1996/1997 fiscal year, the growth rate was 2.7 per cent; 1997/1998, 7.8 per cent; 1998/1999, 4.4 per cent; 1999/2000, 6.1 per cent; 2000/2001, 3.3 per cent; and the growth rate in the year 2001/2002, which is the current year, has been 2.7 per cent.

Mr. Ramnath: Shame on you!

Mr. W. Dookeran: Is this but evidence, Mr. Speaker, of an economy whose solid performance has been acknowledged internationally? Let me go further, because I want to put a setting in perspective before I analyze the measures that have been put forward. The gross international reserves in 1993 was US \$446 million; 1995, US \$652 million; 1997, US \$11.2 million; 1999, US \$1,390 million; and in the year 2001 it was \$2.456 million—a steady increase in the foreign reserves of this country over that period.

The external debt as a percentage of our GDP, Mr. Speaker, was 30.6 per cent in 1993; 20.2 per cent in 1995; 15.4 per cent in 1997; 8 per cent in 1999 and 3.5 per cent in the year 2001. The hon. Member for St. Joseph had already given the figures on the return on debt, but let me just look at debt servicing which is outlined on page 66 of the *Review of the Economy*. And I quote from the *Review of the Economy*, Mr. Speaker:

“The debt service obligations of the Central Government decreased by 36 per cent from \$4.7 billion to \$3.0 billion during fiscal 2001/2002. This decline has been attributed to a 33 per cent reduction in the internal debt service, largely on account of the Government's 2001 restructuring exercise, which involved the refinancing of loans totalling \$701 million, plus repayments of \$498 million on the final tranche of the two-year emolument bonds for public servants, which matured on January 31, 2001.

The Government's external debt service obligations also decreased by 41 per cent to \$1.2 billion. This decrease is primarily due to the repayment of a US \$125 million Eurobond issue during fiscal 2001 and the fact that there was no repayments of similar magnitude during fiscal 2002.”

The inheritance was a good wicket, I am sure. [*Desk thumping*]

The International Monetary Fund (IMF), in Article IV Consultation of July 6, 2001, placed Trinidad and Tobago among the strongest performers in the region in terms of robust growth, more job creation, low inflation, balanced fiscal and external trade accounts, as well as poverty reduction, and commended the Trinidad and Tobago authorities for the strong track record of economic performance in recent years. This is the inheritance which this Government took up in December 2001.

What is at risk today, Mr. Speaker? The budget proposals have identified a number of measures, and I want to press the risk factors in this budget to see whether or not we can continue to be on that track or whether we are putting at risk some of the economic fundamentals which we have built up so painfully over the last 15 years. There has been absolutely no mention in the budget statement as to the implication of the global economy on the Trinidad and Tobago economy. And that is the first risk factor.

The very recent meetings of the IMF/World Bank which took place in September pointed towards a pessimistic note on the global economy. The IMF concern is that the overvaluation of the US dollar has not been corrected and the abrupt and disruptive adjustment remains a significant risk. We are not an island

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unto ourselves. These implications are likely to affect us in some way and at some time.

A report coming out of the recent IMF/World Bank meeting had this to say, and I wish to put this on the record of the *Hansard*.

“The economic crisis in Argentina remains unresolved, Uruguay is facing serious economic problems and Brazil is in a state of crisis as its exchange rate and stock market collapse. Argentina’s economy has shrunk 20 per cent over the past four years, drawing parallels with its experience in the Great Depression of the 1930s.

The bigger concern is that problems in South America could hurt the ability of developing countries in the rest of the world to access capital. ‘Were problems in South America to intensify—especially if accompanied by weaker growth in industrial countries—the potential for a more widespread impact on the emerging market asset class, including through cross-border bank lending, would increase significantly.’”

And it concludes with a comment from:

“...the Institute of International Finance, which represents all the world's leading banks, recently forecast that net private flows to emerging market economies would fall to \$123 billion (US) this year, the lowest level in a decade, before increasing slightly to \$151 billion next year.”

Mr. Speaker, I am raising these things because I believe it is important in planning the economy that we take into consideration the implications of the global risk that could descend upon us.

How does the global economy affect Trinidad and Tobago? Firstly, there could be a fall in the external demand for our products. Secondly, there could be a fall in the commodity prices of our major products and, thirdly, there is a deterioration in the terms of trade, but I do not see any of these considerations outlined in the budget as an instrument of economic management.

These effects are likely to be even more pronounced if the global events affect our Caricom markets adversely. The budget statement that says nothing about commodity prices or terms of trade shocks misses the point, and cannot be interpreted as a credible statement on economic management.

The September 2002 issue of the *Journal of Economics for Investment*, which looks at these concerns, made the following remarks, and I will just put this on the record:

“The US upswing has slowed sharply due to weak stock on war fears, but has not yet stalled. We expect growth to continue at lackluster pace, prompting the fed to take out insurance and cut rates further. The double dip recession risk has risen to 40 %.”

This is an issue of September 2002.

“Europe has slowed too,…”

Mr. Valley: Mr. Speaker, I wonder whether the hon. Member could just explain to the House this concept of the double dip recession risk. Could you explain it to us, please? We do not understand it.

Mr. W. Dookeran: I will certainly be willing to have a further discussion with you on that particular issue.

“...Growth should continue. Business uncertainty is high worldwide at present. The ECB will stay on hold, since inflation should moderate.

Japan’s upswing will remain weak,...

Government bonds will remain at low yields,...

The dollar will likely move weaker near term.”

And very important:

“Emerging debt has been on the rising trend in most emerging markets over the last five years, raising concerns about sustainability.”

The hon. Minister of Finance has said nothing as to the implications of these developments into our economic life. Is it that he has considered it and he has said that it does not matter? Rather than adjusting the economic projections and taking into consideration the new risk factors, Mr. Speaker, he has continued to inflate the budget and, to some extent, it might not be a true increase in the Government budget. I will come to that later.

Has the Minister of Finance factored these considerations in his projections for balance of payments and fiscal balance? A credible budget must do that, outlining clear statements as to how those two particular equations are going to be affected, otherwise it is merely shadow boxing outside the ring. [*Laughter*]

11.30 a.m.

So, Mr. Speaker, this is what we are facing. The *Review of the Economy* has pointed towards an anticipated development of a problem in the balance of payments. Page 70 of that review had this to say; for the first time, the *Review of the Economy* has made this comment in a very subtle way:

“Trinidad and Tobago recorded a balance of payments deficit of US \$3.7 million at the end of the first quarter of 2002. This deficit was the result of adverse movements in both the capital and current account. However, while the current account remained in surplus at US \$148.1, the capital account, deficit widened to US \$151.8 million. The external current account maintained a surplus position at the end of the first quarter of 2002, of US \$148.1 million approximately 1.5 per cent of GDP. This represented a marginal deterioration over the 2001 surplus of US \$150.5 million, or approximately 1.7 percent of GDP.”

I have quoted this, not as an alarm signal, but let us look at the figures.

In 1998 the overall surplus was \$80.6 million; in 1999, it was \$162.2 billion and since the year 2000 it began to drop 1.8 positive in 2000; in 2001, revised 1.8 and in 2002, negative 3.7.

Mr. Valley: Mr. Speaker, I wonder whether the hon. Member would also tell us the level of external borrowing in the same year, because as he knows the level of external borrowing would affect the capital account. Would he please?

Mr. W. Dookeran: Yes, Mr. Speaker, the level of external borrowings was zero in that year, but the balance of payment cannot be predicated on borrowing, and this is an important point that the Minister has raised. We cannot develop a surplus on a balance of payments account on external borrowing.

Mr. Valley: If you are comparing 2001 and 2002 and you had hefty external borrowing in 2001 and you have zero in 2002, then you must make the point. Nobody is saying that you will depend on external borrowing. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. W. Dookeran: I am conceding that point, but I am going further. I am saying that the hon. Member has exposed a thinking that we shall build the current reserves on external borrowings. [*Crosstalk*] [*Desk thumping*] That is the point I want to make. [*Desk thumping*] He has helped me to make my point. Thank you, hon. Member for Diego Martin Central, for helping me to make a point.

Mr. Ramnath: I think he will make a better Prime Minister than you; brilliant man.

Mr. Imbert: You cannot make anything.

Mr. W. Dookeran: Mr. Speaker, my argument is that the international context is one which we should factor in our projections. My argument is that the balance of payments situation, although not alarmist, I keep making that point, is beginning to show weakness. Now let me look at the fiscal equation.

There are, in fact, only two balances that we must look at: The balance of payment in the fiscal equation, the draft estimates of expenditure, as identified in the financing gap of \$4.2 billion, which according to the estimates, represents 21 per cent of their revenue. This is outlined in the Estimates of Revenue. The borrowing in 2001 was \$2.2 billion of a total revenue of \$16.5 billion, representing 12.5 per cent borrowing, as a percentage of revenue. In 2002 it was \$1.4 billion out of a total of \$15.5 billion, representing a figure of 9 per cent; but in 2003, it is \$4.2 billion representing 16 per cent of the total revenue; so we see another trend developing; almost \$2 billion is to refinance government debt due to high cost debt. This is part of the process of debt restructuring.

I recollect hearing the Minister of Finance or someone saying that this was to refinance UNC's high cost, but this is a normal practice in government affairs, that we had looked at the maturity and risk profiles of these debts and had begun to refinance them a long time ago. That is why I was a little disappointed when the budget statement ignored these facts and tended to politicize economic statistics for the purposes of short-term political benefits. *[Interruption]* I would expect that in the debate, but not in the statement.

Now, Mr. Speaker, of that \$2.2 billion of new borrowing, because \$2 billion is for refinancing—*[Interruption]*—3.6 is when you added. The document says it very clearly, but he has given me some new ideas so I welcome it. *[Desk thumping]* Thank you, Member for Diego Martin Central.

Total amortized payments for both foreign and domestic debts will amount to 3.3; planned borrowings on the domestic market amounts to 2.9 of which 1.9—and this is the point I am making—\$1.989 million is the refinancing of Government's high debt; contractual external borrowing from multilateral institutions would amount to \$248 million. We are talking borrowings; we are not talking repayments. Mr. Speaker, \$930 million has been programmed to be borrowed from international commercial markets.

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I ask the question: As to this \$930 million which is programmed to be borrowed from international financial markets, this to me is a rather strange decision, when one considers that the level of foreign reserves is relatively high in this country and the net cost of borrowing will be much higher, especially in light of what they said earlier and our rate of return on our resources is likely to be very low, which means that we are likely to pay a very high spread for borrowing costs.

We have debated this issue at length and had suggested that, perhaps, this is not the time to increase our foreign borrowing, but the Government in its own wisdom—and the reason I am saying this is that there are implications for the fundamentals. Although it may not change the fundamentals now, what I am doing in this presentation is merely identifying a trend that could start as a result of this fiscal account that we have to approve today.

Of equal significance is the fact, and this was raised by the Member for St. Joseph, for fiscal 2003 the anticipated debt/GDP ratio will be 77 per cent, which now places us among the vulnerable countries like Brazil, 72.4 per cent; Philippines, 62.6 per cent; Egypt 85.2 per cent and Turkey, 19 per cent. *[Interruption]* The Member for St. Joseph went to great pains to outline that.

Hon. Members: Bogus figures! *[Crosstalk]*

Mr. W. Dookeran: What we are suggesting is that the emerging risk, the global and US adjustments, the overall balance of payments deficit and the emerging fiscal balances all put together are, perhaps, at this stage, putting our fundamentals at risk. Are we setting the stage to put at risk the fundamentals of the economy? That is the critical question that I pose to the hon. Minister of Finance. Are we setting that stage? We have come through that stage; we knew that in 1988 the economy's fundamentals had gone wrong. We knew at that time that the fiscal accounts had gone off track; we knew that the balance of payments had gone off track and we knew what we had to do between 1988 until now, to rebuild those fundamentals.

If my submission is to merely warn the Government, I would have contributed an enormous job here today; to urge you to look at these fundamentals, because one of the important things about fundamentals, once they get off track, it is very costly to bring them back on track. We have spent the last 15 years in this country building those fundamentals. Are we going to put them at risk?

I have identified the issues that should be brought into consideration. *[Interruption]* Plenty words? Are you talking about the budget statement? *[Laughter]* I

found so, but I really did not want to be so unkind as to suggest that there were plenty words in this statement as well. Since you have raised it, hon. Prime Minister, I agree that there are plenty words in here, plenty, plenty words.

Mr. Ramnath: Which he did not read before coming here. [*Crosstalk*] “Yuh” get Valley to set “yuh” up.

Mr. W. Dookeran: Mr. Speaker, we have paid a high price for economic mismanagement. In 1986 we began to reconstruct these fundamentals, putting the fiscal balance in order, step by step, taking hard decisions, sustainable debt burden, which we began to redress and refinance, overall balance of payments surpluses began to become part of the new horizon. I set the stage earlier where during the five years the UNC was in office, these balances were strengthened one year at a time. These are the vital health indicators of our economy, once we let them go astray, we will pay dearly for it to be returned. If we open the door and put our fundamentals at risk, we will be doing so at great disservice to ourselves and, more importantly, to the next generation.

I was tempted to wonder, when I looked at these figures, and particularly the budget and the financial figures, whether the Government was relying—because I always make the generous assumption first—on anticipated revenues in the energy sector that will eventually reverse these trends in the years to come. Maybe the hon. Member for Diego Martin West, the Minister of Planning and Development, who looks beyond today, will be able to enlighten us on that.

What are the anticipated revenues for the next few years and were they relying on that to redress the balance? Did they feel confident that that revenue source would redress the balance or, alternatively, were they looking at the review of the petroleum tax regime to boost Government revenue, as the second way in which they can deal with this problem? But I would think that this, perhaps, could not be their thinking. I think that they cannot really be serious to factor these anticipated revenues either through taxation or production into this year's budget. I would hope not, but only time will tell. If my presentation is to stop it from happening in the future, then we would have done our job here in this Opposition. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, there appears to be some contradiction in the figures; maybe the hon. Member for Diego Martin Central will enlighten us in due course. Let us put the debt servicing figures in perspective. The debt servicing in 2001 was \$4.6 billion; in 2002 it was \$2.3 billion and according to the Draft Estimates of Expenditure it was \$5.5 billion, although the budget statement talks about \$6.2 billion. That is one point that maybe it is a bit of arithmetic; maybe the estimates

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were prepared long before the budget and maybe there were some new figures, but the fact is we do not have the figures.

Secondly, we notice in the Variation of Appropriation Bill, in spite of the fact that you are talking about a \$20 million budget, all that we have been asked to approve is something like \$15 million in expenditure, which excludes the debt servicing. [*Crosstalk*] Well, the size of it will not account for debt servicing and it has not been so in previous bills. We have looked at that.

I am raising these issues so that you can clarify them if you so wish. It does not, in any way, take away from the argument as to the viability of the fundamentals being put at risk. Let me move on to the other aspect of the allocation of resources and let us look at some of the developmental aspects of this budget. As an instrument of economic management, what are the risks associated with this budget in terms of the sources of growth, the risk to workers; the measures to increase our competitiveness and generating more exports for our country's trade regime and we will notice some further contradictions.

On the sources of growth, the budget statement is predicated on the economic strategy that energy will remain the engine of growth in our economy for some time to come, perhaps in a transformed way. While it talks about the manufacturing sector being the strongest in the region, it has taken steps to remove the export allowance, which has been one of the sources of that strength. In order to be able to keep that strength going we need the export allowance, but they have taken that away without putting into place an alternative mechanism to keep its competitive position.

Thirdly, the financial sector is raised as an important one:

“making Trinidad and Tobago a major financial centre, not only in the Caribbean but in the Western Hemisphere.”

I believe the Member for St. Joseph already outlined our position here, when he said that we have absolutely no problem with the measures they have taken in the financial sector. They have been long in gestation and they ought to be put in place as fast as possible. In fact, plans were in place almost two years ago to have these measures introduced, so the question of the integration of the financial services regulation between banking supervision and pension, we support. The question of the introduction of a financial services ombudsman, we also support.

The Member for St. Joseph raised some concerns about the regulatory system that ought to be put in place in order to deal with the credit unions as a

prerequisite to dealing with the expansion of that sector. These are responsible positions that have been taken by the Opposition. We are not Opposition for opposition sake.

Let me look at the risk for the workers in this budget. There is one positive. There is a substantial increase in construction activity that is envisaged in this budget. Public Sector Investment Programme: We know in the past that when budgets do not balance the first account to be cut is always the Public Sector Investment Programme, so we have to take that into consideration. If this budget does not balance in the end, if external factors influence or if much of the arithmetic does not work out, that is a big risk we are taking. Nonetheless, there is construction activity being promoted.

There is a dislocation to the workers that would come out of the restructuring of Caroni (1975) Limited; that is one of the risks associated with this budget; risks due to dislocation and industrial restructuring. Have we worked out a plan? I heard the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West give the impression that he has a plan for Caroni (1975) Limited and I listened very carefully to what he said, but there have been many plans, as he well knows. He relied on the tripartite Plan for Caroni (1975) Limited, but his plan was not really the tripartite plan. It is a plan beyond the tripartite plan.

The hon. Member was telling us that he had a plan and he gave us the document on the tripartite plan on the one hand, but he was talking about another plan, so I am not too sure he knew which plan he was talking about. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Manning: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. Member for St. Augustine for giving way. The fact is that the tripartite arrangement is the one which we were working on up until 1995, but the whole arrangement has been prejudiced between 1995 and 2000 by the actions or inaction, to be more accurate, of the government that succeeded us, to the point where today a different set of circumstances is now facing us and in that situation it calls for different policy prescription. That is what I am talking about.

Mr. Ramnath: You have not said anything!

Mr. W. Dookeran: In other words, you are supporting my view, Mr. Prime Minister, that the hon. Minister of Agriculture was shadow boxing outside the ring. [*Crosstalk*]

We talked about the further risk to skilled workers in the tradable sector and I mentioned briefly the export allowance, which is a major factor. There is likely to

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be a risk associated with the turnover, the adjustments that are likely to take place in the port and in the Unit Trust. There are other restructuring exercises and they are likely to be a risk to workers as a result of those measures and it is important, therefore, to address these issues. A serious, credible budget statement will address the risk to workers and tell us how they would deal with it. [*Desk thumping*] It would appear to me, based on some of the documents I have read here, that there is likely to be a fall in employment in the informal sector.

In today's world one does not know what the future is, so one has to identify the risks, deal with them and mitigate against those risks. This is what I am saying. To simply announce that these things are going to happen, without addressing and telling this nation how they are going to deal with the worker fallout of this budget, is really shadow boxing outside the ring. [*Crosstalk*] It is in that context that we need to analyze an area that is missing in this budget, which I will raise, which is the issue of corporate governance. How is corporate governance at risk?

Today, that is a big issue. We know of the problems that are taking place in the corporate sector, in the United States and elsewhere, where there is need for a balance between the spirit of enterprise and accountability. I would want to suggest that the Government seriously look at corporate governance in this country, to identify the role of public policy to provide the firms with the incentive and the discipline to minimize the divergence between the private and social returns and to protect the interest of the State and the stakeholders. It is an area that is completely missing, but it is an important area in today's financial landscape. That is why I said earlier when we started, that the budget is an instrument for economic management and the budget has fallen short on that particular issue, for it has not dealt with that. It has not dealt with the issue of economic management in the way in which we have outlined.

On the question of the removal of the export allowance, one professional study was done which suggested that in a corporation with a profit of \$800,000 per annum, the effective tax rate, which was 8.7 per cent in 2002, is likely to increase to 20.7 per cent in 2003. That is based on a professional study that was done and circulated.

Mr. Valley: Do you consider a tax rate of 20 per cent reasonable or do you consider that in this day and age a corporation ought to be paying a tax of 8.7 per cent?

Mr. W. Dookeran: What I am concerned about is how competitive the rate is, not whether it is high or low. You have outlined again one of the underlying

themes that there must be high or low tax rates. The question in today's global world is whether the rate is competitive [*Desk thumping*] and whether it allows the manufacturing sector to explore the opportunities that are emerging in the global economy and that is the question you should ask yourself, Member for Diego Martin Central. I want you to ask me some more questions, Member for Diego Martin Central. [*Crosstalk*]

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

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

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. W. Dookeran: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the Members of the House for the extension of time.

On that point, Member for Diego Martin Central, there are two proposals that affect the competitiveness of our export sector in this proposal; one is the introduction of VAT on export services. While having a positive revenue effect, it is likely to introduce an anti-export bias in the trade regime. The second proposal is the export allowance removal. The point I am making is that we talk about building the manufacturing sector's competitiveness, but we take measures in order to reduce that competitiveness. [*Crosstalk*] As an instrument of economic management, I am asking: Where is the coherent development strategy? Maybe the Member for Diego Martin West will give us the outline of his plans for the next few years—[*Crosstalk*—]at some stage.

Maybe I was making a general statement for the Member for Diego Martin West, I am not too sure he understood the generosity of the statement. [*Crosstalk*]

We have two professional reports, Mr. Speaker, the Ernst and Young report and the Pricewaterhouse report, which were circulated widely to the public, these points professionally. So I am not giving these points on my own, I am just relying on professional work that has been done on these issues, about the reintroduction of the anti-export bias in the trading sector. Where is the economic philosophy?

I am sorry the hon. Prime Minister is not here, because I am saying, first and foremost, a budget has to be an instrument for economic management. So some of the key questions which we would expect to see outlined are: What are the projections for commodity prices in the next year, the risk associated with that? Are the terms of trade likely to deteriorate in the foreseeable future? We would

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like to hear statements on that from the Minister of Trade and Industry. What is the index of competitiveness in the national economy and how would these measures improve that? I would like to hear the Minister of Planning and Development address that issue. Do our fiscal measures have an anti-export bias or not? Which I have postulated.

I heard the hon. Member for Port of Spain North talk about food security. I was pleased to hear him talk about food security, but I am waiting to hear how he intends to bring about food security in Trinidad and Tobago. It is a big challenge and I am pleased that he raised it, but do we have a serious policy for food security in the nation? [*Crosstalk*] I am not here about apportioning blame.

Mr. Speaker: Order, order!

Mr. W. Dookeran: A large part of the debate in this thing is about apportioning blame. I could do that if I wish, but I am simply saying: What is the food security plan that you talked about? Is that plan going to be promoted by the Public Sector Investment Programme? Is it going to be promoted by—the Member said that he had credible investors interested in investing in Caroni (1975) Limited. What are they? Who are they? What are these? We will need some more information. I thought when he was going to explain that, that we were going to get some food for thought. The issue of the presentation was good, but it did not inspire the confidence in the agricultural sector that I wanted to hear. [*Crosstalk*]

There has been a lot of talk within recent times about having three-year budgets, so that one can see the perspectives within a period of time, so that there can be a rollover, so that there will be more—certainly, there would be more confidence, more trust in fiscal and monetary affairs. Is there a policy position on this matter? Are we likely to have a rolling plan budgetary proposal or not? I am raising these issues because I believe these are some of the critical issues that have to be incorporated in a budget statement. I am raising them because they were not in the budget statement.

Let me deal very briefly with the issue of poverty. I think it was pointed out by Members on this side of the House that poverty is a problem that has to be tackled and the measures outlined are but a step in that direction, but there is one conceptual issue. There are two approaches to dealing with the issue of poverty in today's literature and in today's public policy journals and by those who are responsible for managing public policy. One is this whole concept of the social safety net. I would say that that, perhaps, is the thinking of the last generation of

how to deal with poverty issues, but more recently there has been a lot of discussion as to the new dimension of poverty.

I would just put on the record some of the experiences of other countries and the alternative approach to dealing with poverty, because what we have here is a generational gap of ideas. [*Desk thumping*] What was good at one time may not be good. We cannot be stuck with those ideas of the past that may or may not have worked. We continue doing it in year 2002, we come back with the same programme and say there is poverty because it is not working.

Social capital formation:

“Social capital is assuming an increasingly important role in the World Bank’s reduction strategy. The *World Development Report 2000/2001* identifies three pillars to that strategy; promoting opportunity, facilitating empowerment, and enhancing security. Building social capital is at the core of the empowerment agenda, together with promoting pro-poor institutional reform and removing social barriers. However, social capital is also a critical asset for created opportunities that enhance well-being and for achieving greater security and reduced vulnerability...”

And they talk about what is happening in Indonesia, where particular villages in the island of Java build and maintain complex water delivery systems that require collaboration from the nation while other villages rely on simple individual wells; collaboration from the nation. You mobilize communities for a specific social purpose and there are elements of that in some of the proposals. [*Interruption*]

It is not in the set of proposals we are talking about, I am sorry to say. We are talking about a different concept. This is also not my view; I am saying that there are two generations of thinking and handling of the issue of poverty. One is the social safety net, which we are still wedded to and the other is the creation of social capital through a new measure. I want to suggest to the hon. Minister of Finance that it might be well for him to open detailed dialogue with the World Bank on the issue of social capital formation, and let Trinidad and Tobago be one of the candidates for introducing measures based on this new concept for dealing with the issue of poverty, so that we be not forever wedded to the old institutions.

The world has moved beyond that and there are other examples in Tanzania, informal networks in Russia and so forth. I will not go through the details. The only point I am making is that we must have a new generation of thinking when it comes to the issue of poverty. We want to have a permanent solution to poverty

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over a period of time [*Desk thumping*] not a stopgap measure that appears to be appealing but, in the final analysis, returns a new generation of poverty every time we deal with the generation before. We need to question the traditional approach to development. [*Crosstalk*]

The Leader of the Opposition made this very point in his statement when he talked about the ways in which we can deal with poverty. So I am elaborating on the point that he has raised in his contribution. We need to question the traditional approach to development. Where policies have failed, we must not go and redo them; we must try new policies. Looking at the experience of other countries, we must have a good idea of what policies work and what do not work.

Policies are equally important to resources. It is not only a question of having resources to plug into an old policy framework. We must have a new set of policy framework to deal with the issue of poverty and I am suggesting that, perhaps, we may need to do that. I believe it was the Member for Naparima who outlined, in great detail, a critique of the existing measures that were outlined in the budget statement, in order to deal with this issue, coming to the view that we have, in fact, a populist approach rather than a strategy for transformation.

No one is against proposals that deal with poverty; everyone wants to deal with that. The question is whether you are really dealing with it by saying that you are dealing with it or whether, in the long run, you will be able to bring about that kind of change.

Mr. Speaker, the Government has another chance; 75 per cent of the budgets prepared in the last 46 years came from the party in power today. Are you aware of that, Mr. Speaker, that 75 per cent of the budgets presented in the last 46 years have been budgets by the PNM government? If there is, therefore, any apportioning blame in a total sense, they have to take 75 per cent of that blame in the context of time. [*Desk thumping*] But we are not in that business. We just want to warn them against those measures that are based on the old generation of thinking and are not based on the simple story of finding a plate for every soul, the fund, the programme or a centre, in order to deal with the issue of poverty, and there is a whole new thinking on that particular matter.

I will deal with a few of the other issues in the budget; the first issue is the University of the West Indies. I do not know what is the genesis of that idea. I know in today's world we are talking about networking of universities; we are talking about building core institutions and networking them into the global framework; we are talking about building alliances with universities abroad so

that we can have a total onslaught of the intellectual capital to bear on our problems; not to isolate and go back and build a University of Trinidad and Tobago. Building an institution is an enormous responsibility and particularly building an institution of an educational nature. Sometimes it takes 50 years to deal with that.

In today's world, the new thinking is to build networks of institutions and we have got to use the University of the West Indies which has a credible reputation in the world to expand it and to be able to create the networks that are required to make it a first-class university in the world, rather than to sit back and say, "Ah, we come with an old idea." [*Desk thumping*]

It was an idea in one of the 75 budgets earlier on, way back when, of building a University of Trinidad and Tobago. I do not know which one of the budget speeches, but about 30 years ago that was raised and we have now a recycling of those ideas in all these budget speeches of the past, coming to bear in a new horizon, in a new time, in which we have to take the global economy which is at our doorsteps. So I would want to humbly suggest to the hon. Minister and to the Government that instead of dealing with setting up a University of Trinidad and Tobago, they should take steps to build a networking framework for the University of the West Indies to be able to expand and to be able to get all the resources to improve the production of tertiary education in Trinidad and Tobago from the current level of 8,000 to 20,000 during a period of time. That is another area where the generational thinking is once again at fault. What is at hand today is not that concept of building a University of Trinidad and Tobago. You do not deal with building universities just like that.

Let me deal, very briefly, with the issue of the Public Sector Investment Programme. I notice that the PSIP has a very ambitious programme this year but, once again, the programme is predicated on a lot of words. I would just like to put it on record, because the hon. Prime Minister talked about words when I was talking earlier. Here is what it says:

"2. The 2003 PSIP has been designed to reflect Government's efforts at initiating the process of transforming Trinidad and Tobago into a developed country by 2020. Initial preparation on the 2020 plan has so far focused on gathering information on various characteristics including demographic status, economic performance, social indicators such as education and health, labour

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market, infrastructure, access to utilities, technology achievement, human development and the environment.”

Look at the approach. You are dealing with a 20-year perspective. You are going to collect data and there is no problem with collecting data, but that is your main approach to dealing with this problem. We live in a dynamic world. The dynamics have changed; you have got to position yourself in order to be able to draw into the Public Sector Investment Programme complementary private sector activities; it is a new approach now. It is not really a new approach; it has been on the agenda for some time, but it is an attempt to do that, so that we would have, not only a Public Sector Investment Programme, but also a national investment programme in Trinidad and Tobago that takes into consideration the public sector and the private sector in its approach. [*Desk thumping*]

This has been one of the problems that we have had when we look at the Government's focus on the State directing the show. Now it is a game where the market forces have to play their role. The market forces will have to play a role, just as the public sector has to play a role. When we look at the way in which the Public Sector Investment Programme has been articulated and formulated, we do not see any change in approach. I would have thought that the Government, which had nine months to prepare for this budget would have, at least, come up with some ideas that are now consistent with a new approach to delivery. The Public Sector Investment Programme is very important. The very growth rate of the economy is dependent on the PSIP and the extent to which we can have growth in the economy. We could have growth; we have had growth at 6 and 7 per cent before; we cannot settle for 2 and 3 per cent.

In fact, that brings me really to my final point and that is the whole issue of the vision. We have looked at the growth path for the future. I believe the Leader of the Opposition outlined the very genesis of our proposals for the future, when he talked about the jewel of the Americas concept, a diversified economy, full employment, globally competitive technology driven society, knowledge-based, equal opportunities, social cohesion and security of life. We believe that we do not have to wait for 20 years in order to be able to put things right on the economic front.

Our per capita income today is \$8,450 per head. We believe that we can work towards a per capita income of \$15,000 per head by year 2010 and we have worked out what is required to do that. It requires a growth rate of 6 per cent, not 2 per cent, averaging 6 per cent and, therefore, the real focus of the Minister of

Planning and Development is to suggest to this honourable House how he can get a 6 per cent growth rate going in this country in order to bring us to a \$15,000 per capita income in a 10-year period. That is the real challenge; not to come with statistics and blame this one and that one. The question is: How can you support a 6 per cent growth rate?

There are a lot of things that are going to happen. We have no forecast of what these rates are likely to be. The budget statement makes no comment on the future, not even next year. It does not tell us what we should expect next year. Presumably, next year we will say that the price of oil dropped and, therefore, we did not achieve what we wanted to achieve. Then we will go over the process again, because we need to have a plan and when things change, we need to change accordingly to make sure that the plan is achievable. [*Desk thumping*] It is a dynamic process we are in; it is a different world. It is not a world of static; it is not a world in which you sit back and put a Public Sector Investment Programme and you say after, "It cannot work."

So our plan to achieve these goals suggested is that we can move to a 6 per cent real growth. We have talked about labour force participation as an indicator of development. Today it is 44.5 per cent. We have suggested by 2010 it can be 52.5 per cent and we have suggested that there are steps to be taken in order to improve that. The steps are given in detail in terms of education and skills training. Poverty rates which stand at 21 per cent by UNDP standards can move to 12 per cent by a targeted programme, some of which I have talked about today.

Mr. Speaker, productivity growth is very important to maintain the competitiveness of the economy, but we cannot be talking about the social equation and leaving the economic equation to take its own course. Productivity growth is now at 1.3 per cent, 1995/2000. In order to achieve that 6 per cent growth and provide \$15,000 per capita income per head in this country, we need to move that to 4.4 per cent by 2005 and 2010. So there are detailed statistics that we can put and then ask, "How do we get there?" Other countries in the Caribbean, Barbados, Bahamas, Aruba and Curacao have today per capita incomes of \$15,000, but we are satisfied in Trinidad and Tobago by saying that we have a per capita income of \$8,000 per head and we are very, very happy about that.

The final analysis is that all the social programmes that we talk about can be resolved, if we have a serious plan for improving our per capita income in Trinidad and Tobago in accordance with a planned approach. The Minister of Planning and Development has a serious challenge in his five-year period and I

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have no problem assisting him in finding solutions. I have no problem, Mr. Speaker. We can talk about that in dialogue. [*Crosstalk*] We can talk about that, because this is important for the nation.

This is how we want to deal with the country and we cannot come with all these ideas and say that we are solving the country's problems. Productivity growth must increase. The growth rate of the economy must increase. Labour force participation has to be increased in order to achieve these goals and that is what I was hoping to see in a Public Sector Investment Programme, not the old thing that we would now collect data. We are going on a 20-year plan, but what we are going to do as our first step is to collect data.

I remember when I was a minister in government and I had to rely on data collection; I ended up collecting data for five years and doing absolutely nothing with it at the end. [*Desk thumping*] I want to forewarn you of that approach. I am giving you the benefit of my experience and my approach. You need to go beyond that. You need to sit and work out a strategic plan, so what you do not know I will give to you and what you do know I have already forgotten. [*Crosstalk*] [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, our planning vision is clear. We know where we want this country to go. We know that this country can move in that direction; we know that we have the resources to do that. We cannot come back with the old formula and the old institutions and the outmoded methods, but it is very important for us in this Parliament to sit and look at the ways in which we can bring about the unity of this country, in order to achieve the energy that is required to move us ahead and that is another big job.

It is a job that the Leader of the Opposition has been speaking about and he has mentioned that unless we agree on the mechanisms by which we can inspire all our population, our young population, towards higher heights, towards greater possibilities, we will forever be telling ourselves that we are working on their behalf, but we will not be working on their behalf.

Mr. Speaker, this is another big challenge. They have been given the mandate to chart, not to rule. They have been given the mandate to chart that course for the country for the next five years, so that it would be different at the end of five years, so that when you come with your 80th budget, it will not be on the same issue that you have started. If you come back here in five years and we discuss the same issues that we are discussing today, then you would have considered yourselves to have failed.

This is the challenge that we are all facing here in the Opposition and you are facing there in the Government, but you have started on the wrong foot. You are wedded to ideas of the past. You have not thought out the methodology to deal with some of the issues. You have ignored the critical issues of economic management and you have, therefore, not started off. It is our job to put that right, to let you know that for the nation's sake you need to put it right.

I said when I started that we are always in the interest of Trinidad and Tobago. Our job, whether we sit there or we sit here, remains the same, to remain in the interest of Trinidad and Tobago and in that context, let us remove this politics that has divided us in the past; let us try to get a new imaginative approach to dealing with our problems. Let us start with our three-year budget statements, our economic planning and let us discuss our unification programming in this country. Those are the issues.

We cannot sit back here simply going through the motions year in year out. I have come back here with the benefit of my experience in the past, knowing some of the problems that you face and suggesting to you that together we can make this thing work, but you have to listen very clearly and deal with the issues in a serious way, especially the issues that those who have had the benefit of governing have brought to your attention. I have listened to the contributions of all Members of this House in the last year and a half and I have no doubt that the Members who have spoken on our behalf, the Member for Naparima, the Member for Oropouche, the Member—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Members: Oropouche!

Mr. W. Dookeran:—have all raised serious issues; they are the people's representatives; they are raising issues as they emerge in the people's corridor and you cannot ignore the issues that have been raised in the people's corridor. Those are the issues that must be addressed by enlightened leadership. [*Crosstalk*] Those are the issues. Whether you agree with them or not, those are the issues. When you raise the issues, I listen. Those are the issues in the corridors of the people. Enlightened leadership will take us above that. Let us, therefore, in the context of this budget, set a new page in the history of Trinidad and Tobago so that your own history will not be tested in a dishonourable way.

Thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

The Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Let me join my

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colleagues in congratulating you on your elevation to the Speaker's office. I think it is most deserving.

Mr. Speaker, I also congratulate the Members of this House who have made their maiden contributions during this debate; the Member for Naparima, the Member for Oropouche; on my side, the Member for St. Ann's East, the Member for San Fernando West and the Member for Ortoire/Mayaro. I know that the Member for Couva South has not spoken as yet, he has been away from the Parliament for quite some time and, therefore, we should, in fact, treat him as a new Member.

Mr. Speaker, I have to intervene in this debate at this time because the last speaker, a person for whom I have had, up to a while ago, the highest regard, really surprised me this morning. Over in the Ministry of Finance since January, I heard some people saying certain things and I did not believe them, because I thought I had known the Member for some time, I could not believe it.

12.30 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, he looks at the headlines with a number of documents and attempts to use them in the first conversation he had afterwards, not even fully understanding what he had read. They tell me the last Minister of Finance and the one before very quickly decided to distance themselves from him. I did not believe that, Mr. Speaker, but looking at the performance here this morning I have to give that some level of credibility.

On the issue of credibility, Mr. Speaker, I think I would want to deal with that a bit because the Member stated that the last time he was in this House he was a defender of democracy. Mr. Speaker, obviously he was referring to the 1990 situation and I do not know whether you would remember, Mr. Speaker, but my recollection is that the Member was the person selected by those who desecrated our Parliament to become the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago and he accepted it and left the Parliament, and went to his colleagues and said: "Listen, this is what they gave me." Well of course his colleagues ran him, so I do not know on what basis he can now claim to be a defender of democracy.

Mr. Ramnath: Mr. Speaker, I hate to disturb you, but this is a very sensitive matter. The Member was not here, I was here, and what he is saying is misleading. Stay away from that.

Hon. K. Valley: I will just ask my colleague whether or not he was appointed as Prime Minister and whether he left the Parliament with a document and took it to his colleagues.

Dr. Moonilal: Irrelevant.

Hon. K. Valley: The Member claims—I do not know on what basis—that they came to rescue the economy. Mr. Speaker, we are on record as saying that we expected this economy to perform over the period 1995—2001 simply because of what we put in place over the period 1991 to 1995. It is the PNM that liberalized this economy. That is the fact. When we left in 1995 there were about 14 energy-related projects in the pipeline all of them including the Atlas Plant which was just about to go into production—even that was in the pipeline, Mr. Speaker. Would you believe that when we came in, in January there were two projects in the pipeline? Thank God we got our act together and yesterday when I asked Tidco to give me some indication concerning what is in the pipeline for the period April to September, they can now give me a document of some 10 or 12 pages—and I cannot even go through all of this—of projects especially in the non-oil sector that are now in the pipeline.

Economic management is not a chance event. That is the reality. So that we expect the economy to be performing well. Mr. Speaker, when we talk about the 2.7 growth in 2002, we have to put that in context. Given the momentum, there has been growth in the economy, but if you reap without replanting, without tilling the soil, obviously at some point in time it is going to become barren and that is what has been happening to our economy. Not one new project other than InnCogen over the period; even the four others that were to come with InnCogen failed to come. That is their experience. They did not till the soil and, therefore, the growth started to reduce. That is the reality!

That has been his experience. He should tell us of his experience over the period 1986—1991 because he was the Minister of Planning and Development then. They tell me that was the same experience at the Central Bank. I did not believe it, but he should tell us his experience when we had negative growth, current account deficits, and fiscal deficits in that period. He is talking. It is amazing, Mr. Speaker, how well he talks about Caroni (1975) Limited.

The tripartite agreement—because I am simply dealing with the issue of credibility because I believe that credibility in life is everything, and if you want to be an elder statesman, you must watch your credibility. When you come and tell my colleague that he is giving you a sleight of hand, you talk about the tripartite plan, but now you are talking about the new plan for Caroni (1975) Limited.

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Mr. Speaker, you are aware that the tripartite plan was a 1992 initiative by my colleague, the Member for Diego Martin West. The Member for Couva North participated in that, we wrote off some \$2.4 billion of the agreement on that plan and you know what they did in the period 1995—2001? Renege on that plan, started running up debts once more so that I am now faced with going to the Cabinet to ask for a restructuring of Caroni (1975) Limited's debt amounting to \$518.5 million, and this is only part of it. Over the period their debt is \$2.6 billion.

Obviously in that scenario, one has to take a hard look. We are not only taking a hard look at Caroni (1975) Limited. You would have heard my comment with respect to BWIA, Mr. Speaker, because we have to face the reality in Trinidad and Tobago. We cannot continue to be pumping money into Caroni (1975) Limited, and the good thing about the last government was that they realized that also.

Mr. Speaker, the same committee they had dealing with Caroni (1975) Limited is the same committee that we are using, so all the hullabaloo I am hearing from the President of the union I know that is shadow boxing because he agreed last year, 2001, to the restructuring of Caroni (1975) Limited. He is changing his mind now because it is PNM in office and not UNC, but there is a reality and we are facing that reality. So that Caroni (1975) Limited will in fact be restructured. We have set up a state management company; we are transferring the land; we are offering the VSEP programme and we would move from there with equity.

We said we will set up the Light Manufacturing Sector, we are going to put some into heavy industry, we are going to put some into housing, and we are going to put some into agro-processing and other agricultural products that the Member for Couva North is speaking about. If he wants rice cultivation and so on we would go into that, but we cannot keep Caroni (1975) Limited in its current state and allow it to continue bleeding the Treasury, and the Member for St. Augustine ought to know that.

Then Mr. Speaker, there is this issue of the export allowance, the hypocrisy. Mr. Speaker, let me just read from the 1998 Budget Speech delivered on Friday, December 12, 1997 by the credited hon. Brian Kuei Tung, Minister of Finance. I am reading from page 20, Export Allowance.

“Mr. Speaker, the Export Allowance has been available to exporters for a number of years.

This allowance was intended to enhance the Industrial/Manufacturing Sector by providing a tax incentive to new industries during their infancy.

It was expected that when such industries became mature and established, the allowance would be withdrawn.

To date, no industry has been weaned from this allowance.

Furthermore, we must be mindful of our obligations under the various International Trade Agreements which tend to view export allowances as export subsidies.

Accordingly, Mr. Speaker, I propose to eliminate the Export Allowance commencing January 1, 2000.”

I now go to the Budget Speech of the last Minister of Finance, Minister Yetming, September 14, 2001 and I am quoting from page 31, under Manufacturing Sector:

“The fifth driver in the diversification process is the manufacturing sector. The challenge for the non-energy business community, and the manufacturing sector in particular, is significant in light of imminent regional and international developments. The Free Trade Area of the Americas, the CARICOM Single Market and Economy, and the termination of the Export Allowance under the WTO agreement by the year 2003, will place manufacturing firms in a vulnerable position.”

Mr. Speaker, this is not something that came as a bullet out of nowhere, this has been telegraphed for some time that this is considered an export subsidy. As my colleague, the Member for San Fernando West, said yesterday: if we continue with the export allowance, then our manufacturers would be subject to countervailing duties as the export.

I can tell you earlier this year I had to go with Ispat to Washington to help them fight a case relating to countervailing duties. So they knew about this and if they were in Government the export allowance would have gone also. The hypocrisy he comes here with, an elder statesman, one does not expect that from him. I am surprised and disappointed, Mr. Speaker.

Dr. Rowley: He was the former Governor of the Central Bank.

Hon. K. Valley: A beautiful person I thought, how can he do that?

Export allowance and then the issue of balance of payment, Mr. Speaker, and you know, the hypocrisy, the attempts to cover. Take the balance of payment so there is the current account balance and the capital account balance. In the capital account, if one borrows externally, then obviously you are going to have more

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plus than—[*Interruption*] It is a clash of culture, I agree with you because credibility is a big thing for some people.

If one borrows externally, then it assists the capital account and, therefore, if one is looking at the balance of payment and the capital account and one knows that in one year there is zero external borrowing, while there was heavy external borrowing in the preceding year, then it is an unfair comparison to say that your balance of payment is falling. It is unfair and, as a trained economist, the Member knows that. Therefore, it has to do with the question of credibility once more, Mr. Speaker.

Let me deal with some other issues.

Mr. Ramnath: Your anger has not been gone.

Hon. K. Valley: No, it is not anger, it is disappointment. I hate people whom I like and I trust to disappoint me, Mr. Speaker.

Let us take the public debt, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday the former Minister of Finance gave us some figures—bogus figures—with respect to the public debt,. What is the reality, Mr. Speaker? The reality is that the total public debt as at September 01 stood at \$32.4 billion: The inclusive public sector debt that was comprised of Central Government \$20 billion direct debt; guaranteed debt of State companies, \$8.8; Letter of Comfort \$717 million, so the total public sector debt was \$39.6, then there were releases, \$781 and open market operations of \$2.0.

On a similar basis when we looked at December 2001—in other words, when they left office, the all-inclusive public sector debt increased to \$35 billion. That is right, \$32.4 billion to \$35 billion and that was between September and December. As at the end of September 2002, the public debt all-inclusive was \$36.5 billion. That was the information supplied by the Ministry of Finance.

There was another issue with the Member when he attempted to look at borrowing as a percentage of revenue and I wondered what we are really doing, what information is that giving us when we look at borrowing. Borrowing is not part of revenue in any state of the market. Why are you looking at it as a percentage of overall revenue? In the estimates, borrowing is a financing item, it has always been a financing item and you know that, or you ought to know that, and this is why sometimes I wonder.

He wants to know where we are getting the difference in revenues and it is so simple. The sum of \$19.7 billion, \$3.6 billion relate to principal repayment and sinking fund and you will see that in the budget statement, it makes it clear. I do

not know what difficulty the Member is having. So there is \$3.6 billion accounted for by repayment. The borrowing is supposed to be about 4.1 and it is easy. If your deficit on your account is supposed to be \$623 million, the net borrowing must be \$623 million, it cannot be one penny more. All you are doing, Mr. Speaker, you have repayments of a certain quantum, principal repayments of \$3.6 billion, you have a deficit of \$623 million and that determines how much you have to borrow because you cannot get money out of thin air, nobody is giving you grants. So I do not understand what is the problem. You have to pay \$3.6 billion and you are short of \$623 million, you add it and you know how much you have to borrow and then you determine how much you borrow externally and how much you borrow on the local market. There is no maths to that. I do not understand this.

Mr. Speaker, on a consistent basis, all the Minister of Finance attempted to do was to spell out clearly in the budget statement what was happening. If you were to compare it with last year you would see that the financing, the borrowing and the repayment were treated under the line. If you deduct the principal repayment from the \$19.7 billion, you would see that your revenue is very similar to last year. For example, if you go to the Revenue Estimate Document and the table there Estimates of Revenue, let us look at 2001 Tax Revenue, Income and Profits, the Actual, and I am taking 2001 because there are actual figures for 2001 at this point in time. Income and Profits \$7,516.9. The Estimate for 2003 is \$7,587.5.

So when you hear or see somewhere that they are looking at the revised estimates for 2002, which is \$6,372.8, and asking how are you going to get there, the difference—and it is very simple. As we have said before, BP wrote off all types of debts in fiscal 2002 which had the effect of depressing—they know their revenues; they do not have that ability in 2003. Members should remember also that the people at Ministry of Finance have not changed—the same people who did the estimates last year are doing it this year. So there is no issue with respect to the revenue figures.

I have dealt with the issue of the export allowance already, Mr. Speaker. Let me just say that as a fact, the export allowance, because of our agreement and so on, had to go but we are conscious that we have to do whatever we can to assist our manufacturers.

Last year, as part of the adjustment, because the export allowance was going, the Minister indicated, quite clearly, that the manufacturing sector would benefit from certain things; accelerated capital allowances and basically to expand the

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first schedule of the Income Tax (In Aid of Industry) Act to include manufacturing activities. In other words, given that we are taking away the export allowance, we will be giving in return the benefits under the Income Tax (In Aid of Industry) Act.

I mentioned that to the Member for St. Joseph while he was speaking, he said he did not see it there. Mr. Speaker, I have a letter from the Manufacturers' Association, dated October 23, 2002. I will just read part of the letter, it is from the President, and he is merely reporting on a meeting he had with me earlier on because they were annoyed about a few things, of course. It says:

“In a post budget meeting with the Minister of Trade, we apprised the Minister of our concerns, and we were given the assurance that they would be considered.

We were assured, that even though it was not mentioned, that the widening of the ‘In Aid of Industry Act’ from a few industries to all manufacturers, which was granted in 2002, will be included and enacted in the 2003 Finance Act.”

So that when I made that point to the Minister, it was not something I was making up *ad hoc* here. The provision is that last year, because the Government was unable to pass the Finance Act, the measures proposed in the budget were not implemented—well, they were implemented, but had no legal sanction. The Government has taken the position that governments come, governments go, and it is a commitment so we will implement it. They will be included in the Finance Bill for this year, so that in fact they would get that. There is no problem as far as that is concerned. So that is the issue with the export allowance. We regret that we were unable to save that, but we will be doing compensating things.

There were other issues raised by the manufacturers such as the issue of VAT refund. They had proposed zero rating at the Customs; I said: “Listen, if we are doing that it would need management, therefore, we need to have a committee consisting of persons from the Manufacturing Association, and persons from trade and finance to look at that.” In the meantime however, we will meet with the VAT office to ensure that they can get early refund.

May I say something else on this VAT? Because it was again, their Finance Minister, Mr. Kuei Tung, who told the VAT office that anytime a refund is over \$10,000 delay it for six months, and on the 29th day, just before they get it, they will say audit. [Interruption] Now, obviously, the Member is asking if we have any anti-bias to the export sector, that is one.

Hon. Member: Propaganda.

Hon. K. Valley: That is one. You see, Mr. Speaker, we need to do everything. We need to create that success environment for our manufacturers and that is what we are doing. That is critical. Another issue, there are manufacturers ways and we have a situation here where we are saying we want you to be competitive, but then look at sugar, for example. You have to buy local sugar, or if you bring it in, you have to pay Caroni (1975) Limited 50 per cent or some magic like that, Mr. Speaker, or only Caroni (1975) Limited can import and they write up by 15 per cent. When in fact, manufacturers can import their sugar much cheaper, or for that matter, oil in some cases where they can import it cheaper but they have to buy from the local supplier.

In an environment where we are saying inputs into manufacturing must be duty-free, but remember there are manufacturers producing some of these items also so we have agreed with the manufacturers that we would have a little committee comprising of themselves because the current environment is that manufacturers who want to import a product which is produced locally, have to get written approval from the domestic supplier. So could you imagine I want to buy some product, some input into my manufacturing process from abroad, but because it is produced here locally, to be able to bring it in duty-free I have to go to that supplier and ask him please give me a letter stating that you cannot supply. To me, there is a difficulty in that. So that the manufacturer says, "Listen, you will have to decide that." So we are working with our manufacturers, Mr. Speaker, to provide that success or enabling environment.

On the foreign used cars Mr. Speaker, what are we trying to do with the foreign used cars? The Member for Couva South just mentioned the negative list. We are trying to get rid of that Negative List. The environment is that if you want to import a roll-on/roll-off vehicle, you have to get a licence in this day and age. When I went to the ministry that was my question. What could we do to avoid that? We have to protect against the unregistered dealer. If we allowed the individual to import freely, then he would become a dealer also without the registration and the requirements that the ministry has set out for the registered dealer.

So we are saying let us rationalize this thing. If you are a registered dealer you have a bond of \$250,000, you give a commitment as to service and so on, then you will not require a licence and anybody can go and buy their vehicles. If however, you want to bring in your own vehicle, then you still have to operate under the licensing requirement.

Mr. Speaker, there was a committee consisting of new car owners, used car owners, people from the ministry, people from Customs Department, people from

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Licensing Department and they argued about a month and a half—going back and forth and then they agreed because we had reduced the age of the car from five years to four years, but there were other requirements. They argued and so on, and they could not agree on what system they should use for taxation and it was said it would be left to the Ministry of Finance.

At the Ministry of Finance, after discussion, they came up with the 75 per cent rate, 75 per cent of what the new car, motor vehicle charge would have paid. Mr. Speaker, what is the current situation? The current situation is that persons importing vehicles are required to pay varying percentages of the Motor Vehicles Tax specified. If the car is one year, but not exceeding two years, they pay 90 per cent; two years, but not exceeding three years they pay 75 per cent at present; over three years, but not exceeding four years they pay 50 per cent of the tax specified. Now it is only if it is four years, but not exceeding five years, they pay 25 per cent, but remember we have taken out anything over four years so that the over four years with 25 per cent would not apply in any case. So that the lowest level of tax they would pay is 50 per cent and the highest would be 90 per cent under this schedule.

They say 75 per cent of what a new vehicle would be. We were looking to ensure some equity between the new car owners also. Look at what happened in 1998. They talk about the Bamboo. Somebody from the Bamboo came to me crying. Just before the 1998 Budget, this gentleman imported 70 used trucks, he was supposed to pay \$30,000 tax per truck but then the budget increased that to \$90,000 per truck and the gentleman still has his 70 trucks in the Bamboo.

Mr. Speaker, that obviously is unfair, and I have asked our people to look at it and see what amendment we have to make in that circumstance. Quite simply, if we are talking about liberalization, we are talking about liberalization, we cannot be going forward and going back at the same time. With all the fancy talk, what the Member for St. Augustine said is airy-fairy nonsense, quite frankly—I am sorry but that is what it is. So we are going forward and we are liberalizing those used cars.

The other thing having to do with these vehicles also is the port. If you go to the port, you will see all types of motor vehicles there. There are people with all types of problems. There was a particular case of a returning resident. Under the law you have to be away for a period of at least five years to be able to bring in a vehicle and you can bring in a left-hand vehicle, but the car must be at least six months old. This gentleman had an accident, the car was a write-off so he bought

a new vehicle three months before he came back unaware that that would be a problem. He has the pictures and everything showing that the car is a write-off with cheques from the insurance company, he bought a new vehicle and he cannot get the vehicle from the port. So you would see in this budget statement we are giving an amnesty, we want to find a way to give the people their cars as long as there are no legal implications—well I think the words used in the budget statement is “would not compromise the State”. Let us get some tax from the people and claim that. We are serious about that, that is what we want to do and yes, we want your help, but we want you to come with clean hands, with credibility. Do not dance us, because we cannot take that. We want your help, okay. [Interruption] No, I am not saying the cars on the port are UNC’s fault; I am not saying that. There is a law and I can tell you I tried everything to help this gentleman but I could not.

Mr. Speaker, I think I had dealt with most of the issues raised. The Member for Siparia, on the day of the budget statement, raised the issue whether it was not correct to have a Supplementary Appropriation or a Variation of Accounts before we go into the budget debate—in other words, the closing of the accounts. I told her in response that that was incorrect, that had to happen before the accounts were sent to audit. Lo and behold, Mr. Speaker, for the second time this morning on the *Newsday* I am seeing an article stating that I misled the House. I said also that that situation cannot be correct because even the UNC brought its budget on September 14, but up to now the accounts for 2001 are not closed. She said I misled the House because there was a Supplementary Appropriation on September 12. That is correct, Mr. Speaker. There was a Supplementary Appropriation passed in the House on September 12, but that certainly did not close the accounts because you cannot close accounts before the end of the fiscal period. If one were to look at the accounts of the *Auditor General’s Report for 2001* on page 55, Head 36, Appropriation Accounts one would note the statement, Mr. Speaker. It says:

“Parliamentary approval was not seen for expenditure totaling \$97,785,721.”

The closing of the accounts, Mr. Speaker, would have dealt with that because what would have happened—

Mr. Ramnath: I thought you were saying that we stole it.

Dr. Rowley: You might have done it.

Mr. Imbert: It is quite possible.

Hon. K. Valley: Either parliamentary approval was not seen because what might have happened, there would have been a Variation of Appropriation moving the money around and there are three examples on page 14 of this document. Under Head 21—Ministry of Integrated Planning and Development, you see a similar statement that parliamentary approval was not seen for expenditure totaling \$32,219,508.93 and then there is a small amount on page 62 with the same thing. The account was not closed.

If you look at the *Statement of Expenditure* you will see there are a number of accounts where they spent less than was budgeted so that in the closing of the accounts all of that would have been dealt with as is the norm. I simply want to put on the record therefore, especially for the media that that big article they had on the *Newsday* this morning, “Minister Valley misled the House” is very misleading and incorrect. You were misled by the Member for Siparia and you need to check your information.

So that as a fact that has not been done. Let me say one other thing because there is a penalty for that under the Exchequer and Audit Ordinance. Permanent Secretaries could be surcharged because you are not supposed to do that. The problem is, it is not the Minister that is surcharged you know, it is the accounting officer, the permanent secretary of the particular ministry.

Mr. Ramsaran: Ease them up.

Hon. K. Valley: Well, obviously. I simply wanted to put that to rest.

Mr. Speaker, on the budget we have had some talk about vision. I think the Member for Couva North, in leading off the debate, stated that it is a Soup kitchen budget lacking in vision. I thought that the Member for San Fernando East was particularly careful in his budget statement to outline—the budget starts with a vision. It started with an outline of that vision, Mr. Speaker, you know, music to the ear, I do not know whether Members were not listening. This is what it is.

“Mr. Speaker, this Budget is set within the vision of making Trinidad and Tobago a developed country in the shortest possible time and certainly by the year 2020.

This vision of the People’s National Movement is rooted in upholding and advancing the human dignity...”

I am not going to read everything, I think Members can do that, but it is outlined there and it is not “iffy”. I do not know whether Members are aware that this is a vision document, it is not something we are guessing, that we just made up to open a budget statement.

Mr. Speaker, you would be aware that this vision statement positioning Trinidad and Tobago for the global age 2000—2020. You have seen a date on this which is September 24, 2000. This is when it was printed, but this took four years, Mr. Speaker—different committees working on this vision statement, engaging the public, then going into a general convention where it was discussed and approved. This is a party document, this is our vision document. This is a vision and, based on this, Mr. Speaker, we went to the population with a manifesto and the manifesto said quite clearly that it is formed by the vision 2020 and what we attempted to do in the manifesto is to cut this five-year period, where we want to be. When one looks at the manifesto it states clearly that over this five-year period there are about six core concepts that are going to form our action. So when you are talking about a budget being a medium term plan that is exactly what this is. It does not stand alone, it stands as part of what we want to accomplish over a five-year period and even that manifesto is fitted within the context of vision 2020. It is not Vaps, it says here, Mr. Speaker, and I thought I had given the young Member for Oropouche who would learn—on the night of the debate I thought I had given him a copy of the manifesto, but it is as though he does not share. He, being the most experienced Member after the Member for Couva North in the UNC—[*Interruption*] the true leader as he implies, of course, kept it to himself. But we said, quite clearly, that the underlying philosophy, the core concepts which permeate this manifesto were social equity which was number one.

Mr. Speaker: The speaking time of the hon. Member for Diego Martin Central has expired. At this stage I will take a motion for increased time, but that will commence after lunch.

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

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. Speaker: We will resume at 2:15 p.m.

1.18 p.m.: *Sitting suspended.*

2.15 p.m.: *Sitting resumed.*

[MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Hon. K. Valley: Mr. Deputy Speaker, may I be permitted to congratulate you for taking the Chair. It was very nice of you. [*Desk thumping*]

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Mr. Deputy Speaker, before we took the break, I was putting the budget for the year 2003 in context and I was making the point that it fits within our manifesto, which in turn fits into our vision document: “Vision 2020”. In the manifesto we identified six core concepts to guide policy prescription over the five-year period, and I had started identifying those six as social equity, human resource development, the concept of wellness and well-being, poverty eradication, affordable housing and personal security and safety.

You would note that these concepts permeate the budget, and that is why the theme of the budget is “Vision 2020: People, Our Priority”. Conceptually, we are saying that in moving to “Vision 2020” we must first move with our people. We have to develop our people, the human resource development concept. Some people, even the Member for St. Augustine, has criticized the University of Trinidad and Tobago. As an aside, the Member for Caroni East asked whether Dr. Cudjoe would be the Pro Vice-Chancellor.

I want to inform Members that this is going to be a world-class university. [Interruption] We know that. It was born out of that Hong Kong visit when I accompanied the Prime Minister and we went to the Hong Kong University. So that you have world-renowned lecturers that we want to be able to attract—we are talking about 2020 and we are very serious about the vision.

As I said, we took some time to develop the vision and we are taking care and I am pointing out how one fits into the other: The development of human resources, the concentration on our housing programme, and understand in that context, the reason for this new deduction; the \$10,000 on the principal portion of the house which we are giving to first-time home owners over a five-year period, in addition to the existing mortgage interest deduction making it so much easier for the young person to own a home, which is perhaps the biggest asset that most of us would ever own. The concept is that by so doing, that person, having that stake in Trinidad and Tobago, becomes a better citizen.

Understand the emphasis we are placing on the health sector, because we are talking about a well-educated, healthy individual who is properly housed; a benefit to the society, a benefit to the business community. That is how it fits.

Quite simply, on the issue of poverty, we are saying that we are too richly endowed a country to have a poverty rate of 21 per cent. I think it was the Member for St. Joseph who said that referred to 1992 information. I do not know where he got that information, because somehow, looking at it, I thought it dealt with information from 2000. Perhaps I am guided by the HDI index which referred

to the 2000 index pointing Barbados at a higher ranking than Trinidad and Tobago; Barbados with a rank of 31 vis-à-vis Trinidad and Tobago at 49.

We are saying that, really, we love our neighbour, Barbados, but Barbados ought not to be ranking higher than Trinidad and Tobago and we have to do something about that. That is the reason for the emphasis we are placing on poverty eradication; our whole social sector programme.

It is not a handout; it is doing what is required and if Members were to view it carefully, you would see the emphasis on training, On-the-Job Training, the Civilian Conservation Corps, and so on, coupled with the university with the difference, using the concept of North America where one does not have to have the five O'levels and two A'levels to enter university. If one is a mature student at 23, one gets a rung on the ladder and one is taken from that point.

That is where we want to go. So I simply wanted to make the point that the budget fits into an overall plan, fits into the manifesto, fits into our "Vision 2020".

Specifically, with respect to the business sector, I think—and as we have seen—generally, the business community is happy with the budget, because in addition to the reduction in the corporation tax, there is the reduction also in income tax and to the extent that one is leaving more disposable income in the hands of the household sector, obviously one would expect an increase in demand and that has to be good for the business sector in an environment where demand has been flat for quite some time. That is seen quite clearly. Even though there is liquidity in the banking sector, there is no demand.

The household sector's debt capacity is shot. Most of them have not had any significant salary increases for some time and demand in the economy is extremely flat. Productivity is increasing. That is another point I wanted to make. If we want to maintain such gains without allowing for wage escalation, the Government must look at increasing disposable income in the hands of the household sector.

That is what we are attempting to do. We have said quite clearly that over the five-year period we would want to reduce the tax stake even further. That brings us to the concept also of what is an appropriate tax rate. Again, when we went to Hong Kong their average tax rate was 15 per cent. We thought at that time that, really, that is too low. We would want to shoot for 20 per cent average tax rate.

So that when one is talking about a competitive tax rate, 8.7 per cent has to be extremely competitive, but we do not have that, because the export allowance

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triggers only for extra Caricom exports. It is not Caricom exports; it is extra Caricom exports. If with the tax deduction the manufacturer who is exporting extra Caricom now has a tax rate of 20 per cent, that is competitive, my friend, in the current world.

Because of the fact that we are extending aid to industry, benefits to the manufacturing sector, then the tax rate will be even more competitive because that would have the effect of taking it below the 20 per cent threshold.

So I want to congratulate the Minister of Finance for this budget, all inclusive, as the man-in-the-street says. Of course we are aware that the test is implementation. We are committed in Government to carrying out our programme. It is, as I said, part of the medium-term plan, and I am sure when we come here next year there will be work in progress. We expect that. We have been particularly hard on ourselves because we want to continue the pace we started in January.

Generally, I think the society is extremely happy with what we have offered. Critical, as we have said in our manifesto to success, is the social cohesion in the society. We are saying that that is best achieved via social equity.

In a debate the issues come up from time to time and I want to assure my friends on the other side that as we go forward we will go forward with equity. That is the commitment from this side of the House.

I thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Chandresh Sharma (*Fyzabad*): Mr. Deputy Speaker, may I add my own words of congratulations to your good self. I also want to welcome all new Members and in particular, the Member for Ortoire/Mayaro who is a constituent of Fyzabad. I also want to congratulate the Member for San Fernando East as he observes his 32nd year in the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago.

Over the last two days, what has been said in the Parliament here has been a lot of crosstalk in addition to the debate material, and that is, those on that side keep saying, “we are on this side and you are on that side” for whatever reason. But perhaps what is very instructive to note—and that is one reason why I congratulated the Member for San Fernando East, because it is a shame, after 32 years, that you sit in this Parliament having stolen the election. But I must qualify that.

The electronic media, the print media and the international community have come to observe that the election in Trinidad and Tobago of 2002 was very

different. In fact, in 1966 when the voting machine was introduced for polling purposes, it was noted in Tobago that the candidate who won got more votes than the constituency offered.

Hon. Member: Nonsense!

Mr. C. Sharma: Again, you are from Tobago, you ought to know better. It was noted, and again it was documented and it obtains in the records of Trinidad and Tobago.

Hon. Member: Where is the document?

Mr. C. Sharma: You are a lawyer, you know where to find it.

The point to be made is that if members of the national community, whether they are from the PNM, the NAR, the UNC, wherever they come from, living in so many countries are of the opinion that the election of 2002 was stolen by the PNM and its agents, then it begs the question, how did it happen? Why did it happen? What are we going to do about it?

I also wanted to congratulate the Speaker, the former Member for San Fernando West, because I was thinking when it comes to the attention of everyone that the PNM stole the election and we have to go back to the polls, then the Speaker will be no more, and it would be a shame. *[Interruption]* It does not matter when. Truth can surface 25 years later, 30 years later. It matters not when the truth comes to the attention of the House.

It was said that the election was stolen; fear, violence was used; State resources were also used. Let us explore some of them, and take notes, those who are going to speak after me. Let us deal with it in a very simple, holistic way. Let us not get emotional. Let us not play the race game. Let us deal with the facts as they obtain in Trinidad and Tobago.

I have had the good fortune of travelling with the political leader of the party on the side on which we sit. We were in Canada, the United States, London, and we met many people, many NGOs, many business groups, many political parties, and, of course, we have established a relationship, and they are asking questions from the day of the election; before the election and after the election.

So it is in the global place that the election was stolen. Let us look at State resources. Let us look at WASA, for instance. A number of projects were undertaken in the last nine months by the PNM. That is okay. But 86 per cent of the projects were done in PNM-controlled areas. In fact, many of the persons who

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obtained pipe-borne water made no applications. It was connected to their homes. Who paid for it? State resources. That is bribery. That is stealing the election.

A number of constituents in marginal constituencies—and we know the marginal—their telephone bills were paid; cell phones were given to them; their T&TEC bills were paid; their WASA bills were paid. The PNM is very much aware of it. They can say what they want. [*Interruption*] You must shut up and listen now!

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Member for Fyzabad, please address me.

Mr. C. Sharma: Thank you, Sir. I hope you are listening, Sir.

Let us look at an example of further State resources. MTS was encouraged by the Government—by the line Minister—to obtain a \$15 million loan and the number of persons who were employed again—look at the addresses—from marginal constituencies. It certainly cannot be by accident; it is by PNM design.

Let us move on again. I just saw in a paper here today, “MTS Help Fund PNM Campaign”.

Hon. Member: Which paper is that?

Mr. C. Sharma: It does not matter which paper. When the paper does not write a story favourable to you, you question the paper. The paper is a paper licensed in Trinidad and Tobago, the same way you gave a licence to your friend who is now seeking a divorce—your friend, Louis Lee Sing.

MTS Help Fund PNM Campaign.

Details are being uncovered about the abuse of resources—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Members, please, the *Hansard* Reporter is having some difficulty in recording what the hon. Member is saying.

Mr. C. Sharma: Mr. Deputy Speaker, by the time I am finished, there might be a vote for you to become the Speaker.

Let me restart. This is the *Probe*—

Hon. Members: *Probe*?

Mr. C. Sharma: It is a newspaper.

Details are being uncovered about the abuse of resources of the National Maintenance Training and Security Company in the run-up to the October 7 general election. There are reports of MTS providing roving services in San

Fernando West where a 450 Prado vehicle and a chauffeur were used to assist the particular candidate.

Of course we know the candidate has to be from the PNM.

The San Fernando West constituency received other assistance including cleaning services. Several senior managers, including a close relative of a top government official reportedly took time off from work to campaign for PNM candidates.

Member of San Fernando East, through you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, too much of the State's resources were used in this election. Anywhere you go—Petrotrin—endless employment in the last two to three months; Airports Authority, endless employment over the last two to three months, and the majority of persons coming from PNM constituencies.

When you look at the area where they won the election, very meagre votes. How did it happen? When Christopher Columbus came to Trinidad, it was reported that he fooled the natives with beads, coloured stuff and mirrors. The PNM used State resources and fooled the natives of Trinidad and Tobago, and, in particular, the marginal constituencies.

We know of a company called Solid Waste Management Company Limited. They obtained a loan three or four months before the election, of \$75 million. They employed approximately 6,000 persons, the majority again from Ortoire/Mayaro. What the PNM did was to buy an entire block and they took care of those people; three months groceries, sneakers—

Mr. Ramnath: Would the hon. Member give way? Would you identify the company that you are speaking about and the name of the general manager?

Mr. C. Sharma: Certainly, for the public record. Because let me tell you something, the time will come when the truth will surface in documentation. It is a fact that Solid Waste Management Company Limited, through one of its politically orchestrated organizations, headed by a gentlemen called Ray Brathwaithe, pumped these resources. They are paying these persons \$110. To do what? Give them one-year contracts. To do what? Let us assume 50 per cent is excellent to clean up the place—we welcome that—but it is bribery. [*Desk thumping*] And it is has happened in so many different places. In fact, almost every State-aided organization—National Flour Mills, National Lotteries Control Board—abuse of State resources.

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That is why they are there and that is why we are here. That is the only reason they are there. They won the election by unfair advantage. They stole the election, say what they want. They should be ashamed of themselves.

Let us talk about violence in the election. For the first time violence has been introduced in the elections of Trinidad and Tobago by the PNM, following Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Grenada. When those things happened in Guyana the same PNM was supporting the Guyanese government at that point.

We saw the election of Jamaica a few days ago where 50 to 60 persons died. We saw in a constituency in deep South—[*Interruption*] Shut up and listen! Shut up and listen!

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Members, please!

Mr. C. Sharma: Mr. Deputy Speaker, we saw in a constituency where the reports—and it is in the court reports, a public court in Trinidad and Tobago—the police have statements from persons that the candidate in company with others, beat up a UNC supporter. It was reported in the papers some days ago. They beat up the person visiting.

We saw it in another place, again in a PNM area. So the PNM has brought in the violence, the fear. It is crystal clear that persons belonging to a particular group—and if you look there, Mr. Deputy Speaker; I do not know if you can see it from where you are sitting; you are seeing some bullet holes in the glass there; three. The photograph there is a former Member of Parliament who was killed here because of violence. That very group, it is clear, assisted the PNM. They had cars driving up and down the place paid for by State agencies; paid for by PNM supporters. So that is where they used the fear. That is how the PNM sits over there.

So 32 years of the Member for San Fernando East have come to nought—zero. I would much prefer to sit here for another 40 years. This is my 11th year. In another 21 years I prefer to be in Opposition than steal the election. [*Desk thumping*] I do not want to celebrate 32 years in this Parliament sitting on that side, having stolen the election. [*Interruption*] You know what is sour. Most people know what sour is; sour is when you steal the election and you get caught. That is what makes it sour.

So that we saw here the exact thing that happened in Guyana, in Grenada. In fact, the Member for Diego West appeared on television the week before the election on TV6 on a morning and said the group of terrorists should not be treated with, that the lands should never have been offered in the first place.

So the Member for Diego Martin West appeared on television Wednesday morning and the Member for San Fernando East appeared at a national PNM meeting in Chaguanas and said, "We are going the way of Cyprus and Guyana." We are going! He took us there! The Prime Minister of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago took us there; brought violence into the election; brought fear into the election and a total abuse of State resources. Do not cover it all the time.

Let us assume that there are 25 State agencies. Let us assume that the resources of four were not used. Twenty, too much; \$200 million, too much. So this election, the PNM has paid \$200 million for this election and what did they give the workers today? Sixty cents per month for the next five years. \$200 million for less than 1,000 votes and for the national workers of this country, sixty cents over the next five years. Shame! Shame! Total shame!

I just heard the Member for Diego Martin Central—hot air; big balloon of hot air—boasting about the University of Trinidad and Tobago and talking about Hong Kong. Do you know what they are going to offer? Degree by fax. Do you remember that story? So here we have the university system operating in Trinidad and Tobago.

But more than that, the Member of Diego Martin Central said that there are a number of vehicles at the port. Let me tell you the real story on that; PNM corruption at work. You would recall that two vehicles, two Navigators with bullet-proof glass, et cetera, were brought into this country. Those vehicles are parked at the port. The PNM—pay-back time—returned it to the owners and claiming that people have vehicles down there.

He gave a story here about a guy who had a vehicle in Canada who got into an accident; the vehicle was written off, and the guy bought a vehicle for three months. Do you know what he is doing? He is opening a floodgate for PNM friends and families to bring vehicles the same way, because anybody can come and claim the vehicle write-off; the vehicle stolen. So it is a gateway for friends and family to get vehicles.

In fact, do you know what will happen? Some guy will come with a gun and say, "I had a gun in America and I did not know and I brought it." The Member for Diego Martin Central will say take it and go home; shoot up the UNC "fellas" if you can.

Why are there suddenly so many guns in this country? Every day, under PNM rule for the nine months, hundreds of people—in fact there are about 8,000

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gunshots reported in Trinidad and Tobago. So it means to say that guns are in the hands of too many people. [*Crosstalk*]

What we also observe very, very clearly is that the abuse of State resources did not stop there. There is an outfit called the National Commission for Self Help. When the UNC was in government, 53 per cent of all projects approved went to PNM constituencies. In the nine months of PNM administration, 79 per cent went PNM; 21 per cent went UNC. [*Interruption*] You bring the figures and present it to the Parliament.

So that is how they use the system. So this budget is pay-back time. In fact, you have heard the academics in the country; you have heard the practitioners saying that the budget lacks vision; it does not point us in any direction; it is giving, giving, and not generating any income. One of the main requirements of a budget is to make sure it creates employment; it creates wealth in the country. This budget does nothing like that; absolutely nothing like that.

Yesterday my good friend, the Member for St. Ann's East, the former chairman of the San Juan Regional Corporation, made a very instructive statement. He said the prison population presently is about 4,000; by the end of the year it is going to increase to about 5,000. In three months of PNM rule, they increased the prison population by 25 per cent. That is how the PNM operates. [*Interruption*] You see, you were not paying attention to your colleague yesterday.

How is it that you have 4,000 prisoners today and the Minister says in three months it is going to go up to about 5,000? PNM rule. Let the country take PNM.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Parliamentary Secretary.

Mr. C. Sharma: Still a Minister, Sir.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: No, it is not. You just call him by his proper name.

Mr. C. Sharma: I accept your ruling, Sir. *May's Parliamentary Practice*, however, describes it as Minister.

So you saw the PNM using muscle power, and that is why they are there and we are here. We will not use muscle power to go there. Let the national community see the PNM at work. The national community has seen UNC at work.

So we saw an attack on poor people who have to depend on foreign-used cars. We saw the PNM machinery at work. It is pay-back time. How is it for "X" number of years poor people in the country could afford a foreign-used car; no

problem; things were going pretty good, depending on the size of the engine they will pay a certain amount of money, and they were all happy with that. So that you go to any community and more than likely their family would have a car. Suddenly the PNM returns and it is back to the old days.

You remember, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when you bought your first car, you had to pay about \$10,000 bribe? Well, I mean, you may have been saved from doing that because you would have known people, but that was one way of getting your car. PNM is reintroducing that, Sir. *[Laughter]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Member for Fyzabad, I am a Member of this honourable House and if you impute improper motives to me, you are getting into a little difficult area. Could you please refrain?

Mr. C. Sharma: My humblest apologies, Sir. But when you bought your first car you were not a Member of Parliament then, Sir.

Let us look at UNC administration for the years they were there, for about five or six years. For that period the UNC brought to this country the highest foreign investments ever. Outside of Canada from the United States, we were attracting the highest amount of investments. In fact, we were doing about \$4 billion total, the average of US \$6 million to \$7 million per year, under the UNC. It never obtained under the PNM.

What did we do with some of these investments? We made sure that we contributed to the development of Trinidad and Tobago, where today more people are employed; more people have been trained for employment. But more than that, the wealth of the country continues to be held by its citizens. So more people under the UNC administration were able to buy motor cars; more people were able to build their homes; more persons were able to open businesses. So the UNC made sure the resources of the State were spread.

In fact, this Member for Diego Martin West has this tendency to describe the airport in a particular way, but the very PNM Government today is boasting of the airport. In fact, do not hide and ask questions. There is an article that appeared in the *Financial Times* that talks about the beauty, the good value of the airport.

More than that, the airport is 37,370 square metres. The new terminal is more than twice the size of the original one. I have looked at the airports in London, Miami, Toronto and Barbados. In fact, our airport, dollar per square foot, is the cheapest in the world compared to all the airports being built. Challenge that! The cheapest dollar per square foot!

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More than that, the airport was built in the shortest time. *[Interruption]* No, we do not have shame; you have all. That is why you sit there.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Address me, please.

Mr. C. Sharma: Mr. Deputy Speaker, the airport has the most modern escalators, elevators. More than that, this morning I heard the Member for Ortoire/Mayaro talking about the air traffic controllers. One must remember that the airport has to meet international standards and one must always look to upgrade. Even in one's life one must always look to advance. So the airport will always advance. There would be new things. For a small country we are the traffic hub in the Caribbean.

So that the air traffic controllers' requirements have to be met based on international standards. That does not mean that you cannot continue adding value.

On the ground control duties which the air traffic controllers use, meet all the international requirements. The ramp controllers operate out of a tower located within the new terminal.

Maybe the Member is not aware of that. Let me repeat that.

The ramp controllers operate out of a tower located within the new terminal and the air traffic controllers will continue to supervise aircraft from the tower at the old terminal.

Those are international standards. It obtains at the Atlanta Airport. You have been there. It operates in Houston. When you build a new airport you do not remove everything immediately, because one airport may be for passenger traffic, another airport may be for cargo traffic. So you keep developing.

In fact, in Atlanta, one of the smaller airports on the outskirts is used only for emergencies, for health requirements, to bring persons back and forth.

Let us continue at the airport.

“There are 82 checking positions controlled by the common user terminal equipment, known as CUE.”

That is what obtains at international airports.

Mr. Ramnath: How many we had before?

Mr. C. Sharma: Fourteen. Now we have 82.

This technology gives...of increasing the amount of ticket and gate counter space needed at short notice.”

So like during Christmas, Carnival, Divali, more people will be coming in so that you can increase its use.

The new terminal is therefore expected to handle peak hour passenger traffic of approximately 1,500.

Are you not ashamed, Member for Diego Martin West? One minute your leader is saying we have an international airport, come and do business with us, and the next day you say it is a shed of shame. You belong to the shed of shame!

Arriving passengers will be processed through 24 stations, fully computerized.

So within three and a half minutes from departure from the aircraft, you can be in Customs picking up your baggage.

Hon. Member: When last you travelled?

Mr. C. Sharma: A month ago; not in Tobago. [*Interruption*] Forget the rain, you have umbrellas.

The airport also has shopping, as is required of all airports and what it allows is more and more people to get involved in the businesses. You have local craft; you have local production of clothes and so on. So we are seeing a lot of that happening.

A major emphasis has also been placed on security. Critical things that countries face in this part of the world and must protect against contraband security and terrorism.

How could we help in terrorism when the PNM introduces it in the election? How can we do it now? How is it that so many people are shot? Where are they getting the guns from? Are they aided by PNM and its agents? The answer seems to be yes.

Security personnel can monitor and record activities throughout the airport 24 hours a day with the use of more than 100 cameras. The airport also has a 100 per cent x-ray in and out luggage.

Again, international requirements: You are going out, they check your luggage; you are coming in, your luggage is also checked.

Where are the guns coming from, if all these security measures obtain at the international airport? Can somebody on that side say? It is coming through PNM

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contacts. One must never fear speaking the truth. In fact, yesterday when some Members on the other side were speaking, they were allowed to be very economical with the truth. I heard my good friend, the Member for Arouca North talking about some work done under the URP and called a trace, which happens to be in the constituency of Fyzabad where I know you sometimes visit, Sir.

The point is, if what he went to visit is described as “X” and you go there and you find “B”, nothing is wrong with that. The bottom line is that value for money is there. What he was saying, it was some trade centre, or something—a cultural centre—whatever it is, the point is, if people do work—in fact when he referred to the shed at the office of the Member for Couva South which was built three or four years ago, the fact of the matter is, the shed obtains. It is there for all to see and it is used by the people of Trinidad and Tobago. So contractors built it and they have to pay for it.

May I continue on the airport?

Several law enforcement agencies are based at the terminal and ensure passenger safety and the maintenance of national security.

So you see, while the government of the day, the UNC, made sure and put all these measures, in less than one year of PNM rule, things are changing. When you look at the number of murders in the country, why is it happening so often? We saw the PNM Government going there—again an abuse of public property by public officials—ripping down the roof and disposing of it within hours. It was all orchestrated. It was not by accident, and when they began to be embarrassed, they took the national flag and draped it a thousand times over. That is PNM. Shameless!

Fire protection at the airport is maintained by the Trinidad and Tobago Fire Services.

While I am on the fire services, it has been brought to my attention that members of the Trinidad and Tobago Fire Services, in particular, the auxiliary fire fighters, are denied their pension benefits. The opportunity for equipment and personnel effects like fire fighting boots and so, seems to be lacking and Members opposite may want to take note of it and treat with it.

Very important at the airport—again very few airports have this now. In fact, in the Caribbean we are the only airport that has it.

There is also a state-of-the-art medical facility that allows 24-hour emergency service with a doctor on call.

This never obtained under the PNM. Please do not remove it.

With all these advances this terminal is geared to launch Trinidad and Tobago in the 21st Century as the best airport in the Caribbean for business.

So if you want to develop this part of the country into the financial centre, the communication centre, the airport plays a very important role. In fact, almost 50 years ago when the airport at Atlanta was built, it was built almost in a desert area and the entire business community came around the airport. It is one of the busiest airports in the world.

So the vision for the airport of Trinidad and Tobago was well thought out and it is going to benefit all the people of Trinidad and Tobago. The short point is that the PNM must stop playing games with the airport of Trinidad and Tobago and promote it; develop it and stop hiding behind Commissions of Enquiry and claiming all kinds of stories. Every day is a new story.

In fact, we have seen, in this country, more than 50 Commissions of Enquiry. At the end of the day, it produces very little. So I wanted to voice, as strong as possible, the terror used by the PNM in this election; the violence introduced by the PNM and the abuse of State resources.

I want to continue with what the UNC has done. Evidence of UNC's good governance can be seen—and let us look at January to August of 2001. We recorded a trade surplus of TT \$2 billion. That never obtained under the PNM. In fact, the countries in our hemisphere with which we registered trade surpluses include, the United States of America, Canada, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Peru and other countries. So you see, the UNC has been working all along. So when the PNM came and said they just introduced those with the Dominican Republic, we have been doing business with them and recording a surplus as well.

We continue to register significant trade surplus of TT \$3.0 billion with our principal Caricom trade partners, including Jamaica, Barbados, Guyana and Suriname.

UNC has really done tremendously well and the national community has benefited from it. After the events of September 11, 2001 from which the entire global community has suffered tremendously, more so the loss of lives and property as well, and the psychological fear that this thing can happen, especially when governments appear to encourage such activities—it is a fact that the PNM

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Government seems to promote that kind of activity. That is a very, very frightening development.

In fact, in the last nine months—you know Members of Parliament are required to sign passport forms; I am sure, Sir, in your own office you may have signed the most passport forms under this PNM rule—many persons are leaving. In fact, you have seen one Embassy introducing a US \$100 fee to process visas. The applications are too many. People are migrating. We saw in the newspapers of two days ago and recorded up to today, where a young lady was kidnapped.

So the PNM stopped the kidnapping for a little while. The Member for San Fernando East said he saw the truce. He saw the signed document. How did he see it? He saw it because he is party to it. The PNM is party to it; that is why he saw it.

They are back in Government. Apparently the PNM is owing a lot of money. Maybe they cannot use any more State resources, because the Freedom of Information Act will allow a lot of information to come to the public attention.

So the point I was making is that the events of September 11, 2001 required all of us—in fact, the budget was presented on September 14, 2001 and I recall all of us going into the Members' lounge to look at the broadcast of the then President. We all were concerned. In fact, the House was adjourned for a few minutes to allow us to see it, because we felt for it. Many of us had relatives in the United States and just the psychological fear that this thing can happen, we all prayed in our own way to make sure it never reaches Trinidad and Tobago.

After September 11, 2001 this country continued to do very well. While there was global recession we were doing very, very well. In fact, we recorded our eighth payment on all the loans we had. PNM has not been able to pay as yet. So we were doing very well. The introduction of fear and violence has caused many nationals in this country, from the PNM side, from the UNC side and the other sides, to reflect.

Migration is taking place. People are selling out their properties. May I register a private interest? I am partner in a real estate company—Fortune 500—and many listings are coming to me and I am questioning why these are people going; where they are going—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: In order to register a private interest you have to call the name.

Mr. C. Sharma: I just did, Sir. We will do some business, Sir, because you are in private practice yourself.

I want to come back. The UNC has contributed—notice I am not claiming all of it—to making Trinidad and Tobago the most industrialized country in this part of the Caribbean. How did this happen? From 1995 to 2001, tremendous contributions across the board; in every area of development: training of people, retraining of people; opportunities to go back to school; to open businesses.

In fact, the Member for San Fernando East in his budget presentation—and Member for San Fernando East, through you, Mr. Deputy Speaker—did this House a favour, look at those 900 persons who obtained loans from NEDCO and see how many of them come from the marginal seats, and see how many of them—whether you can measure it scientifically—are PNM supporters.

It was a giveaway. “Come and take a loan. Vote PNM, take a loan. Take the money and buy two or three more votes.” That is it, Sir. Even if you discount 50 per cent as real applications, the next 50 per cent were PNM hacks, unfortunately.

That fact of the matter is, it is surfacing. If I do not say it, others will. Do not shoot the messenger. It is the message. That is a PNM problem. They want to get up there and criticize everybody; get into their personal lives, and when the truth surfaces, they start to jump. [*Interruption*] Of course, the whole country is PNM. This is PNM country. In fact, in some areas people are afraid to go, because people are told, “This is PNM area, you cannot come here.” They “pelt” you. That is PNM violence.

The Member for San Fernando East in his presentation spoke about the oil boom or the gas boom, whatever it is. Let us record the work of the United National Congress in government:

“Partly because of the strength of the energy sector, the country has the highest foreign direct investment per capita in Latin America and the Caribbean, with US investments alone amounting to more than \$2 billion.”

At TT \$6.30, that is about \$13 billion—UNC; for all the people of Trinidad and Tobago, not for party people only. This figure is expected to increase, certainly.

“The strength of the economy is evident in the healthy state of its external accounts. In 2001, the country recorded its eighth consecutive balance of payments surplus.”

Many of you may not understand what that means.

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“Consequently, gross foreign reserves are up to almost US \$2 billion.”

So the PNM has really gotten a golden plate. In fact, \$2 billion is around 5.2 months of prospective imports. That is the highest it has ever been. Even in the oil boom days of the late ‘70s, early ‘80s we did not obtain that kind of money. During the period 1995 to 2001, real GDP had grown at an average of just under 4 per cent annually. This was expected to continue even after 2001.

Under the UNC administration, growth was not restricted to the energy sector; it also extended to the non-energy sector. For the first time in more than four years every sector experienced positive growth. Do you know how nationals must be hurting in this country to see the PNM? Think of it. The UNC did so much. So it comes back to the presentation of this debate, that they are there because they stole the election. It could not be for anything else.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I know you represent a constituency and you care for your people and you are loved by your people, because I am your neighbour. UNC has kept at bay, with constant job creation, the most number of jobs ever created by a government in this part of the Caribbean. I am talking about real jobs; not this PNM fraud: hold a one-year contract; vote PNM; cut some grass and go and clean up a PNM neighbour’s yard.

In fact, I think the Member for Oropouche made the point, the lowest unemployment rate recorded in the history of Trinidad and Tobago in 27 years was under the UNC administration. [*Desk thumping*]

“There are diverse investment opportunities available in oil and natural gas exploration, refining, and petrochemical processing. The energy sector continues to attract significant investment.”

I am presenting the period of 1995—2001. I do not know what obtains today, Sir. We talk about making sure that the growth was not only restricted to oil, and today we are now seeing:

“In manufacturing, for example, some of the predominant sectors are now petrochemical processing, downstream steel processing, textiles and garment manufacture and pharmaceuticals.”

So we encourage people to go into business.

I saw here: South patients suffer. No tablets for diabetic patients. These tablets cost TT 5 cents, Sir. Are you not ashamed?

So the PNM wants to give money here, money there. How is it that the majority of the soup kitchens are in PNM areas? Is poverty only in PNM areas? In fact, when you see it in a UNC constituency, bet your last dollar that it is in the small PNM catchment area. The record will show it; it is very easy to analyze.

Mr. Ramnath: I want to take exception to that. In Carolina I beat the PNM candidate 10 to 1.

Mr. C. Sharma: There are always exceptions to the rule.

The point is, we are seeing nine months of PNM rule; elections come and gone and diabetes. I hope this is not a calculated matter, because if tablets are costing five cents, why is it that scores of patients are unable to obtain tablets? So already we are seeing PNM discrimination in the health system.

That is not by accident. Do not think that is an isolated case. In fact, the health centre in Fyzabad is located next to the Member of Parliament's office and ever so often I see many patients who do not get their medication for one reason or the other. Certainly from time to time there will be a shortage of some medicine. So the PNM does not care about people; they just care about power; win by whatever means, treat with their few people, and that is it.

UNC caused investments in agriculture, "in areas such as food processing"—*[Interruption]* Sit down and listen!—"...horticulture floriculture."

More than that, the recreational marine area, I wanted to touch on that. I hope I can do it before my time is up.

More than that, over the last number of years the UNC government has made it easier to invest in this country, introducing a host of incentives alongside fiscal and legislative reform. So the UNC more and more made sure that it treated with people. In fact:

"Free Zone incentives are also offered to companies that export 80 per cent of their goods and services."

This obtained under the PNM administration; it obtained under the NAR, but the volume increase was almost 100 per cent.

So when under the PNM it was doing 40 per cent, with the UNC it went up to about 80 per cent. It continues:

"They include exemptions from import/export licensing requirements, corporation taxes, work permit fees and taxes on remittance of profits,

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dividends and other distributions. Duty free items include capital goods, spare parts, raw materials and construction and set-up of regional head offices.”

3.15 p.m.

Mr. Rahael: The hon. Member for Fyzabad is misleading the House when he says that they have made investments in agriculture. That is inaccurate.

Deputy Speaker: What is your point of order?

Mr. Rahael: Standing Order 36(5).

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Let the Member continue. But be careful.

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

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. C. Sharma: Mr. Deputy Speaker, on reflection your good self, others and I were elected around the same time in 1991. As a result we had the opportunity to be in opposition and in government. This debate is a sad day in the history of Trinidad and Tobago. We are debating the budget of 2003 in light of an election that was fought less than a month ago and for which there is clear evidence that does not only obtain in Trinidad, but elsewhere, of fraudulent media employed by the PNM. That is extremely important to note. I hope as time goes by in the debates outside, in the mandirs, churches, masjids, sports groups, schools, colleges, universities, it would be revisited and the truth must be documented for those who come after us. When we sit in Parliament in the future, no such picture will not hang again. I am not talking about the first one, but the one behind.

What was very instructive during the UNC administration was the number of international companies that came here to do business. Some of them such as BPAmoco started to put their head offices here. They chose Trinidad and Tobago because of what obtained. That was the good administration of the UNC.

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Mr. Speaker, in your absence I placed on record my congratulation on your winning this new office. I would revisit a point because I do not want it to be misunderstood. I have the greatest respect for you.

Evidence obtained in Trinidad and Tobago and elsewhere is that the elections were stolen. The use of fear and violence was introduced by the PNM. For that

reason they are there and we are here. During 1995–2001, Trinidad and Tobago under the UNC administration enjoyed six years of sustained growth in real domestic product fuelled by rising oil prices, increased production of natural gas and petrochemicals and an expanding service sector. This came about because of UNC policies. The country has not been unaffected by the economic downturn in the global economy in 2001. The growth in real GDP was estimated to decline to 3.5 per cent from 4.7 per cent. It was global recession and we were doing very well because we involved as many stakeholders and team players in the development of Trinidad and Tobago. The per capita GDP increased by 50 per cent between 1995–2001. It is the highest record in this part of the Caribbean. It went from US \$4,268 to US \$6,200. This has never obtained in this part of the Caribbean. This was never obtained under the PNM when they held office in the last 30 or 40 years.

The rapid growth of the economy over the last seven years has not ignited inflation. During that period of UNC administration consumer prices were an average of 4 per cent per annum over the period 2001 with a peak of 5.6 per cent in 1998. Prices as obtained under the UNC administration have remained in many areas. With the PNM coming into government we have seen an increase in food prices such as basic foodstuffs like macaroni, cheese, table butter, flour, rice, oil, tuna and sardine. We have seen an increase in taxi fares. Under the UNC we made sure that money was made available for persons who needed to be retooled. Through the National Energy Skills Development Centre computer programmes were introduced in many areas. They were introduced in both PNM and UNC areas. As soon as the PNM came in these were stopped. You see the kind of games the PNM plays. They say all kinds of things here and when they go outside they do differently.

The public finances have been well managed over the years 1995–2001. Surpluses were reversed in 1998 and 1999 with overall fiscal deficit in those years of –1.9 per cent and –3.2 per cent GDP, respectively. Public finances returned to small surpluses in 2000 and 2001. When the global recession was taking in after the events of September 11, we made sure we maintained standards in this country by treating everyone fair and square.

Over the period 1995–2000, the external debt declined from US \$1,905 to US\$1,680 million. We serviced the debt we owed. This allowed us to maintain good international standards. For that reason many international financial institutions were proud of the governance of Trinidad and Tobago. The report was presented by the Member for St. Joseph. We heard from the Member for St.

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Augustine that things are beginning to change. He has sent out the advice that we should revisit what we are doing and make sure what we are doing in the budget is real.

I will touch on a few specific areas in the budget. I wish the presenter of the budget, the Member for San Fernando East, would pay attention. Because of the fear, violence and stealing of the election there is a larger fear by nationals of Trinidad and Tobago that the housing would be for PNM people. They think so because of the history of the National Housing Authority. The majority of houses built and serviced by NHA always go to PNM supporters. In the last elections housing developments in San Fernando East, Pleasantville were treated to vote PNM. There are housing developments in St. Joseph and Leotaud Street and the people were treated. In the place called the "trainline" in Marabella there was no application. Water and electricity were provided. Those persons who received water and electricity are not on the records of T&TEC and WASA. Cell phones were given out.

Under public utilities we see an abuse of the system. Under the short-term improvement project a sum of \$50 million was used for PNM propaganda.

With regard to people empowerment in the last nine months using State resources such as the Regional Health Authorities, only PNM people. It cannot be by accident that so many persons suddenly knew to apply for employment in Petrotrin, WASA, T&TEC, TSTT, MTS, BWIA and the Airports Authority.

The budget attempted to talk about personal safety. How did this all come about? How did this country become so violent in such a short space of time? The distinguished Member for St. Ann's East indicated the prison population. He identified the ages as 15–24 years. These are largely the children who grew up under the PNM administration. The Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West said that Carlos John is joining them. This Member brought in much contraband goods into the country and he did not make any jail. I said it is alleged. The Member for Deigo Martin Central was talking about the Member for St. Augustine and said that he heard that they say so and so about him. I heard too that the Member, my very good friend, brought in contraband. I know he did not do it. Many people think he did. In the same way it is perception. In this country much contraband obtains but nobody brings it. Moreso, if they are connected to the PNM they do not bring it. There are items such as contraband whisky, shoes, T-shirts and medicine.

The perception and degree of reality that obtains is that employment is only for PNM people in this country. The way they treat with that is to make sure

whatever employment obtains, that due process is maintained. The Member for Laventille West was saying that somebody got a form through a PNM party group. How do PNM party groups always have employment forms? Why do PNM party groups always get the plums of the country from community centres to security?

Mrs. James: I never said that. The Member for Oropouche made a point and I replied.

Mr. C. Sharma: Mr. Speaker that does not change the truth. The truth obtains in Trinidad and Tobago that PNM party groups are the first to receive application forms, get watchman jobs, cleaner jobs in the hospital, get work in MTS, TSTT. In the last election it was evident. In some of the State bodies, Petrotrin being one of them, there were no places to house these people. They brought them in just for the election to work one or two hours and send them out to campaign.

The Member for Arouca North is attempting to hide things. In the last couple months under the URP goods were purchased without due process. He is covering it up by saying that he sent it to Cabinet and the Ministry of Finance. Many persons who supplied goods to URP for PNM political work were not registered. They did not meet the requirement. It will surface at the right time.

The Member for Toco/Manzanilla is talking about 5 per cent and 10 per cent. He is guilty. His conscience is worrying him. He works very hard. He is a professional. He is putting up a bungalow somewhere that his combined income cannot allow. The perception is the 5 per cent is going there and the 10 per cent is going there. That is not my business.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the *Hansard* reporters are having great difficulty in taking down the contribution of the Member for Fyzabad.

Mr. C. Sharma: It is okay for the PNM to buy Benz but if somebody on this side buys a Benz they would be in trouble. It is okay for them on that side to have jewellery to cover from head to toe. If you come here with 12-carat gold, you would be in trouble. It is you bribe to get it. You "tief" to get it. It is okay for them to build massive bungalows and to own estates all over the country. We on this side cannot do those things. It is only they know to work, save and make intelligent investments. UNC people must not own any real estate in this country. UNC people must not buy Mercedes Benz. Any time you raise the issues, the best defence is a strong offence. It is about insults; talk about your family, and health. It is public information that the spouse of a former minister was coming through the airport with a suitcase of gold. Again, that is perception. I was not there.

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I come back to the prison service. I admire the sincere effort of the Member for St. Ann's East to treat with the prison population. He went one step further. He said prevention must obtain. Part of the prevention that could obtain is to treat people fair and square. Do not make this a PNM favoured country.

I saw that the Minister of Education in Great Britain, Estelle Morris, resigned over the last day or so. No relation to Morris Marshall. She tendered her resignation which was accepted by the Prime Minister. Some students were not graded properly. When it was checked the errors were discovered. In Trinidad, last month children who should have won scholarships at first did not obtain any. When enquiries were made and protests were lodged, the persons were given their scholarships. It happened in schools in Port of Spain. It happened in more than one school. We saw nothing from the Ministry of Education. We saw a number of people received scholarships to read for a degree. We saw the same thing in the SEA Examination. We saw in a school in Pointe-a-Pierre where children who should have done better were sent to different schools. Upon enquiry, it was found that they had passed for their first school of choice. That is PNM corruption. They circulated a document to all the schools to see if the children were Hindu, Christian, Muslim, Indian or Dougla. PNM introduces race in everything.

Recently, when the Member for San Fernando East, the hon. Prime Minister, went to start off a breakfast programme in a school, there was no breakfast for people who do not eat meat. I was told that the Prime Minister was very embarrassed. Here he was eating buljol and other children could not eat because there was no vegetarian meal for them. It might be an isolated case. The fact of the matter is that when PNM is in government those are the things that obtain.

I want to talk about the family as obtained in the budget. Families must be encouraged to remain families. Families must be encouraged to stay together, pray together and eat together. That can be obtained by making sure people are not discriminated against. In the past, in the protective services entry requirements were not considered. There was never a balance. In most of the State agencies it does not reflect our rainbow society. PNM must not allow it to continue. They created it. They cultivated it and now they must put a stop to it. Employment at their control in the State agencies such as Petrotrin, TSTT, MTS, BWIA and the Airports Authority, look at them. The Member for San Fernando East appointed Dr. Selwyn Ryan and I think Prof. John La Guerre to do some research. They found that many of the State aided agencies, the police service, fire service, prison service and the army did not reflect the applications obtained.

Mr. Manning: Mr. Speaker, the Member for Fyzabad is deliberately doing this. They looked at employment practices in the public and private sectors to the extent that they identified any imbalance in the public sector. They also indicated that steps had been taken long ago to correct that. Without going into the details of the report, when Members of Parliament do what that Member is doing it creates unnecessary problems in a society like this. That is not correct and he knows it.

Mr. C. Sharma: We are both saying the same thing, that there were imbalances. A study was done and efforts were made to correct them.

Mr. Manning: Mr. Speaker, once again let me make it clear. They did not find any imbalances in the context in which the Member for Fyzabad is speaking. They found a situation that had already been corrected.

Mr. C. Sharma: Mr. Speaker, for the public records, for all of Trinidad and Tobago and all nationals who live abroad what obtains under the PNM is that there is an imbalance in the public service and any agency the PNM has a hand in. In the last three months employment in Trinidad demonstrated without a doubt it is PNM country.

Mr. Manning: Mr. Speaker, because I do not wish to be drawn into that kind of argument in this honourable House, I want to make it clear that I made no comment on employment practices in the private sector. I said the study looked at both the public and private sectors. If the Member for Fyzabad wishes to be honest in the matter, he can speak the truth. He knows what it is.

Mr. C. Sharma: I expect all Members who contribute in this House to speak the truth and the whole truth. The truth of the matter as obtained in Trinidad and Tobago under PNM administrations of the past and present is that employment is favoured, not reflective of the rainbow society. That cannot be said any clearer and with any more honesty.

In the last three or four months prior to the election of 2002 more than 10,000 persons were employed by agencies funded by the Government through its own outfits or companies under the Government's watch. They are Solid Waste, MTS, Airports Authority, WASA and others. The evidence reflected an imbalance of the potpourri community of Trinidad and Tobago. I rest my case here.

In the area of youth there is a lot of emphasis on youth development. This is a global challenge. This has to be developed in a way to make sure the youths feel as part of the society. They must not be discriminated. Their names must not put

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them at a disadvantage. The kind of food they may eat must not put them at disadvantage. Persons living in Barrackpore, Cedros, Laventille, Port of Spain, San Fernando or Couva must have the same recreational facilities. They must have lights in their courts to play at nights. They must have access to public housing, loans, employment opportunities whether MTS, TSTT or other State agencies. That is the best way to treat with the youths of the country so they would be partners in the development of the country.

It is very unfortunate that in today's world where the technology is so advanced, that whatever is said now obtains anywhere. Whatever happens in this country or in another country within minutes we can know about it. Nationals and others living in about 40 countries, I receive email from them. They are very concerned about the political development. They are very concerned about the PNM's ill practices against citizens of Trinidad and Tobago. In this context all the messages were raised. The messenger is not important. The truth is there is an imbalance in the distribution of wealth, services and opportunities. It appears very clearly that this is only for PNM people. That is a very sad day.

Thank you.

Mr. Fitzgerald Hinds (*Laventille East/Morvant*): Mr. Speaker, first of all, I would like very sincerely and publicly to thank God for my life, this day and this Parliament that many citizens might take for granted. We went through some very turbulent times in Trinidad and Tobago over the last few years with the uncertainty and undecidedness apparently, on the part of the people. Fortunately, for Trinidad and Tobago there were sufficient praying souls in this country; sufficient stable and sober minds that we resolved our differences in the courts where necessary and in the polling stations.

Many people take this parliamentary sitting for granted. It could have been so different in other countries of the world. I thank God for that. I thank God for the fact of the PNM being in Government. I am convinced in my heart that the worst thing that happened to Trinidad and Tobago was the coming of the United National Congress to Government in this country. Having listened to my honourable friends opposite for the last day and a half, I am reinforced in my view in respect of that position.

The Member for Fyzabad is overlooking a simple statistical fact that the PNM garnered approximately 92,000 votes in UNC strongholds in the last election. That makes a very potent statement. That tells us that there are people in their constituencies—I do not know their races—that is not important to me—who

voted resoundedly for the PNM. That reminds me of the fact that we increased our vote share in the last elections by 50,000.

I remember on election night Dr. Hamid Ghany who purports to be an independent thinker, Morgan Job and Hansley Adjoda were sitting in the studio in 94.1 Radio Shakti and by 7.30 p.m. celebrating a victory for the UNC in La Brea and Tunapuna. They were saying in expressed terms, jeeringly, that it appears as though many people in this country prefer immoral values. It seemed from the fact that they won in La Brea and Tunapuna, that most people in this country preferred a party without moral and spiritual values until the hammer dropped.

I remember the words of the Quran. It says, "When truth appears untruth disappears for untruth is forever a vanishing thing. When the truth of the results came in and my brothers, friends and fellow PNM representatives Hedwige Bereaux and Edward Hart won in La Brea and Tunapuna, respectively, the cries changed immediately from that studio. From victory and celebration it went to recrimination and who got the most votes overall in the country, until they realized that we got 50,000 more votes than they did. That too went! We started to hear talk about power sharing.

I thank God for this Parliament and the Prime Minister. I thank God for my life and everything. I thank God for seeing the back of that wicked and corrupt UNC Government.

I listened to the Members for Oropouche and Fyzabad. I really feel a sense of sympathy, sorrow and sadness for them both. It is quite clear that so many thousands of young people living in the rural areas of Trinidad and Tobago were brought up on a diet of race, hate, bitterness, angst, anguish and misplaced pain. Yesterday, I listened to the Member for Oropouche crying and weeping, the gnashing of his teeth. The Member for Fyzabad was crying and blaming the PNM.

He talked about national housing. In every country in the world there are problems with shortage of housing in the urban areas. It is in urban areas there are high-rise buildings and housing developments to ease the housing stress in those parts. It is not only in Trinidad. In the rural areas where they represent you do not have that land pressure problem. It is axiomatic that when a government is attempting to deal with housing problems, it will look to the urban areas. You will find housing developments in Bon Accord, Tobago; Laventille, Tunapuna, Beetham and Couva. It has nothing to do with race. They were fed on some harlot which taught them race and nursed them from their childhood. Now that is all they spew. Everything they explain in terms of race. There are housing developments

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up and down the land scarce East/West Corridor and they understand it in terms of race.

The *Trinidad Guardian* of May 19, 2001 when Minister Sadiq Baksh as he then was—thank God we have seen the back of that one as well—Minister of Housing agreed to the fact that there were 23,000 applicants waiting for housing in this country. Nobody wants to know the race of these people. We know that there are poor people in the country who want places to live as low cost as possible. That has been so. We have put policies in place to alleviate this problem. It has nothing to do with race. You all are sad! You all are sick! If I can use that in a colloquial sense. You all are sick, twisted. Warped minds! That is how you grew up. That is what was taught to you.

I heard the Member for Fyzabad talking about the Ryan/La Guerre Report a while ago. When I came to this Parliament in 1995, I took time to read some of the issues that we discussed on a regular basis. When the Ryan/La Guerre study was done I was out of Trinidad and Tobago. I was studying law in England. From the time I came back to Trinidad, I heard members of the UNC saying that Prof. Ryan and Prof. La Guerre found that there was this imbalance in the public service. I read it. That is not what was said. The Member for San Fernando East is absolutely right. If the Member for Fyzabad is man enough; if he is Hindu enough; if he is righteous and truthful enough, let him get up now and tell this House that he read that report. I suggest to him he never did! Never did! He just heard some fool saying it and he mouths it off like a UNC parrot and is misleading the country. I salute the intervention of the Member for San Fernando East.

I hope that he will never say it again. It is that kind of wickedness that is causing this country to be at risk. Thank God that we won 20 seats! The electorate spoke loudly. [*Interruption*] You are there and we are here! We intend to keep it so for another 25 years. When the PNM leaves government again, my 14-year-old son who by then would have children and grandchildren, his grandchildren should be members of the PNM Youth League.

I heard the Member recklessly talking about violence and the PNM introduced violence in this election campaign. He does not even deserve a reply. Yesterday I was speaking to one of his colleagues in the tea room. I was telling him in very graphic and yet simple terms about some clear misdemeanours on the part of some of his colleagues, present and those recently past. He just would not hear. Then I realized that like me he is locked into UNC as I am locked into the PNM. I believe in our philosophy. I believe in the principles. I stand solidly on the PNM rock and believe in it. There is hardly anything anyone of you could say to

convert this. By similar token, he is in the same position. I accept that. Then I realized I was wasting my time speaking to him, so I will speak to the country.

The country will judge. You remain locked in.

There was no stealing in the last six years. Nobody stole a dime. The \$52 million account is just a dream. The \$10 million account is a dream. That never happened! The InnCogen talk is small talk. We made it up. We choreographed it all. It never happened! The \$30 million in rice, that is not true! *[Interruption]* Pinch yourself! You are not hearing me now! It is not true! Never happened! The airport that is costing this country in total \$3,800 million is not true. Never happened! It was supposed to have cost \$400 million. They end up spending up front cost of \$1,600 million. That never happened! The interest that we must pay at \$115 million a year on the four loans they took to build that, would cost \$2.6 billion over the 20 years that our people must repay. That never happened! It is not true!

The Biche school is a myth and a dream. The fact that the former prime minister is in handcuffs and chains before a court in San Fernando for failing to properly declare. I do not want to say too much about that. I know they will say *sub judice*. I am a lawyer and I know what *sub judice* is. The fact that Basdeo Panday is now before the courts for lying to the Integrity Commission—

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, do not go in that direction.

Mr. F. Hinds: I am sorry, Mr. Speaker. All of that is just a dream.

Mr. Speaker: Will the hon. Member for Laventille East/Morvant address the Chair.

Mr. F. Hinds: Much indeed and much obliged. I would be guided by your decency, honour and integrity. No problem.

I heard the Member for Fyzabad—I want the country to understand what they heard today. The Member for Fyzabad heard the Member for Arouca North speak on a matter which emanates out of a dirty experience to Trinidad and Tobago located in Gheerahoo Trace in the constituency of Fyzabad. The records of the Ministry of Local Government reflect that money was allocated for the construction of a sporting complex. The Member for Arouca North as Minister of Local Government with authority for those records, came to this honourable House and said that money was allocated and spent on a sporting complex at Gheerahoo Trace in Fyzabad. The Member sent officials from the ministry who walked every single square metre of space of that street looking for a sporting

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complex which to this day has not been located. The records are there. That Member for Fyzabad in his UNC madness, blindness and wildness was heard to say that nothing is wrong with that. That is the reason in 2001, when the President spoke of moral and spiritual values, they did not understand then; they have not understood since and they will never understand because nothing matters. I do not want to deal with the race issue, although we can.

When I studied law we dealt with race issues in an intellectual sense without rancour and malice, just as Prof. Ryan and Prof. La Guerre would have done. You do not have to be racist to discuss the issue of race. I do not want to be racist. I am not and will not want to discuss the issue of race. They use that like zandolee to murky the water to hide behind their wickedness. Every time they are confronted with the facts, they run and make a mess about race and hide behind the murkiness of the dirty water that they have grown accustomed to striving in.

I will state briefly that they talk about rainbow society. They just need to look around on their Benches of Opposition and tell me where is the rainbow. When you do not find it, like the sporting complex on Gheerahoo Trace in Fyzabad, then look over here and here you will see rainbow! Enough said!

I would move on to my friend, the Member for St. Augustine, who took a high pedestal and gave us a university type lecture that bored the daylight out of me. I will not discredit the gentleman's economic prowess. I will never do that. I got as far as doing a second year university programme in Economics. He is a genius in the business. I will not challenge him on that. What I do know is that he is a poor politician! A failed politician! I say so without remorse or repentance. He was a part of the NAR government in 1986. He was a frontline part of it. That came to nought. *[Interruption]* You could say what you want. I am saying what I want. He was part of the NAR government in 1986. A failed project. He lost his deposit, I am being reminded at some point later. He was the Governor of the Central Bank. Less than two weeks after demitting office, I heard misguided callers who were brought up on the same milk that the Members for Oropouche and Fyzabad were brought up on—

Dr. Moonilal: Leave me out of your bacchanal.

Mr. F. Hinds: You see how fat and chubby you look. The milk! The harlot of which I spoke does not have two. It is about 12 breasts. It is real harlot. You got plenty! You bitter with it! Fat and bitter! *[Laughter]*

Less than two weeks I heard callers around the country calling in to say that Mr. Manning, the Prime Minister, should have asked the Member for St.

Augustine to extend his term as Governor of the Central Bank. Again, many implications of race! The reason he was not given a second term is because the PNM is racist. That foolishness. Less than two weeks after, before the ink on the last Governor's signature dried, before the ink on the last \$20 bill that rolled out with his name on it, he was writing the UNC manifesto to beat the PNM in the last election. That Member for St. Augustine! With hindsight the Prime Minister was quite right not to ask him. Maybe, these men are so "unintegral", if I can use that construction, he may have been writing the UNC manifesto from the Governor's Chair. I do not put it past anyone. I do not put it past him. He comes here today to tell us about what we should do about the economy and poverty, as though the poverty in this country began on October 8, 2002.

I remember the former Prime Minister, Basdeo Panday, talking about alienation and discrimination. The day he became prime minister he never used the word "alienation" again. Everything was fine after that. From the morning of October 8 his twisted face and double tongue, he started to use the words "alienation and discrimination and thievery of the elections." They could seriously accuse PNM of "tiefing" the elections? I am not speaking to you as I promised. I am speaking to the country and the Speaker for immediate purposes.

The Member for St. Augustine boasted about economic growth. I want to remind him that this country went through seven or eight years of structural adjustment. The first time in 10 years that this country experienced economic growth was in 1994 under a PNM administration. He knows well that economic movement of the country is a continuum. There are no stark breaks. It all happens. It does not happen by chance. It happens as a consequence of some planning or failure to plan. He spoke about the economic growth that we have been experiencing consistently in this country since that time. We can revel in it. We can thank God for it. We initiated it in 1994, but that is not for the PNM. That is for the people. It has continued. The point is that economic growth is not good in its own right. Economic growth is not good for its own sake. Economic growth is something that ought to benefit the people of Trinidad and Tobago. Did they benefit from the growth that the country experienced under the UNC?

Lord Denning espoused a theory in equitable principles that fraud unravels everything. If a contract was signed, sealed and delivered, or some legal position was established, once it could be demonstrated to the court that fraud was involved and the other principle is that the perpetrator of the fraud must never benefit from his act. I want to draw on that legal principle that fraud unravels everything, simply to say that corruption unravels everything. When you are

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elected to government and asked by the people to represent their interests as managers of their money and the economy, implicit and underlying subcontract to the main one that you signed to the people is that you would conduct the affairs not only with dignity, but you would do it without corruption. You would do it honestly.

If they delivered some roads and an airport it is no delivery if it was done on the basis of corruption. You are in breach of the contract with the people. These are my words. I liked them when I wrote them. Corruption is the antithesis of economic growth. You like it? *[Laughter]* Did they eradicate poverty? How far did they come down the road of eradicating poverty? When I sat and listened to the wild ranting, raving and muttering—last night the Member for Tabaquite, the hon. Adesh Nanan, I felt a sense of sadness for the Hansard reporters. I thought they should have opted for audio or video recording. They could never have written what he said. It was muttered and scattered. Oh, it was a disaster!

I want the country to understand this. This is why I, Fitzgerald Ethelbert Hinds, am absolutely proud to be PNM. I feel proud to be on this ship. I do not care if I am the last in the line. I feel proud! I do not care about that. It is not about me. This country has benefited from a great institution. It has been 46 years for the Peoples National Movement. Great institution! When I came in 1995 as a rookie, a brand new politician, I joined the team. I remember Dr. Keith Rowley, Mr. Kenneth Valley, the political leader Mr. Manning, Roger Boynes, Eric Williams and another one who now sits in an esteemed Chair. *[Interruption]* Excuse me! I am speaking man! Keep quiet! Stop popping up and down like an animated object, like a wooden toy. When we came in 1995, hear the institutional training, the institutional memory that we were to carry henceforth.

We were instructed to see those who had held the particular portfolio that we were to speak on. In my case, I was instructed to find Mr. Augustus Ramrekersingh who was the Minister of Education until he lost his seat in 1995. I sat with him for about five hours as he went through what the Government was doing in education. If you look at Hansard in my first budget contribution in 1996, you would see I was beginning to become familiar with government's policy with respect to education. My friend, the Member for Port of Spain South, did the same in energy and Roger Boynes in sport. That is what this country wants. Continuity! Solid development! The information is passed on from one generation to the next.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member for Nariva, please allow the Member to make his contribution.

Mr. F. Hinds: This is a budget debate. The people of the country have taken time to come to this Chamber and those at home would listen to this debate. This is no small talk. I am genuinely embarrassed about their contributions, from their political leader right down. He spoke 35 minutes of nothing. This is a copy of the budget response 2001, printed bound and delivered by Mr. Patrick Manning in that time. This is how we operate.

When we are preparing a budget response as the opposition, we all get together. Everybody makes a contribution. The experts on the team refine the document and we present Trinidad and Tobago with a solid response. That is how the PNM does it. That is why as long as they remain there, we would remain here, to the benefit of those over there! That is how we do the business.

Hon. Member: You will remain on the last seat.

Mr. F. Hinds: It matters not! As long as I am on the PNM train I am happy. Any time you see me on UNC train, take me to St Ann's! It has to be a case of temporary insanity. It would only be temporarily because I will regroup. I mean that. That is no fun.

This is the People's Charter delivered on January 15, 1956. We are from our very embryonic stage as an institution. We began to shape ideas for the development and benefit of Trinidad and Tobago. I was telling my sister from Tobago East that I got a bound version which a gentleman from Maraval blessed me with. It is a bound version of every single budget presentation from 1956 up to this day. Look a copy of it here! I read this document. I read all these budget speeches. I was able to see the development of Trinidad and Tobago for the 25 years the PNM remained. There has been incremental development. I could see where \$30 million was allocated to build the Lady Young Road. I saw the John S. Donaldson Technical Institute which still serves our youth today. It is built on Wrightson Road. It gives me no surprise when people speak the way they do about the late great Dr. Eric Eustace Williams. A great legacy! A great party! We have been in government for 35 of the 46 years that we have been in existence.

4.15 p.m.

And you know what, Mr. Speaker, thus began our vision plan for this country; it began with the People's Charter. In 2000, we developed another vision and that vision was to take—a vision developed by the current Political Leader, and all of the PNM, after massive consultations, a vision presented at a special convention on January 23, 2000—Trinidad and Tobago to developed status in 20 years. You see the continuity? You see why the people keep saying PNM, PNM, PNM, PNM? You

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see how 92,000 of you, abandoned you, and supported us?

The Member for St Augustine might be a great economist but a poor politician. He jumped on the wrong train. He wanted to go to San Fernando but he ended up in a Diego Martin taxi—a gentleman, with the best intentions. [Laughter] [Interruption]

Mr. Speaker, my heart is so filled with joy and peace, “I doh need nutten,” I am cool. [Interruption] Trust me man, I am satisfied. My heart is filled with joy, “I doh need nutten else, Jah is great, yeh, understand that”.

Mr. Speaker, after listening to the budget presentation a few days ago, I listened, too, to the soundings from the national community, the teachers; the police happy; pensioners happy; parents happy; single mothers happy; the youth happy; public servants happy; everybody happy. [Interruption] As a matter of fact, in a strange way, I can see through the bitterness in your faces, I know you are happy too, “yuh” know. Look how comfortable you are! I know you are happy, too. You are happy, you feel relieved. The beast has been removed from the country! Everything is all right now! I know, but you have a role to play, and I understand you will try to play it but you can do a better job!

I remember seeing the distortion on the face of the Member for Couva North on budget day. I know, I remember seeing it. Everybody in the national community commented on his face. Some thought it was anger, maybe? I know he is an angry man. Some thought it was hate; I know he can be a hateful man. But I thought it was simply a case of shellshock. You all have not recovered from the PNM beating all “yuh” got on October 07. You “eh” soak it in; it “eh” consommé yet! [Laughter] [Interruption] Shellshock and fear—and it cannot be a nice thing! I know how you feel, I understand, I empathize with you! It cannot be a nice thing that after a short six years and three elections later—after saying, as long as you are there we will be here; after saying that you will be in Government for 20 years; after coming and meeting a growing economy and all of the foreign investments that my friend, the Member for Fyzabad, spoke about—you are sitting on the Opposition Benches again, and you are only hearing boots walking up and down the aisle, in an imaginary building with chains and gate the shut. It “cyar” be nice!

You say you see people in blue outfits working up and down the street on the Environmental Programme. I know that some of you—and some who were here up to recently—when you see the blue you are seeing prison uniform! I understand that, so it “cyar” be too nice.

Mr. Speaker, I remember when we came here—and this is why I thank God, for this Parliament, in all sincerity—on the last two occasions to try to establish the Parliament to the benefit of the people of this country; I remember seeing the Member for Caroni East walk in here with something like a baby pram with 3,000 names, all designed to obstruct the establishment of the Parliament. I remember that! I remember when we went to Crowne Plaza, agreed, settled a position, and you reneged it. I remembered that! You blocked the Speaker; you blocked the establishment of the Parliament; and then you came a couple days ago trying to block the delivery of this budget to the people. But it is not within your power, God is in control. The Almighty “Jah” is in control, man! And as I said to you earlier—just listen to me—when truth appears, untruth disappears, for untruth is forever a vanishing thing. [*Desk thumping*] You will not be able to block anything anymore; the business of the people will go on!

The budget, as delivered, demonstrates, in my view, in our view, and in the view of the majority of the people of this country, a clear strategy and a clear philosophy. The vision, as I said, is to bring Trinidad and Tobago to developed status in 20 years. We may never be as great a country as the United States, or as Germany, or as Nigeria, or as the United Kingdom but we have the potential to be a far better one. And as I told the Member for St. Augustine, across the floor when he was speaking, he could think and say what he wants, the removal of the UNC from Government in this country, is the first step that Trinidad and Tobago is in the right direction. [*Desk thumping*] Nothing else could have happened without that! That is the first step and we are therefore on our way again. Developed status in 20 years.

Poverty eradication: I want to say a few words about the question of poverty eradication because, like some of you, I see poverty in my country; I see poverty in the world and I, too, have a concern about it. I am going to deal with some of it because I want to demonstrate to you that our policies, our proposals, our budget statements, are designed as a strategy to deal with poverty eradication. And you call it “gimme-gimme” and handouts. That is all you heard at Reinzi Complex. The Members for Oropouche, Fyzabad and others came up here talking about it: handouts, “gimme-gimme” and dependency syndrome.

Well, let me tell you a bit about dependency syndrome. While we are serving up some of the nation’s resources to the people of the country; the mass of the people who, by God, needs it, you all served it up to a few selected people, who were also very dependent on the Treasury; it would appear! And some names we know—the Speaker has asked me not to call the names—no, he did not ask me

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that, so I might continue. [*Laughter*] But many of those who were dependent on the Treasury and became addicted to the Treasury, are now before the courts of Trinidad and Tobago because of their addictions! And there are those who are yet to come; there are more to come!

Hon. Member: You are a police or what?

Mr. F. Hinds: I wish I were. If I were—

Poverty eradication: poverty, according to the learning—and I read a document about poverty in the Caribbean, the thoughts by Dennis A. V. Brown of the University of the West Indies. I do not see the date of publication here but in any event—yes, 2001. According to him, poverty is defined in terms of material deprivation. And it is simple, you know, the standard approach to looking at poverty is in terms of the individual being deprived of some basic things that he or she needs for survival. Of course, from this perspective, an individual can be poor in either absolute terms or in relative terms, if he is compared to a group, or if we have a certain standard as exists in the world, living on less than US \$1 per day. That, basically, is what he had to say about poverty, and then he arrived at the poverty line, so to speak, and anybody living below that is classified as poor.

Of course, you know you have the unemployed poor and you have the working poor. There are public servants; there are many people who are working but they just work to pay bills, and they, too, are, in that sense, poor. In fact, it was amazing to see that in the Caribbean they assessed, as a line, that persons would need about 2,400 calories on a daily basis in order to survive. In Europe the same calorie measurement is 2,000. We need a little more in the Caribbean—I suspect it is because of the tropics; the environment in which we live, and I suspect because of the energy of most of our youth who do not walk in a normal, efficient, manner; you know—they strut around well so they need some more energy and that sort of thing.

Of course, there are some broader definitions of poverty, some of them being the access to basic education; primary health care; personal safety and the supply of information necessary to make informed decisions and to participate in the running of society. So within more recent times, they removed the definition from the narrower view of needing minimal requirements for survival, and they broadened it to the terms that I have just read. So we need to look at that.

So when we talk about economic growth, we want economic growth, yes, but we want to transpose some of that growth and some of that wealth to the benefit of the people, many of whom would really need it. You are calling that a

dependency syndrome. We decided in the budget—and we have seen, there are too many young women, teenagers, adolescents who, by virtue of their lack of restraint, become pregnant when they are themselves children. Many of them do not have the support of the family to take care of them and the oncoming baby. We decided, in this budget, to allocate some money to deal with this kind of situation, to give them some information; to teach them life skills; to give them basic training; to let them know life is not at an end because you have a baby at age 16, and you can deal with it and give them some counselling; you call that dependency syndrome. You call that a soup kitchen budget.

We decided that we would allocate some moneys and we told the country that AIDS is a serious crisis; it is a serious problem. They say in another 15/20 years, when those who are inflicted with the disease become full-blown, many hospitals will not be able to cope with the onslaught of the sick, at that time. We decided to allocate \$500 million over the next five years to deal with education, prevention and treatment of that serious problem; you call that dependency syndrome.

We recognize that 23,000 persons—and it must have gone up since—31,000 now, the Minister of Planning and Development has told me—31,000 people in this country are saying, “We need a low cost home” and we embarked upon a project to cause to be constructed, 10,000 houses a year for 10 years but you say we cannot do it, you must be a magician. How do you know we cannot? We are saying we are striving to; we are putting systems in place; we have demonstrated sincerity of purpose; we have already constructed and delivered 500 of them in the Marabella area; we have already turned the sod in many parts of the country to continue with that noble project, to satisfy a basic need of 31,000 people, you call that dependency syndrome. You are misguided.

I remember in the last campaign having to read the terms and conditions of the employment for a chief executive officer, under your watch. The Member for Oropouche, he spoke yesterday about opportunity—

Dr. Moonilal: Stay on the issue.

Mr. F. Hinds: I am not attacking you personally. All right “yuh eh want mi say it publicly, all right, ah won’t say it!” I would not say it, I would not remind the country that you had two opportunities; it is quite all right. [*Interruption*] I know, but you ended up with two jobs at the same time.

I know, getting two salaries! [*Interruption*] You know, you wrote a letter to the Commissioner of Police and you said yesterday, in your contribution, that the matter is being investigated, well I want to remind you, yours too. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the sitting is suspended for half an hour. We will resume at 5.00 p.m.

4.30 p.m.: *Sitting suspended.*

5.00 p.m.: *Sitting resumed.*

Mr. F. Hinds: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I was dealing with a couple of points on the question of poverty, and I think the Government, well known to all observers—

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

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

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. F. Hinds: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and Members of this honourable House for extending my time.

Mr. Speaker, anyone who observes this phenomena of poverty would appreciate without a doubt that it really causes a tremendous amount of dislocation; it is responsible, in the society at large, for declining output; declining government revenues; declining household incomes and a breakdown in public health and infrastructure. Some of the problems related to this are seen in alcoholism, drug abuse, family disruption, suicide, prostitution, crime in general, and poor health.

Mr. Speaker, this question of poverty, really, is a very serious one and we would have all encountered some direct exposure to what it means in reality. I remember going to a house in my constituency one evening about three years ago. The house that I approached—I was directed there by another constituent—was but a shell. This mother, with four young children lived in the house and there were no windows and no door to the house. She told me they had just a couple packs of biscuits and water on that same day for lunch. It took me—I would not say by surprise but it was really a shocking and even humiliating experience. So, Mr. Speaker, it is real, and everybody understands that. We have to do something about it and we are in a good position to start.

I have heard criticisms about the anticipated revenues that Trinidad and Tobago expects, as though it is a PNM thing; it is not. Whatever revenues we have from increased output in terms of oil and gas—improved prices in those two

commodities; whatever benefits we derive from the downstream industries—from those hydrocarbons, whether it is methanol, ammonia, and all the other things that we produce—is to the benefit of Trinidad and Tobago. As a Government we are entitled to anticipate them and to anticipate uplifting the lives of the people.

I just want to share a few statistics that I picked up in respect of the impact of poverty, globally. I am reading from a UNESCO document actually; extracts from an address by Koichiro Matsuura, Director General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). Again, this one is undated, so I cannot help with the date.

Mr. Speaker, the statistics show that:

- “The number of people living in absolute poverty has increased.
- Worldwide, some 1.3 billion people subsist on less than \$1 per day and nearly half of the world's population lives on \$2.
- 800 million people are undernourished; 1.3 billion people live without safe water.
- By 2005, it is estimated that 51 % of the people in Sub-Saharan Africa will be living in absolute poverty.
- More than 113 million children have no access to primary education.”

I want to pause there. It is in our law—the Education Act of 1966, as far back as that, again, the vision of Dr. Williams—that education at primary level was made mandatory. It is unlawful for a parent not to expose his or her child to primary education in this country and it shows the kind of foresight. I know that there is much ill to be said about Trinidad and Tobago but there is much to celebrate as well; there is much good to be said and, I, particularly, like that. It is important because we understand the role that education plays in respect of dealing with poverty.

In respect of education and training, the budget proposals include provisions for continued training for our young people. We have seen the failure on the part of the last government to carry out the mandate of a study paper to develop the education sector in this country. Everyone knows by now about the White Paper—which was arrived at after consultations with all the partners in education—was a blueprint for education for 10 years from 1993—2003.

Over the last six years with greater focus on themselves and other things, the Government of the day did not focus on the development of the education sector,

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and in so doing contributed to the phenomenon of poverty as it exists in Trinidad and Tobago. We are quite happy that we are now with the responsibility to advance the project again, and you can be certain, Mr. Speaker, we will do just that.

The On-the-Job Training Programme: The country has already heard about it but it appears as though the Members for Fyzabad, Oropouche and a few others, including the Member for St. Augustine, need to be reminded. We had established that programme and it works in consonance with the private sector, where the State pays half the stipend and the private sector operator pays another half. The young person with no requirement of O'levels or so, comes on the job with practical skills, gathers some experience and can now go out into the working world and say: I have some experience and I can avail myself of the job at hand.

In many cases, as we all know, employers want some measure of experience before they extend the job to the potential worker or, in fact, the applicant. It is a very laudable programme and it involves the private sector in the struggle against poverty. Poverty is not only a Government issue, it is an issue for all of us and the private sector has a role to play in combating poverty in any society, not the least, that which is Trinidad and Tobago.

The Civilian Conservation Corps: again, young people are exposed to life skills; even basic manners, politeness, respect for the environment. I mean many times young people came to me in the constituency office asking for my support in terms of getting them jobs and immediately, in my observations, I realize that they have serious difficulties. In some cases they may have the academic requirements but it has to do with life skills as well: the way you present yourself; the way you indicate to the listener; politeness; good manners; all of these things. I have to tell them many times people eat first with their eyes. A meal—as I would say to them in a metaphor—could be as nutritious as it could be, and as tasty but you would never know, if it was not well presented because you would never venture.

These are some of the life skills that they acquire when we put them in the Civilian Conservation Corps, in the keep and under the watch, of members of the trained protected services, in particular, the Trinidad and Tobago Regiment. They are taught some of these skills; they are taught to respect and to care for the environment; they are taught some basic traditional skills, be it welding or whatever. They get some training and, again, they undergo that programme where they get up in the morning, they do some physical training—I see them every morning as I drive through my constituency. It is a very useful programme and I

can report, without fear of contradiction, that the young people who are involved are particularly grateful for the opportunity. Mr. Speaker, getting up in the morning for a young person, and not having any place to go—with that energy of youth—is a very devastating thing and the Government has put that programme in place to give them an opportunity to acquire these skills. And they call that dependency syndrome. Something has to be wrong with them! Maybe they need a place on the Civilian Conservation Corps. But we will come to that!

The YAPA Programme: I heard the Member for Fyzabad talking about the dependency syndrome, this is the Young Apprenticeship Programme in Agriculture; it is about the availability of land. The Government is making a lot of land available to young people; teaching them agricultural skills; assisting them in getting some start-up business costs and they can do so, you understand? [*Interruption*] Yes.

The HYPE Programme: Help You Prepare for Employment Programme, as it is called, again, another programme, another initiative, all designed for the young people.

Before I conclude, I feel it is incumbent on me to say that in the constituency of Laventille, the larger constituency—it is actually in the constituency of Laventille West, we have begun to convert the old Rum Bond that burnt in 1992 to a permanent training facility. [*Desk thumping*] It has been named: The Laventille Institute of Technology and Continuing Education, where we intend to transpose to those who are willing to accept the discipline of learning high tech skills so that they can leave the community and go and find work in the very buoyant oil and gas industries.

Continuing Education: Money has been allocated for it and work is ongoing; that is another initiative. [*Interruption*] If you want to call that dependency syndrome, feel free, but what is dependency for you is sustenance; opportunity, for the young people, and they welcome it. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, there is no more that I would, usefully, want to add on this matter at this time. There is much more to be said, and more than that, we have five more years in which to say it. [*Desk thumping*] I want to congratulate the Minister of Finance. I want to congratulate the entire PNM team for its work in presenting that very useful budget for Trinidad and Tobago. I want to congratulate the entire PNM family for the support that it gave us. I want to congratulate all the people of Trinidad and Tobago for making a clear decision on this occasion. Great is Trinidad and Tobago, and Trinidad and Tobago must prevail.

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

Mrs. Eudine Job-Davis (*Tobago East*): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to join my colleagues on this side, and the hon. Members on the other side, in congratulating you on your appointment as Speaker. [*Desk thumping*]

I was not privileged to be here last year or two years ago but, of course, our access to television and electronic media allows us to understand what transpires in our Parliament. I dare say that since you have assumed your office, that you have brought back to this House, the kind of dignity and calm to which we had been accustomed. [*Desk thumping*] I know this new attitude will continue to prevail as long as we continue to govern this country and you remain Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, as I sat and I listened to the debate on the Appropriation Bill, I could not help looking back a couple of years, maybe five years to see what transpired in those appropriation bills. Time does not permit me to speak on all of them but I would like to quote from the 1999 Appropriation Bill, Friday, October 08. It says:

“When this Government assumed office in 1995...”

This would be, of course, the former Government.

“...it was evident that there existed numerous and serious disparities and inadequacies in the economic and social conditions prevailing in the country, but this Government had a clear vision for Trinidad and Tobago. In this vision, the people of this nation will enjoy a standard of living consistent with the growing prosperity and economic potential of our twin-island state.

More than that, we embarked on a programme to develop firstly, a society built on the concept of inclusion; secondly, a society in which fairness and equality of opportunity would prevail; and thirdly, a society in which the faith and confidence of our people would be restored.”

Words, lots of words. I continue to quote:

“We also met a demoralized public service, with public officers who were hard-pressed to meet their financial commitments. Wage negotiations had not been settled and arrears of emoluments had not been paid.”

Mr. Speaker, that was the year 1998 and the then government was reflecting on its assumption to high office since 1998. I just want to say that the budget that is proposed by this Government is not a blue soap and pampers budget; it is not a budget about curry and salt; it is a budget that has tangible benefits for the people

of this country. It is a budget from an organized party presented in our manifesto and developed in conjunction with various groups in this country. This budget proposes a vision for our country, a vision of developed country status by 2020. Contrary to the vision expounded by the hon. Member on the other side, where the hon. Member spoke about Trinidad and Tobago being the jewel of the Caribbean—which, of course, is some slogan taken from some other Caribbean island, that uses it to promote its tourism—we are focusing on our people. We are focusing on poverty eradication and the development of our human resource. That is what this budget is all about.

We have outlined, in our budget, proposals to deal with developed country status; proposals to deal with poverty eradication. I listened over the past day and a half to Members on the other side talk about dependency. They did not read our document! Let me bring it to their attention. On the introduction of our budget statement, we said:

“The vision of the People’s National Movement is rooted in upholding and advancing the human dignity of every individual, irrespective of race, colour, religion, culture, ethnicity, gender, or social origin. Such dignity, Mr. Speaker, must be based on self-reliance and self-help, and the confidence in the ability of individuals to promote their own development, and that of their communities and the nation at large.”

What in that signals dependency, Mr. Speaker? It took this PNM Government to develop the social intervention programmes, which the UNC government recognized was needed in this country five years ago. They recognized that we needed some social programmes to assist those persons who could not assist themselves. But it took the Government, us, in 2002, to develop and will continue to implement those programmes because we are about our citizens.

In addition to that, they talked about demoralization of the public service; in 1995 public servants could not pay their bills, seven years later, this PNM Government will ensure that public servants in Trinidad and Tobago would be paid their arrears in November of this year. [*Desk thumping*] It is quite clear and obvious why these programmes were not implemented or why there was no focus on the majority of our citizens. As my colleague said, it seems as though whatever was happening in this country happened to a selected few; \$52 million there, \$10 million here, \$1.6 billion over there. The focus, therefore, was never on the social intervention programmes that would benefit the dispossessed but on filling the pockets of just a few.

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I would now like to turn my attention to matters relating to Tobago. Historically, we know that the relationship that existed between Trinidad and Tobago was not one that augured well for discussions and dialogue. As a matter of fact, it was one of more fighting and enmity.

Hon. Member: Word girl.

Mrs. E. Job-Davis: Yes, we have to do that for you.

Hon. Member: Word! Word!

Mrs. E. Job-Davis: In the year 2001, Tobagonians recognized that after 34 years of wandering in the wilderness—they understood that we had to change direction, and in changing direction, it meant going with a government led by the People’s National Movement. It was unfortunate at that time that our brothers and sisters in Trinidad did not accept the fact of what was happening in our country.

Tobagonians normally vote on issues and we understood, quite clearly, that in the year 2001 there was no way that we could tolerate the UNC back in government. Because after riding on the willing backs of Tobagonians; riding into this Parliament and holding court for five years, Tobagonians were treated with scorn, discourtesy and contempt. [*Desk thumping*] But you know as we say in Tobago: “Payday is always there” and the payday come for the UNC. It did come! Yes! So that in that election in 2001, when the UNC proposed to send their candidates they were rejected, resoundingly. And we rejected them again, and again, and again. It is now history that our Trinidadian brothers and sisters have come to the realization that if this country has to move forward into developed country status by the year 2020, there is no way they could progress under the UNC.

In looking at our budget for Tobago we have been hearing a lot of talk about the DRC report. However, I would like to put on record that the Tobago House of Assembly requested \$700 million for recurrent expenditure but received \$600 million-plus; that is approximately 85 per cent of what we requested. On the development side, the request was similar but we did not receive all that we asked for in both recurrent and development. However, since 1995, it is the most money that the Tobago House of Assembly has received under any government. [*Desk thumping*] That has come about because we understand, quite clearly, that we do not have to fight to get everything; what we need is discourse and dialogue—talk, that is how we do it.

Under a PNM-controlled central government, and a PNM-controlled Tobago House of Assembly, Tobagonians know that they are going to get what they

deserve. [*Desk thumping*] It is not all about statistics; it is about how we treat with the issues that affect our development. Even though we did not get what we requested in this budget, we certainly understand that under the national programmes, Tobago stands to benefit. So all these national social intervention programmes that are available, Tobago is going to benefit. Of course, the funds would be allocated to the Tobago House of Assembly to ensure that the programmes are disbursed by the THA, who has been given autonomy to do that under Act No. 40 of 1996.

In addition to that, it is the first time in the history of this Parliament that Tobago has been given a separate PSIP. A separate one! First time! [*Interruption*] No, no, the first time! Under the PSIP, Tobago would receive a total of \$104.1 million or 11.5 per cent of the overall PSIP. [*Desk thumping*]

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar: What about last year?

Mrs. E. Job-Davis: We did not receive any from UNC. [*Interruption*] In any event because we put you in government, you should have given us almost half, or everything we wanted. [*Desk thumping*] We put you in government. Do not forget that!

Under the PSIP, Mr. Speaker, funds have been allocated for agriculture, forestry and fishing, transport and communication, water and sewerage, education and training. And I might add that under the water and sewerage programme, the sewerage treatment plant—that is so vital to the tourism industry in Tobago—will be addressed. This Government has started the process, and even though we asked for that plant to be constructed about five years ago, we have not gotten it, and now it would be built under the PSIP.

The Prime Minister, in this budget speech, indicated that Tobago, today, clearly needs to catch up with the rest of this country.

“...the key to achieving this is through investment in human and physical capital—to raise productivity levels; to increase per capita incomes and to bring Tobago into the mainstream of the national economy, allowing it over time to contribute more fully, as it rightfully should, to national economic and social development.”

That is why with the allocation given this year, the Tobago House of Assembly will ensure that the people of Tobago, in particular, those in Tobago

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East, will have access to information. In any developing country access to information is vital. Therefore, in order that we are not left behind, we know that information would be made available through television, cable and, of course, distance learning. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, under the PNM Government from 1976 there has been actually no development in Tobago East. No housing project was done after the PNM did that prior to 1976 and in this budget of 2002 the PNM Government will once again commence the housing project in Roxborough, Castara and in Blenheim. The rejuvenation of Tobago East is going to begin. We have proposed for Tobago a new library, a new health centre; the construction of the Scarborough hospital—which should have happened in your time—the housing project. We started a new Mason Hall government school. [*Interruption*] From the PNM Government.

Youth Empowerment Centres would be built in Castara and Charlotteville to accompany those that have been built in Bethel, and the restoration of Mount Saint George Youth Camp which was closed under the last regime would commence.

Mr. Speaker, on the hustings we promised the people of Tobago that with a PNM Government in control the development process in Tobago would be accelerated and this is what is happening given the amount of money we have received from this Government in this budget. [*Desk thumping*] So, it is not all about the DRC report and it is not all about percentages. We are dealing with the reality and how the moneys received would be expended.

Mr. Speaker, Tobago is tourism and we understand, quite clearly, that the industry has been ailing and lagging and nothing really has been done to assist this ailing industry, that is, until 2002. The UNC government proposed \$30 million in a budget with one hand, and with the other hand, what happened? They revised it downwards and did not indicate to the industry that the moneys were not available. However, on the intervention of the PNM Government and with the establishment of a planning committee for tourism development in Tobago, this industry has now been given an injection of funds in the amount of \$307 million which is 10 times more than it has gotten under the UNC. [*Desk thumping*]

We have also managed to stabilize the airlift situation because we, of course, have put our money into assisting the airlines. This is a Government that cares and we understand. When the people of Tobago cried out for help we did not turn a deaf ear or a blind eye. The Government actually did something to alleviate the situation.

Mr. Speaker, agriculture in Tobago is also on the decline, as it is in Trinidad, the Caribbean, but the Tobago House of Assembly, of course, has plans to

revitalize that industry; to ensure that access roads are made available to the farmers and within the rural electrification programme, that some funding will be expended to assist the farmers to and from the various farms in relative safety.

Also, in Tobago, the establishment of a NEDCO office would foster the development or the entrepreneurial spirit of our people and foster the community tourism effort. It will also foster the independence of the people of Tobago for which they are well-known. We know that if the benefits of developing the tourism industry do not permeate throughout the society then it does not make much sense. This Government is about empowering the people of Tobago and empowering the people of Trinidad, by not giving them a fish, but teaching them life's skills; teaching them to fish so that they are, in fact, able to feed themselves.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to touch on the programme that the Tobago House of Assembly (THA) has planned for the next fiscal year and beyond in some instances. This new library would be equivalent to—maybe on a smaller scale—what we have here in Trinidad, and would, again, allow our children to access information necessary for their education—which in Tobago we understand is the poor people's salvation.

We are also looking at the commencement of Phase II of the Tobago Technology Centre at Goldsborough. That, again, gives the opportunity for life skills training.

The Scarborough Hospital: Apart from the fact that it serves the national community in Tobago, it would also be good because Tobago is a tourism destination. That, of course, is going to augur well for prospects of health tourism.

In addition to the funding received by the Tobago House of Assembly, this Government will purchase a new ferry for Tobago, which is long overdue. What we have been getting are ferries 25 or 30 years old. This Government has indicated that it will purchase a new ferry to service the domestic routes. [*Desk thumping*] In addition to that, to ease the burden of air travel, we are also going to see a reduction in the cost of the airline tickets. That would serve both Tobagonians and Trinidadians and would also assist in the development of domestic tourism.

In addition to the funds received—and I want to stress; in addition to the funds received by the Tobago House of Assembly—because people are indicating that the recommendations of the DRC report have not been adhered to and we have been given less than the prescribed amount—all these projects contribute to the

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funding that the Tobago House of Assembly is, in fact, receiving from the central government.

The Crown Point Airport is earmarked for expansion, and because of what is happening—because of the efforts of this government, more and more we are seeing that airlines want to come to Tobago. One of these is Virgin Atlantic which has indicated that it can only come to Tobago if the airport is upgraded to meet certain international requirements. This Government, being committed to the development of Tobago and tourism, understanding the unique needs of the sister island, will upgrade the Crown Point Airport with a view to constructing a new airport terminal and runway at Crown Point; one that I know will not cost \$1.6 billion.

Mr. Speaker, the needs of Tobagonians are not many and they are not hard to meet. When you go around our island and talk to our people, some of the needs are basic ones: a fishing facility here; an access road, and this Government understands that politics is about people. If it is about people, then it means that whatever we do must impact on the lives of our citizens, in Trinidad and in Tobago.

Therefore, in terms of education, once we have access to information technology—this “Education For All” system that was implemented by the UNC, I do not know who monitored it, but in talking with some of the principals, they are experiencing severe frustration with the level of intelligence of some of the students—the Education Reform Programme that this Government is going to embark upon will, of course, target all those students—[*Interruption*] The Minister of Education will let you know that. It will target all those students who have been forced into secondary schools and are not able to perform; forced against their will, I might add, under the premise of “Education For All”, but we are going to address that.

Mr. Speaker, I have heard from the other side talk about the crumbs from the social sector programmes; that this Government is giving crumbs to poor. I, along with several other Trinidadians and Tobagonians, were recipients of those programmes piloted under the leadership of the late Dr. Eric Williams—that is why we are standing here today—programmes, of course, that became non-existent under the reign of the UNC. We understand, too, that these social sector intervention programmes must be developed for all of Trinidad and Tobago and not just a few. Therefore, the crumbs from the table sometimes were sufficient for some people because they were given a chance, an opportunity, to fulfill their lives’ desires.

Mr. Speaker, we know that the central government is committed to working with the Tobago House of Assembly—note I said working with—in providing the facilities that would enable Tobagonians, especially the young people, to prepare themselves to meet the challenges and to take advantage of the opportunities that would be created with the development that is going to be taking place under the PNM-controlled Tobago House of Assembly and under the PNM-controlled central government.

Thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

Mrs. Kamla Persad-Bissessar (*Siparia*): Mr. Speaker, may I join with others in this honourable Chamber in congratulating you on your election to the office of Speaker of this House. We trust, and, in fact, the last few days of debate has already demonstrated that you would honour the traditions of the House and that you will ensure that debate takes place at that level at which it should.

Mr. Speaker, I want to also use the opportunity to take note and to commend the Member for San Fernando East on this, his first budget delivery in the Parliament.

Mr. Speaker, in fact, if the UNC needed an endorsement that its policies were on the right track, this budget document and the estimates that are presented are proof to that because what I do see is really a copycat budget which replicates, in the main, the programmes and policies which were being pursued by the UNC government.

Mr. Speaker, what is the difference or what shall be the difference with respect to the implementation of that policy? How will we judge implementation of the policy? We will judge that on the basis of past performance, the track record of the PNM and we will judge that on the basis of the last time Mr. Manning's PNM was in office and the last nine months when Mr. Manning's PNM was, again, in office.

Mr. Speaker, before I go further, I would like to remind the Member for Tobago East that she talked about 1976 and the fact that no projects had taken place in Tobago from 1976. I would like to remind her that it was in 1976 that Mr. Robinson left the PNM. Over the years when Mr. Robinson—after 1976—became the representative for Tobago in the Parliament Tobago was deprived of any benefit because of the victimization and spite of the PNM towards Tobago. That is the record and Mr. Robinson himself has publicly stated that. It is on the record,

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publicly, that Tobago suffered because of the spite of the PNM. [*Interruption*] His words are in *Hansard* and they could be checked.

Mr. Speaker, Tony Fraser, writing in the *Guardian* of Thursday, October 24, 2002, on page 16 raises a very important issue in respect of the budget. He says:

“The ten and 12 per cent increases in...education and health would only be useful if they are directed to root and branch transformation.”

Mr. Speaker, when we look at the estimates for education we would see that there has been a very minor increase in the education budget. There has, in fact, been no increase in the development programme budget of the Ministry of Education. Therefore, it means, in terms of development programmes, capital programmes, the education sector has not been given an increased allocation.

When we look at the Recurrent Estimates, we note that the increase is in the Recurrent Estimates, but then what are the recurrent estimates for? What are these numbers for? Again, we are talking about root and branch transformation, in the words of Tony Fraser, and we are talking about whether there has been any real increase in terms of budgetary allocation.

We agree that for the education sector to develop and grow, and for it to do all the things that we dream of it to do, and we want it to do—which is for the benefit of the children of Trinidad and Tobago—it is not simply a question of how much money is put into it, but also a question of the kinds of programmes and the priorities that are given to the programmes. Therefore, when we look at it, first of all, let us take the first aspect which is that 10 or 12 per cent increase in the education sector that has been estimated in this year’s budget.

We see that in the *Draft Estimates Details of Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*, Head 26, there has been an increase of about \$268 million, but when we look at the specifics of that increase we see that the majority of this increase has gone into what is known as Personnel Expenditure. What is Personnel Expenditure? It is for staffing. Does this then mean that the Ministry of Education intends to increase its personnel—increase the number of staff—so that it can better deliver the programmes or better implement the programmes that it has already started? Is that what the increase is for? If that is the case, then the increase is justified. However, again when we examine the estimates for 2003, we see that this is not the case. The increases in the recurrent budget show that \$172.9 million have gone to pay the settlement of arrears to public officers.

I have no difficulty with the settlement of arrears to public officers. In fact, I am sure they are very happy—thousands of citizens in this country—that they will be getting a Christmas bonus. So I have no problem with that whatsoever. What I am speaking about—I am talking about education—is what has been boasted about as this great increase in the budget for education when, in fact, it makes no real difference to what will take place in the education sector. So, \$172.9 million gone to settle the arrears.

Mr. Speaker, when we look at it again we see that for “Salaries and C.O.L.A.” another increase there of \$103 million, gone, again now to do what? Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance, what is that for? The salaries that the UNC administration increased for the first time for teachers—they were given higher levels of salaries—is to be continued by this; that is in terms of the increased grades that were given.

So that the purported increase in the education sector, I am saying, is no real increase at all. There has been no new moneys put into the education sector. That is fine. I am saying it is not just about money, it is about policies and it is about programmes. When we look at the policies and programmes, as put out in the budget statement and the various documents that we have been presented with—the social and economic infrastructure—in the House, we do not see a single new programme for the education sector. There is not a single new programme that is being introduced, or will be introduced, in this budget here as indicated in the documents placed before this House.

This is why I said it was a copycat budget; all that was happening was that you were taking the existing programmes introduced by the UNC and that you were going to carry through on. I have no difficulty with that. It is an endorsement of those policies. So, for example, having taken the same policies, I say it is an endorsement that we were doing something right.

When we came into office in 1995 we met an education sector that was bruised and battered. We met an education sector that was suffering serious deficiencies. We introduced policies which I am happy to note are now going to be completed in terms of the estimates that are put out that the PNM is saying it is going to carry through. But then, when we look at the performance ability and the track record of the PNM it is not one of implementation. For the past eight to nine months we have seen what has happened in the education sector—the disaster zone that it has become.

We have talked about the book grants and we have talked about the free school textbooks and we saw what has happened. Up to today, in this country,

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there are children in schools who have not received their textbooks. So, it is the implementation that our concern is with because the policy has been a carry through of the policies.

When we look at the estimates again we can see clearly that with respect to Personnel Expenditure, again—I am talking about implementation—we recognize that there were deficiencies in the education sector as since 1962, even though the school sector and the numbers of students, teachers and schools have increased so dramatically—the secondary sector by about 500 per cent—no new school supervisor positions have been created. There is need for the monitoring; there is need for the school supervisors to make sure that things go well in the schools.

The moneys were placed in the budget by the UNC administration last year, and up to today, I am seeing back in the budget again, positions created in 2001; Cabinet Notes of the UNC administration, those are the positions that you are saying—when I have to look at what new posts you are saying you are creating—were created by the UNC administration that you are now saying you are going to implement.

Heads and Deans in the school sector. We talked about Heads and Deans—again, nothing, no implementation. So, it is policy implementation. The UNC government approved—worked with the principals of the assisted schools and the government schools—Heads and Deans, but no implementation. So, it is on the issue of implementation. I have urged the Member for San Fernando East that if he is to see his budget successful it would have to be with respect to implementation within the Ministry. Implementation must take place.

So, I want to remind him that we met an education sector that was bruised and battered and when we left it in 2001, for the first time in the history of Trinidad and Tobago 16 students in the A'level examination scored at the top of the world in the Cambridge A'Level Examinations after five years. [*Desk thumping*] After six years of a UNC administration—[*Interruption*] A'level students did not enter the system when you came in last year, they entered years ago. So, after five years of the UNC you saw 16 students on the top of the world and, thereafter, this year again. So, it was not a one shot exercise. Of that five or six, 16 students on the top. [*Interruption*] That is not true. Go and get your people to check it. For the first time Cambridge has been ranking the students worldwide. Last year, for the first time, and it continued again this year. That is the legacy.

Therefore, if you are carrying through the policies—I say I am happy about that—please, it is with respect to implementation of those policies that you need

to pay attention. But, nowhere within the budget statement, and the documents we have been given, have I seen how the Government intends to carry out those policies. How will you implement them? Reading from the Budget Statement on page 25 it states:

“Education

Mr. Speaker, achieving our economic and social objectives, will depend critically on our success in the optimal development of our Human Resources. The development of Human Resources in turn is dependent on improving the equality of education offered to all of our citizens. This is even more important if we are to achieve the status of a developed country...

Our...Plan has been informed by the White Paper on Education...”

And it says:

“We will increase the number of Early Childhood Care and Education Centres (ECCE) in every district;”

How are you going to increase the number of Early Childhood Care and Education Centres when, again, when you look at the development estimates and the Public Sector Investment Programme you have not increased the budget for Early Childhood Care and Education Centres? You have not. This is a capital expenditure; you have to spend money to build the childhood centres. No money is allocated to it, but you are saying in your budget statement that you are going to increase the number of Early Childhood Care and Education Centres. How? Where is it going to come from? *[Interruption]* It is not off budget because you did indicate that it is not off budget.

In the Development Programme (DP) you say you have put the amount that you say you are going to spend on Early Childhood Care and Education Centres. It is in your DP. That is not off budget, the secondary schools are off budget. *[Interruption]*

Whilst you raised that, it is very interesting. I remember the Members on the other side—the Member for Diego Martin West and others—attacking the UNC viciously, when the UNC utilized the MTS for construction of the second batch of secondary schools, but it is the same MTS that they are utilizing. You said they had no capacity; they could not do it, yet they built those schools in a year. You have utilized MTS again in your construction of those schools. So, you will increase the number, but in your Development Programme, no money; how are you going to do it? How are you going to do it?

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They said they would de-shift the junior secondary schools. We began the de-shifting programme. In September 2002 there were several schools you should have de-shifted. Again, no implementation. You have been saying you will de-shift from 1993 and you have not de-shifted a single school. Implementation.

We have established a School Intervention Strategies Programme (SISP), again, this was a programme about which the Minister of Education said, “This is not Kamla’s \$3 million programme, this is a \$28 million programme.” Again, where is it in your estimates? Where is it in your estimates? You cannot implement unless you have the allocations within the budget for implementation. So I raise the issue of implementation.

Mr. Speaker, there is just one other point I would like to raise. I have noted a very interesting phenomenon with respect to allocations under Head 13, which is the Office of the Prime Minister. I have seen from previous budgets—last year’s budget, this year’s budget, and budgets prior to that—that under Head 13 of the Appropriation Bill, under the Office of the Prime Minister, the allocation was usually—last year it was \$86 million—below \$100 million. This year Head 13 now registers an estimate of \$1.3 billion; Head 13, Office of the Prime Minister.

Therefore, when I saw that I was very curious. Why was there this tremendous increase in the estimates for the Office of the Prime Minister? So, I went into the draft estimates here which allowed me to see what has been happening. When we go under Head 13, Recurrent Expenditure, we see that all of these moneys are now allocated to the Office of the Prime Minister for something called “Current Transfers and Subsidies”. Current Transfers and Subsidies have to do with moneys being transferred to several non-governmental organizations; whether they be to religious bodies; whether they be for—[*Interruption*] Yes, Current Transfers and Subsidies; \$1.1 billion under Current Transfers and Subsidies. Look at your estimates. I will read it for you since you are doubting it. Page 49:

“Head 13, Current Transfers and Subsidies an increase of \$1.171 billion”

This is Sub-Head 04 [*Interruption*] Will you look at your estimates on page—

Dr. Rowley: I will not waste my time.

Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar: Why is it when it offends you, you do not wish to listen? [*Interruption*] Sub-Head 04. It is here for all to see in black and white. Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies.

Mr. Speaker, these are for—and a whole host of them have now been included. These now include—[*Interruption*] Look at it on page 49, Head 13.

Why do you not look at it? These now include non-profit organizations; it moves on to religious bodies and then it goes on to other non-governmental organizations, non-religious bodies, and then it moves to something called Households and you see it is there under Current Transfers and Subsidies. [*Interruption*]

The Member does not know what his own Minister of Finance did. Item 007, Households, and under this, again, you will see where this \$1.1 billion has been allocated.

Mr. Imbert: Households is for pension.

Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar: It is \$1.128, under Households on page 66. They are not Government pensions. Do you know what they are? The SHARE Programme.

Mr. Valley: Mr. Speaker, let me help the Member. The social delivery is now under the Office of the Prime Minister.

Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar: So the Member is agreeing with me.

Mr. Valley: What you were saying is that it came from somewhere else to be there; from social services.

Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar: So, what different am I saying?

Mr. Valley: But you are saying it as though the Prime Minister; you are making the point as though, suddenly—

Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar: Mr. Speaker, I have already given way, I would like to resume my contribution.

Mr. Speaker, the Member is agreeing with me. He is agreeing that the budget of the Office of the Prime Minister has been increased tremendously from under \$100 million to \$1.1 billion. He is agreeing. What he is now trying to do—and I have not finished my contribution because I was going to tell you, and I will tell you what has happened, where it has come from and where it has gone. What the Office of the Prime Minister has now done—and I do not know if some of the Ministers know—is that there is a Ministry of Social Development. The Minister of Finance has stripped the Ministry of Social Development of all flesh and of all blood. He has left it as a ministry in name; as a ministry with desks and chairs and personnel, but with no programmes and no projects to deliver because all those programmes and projects have gone into the ministry known as the Office of the Prime Minister.

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He has taken all the social services from under the Ministry of Community Development.

Mr. Valley: He is quite right to do that.

Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar: No one is saying he is not right. Why are you defending? I am stating what is fact. Why are you defending him? I am saying, and I am bringing it to the attention of the public and the Members of this House, that \$1.1 billion has gone into the Office of the Prime Minister for disbursement; for sharing out—that is what it has gone there for—from all the social services. It is a social unit, you are calling it, but several ministries have been emasculated. So that you have ministers sitting, with personnel and salaries with no programmes and no delivery because all of it is now going to be given out by the one and only; by the “Father of the Nation”. He will personally now do these handouts out of the Office of the Prime Minister. That is what has happened, Mr. Speaker.

So that from a budget of about \$86 million last year, the Office of the Prime Minister has gone to \$1.1 billion. We talked about the social benefits that come out of this budget—and again we are happy for poverty eradication—and we see them all centralized into the Office of Prime Minister which, historically, has not handled those programmes. Those programmes have been with the community development and the social development ministry. It is the prerogative of the Prime Minister to decide on the Member for Laventille East/Morvant or the Member for Tobago or the Member for La Brea in his Cabinet, but it is our prerogative in this honourable Chamber to bring it to the attention of the public and to raise it for the record. So, we have seen this new trend where all the handouts are going to be handed out? by the Prime Minister himself.

What a sorry state of affairs that we have reached when ministries of the Government have been totally emasculated so that the Prime Minister could stand up and say, “I have given a hamper to the SHARE Programme; that I can choose to whom I give hampers. I can choose to whom I give all these various social programmes; the Soup Kitchens and whatever.” The ministers have been emasculated where those programmes initially belonged. *[Interruption]*

Mr. Speaker, they do not want to hear about “coulda, woulda and shoulda”. I remember even in those very words they are benefit of—they have no imagination. I remember when we were on that side of the House—Member for Diego Martin East who is so joyful about being on that side of the House, I remind him that he sat on this side of the House. One day, again, he will sit on

this side of the House or totally outside of the House. [*Desk thumping*] Everything we say on this side of the House, he jumps up and says, “Oh we win, we win, we win, we win.”

Mr. Imbert: Not in your lifetime.

Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar: My dear, Member for Diego Martin East, I will remind you that you sat here. I want the Member to look at these Heads as I ask the Member for Diego Martin Central to clarify, when he can, and the Minister of Finance to clarify in his reply: Why is it in the Appropriation Bill there is no Head 19 in the 2003 budget? Why? Perhaps there is a reason. I have seen in the past Appropriations Bill, Head 19 which is the Head that deals with the charges on account of the public debt. I have seen in all the other budgets that it is included in the Appropriations Bill and what that means, therefore, is that it has to be approved by the Parliament. It must be passed by Parliament. When it is in the Appropriation Bill, when we take the vote, this is what we vote on. All other documents are explanatory, they are not what is approved. This is what is approved, the Appropriation Bill; the Appropriation Bill 2003. There is no Head 19 in the 2003 Bill. When the Minister of Finance is winding up the debate, he could advise us why it is that—

Mr. Valley: If the Member would give way. If the Member has a problem and she says it has to be appropriated and it is not, then it means that we cannot pay the debt service. Not so? So she does not have a problem.

Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar: The Member does not have a problem. Well, I am asking whether the Member has a problem or not. I am asking for the Member for San Fernando East—

Mr. Valley: I told you already, it is a direct charge.

Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar: I am asking the Minister of Finance—not the Member for Diego Martin Central—when he is winding up the debate on the Bill he has brought to this House, to tell us why is it that Head 19 is not included here because that is the Bill that we will eventually vote on and that we will pass in this Chamber.

Mr. Speaker, there have been several allegations up and down this Chamber, with respect to what happened in the last election. The Members on the other side become very angry when it is raised on this side, but we have had reports, and it is our duty, as elective representatives of the people, to say what has been brought to

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our attention. It has been brought to our attention that there were persons who were paid \$1,000 to vote in a particular way. We have been told, and I can only repeat what I have been told. In Ortoire/Mayaro, for example, we were told—people came in and spoke with us and the Member for Fyzabad spoke about it—that people were getting connections when there were no applications made; whether it was water or electricity. We have been told by persons to whom this happened—and I can only repeat what I have been told—that they were induced, influenced and bribed to vote in a particular manner.

I would just like to remind this honourable Chamber—*[Interruption]* You know, last year when they did not win the election they went up and down the length and breadth of this country and spoke about voter padding, they turned the minds of the people against the EBC and yet it is the very EBC—The Minister of Health is the greatest Minister of Health. He got dead people to stand up and walk and talk before the enquiry. He is the greatest Minister of Health and he is not even a doctor.

Mr. Speaker, the Representation of the People Act, Chap. 2:01, section 96 states:

- “(1) A person is guilty of a corrupt practice who is guilty of bribery.
- (2) A person is guilty of bribery who, directly or indirectly, by himself or by any other person on his behalf—
 - (a) gives any money, or procures any office to or for any elector or to or for any other person on behalf of any elector or to or for any other person in order to induce any elector to vote or refrain from voting;
 - (b) Corruptly does any act as in paragraph (a) on account of any elector having voted or refrained from voting; or”

And we are saying those who have intimidated our voters, out of fear and kept them away from the polls.

- “(c) makes any gift or procurement as in paragraph (a) to or for any person in order to induce that person to procure, or endeavour to procure, the return of any person at an election or the vote of any elector,

or if upon or in consequence of any such gift or procurement he procures or engages, promises or endeavours to procure the return of any person at an election or the vote of any elector.

- (3) A person is guilty of bribery who—
- (a) advances or pays or causes to be advanced or paid any money to or to the use of any other person with the intent that the money or any part thereof will be expended in bribery at any election; or
 - (b) knowingly pays or causes to be paid any money to any person...”

Mr. Speaker, we have had reports of so many of these incidents taking place that we have come to the conclusion that the election 2002 was stolen by the PNM as a result of these corrupt practices during the 2002 election.

Would the Member for San Fernando East now set up another Commission of Enquiry into the EBC and into those practices which took place on election day? Those records would have to be documented and we will document them; the instances that have been brought to our attention, in addition to this kind of corrupt practice of inducing persons to vote in a particular way. We have had other accounts and other reports from persons coming in to us, as representatives, of people who have moved into areas; who have been placed in Ortoire/Mayaro in beach houses in order to be able to vote.

Mr. Speaker, again, I want to wish the Government success in the implementation of its budget. As I say, I have seen what is a copycat budget with respect to the education sector; the policies carried through—the policies are the same. What we await with bated breath is to see the implementation of those policies and I do hope they are successful because it will be policies that will redound to the benefit of the children of Trinidad and Tobago.

I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Minister of Planning and Development (Hon. Dr. Keith Rowley): Mr. Speaker, let me begin by saying how very happy I am to extend to you, a former colleague of mine, my sincerest best wishes for your long and meritorious service to the State and the exalted office to which you have been promoted in recent days. Mr. Speaker, your presence in that Chair brings a comfort to this country. It brings dignity to the Chamber and it has purified our processes.

I also want to take the opportunity to congratulate all my colleagues who have made their maiden presentations. I thank the Members for Naparima, Oropouche, Tobago East, St. Ann’s East, certainly San Fernando West, Ortoire/Mayaro; I congratulate all of them and tell them that it is an experience that will change their lives, but to give one bit of advice: The secret to surviving this journey is not to get too attached to the position. If you get too attached to the position you would

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have difficulty treating with changes, you become traumatized and you go into denial when there are changes. I think it would be remiss of me if I do not welcome back to the Chamber my friend, the Member for St. Augustine, and my very dear friend, the Member for Couva South, who has not yet stood up in person, but I think he really exists and we will soon discover that he is more than a ghost. We got his messages and we are happy to have him back with us.

Mr. Speaker, there is a lot I had intended to address in the Chamber, with respect the portfolio of Planning and Development, but this being a debate and speaking so late in the debate I think I need to respond to a few of the positions taken by those on the other side. I want to begin by saying that I am happy to see that the UNC has taken the role of Opposition and to point out that even though they sit on the other side that it is an integral part of the management of Trinidad and Tobago; that the Government has an Opposition that criticizes, critiques, and points out to the Government what is going on or what is not going on.

In that context I was quite surprised to see the response of the Leader of the Opposition, the Member for Couva North, who I genuinely believe might be in need of medical attention. I have known him for many years and on any good day, without notes, he would have been able to provide a response to a budget any day of the week, but here we have a \$20 billion budget and the Leader of the Opposition makes? 20 minutes of cursory comments and leaves the Chamber. I think that is in the same vein of trying to prevent a Speaker from being elected, not wanting the Parliament to function, coming in the budget debate to talk about the budget not being able to be presented because of some legalities and what has been done. All wrong.

Mr. Speaker, when the Opposition started making their responses one systematic statement kept coming through from the Opposition. It is surprising to me that persons on the other side who have so many questions to answer about how—some of these same individuals and their appointees—they had managed hundreds of millions of dollars of public funds, have come in this budget debate and systematically disparaged the social support systems; disparaged the expressions in the budget and the existence of the social safety net.

Mr. Speaker, a few years ago the economists, the NGOs, the international bodies, what they were talking to us, and governments like us, about, was the whole question of the need to have proper social safety nets in countries like ours. Because, even as there is development being strived after and development being retained it is possible to have growth and have poverty grow at the same time. I think one of my colleagues pointed out that there is a report on this country that

shows that in the last few years, while the economy has been growing, what we have been having alongside growth in the economy is growth in poverty. In a situation where there is wealth, the poorest man is a poor man in a very wealthy environment.

So, I could not understand, for the life of me, how Members of the UNC could see a problem with the Government increasing allocations to those who are least able to look after themselves and Government initiating programmes to take care of those persons who require some assistance if only temporary. I cannot understand.

There is a confusion. In one breath we are told that it is dependency syndrome; it is handout; it is loacho; it is whatever, and in the next breath it is give it to my constituency; it is discrimination, you are not giving it to me. I am asking: What really is the position of the UNC with respect to the existence of a social safety net in Trinidad and Tobago? [*Interruption*] Do not talk to me about fairness. My colleague, the Member for Arouca North, pointed out what your idea of fairness is. Your idea of fairness is to collect \$250 million in the Road Improvement Programme and not give one cent to Arima; not one cent to Port of Spain; not one cent to Diego Martin. You do not understand the meaning of fairness. The Member for Fyzabad does not understand the meaning of fairness, that is why when he speaks I disregard him. He does not understand the meaning.

Mr. Speaker, one of the problems we are having right now in this country is that public officials—or those on the other side who were public officials—do not think it is important to take their assignments seriously. My friend, the Member for St. Joseph, a former Minister of Finance, took part in this debate, came here with a set of bogus figures pulled out of thin air and contributed a whole 45 minutes about the country's debt, the figures having nothing whatsoever to do with the official figures of the Ministry of Finance.

What I would like to see, and what you can guarantee is going to happen from here on, is when a Minister of Government of Trinidad and Tobago gets up to speak in this country the people of this country can take it as a fact that what the Minister says is the fact and that is the truth. [*Desk thumping*]

I do not know where my colleague, the Member for St. Joseph, got his figure of the public debt being \$31 billion. All the documents in the Ministry of Finance, which we have brought to this House, show what the public debt is and he comes here and talks about a debt service ratio of 77 per cent. I would ask the public to disregard all those statements.

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Mr. Speaker, there are some problems that we have to address in this country and the problem is facing up to reality. My friend, the Member for Oropouche, made a statement that under the UNC not one job was lost at Caroni (1975) Limited and he accused us on this side of not understanding the politics of sugar. I was not aware that we were running the politics of sugar at Caroni (1975) Limited, but I am glad he told me. I thought that Caroni (1975) Limited was a company which happened to be owned by the State, which was growing cane, making sugar, making rum and selling it and supposedly making a profit, but, apparently, there is something called the politics of sugar. And, that politics of sugar is costing this country almost \$500 million per year because the figures are: you are earning \$480 million and you are spending \$790 million and he says what should be done is to expand the industry. All you will be doing for every time you expand it is expanding the loss. The question that the people of Trinidad and Tobago ought to ask themselves is: Can we afford to continue indefinitely to provide almost half a billion dollars to produce 100,000 tonnes of sugar for which, incidentally, there will be no market for half of it in the very near future?

My friend, the Member for St. Augustine, spoke at length about the budget ought to have been pitched within the economics of the international environment. He was very careful not to point out what the international environment says about the world's sugar industry and what it means for Caroni (1975) Limited, but the PNM Government, since 1991 in our manifesto took that into account and, in fact, took steps to deal with it. That is why, as we dealt with the problems of the port, WASA, BWIA and PTSC, we will have to deal with Caroni (1975) Limited notwithstanding all the comments and people talking about discrimination.

When moneys are allocated in this country somebody is deprived of "A" so that "B" could get it. If you allocate more in one Head it means that there is less to go in the other Head. If you allocate moneys of \$400 million or \$500 million a year to support a static situation that has no future, it is denying all of us, wherever we live or whoever we are, that money. That is why we had a tripartite agreement which was signed by the Leader of the Opposition then and he is in the correct position now. That is why, when we say that we are going to treat with the Caroni (1975) Limited situation it is part of treating with the country's problem. For them to try to browbeat us and talk about discrimination, race and unfairness is not going to deal with it. We have a problem at Caroni (1975) Limited to deal with.

Mr. Speaker, the very fact that he can tell you that not one job was lost at Caroni (1975) Limited is proof that we had not even attempted to deal with it

because the root problem at Caroni (1975) Limited is that there are too many people chasing too few cane stalks. Caroni (1975) Limited's problem is that there are too many people in the industry for the size of the industry, but we have settled all of that. The industry was supposed to have been reduced from 9,000 staff to 6,000 and to have produced 140,000 tonnes of sugar and to have allowed the cane farmers to produce more cane and the Government wrote off \$2.4 billion in debt. We put the pension plan in place. We did all of these things. It was a comprehensive restructural programme.

These gentlemen, in their constituencies, did the opposite. They made sure that there was no reduction in staff, therefore, there was no reduction in cost. What they did was to make sure that the production of sugar fell from 125,000 tonnes. When they came into office it was as low as 8,000 tonnes at the lowest during their tenure. So, you had less sugar being produced while the cost of production went up and they are telling us to leave it so. It cannot be left so.

6.30 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, you heard a lot about the country's debt problem. But let us understand that once we get ourselves into a situation where we borrow today to spend on today's items, and next week when something comes up there are three choices. Is it that we do not pay our debts; we borrow to pay them or we borrow, pay some of them, as well as to put some more into the economy for increased growth? There are always options available to us. This government of the UNC in the last six years, having doubled the public debt, has limited the country's ability to borrow for further progress, because it has to service the moneys that it borrowed before. It is one thing to borrow, and it is another thing when you borrow and you spend the money in a certain way that does not contribute to national development. If you look at the Public Sector Investment Programme, you would see that this year the PSIP is under a billion dollars. We are being realistic. That is what we think we can handle. The last budget had \$1.3 billion. We did not see it fit to come and fool the country with a \$1.5 billion Public Sector Investment Programme, but we would ensure that there is harmony between the Government's contribution, which is the Government's billion-dollar expenditure and the private sector's involvement.

Mr. Speaker, we would be ensuring that the approval system, especially in the Town and Country Planning Division where there are a lot of private sector initiatives, where people who are funding their own programmes, some small, some medium and large, that they are required to have approvals on a timely

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basis, to be encouraged to do their own development and, therefore, not only would the public sector expenditure sector be driving the economy but we are going to ensure that the approval's processes are so timely that the private sector involvement would be significant. So we look forward to significant private sector investment during the second year.

We do things differently in the PNM, and the country would benefit as a result of that. I heard the Member for St. Joseph say that one of the things that we did not do was the project on the port, the conference centre, that was in the last budget. They had approved \$200 million in the last budget to carry on with a conference centre complex on the port. If this country has not benefited in any way from the change of Government, it has benefited from the fact that the PNM has come into office and has taken some review action on that project.

My colleague, the Member for St. Joseph, said that the conference centre complex, which is called the Port of Spain Conference Complex, was reviewed by the Government, public servants, and was given full marks to proceed and that for some reason this Government has stopped it. Since when he has become a manager of all those on the other side, and since that is a statement from a former Minister of Finance of Trinidad and Tobago, I will take a few minutes of my time to put on record the correct story on that situation, because hon. Members on the other side have a habit of not speaking the truth to the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Speaker what are the facts? The facts are on April 9, 1998 Cabinet approved the adoption of:

“...implementation of Phase 1 of the Port of Spain International Complex project, which would include two (2) office blocks, core conference facilities and accommodation for the ACS at an estimated cost of \$265 million. (the entire project, excluding the cost of a new cruiseship terminal, was estimated to cost \$476 Mn. with Government being required to inject \$12.6 Mn. ... There would also be an annual operating deficit ...\$2 Mn. To \$2.5 Mn.)”

That is what their Cabinet approved in 1988. But somewhere along the way, very soon after, by September 2001, that project had grown to \$1.2 billion and the Government was supposed to provide 53 per cent of that.

When we came into office and met this situation, which we regarded as airport 2—because one must remember the Piarco Airport was supposed to cost \$400 million. They awarded a contract for \$600 million. By the time the building was finished it was \$1.6 billion and by the time the debt is paid it would be \$3.6

billion. Here was a project that was supposed to start at \$400 million, even before one bucket of mortar is mixed the project has grown to \$1.2 billion and the Government is to provide over \$800 million of it. And what did we do? Hear what the project is: the project is hotel tower—\$325 million, and Government is to provide half; conference centre—\$277 million, Government to provide all; commercial office block—\$220 million, private sector will handle that; office tower, private sector; car park—\$112 million, government; performing arts centre—\$72 million; infrastructure—\$38 million, government, and all of this from loan financing.

Listen to what the cash flow assessment says: Over the 20-year life of the hotel—loses by year 2015, \$148 million of which half is for the Government to cover.

The conference facility by year 2015, total losses—\$729 million of which all is for the Government to cover; car park facility by year 2015—\$295 million losses, all for the Government to cover; the performing arts centre—\$94 million, all for the Government to cover; and the infrastructure—\$106 million losses, all for the Government to cover, a total of \$1.298 billion losses to the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, and that is the project evaluation. Here is a project that shows the Government of Trinidad and Tobago to be put in this position. These people approved it, they put it in the last budget and are saying to us now that we should have continued with that. What did we do? We asked the Ministry of Finance, and we put a team together that comprised the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Planning and Development, Executive Director of the Ministry of Finance, Chief Executive Officer and Chairman of UDeCOTT, we put them together to review the project. This is what the review report says:

Government debt servicing at the end of 15 years would total \$1.6 billion of which interest payments would account for \$999 million and principal \$625 million. On the basis of the project information provided and the proposed financing arrangement, the structure of the project and the organizational matrix, the project should be rejected in its present form.

That is the recommendation of the report. I would not tell you what the report says about how they went about doing it, but just to tell you that had we not come into Government these people would have embarked on this project which would have made the airport scandal look like a tea party.

This Government reviewed it and took the advice of the committee and the Cabinet stopped the project. We said we would go out properly, we would review

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the situation and if there is to be a project there, not to mention this conference centre—one would have heard him say yesterday that Marriott said they would full the hotel with people, 100 per cent, and they would spill it to Tobago. All of that was before September 11 where, today, even BWIA is in trouble fighting for its life, but we would have been spending \$2 billion on a conference centre where the Government carries the can and all the profit-making parts will remain with others. The report pointed out that the cost of construction—airport 2—in that project was estimated at \$917 per square foot as compared to typical cost in Port of Spain of \$500—\$600 per square foot. So even before the project started the construction cost was \$400 a square foot more than the going rate.

And then it says:

The structure of the project reserves the profit making components for the private partners; while Government has been assigned those components that are not expected to make a profit.

That is management, UNC style. Thank God for the people of Trinidad and Tobago the PNM came into office and saved them \$2 billion. If you do not believe this could have happened just watch the information coming out of the Commission of Enquiry on the airport and one would see the reality. One would see how a \$400 million project ended up costing us \$3.6 billion and they were at it again. It is divine intervention that caused us to be saved from airport 2.

Mr. Speaker, you heard them talking about overpass as though an overpass is something to have a national debate over. It is part of the national transportation system, yes, but what is the story behind it? I must put this on *Hansard*, because they have the habit of misleading the country. The overpass should have been built and would have been completed, but do you know what happened, Mr. Speaker?

These same people had the option to build that overpass—and as far back as February 1998 the European Investment Bank provided an opportunity for that overpass to be funded with EIB funds and said to Trinidad and Tobago, if you accept the European Investment Funds in US dollars—they provided the money, a 20-year loan at 3 per cent interest with a five-year moratorium. That meant that the total interest payment on that loan would have been less than \$60 million.

The Government agreed to borrow the money. As soon as the European Investment Bank indicated that the condition for borrowing that money is that the Government would have to use the IDB tender rules, which means proper tendering procedures and proper evaluation, they got Minister Vincent Lasse to

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write to the EIB saying—and I want to put this on record, this is March 16, 2000:

“Mr. Whitehouse,
ACP-IV, Directorate for Operations outside the European Union,
European Investment Bank,
Luxembourg-Kirechberg.

Re: East/West Corridor Expansion and Improvement Project-
Churchill Roosevelt/Uriah Butler Highway Interchange

I refer to your correspondence dated January 6, 2000 on the subject at caption and wish to advise that the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago (GORTT) has taken a decision to undertake the construction of the Churchill Roosevelt/Uriah Butler Highway Interchange with financing from the local private sector. The Government, therefore, no longer wishes to pursue negotiations for the proposed loan which was approved by the Bank on February 23, 1999.”

So a loan which was approved on February 23, 1999, at 3 per cent interest with a five-year moratorium, Vincent Lasse on behalf of the UNC Cabinet is writing to the EIB saying we do not want the money, and what did they do? They went around Queen’s Park East to Citibank and they borrowed the same money at 11 ¼ per cent interest and instead of paying \$59 million in interest, that interest would now be \$320 million. They turned down a loan with \$59 million interest, and accepted one with \$320 million for the same amount of money only because by borrowing locally, they can do what they want with the money. If they had borrowed the cheap money they had to follow the strictures of the EIB.

These are people who come here to the Parliament and see the PNM Government giving \$100 to handicapped children, \$100 to welfare and telling the people of this country that we are encouraging the dependency syndrome and hand-out and loafers. You all do not know what you have done to the people of Trinidad and Tobago. The \$150 million they borrowed could not be used because the engineering drawings for the interchange had not even been drawn up.

You heard my colleague, the Member for Ortoire/Mayaro, saying earlier on today how he intended to approach that project, that engineers would design it and then it would be built by engineers. They borrowed the money and as of now, that money has incurred \$40 million in interest while it has not been applied to the

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project which could not have been afforded but they are telling people, build the interchange, build the interchange; PNM stopped the interchange. When, in fact, it was they themselves that stopped the interchange in November 2001, because at that time when Minister Humphrey gave instructions as to whom to give the contract, one company took UDeCOTT to court and they then stopped the project—November 2001.

These people who think that there is some virtue in not speaking the truth have been telling the country all the that time the PNM did not build the interchange. But it is on *Hansard* that they refused to accept moneys at 3 per cent interest and borrowed it at 11¼ per cent interest. Now \$300 million to be paid for a project which is not yet ready. That is they!

I heard my friend, the Member for Barataria/San Juan, talking about how we stole the election and the reason they lost the election was because their voters had guns put to their heads on election day and they had to go back home. One thing we have in this country, notwithstanding the best efforts of the UNC, is a free press. There are umpteen radio stations, television stations, numerous print media personnel who comb this country on election day, and not one of them has reported a single story like that.

All the persons who had gun put to their heads on election day, went to tell the Member of Parliament for Barataria/San Juan that, and I must believe that.

Mr. Ramnath: And you do not have to believe that?

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: Of course, I do not believe it. It is a bloody lie. The turnout in this last election was among the highest ever. So while he told us that they had guns to people heads and they did not vote, let me just run down the list: Arima turnout—64.5 per cent; Arouca North—70 per cent; Arouca South—67 per cent; Barataria/San Juan—72 per cent; Caroni Central—71 per cent; Caroni East—69 per cent; Chaguanas—72 per cent; Couva North—74 per cent; Diego Martin Central—60 per cent; Diego Martin East—60 per cent and Diego Martin West—62 per cent; Fyzabad—77 per cent; La Brea—74 per cent; Arima—71 per cent; Nariva—71 per cent; Oropouche—74 per cent and I could go on and on. The bottom line is, people came out with a vengeance to get rid of the UNC. [*Desk thumping*] That is the fact. People came out to ensure that they did not wake up on the morning of October 08, 2002 and meet the UNC in charge of their affairs again.

I understand the difficulty you have. One day you figure you are in total control, nothing could happen to you. When we complained to the Prime Minister

about how our moneys were being spent, all he would tell us was “take it to the police!” That was the head of the Cabinet. Now, what are you being told? You move from that to: “not one soul has been arrested” and the next thing one would hear is not one soul has made more than 10 years in jail, because you keep raising the ante all the time.

Mr. Speaker, I cannot speak for what happened all over the country on polling day, but I have confidence in the free press in Trinidad and Tobago, and I have every reason to believe that if there were any merit to that accusation then somebody in the media would have picked up something. That is what freedom of a society does. Somebody would have picked up something. We would not have to wait until the Member for Barataria/San Juan comes to tell us that.

There is a certain amount of deception that seems to attach itself to the UNC’s spokesperson, and I wish to say to my colleagues, it is not becoming of your organization, of yourself and your office to be always caught where your credibility is being questioned in the main. I heard Members on the other side get up and say that the increased pay to doctors is an expression of PNM’s inability to negotiate. We backed down and just paid doctors what they offered. What is the truth? It is this UNC party when they were in government, four days before the general election of 2001, they agreed with the doctors, they got doctors to come to the Cabinet to negotiate. That caused a big problem in the PSA, doctors negotiating with the Finance and General Purposes Committee (FGP) of the Cabinet, independent of their union. The government of the UNC signed an agreement binding the country to pay those doctors. When we came into office we met a signed agreement to be implemented. These same people who did that, came in this debate and said to the country that the payment in the budget for the doctors is as a result of PNM not negotiating properly.

I wonder if this is deliberate, if it is a sickness or a strategy. It happens too frequently. This morning my colleague, the Member for Diego Martin Central, had to point out the matter of export allowance and the matter of the used cars. It is a habit of saying things that are diametrically opposed to the truth. What do you all have to do with the truth?

If you are a public officer, I would like to believe that the people of Trinidad and Tobago, when they hear a statement from a Member of Parliament, especially the one who had ministerial authority, that statement must mean something if it is being critical of the Government. If it is advancing a position of fact, it must mean something. It cannot be that you get up and say whatever you like even though it

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is a naked, unvarnished lie. It cannot be that! We are talking about making this country a developed country by the year 2020. How do we do that? The Member for St. Augustine outlined what he is expecting to see. We are proceeding on this journey very much along the lines that he outlined. This Government does not take the position that we are the point of all wisdom. We acknowledge that we have a responsibility to guide the process.

Trinidad and Tobago is in a very fortunate position, unlike many countries today, to be able to look to a future that is very bright with respect to the country's revenue streams. We are saying to our country that at this time there is an opportunity to raise the standard of our people, to improve the quality of life in a way that would take us out of the description of developing country into the realm of developed country, that quantum leap. I am not surprised to hear persons on the other side saying we are too optimistic and they are worried about the implementation. The PNM has a history of being visionary in Trinidad and Tobago and every time we come up with an idea as to what should happen in this country there are always persons who believe it cannot be attained.

If one goes back as far as independence there were persons in the country who had a problem with independence, Republican status. They had a problem with that. The Point Lisas experiment, they had a problem with that. When Dr. Eric Williams, coming out of the Caribbean Commission, spoke, they pooh poohed the idea and thought it was nonsense because all they could have accepted from the colonial master was ICTA. The colonial masters had put the Imperial College of Tropical Agriculture and some of our fellow citizens could not see beyond that. When Dr. Williams spoke about a university of the West Indies they thought no, no, no, ICTA has to be it. You do not touch that. Of course, UWI has gone on to become what it has become now because there were those who believed in it and felt that it could be achieved.

We talked about building a national library, right next door to the Parliament building. The first thing the UNC did when they came into office was to put forward an argument why this country needs a national library. Instead of building a national library, we should build little libraries all over the country and they stopped the project. Pumpkin grew in the hole out there, costing us tens of millions of dollars. The cost of that project has been increased substantially as a result of a lack of vision on the part of the UNC. Fortunately, they saw the error of their ways before they were fired and the building has been completed. Today, there is a new national library to serve the country.

I do not want to go into details about Point Lisas. Today, Point Lisas is the jewel of our industrial economy as we look forward to doing another kind of Point Lisas in the deep south of Trinidad and Tobago. We are not too worried when you are not on board yet. We know you would come on board.

I heard the Member for St. Augustine of all people, talking about a university of Trinidad and Tobago being a pipe dream and some nonsense. The Member coming out of a university environment and making a statement like that, talking about what we should do is to expand UWI.

Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister and Minister of Finance was very careful in his statement to say that any creation of a university of Trinidad and Tobago would not be at the expense of the University of the West Indies. It is in addition to—and if anybody understands what UWI is they would not get up and say that we could meet our needs through UWI. The University of the West Indies is a regional institution and what that means, that what goes on at UWI has to have the sanction and support of our other Caricom colleagues.

There is in Trinidad and Tobago today, as we talk about becoming a developed country by 2020, the urgent need for a training programme way beyond what any other Caricom country needs at the moment. We want industrial engineers, we want earth scientists, and we want technologists of all kinds. Do you think Dominica, St. Lucia and Jamaica would agree to fund that partially for us, or to agree to do it in the way that we want it done, to our time frame? We have to set our own time frame on training and, in fact, that is the single most important item, our human resource development, if we are to, in fact, achieve that goal of becoming a developed country by 2020. [*Desk thumping*] If we do not move fast we would find in the very near future—I am talking about two to three years—there would have to be significant importation of skills into this country because as the revenues come to the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, and the economy grows and the way it would grow, we have to prepare ourselves for that and we have to create the environment.

We have to create space—the whole cost structure of UWI where every lecturer after three, four or five years gets tenure, he has a fixed establishment, he has a pension paid in pounds in London, that is something you do not want to expand at this stage. You would want to create a new environment where you can have coming into that tertiary environment persons who are not on an establishment of permanence, but who can be working in industry or the private sector but they can teach courses in a university. What that does is to give you a tremendous range of faculty without the cost attached.

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The University of the West Indies is a classic British university. I do not want to use the word “colonial” disparagingly. We are very proud of it. I am a product of UWI and I would not change it for anything. If we are talking about moving our tertiary complement from 7 per cent to 20 per cent, we could not do that by UWI structure. We would keep UWI. It would continue to grow. We could create a new structure. We would bring together what we have as the basis, COSTATT and the technical institutes. We already have something to work with. The hon. Member for St. Augustine was quite right when he said that we could link up with another university abroad. We can get a foreign partner. We can get the local private sector.

I have had discussions with some persons in the local private sector who are keen to participate with the Government in this venture. If we handle it right we could very easily—all it requires is some intellect being put to work and a clear, open mind and a vision. We have that vision and we have that intellect. To say that a university of Trinidad and Tobago is some “Mickey Mouse” thing and lowering standards is to tell me you are limited in your own vision. There are many countries with cities with less than a million people and they have two or three universities in that city. We are a country, a nation of 1.3 million and we cannot have a university because some of our people do not have the vision to think that we can have our own university. I must tell you Jamaica has gone ahead of us. Jamaica has converted the College of Arts, Science and Technology to what is in effect a Jamaican College.

As I say that, we have options, we are now going to build in Tobago a new hospital. That hospital can become the core of another university. What we need to see the opportunity to link that hospital possibly with another hospital abroad, a university, and make it a teaching hospital. It would do two things. It would provide us with a body of faculty—teachers, whom we would not be able to source ourselves, and a lot of it can be funded from the partner. What it would also do is to guarantee to the people of Tobago that you would have resident in Tobago a body of doctors who otherwise would not be there. Building in Tobago a hospital structure, does not necessarily guarantee proper health care because for that small population of Tobago, it is very expensive and difficult to keep the full range of doctors that you want there just to service that small population. But if there is a teaching hospital and there are five or six hundred students, most of them foreign students, paying commercial rates, immediately you have a resident faculty that would provide a medical service for Tobago superior to anything we have right now. Six hundred students in Tobago would change the economy of Tobago overnight, the services.

Only yesterday I was looking at St. Kitts. St. Kitts has a veterinary school with 500 students.

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

Motion made That the hon. Members' speaking time be extended by 30 minutes. [*Hon. K. Valley*]

Question put and agreed to.

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: Mr. Speaker, I thank you, and I thank my colleagues for the extension.

Mr. Speaker, throughout the Caribbean, from St. Maarten to Grenada, we have demonstrated that there is the demand for offshore schools, especially a medical school and the effects of those schools on the economies of those islands are quite startling. Tobago is, in fact, in a much better position than most of these islands to have a world-class facility especially since we are already committed to investing in that Tobago hospital. This idea, I give you the assurance, that we intend to pursue with the THA to see what can be done, and we are confident that we would be able to come up with something that would expand our tertiary education base.

Talking about becoming a developed country by the year 2020—I did mention a little earlier on that we do not think that we have all the answers and the ideas in our ranks. We know that for this to be successful, we need to take the country on board, get the country to buy into the idea that our circumstances are such that we can dramatically make that quantum leap to developed-country status by 2020. The Cabinet has approved what we call a core group of persons to guide the process.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to share with you who those people are so one can have an idea how we are headed. The core group is made up of people from the public and private sectors and the university. The Cabinet has already approved that core group and the persons have agreed to serve as this steering group on the exercise to create the road map, to look at our circumstances to help us work out a road map between now and 2020, so we know exactly what has to be done, know where we are going, have milestones so that we can measure our progress along the way and the whole country can see where we are going, to see how we are doing and what has to be done.

The core group is made up of the permanent secretaries of the Ministries of Planning and Development, Social Development, Energy and Energy Industries,

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Finance and Trade and Industry. The Tobago House of Assembly, Dr. Anslem London; the University of the West Indies, Dr. Carl Theodore; representing the industry is Mr. Arthur Lok Jack; banking, Dr. Ronald Ramkissoon, investment, Mr. Clarry Benn from the Unit Trust; commerce, Mr. David O'Brien; economics, Dr. Terrance Farrell; energy, Mr. Trevor Bhoopsingh; labour, Mr. David Abdullah; Tidco head, Dr. Brian Harry; culture, Miss Pat Bishop, Trinity Cross holder; Dr. Susan Craig, sociologist; the chairman of BPTT, a national, Mr. Robert Riley; Mr. Calder Hart, Home Mortgage Bank and a person who is to come on from the credit union movement. This would be the team which we call the core group, and that team would work along with a consultant firm that we are yet to hire. That firm is required to have had experience working on a project of this nature and, very soon we would have that firm on board to work with this group. This group would report to a team of Ministers headed by the Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and includes the Minister of Planning and Development, Minister of Social Development, Minister of Energy and Energy Industries, Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister in the Ministry of Finance.

We expect to come to the Parliament very soon to ask the Parliament to set up a joint select committee of the Parliament, and that would allow the Opposition and Independent Senators to take part in the process. The objective is, at the end of maybe six to nine months, that the people of Trinidad and Tobago would have, after wide consultation—because this core group would consult very widely with all interest groups in the country. Whatever the interest group is, we would consult but in a short time frame and we would come up with a road map to take this country from our present position to developed-country status by the year 2020. That is our objective. [*Desk thumping*] We hope that the Opposition Members would enthusiastically participate in the process and we expect that the Independent Senators would contribute. The Government is anxious to get this done because it wants to go back to development and planning. In the recent past, we have gone away from development and planning. One good thing about it is we would be in a position to fund our ambition in a way that we have not been able to before. When persons talk about counting eggs in fowl bottom, that is not true.

Hon. Member: Nobody said that!

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: The Member for Couva North said that. Oh, you did not hear him? This is how we propose to treat with the benefits of the petrochemical revenues to come in the future.

We in the Ministry of Planning and Development, in order to assist this process and to prepare the country for this process, have chosen six countries for good reasons. Those six countries are: Singapore, a commonwealth country; Costa Rica, a regional country, that has the same kind of ambition that we have now and has made some progress along the way already. We have chosen Barium, a small oil economy like ours; Ireland which has done this same kind of exercise in the European context; Norway which is an oil-petrochemical economy with a proper human development index and Iceland, a small economy, population small, but very high standards of living. These are what we call our comparators and we have been comparing every aspect of Trinidad and Tobago's development now as we are today with these countries. And immediately we begin to see exactly where we are on this road to our objective of becoming a developed country by 2020. We compare our water supply, our power supply, our training in health, in education, our expenditure patterns, our infrastructure, right down to the level of organic pollutants in our waterways. When we do that, we see in every sub-sector the gap that needs to be closed and as this group that I mentioned earlier embarks on its exercise, it would be treating with that gap that the Ministry is identifying now in our target.

Mr. Speaker, that would immediately begin to guide us towards significant changes in our budgeting process. Our objective is to have the budgeting process treat with our objectives in a very direct way. We need to know what training we have to do in health, nurses, doctors, lab technicians; we need to know about our road infrastructure; we set targets on what we are going to build, and then we now direct the budgeting process into that. So rather than have ministries just throw up a wish list of \$6 billion for the year, as we do now, we know would be purposefully budgeting towards a particular goal after an assessment has been done of our needs towards a particular objective.

The budgeting process from here on, and hopefully starting from next year, or the year after when the funds begin to really flow, we can direct those funds to make specific changes. My colleague spoke about training 300 nurses for the year. You saw us this year increasing the number of scholarships by 100. That is just an indication of things to come.

With regard to our youth programme, those of you who disparage the youth support programmes now, what we are trying to do with those programmes is to treat with a population of young people to get them accustomed to a world of work. If we do not do that, when we create the training opportunities as we are embarking upon, persons would not see those as opportunities and the whole

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success of this approach would depend on the creation of opportunities and the total participation of everyone especially our young people. Because, persons who do not participate in an economy become a casualty of the economy and therein lies the need for welfare. But, if the youth are prepared to accept opportunities, to prepare themselves with skills for the time to come and when those opportunities arise that they are in a position to take jobs in the economy, then they become participants in the economy. [*Interruption*]

The whole idea is to direct them towards the need for skills. We talked about training. We can now begin to forecast the kinds of expenditure that we would have to undertake to lift our education system from its current level to one of developed-country status. Right now we are spending 3.4 per cent of our GNP on education. It is the same thing with health, but if we aspire to developed-country status, when we look at what our colleagues in the comparative countries are spending it comes across to us straight away that we could not get to developed-country health care with the level of expenditure we have now. If we want to achieve develop-country health care, we have to understand that it has to be funded at a hire level.

It is the same thing with education. We could not pay teachers peanuts and expect to get the best persons into teaching. The research has shown that the quality of the output from the teaching system is directly dependent on the quality of your teaching staff so we have to ensure that we can pay teachers better, we can hire more teachers, we can give them smaller classes, better facilities if we are to have developed-country output. These are some of the ideas before us at the Ministry of Planning and Development.

Mr. Speaker, in the very near future, I would have a lot more to say about this because Trinidad and Tobago today is embarking on another one of those quantum leaps as it moves from a colony to self-government, to Independence, to Republican status, we are about at this time to move to developed-country status. These are exciting times for all the people of Trinidad and Tobago, guided by the People's National Movement with the involvement of our colleagues on both sides of this honourable House, and the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you.

Mr. Kelvin Ramnath (*Couva South*): Thank you, very much Mr. Speaker. I join with all the others who have spoken before me, to express my own personal congratulations to your ascension to such high office. As you have noticed, I am one of those persons who began cooperating with you the first day that you sat on the Chair. You can be assured of that continued support.

I have enjoyed the contribution of the Minister of Planning and Development. He has been extremely magnanimous and he has clearly sought to justify his keep in the Ministry of Planning and Development. He has indicated what he plans to do, a lot of which would depend on the actual deliverables, rather than the promises but I will hold him to it.

It has been about 10 years since I last spoke here, and I am very pleased to have rejoined the fraternity particularly, the distinguished Members of the loyal Opposition, and to have had the opportunity to meet with some of my colleagues, most of whom are new, with the exception of the Prime Minister and Minister of Finance. I do not think there is anyone else who was present—I am making the point nevertheless that it is nice to be here. I also want, for the benefit of the record, to inform the newcomers and the junior Members that I did serve for fifteen consecutive years. This is my 16th participation in a budget. I did spend some time in the wilderness, and I must say that I did have the opportunity to learn quite a lot and to do a lot of things that most politicians do not have the opportunity to do, and that is to live a real life, a good mixture, so that you do not get lost.

Let me also take the opportunity to congratulate the first time speakers in the budget debate—I am like one of them, to say that I particularly enjoyed listening to many of the hon. Members who spoke, and who for the first time, contributed to parliamentary debates. My only regret, of course, is that they have gotten too early in the crosstalk and not recognizing that one is dealing with quite experienced politicians on this side. However, one has to make those mistakes.

I enjoyed listening to the Member for Laventille West, and I must say that there was a kind of earnestness that I have not experienced in this honourable House. Whether one likes what she said, I think she did so with the greatest honesty and one could have seen in her contribution that she actually believed in what she was saying. Not like many of my colleagues on the other side who sought to use all kinds of statistics to throw innuendoes and insinuations, and to seek to attack the character and integrity of decent people.

When I look at my colleagues here, I find it difficult to understand that they could have done what you claimed that they have done. That is impossible, and all I can say is, and I did whisper to the Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, that when he should have retired for one reason or the other, either replaced internally or loses the next election, he would make a good political consultant to third-world countries. From the moment they lost the election in 1995, and they

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lost it because the results were 17/19, they began a campaign of discrediting and maligning the government of the day and that campaign was unrelenting—I was following even though I was not part of the inner circle—sustained attack. The Member for Diego Martin East becomes brighter on evenings, I presume. I do not know if it is because of his—a sustained campaign and the objective was to destroy the character and the image of the leader of the government at the time and members of the party.

When we say from this side that one must allow the Auditor General to do her job and let the courts do their job, and let the police do their job and let the DPP do his job, all we are saying is we are abiding by the constitutional provisions in Trinidad and Tobago.

You have tried, you have judged and if you had your way, you would have executed most of these decent people sitting on this side of the Parliament. I do not put it beyond some of you to take that responsibility upon yourself to jail people. I do not put that beyond you. But, in a country where there is such a disparity between the rich and the poor—and I understand very well the arguments for widening the social net which I would come to. I understand why people who are earning a lot more money today than they did before are still poor; that is the reality of the economics.

I want to make it very clear that if we do not respect the Constitution and the laws of Trinidad and Tobago, we could end up as a society in chaos. You cannot continue, or you do so at your own peril. You cannot set up commissions of enquiry and allow commissioners, or the commissioners allow themselves to behave as if they are political tools and pawns as we see in the Commission of Enquiry into the airport. The behaviour of a former Chief Justice is, to my mind, unsatisfactory in the present enquiry.

Mr. Speaker, I was hoping, and I do not want to say anything about the private lives of anybody. I am just talking about what I view and what I have been told. The commission behaves as though it has a mandate to find people guilty. That is what is coming across and the results of your commission would not be credible if the society believes that it is politically motivated. [*Interruption*] But that is the problem in this society, there are several societies. There are different people across the country and not that does not exist elsewhere, but there are very large groups in this country that have certain views. One of the mandates I think the Prime Minister and Minister of Finance has, is to make a very special effort and a genuine effort to bring the various strands of this society together so that we could achieve that first-world status.

I have whispered to him in crosstalk that one of the ways we can do that is through this institution of Parliament. So that when large bodies of people in this country are of the opinion that these commissions are set up for a particular purpose you are not going to get people to actually believe in the results of these commissions. I would not say much more about that. We will have an opportunity to debate some of these things, and I am quite sure when commissions of enquiry are telling you about airport costs and about other costs, 15 years from now, or 20 years from now, right thinking individuals would understand that there is a public relations aspect to these kinds of commissions.

I feel proud to go to Piarco Airport and really do not want to politicize this issue. I was not part of the government. I have difficulty myself without having all the information to argue with a lot of the things that are coming from the other side in terms of numbers. So I do not want to enter into a debate as to whether the numbers are justified or not. But one thing I can say, is that you have entered the road to first world status by 2020 whatever, as a result of that Piarco International Airport. Whether it costs two or three times it is a different issue and I am quite sure you will deal with that. I feel very happy that I can walk off a plane through jet bridge, down escalators, see smiling custom officers and immigration officers who, hitherto, were very upset about the working conditions they had to endure at the old airport. We cannot simply dismiss everything that people do because you are on a witch-hunt and you are out to get people on the basis of corruption. Please proceed if you so desire on your witch-hunt, proceed if you so desire on finding those who have deprived citizens of taxpayers' money. I have no problem with that, but do it in a very civilized manner and in a manner with respect to the dignity of all people.

I had to endure the rudeness and the lack of manners of the Member for Laventille East/Morvant today. I find him to be a rather intelligent man, except I do not know why he does not allow himself to be disciplined by his party or his leader. It is totally unacceptable according to the traditions of this honourable House, to have a Member abuse people the way he did in this Parliament. I know that you have been extremely tolerant, Mr. Speaker. I do not want to drag you into this but that is not acceptable.

7.30 p.m.

He has done so on several occasions—identifying people by name, attacking people without any basis and he believes that the Parliament is a place that you can do almost anything. I know that he is bright and that he will learn. [*Interruption*] I can deal with all those things that are in *Hansard*. Do not worry about that.

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I can deal with the Member for Laventille East/Morvant at any time. He is nothing to deal with. All I am seeking to do is to let him know that people must, first of all, be found guilty before you can make those serious allegations. Those who have incurred my wrath will tell you that had they not behaved in a similar manner, I would not have lost my temper. Do not abuse the privilege.

Let me deal with some serious issues. I understand his predicament. He said that he was apprenticed to a very honourable gentleman, a friend of mine, Mr. Ramrekersingh, a former Minister of Education. Can you imagine having won his seat and having great expectations, he now finds himself sitting, not only in the Back Bench, but the last bench.

I understand the difficulty, but I also understand the difficulties the Prime Minister would have when he has someone like that who is aspiring for high public office in his Cabinet. I am quite sure he has opportunities to mend his ways and, perhaps, beg for forgiveness and one day we may see him on the Front Bench. He is like the leader of some left wing movement in the PNM. He stands up in the debate, tries to appeal to the public gallery and to others across the country, tries to seek their sympathy, giving the impression that the Prime Minister is not his leader, but that he is a PNM and can speak on behalf of the PNM. [*Interruption*] Let him do that and conduct himself properly. Let him serve his apprenticeship with dignity.

I know had he had hopes; that his leader has let him down—and I am not speaking here about the Prime Minister. The leader of his faction has also come to terms with the fact that he has to cooperate in building and leading the country to developed status, so clearly he has no use for delinquent members of his faction.

Mr. Speaker, I rest my case. I am sure that the Member for Diego Martin West, for whom I have a lot of respect, would also take the opportunity to speak to him.

I observe also that he has with him a few people. By the next election I am sure they would not be around because the Prime Minister would have had the opportunity to know that they are not supporting him. Whereas on this side, we have unanimity in support of our political leader—unquestionable, unqualified, total support. [*Desk thumping*] [*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: Who is your leader?

Mr. K. Ramnath: I was going to ask that question. In 1990, when this question was asked as to who is your leader, we saw some holes in the window as

a result. Mr. Speaker, it frightens me and I would like to make a special appeal to you and the Clerk to replace those panes.

I was very unhappy when one Member of the Government Bench sought to attack the hon. Member for St. Augustine, in a very unfortunate way, with respect to his role in 1990. That was an occasion at which none of them would have liked to be present.

I remember that the President of the Republic shared these Chambers with us for six days. I am fully aware of those people who perpetrated this crime against the democracy of the nation. I join with the Member for St. Augustine in saying to him that he played a significant role in the preservation of democracy in 1990. [*Desk thumping*] [*Interruption*] I will have an opportunity one day to write about it and I will send it to you if you are still literate. We will tell you who drafted it and so forth.

The events of 1990 did, in fact, change the direction of this country and we are fortunate to be sitting and arguing with each other and, hopefully, working together to achieve the stated goal of the budget as a result of the sacrifices made by those people who remained in this Chamber on that occasion. [*Interruption*]

I will talk to you privately some time. You do not seem to have any degree of empathy. Your class position militates against it. Let us not get into any argument here this evening.

Let me say that I find it very unfortunate, although there has been an attempt to lift the standard of the debate, that the theme that ran through the debate in this House—there were several themes—

Mr. Imbert: We are here, that is why you are there.

Mr. K. Ramnath: That is the logic that you emulate. The implication that came so often is that might is right. That is a very dangerous thing in a highly pluralistic society. That is a very dangerous behaviour in a society in which we get 285,000 votes, you get 307,000; you get 20 seats, we get 16; we get 18, you get 18; we get 19, you get 17; we get 17, you get 17. [*Interruption*] You can stop being trivial and listen to wisdom.

Imagine we have had in the last five elections results that have been extremely close, and whether they want to accept it or not or they want to be frivolous about it, voting in this country, in the last few elections, has clearly demonstrated that

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the numbers are very close. They will tell you, as the Member for Diego Martin West has repeated today, that it will be a great pity if we were returned to power. We will tell you that it is a great pity that they got into power—and I might try to establish some of that during the course of my 75 minutes here this evening. I promise that I would not be repetitive.

The Prime Minister made a very significant statement recently, which was published, that he was worried about the level of racial tension in the country. *[Interruption]* I am not talking to you or the Member for Laventille East/Morvant. I am talking, through you, Mr. Speaker and to you, Mr. Prime Minister. The Prime Minister said so—that he was worried about the level of racial tension in the country.

I am quite sure that that statement came as a result of an analysis of a problem and I am quite sure he has some kind of solution or at least will attempt to make some solution to try to deal with this problem. We are not going anywhere in this country if that becomes the fundamental problem to development. We cannot arrive at any developed-country status if the country continues to be divided.

Without going into any discussion on what is my view about what should take place, we have to start talking about these issues in committees and try to find solutions to the problems. We may very well find that one of the problems or obstacles to progress is when as a Prime Minister, you have to depend on all these people for your daily survival. It is not an easy thing. It will be so much better if a Prime Minister or a President of a country is elected by popular vote. He then has all the time in the world to see about the country's development and not worry about who is going to overthrow him and which faction is planning to work against his stability. It does not matter whether it is this Prime Minister or the last one. It is, therefore, time we develop a model that will work in the interest, not of national unity in any glib or amorphous way, but unifying the country to move forward for the benefit of everybody.

Many great statements have come out in this budget. I think everybody in this country really wants to ensure that we all become very prosperous; that we become very educated; that regardless of who is in government and who is in opposition, we have a country in which crime and poverty are reduced. All of those things will come about only when people believe that the government of the day is a government for all the people.

Left to many on that side, they will not allow the Prime Minister to implement some of those policies in a way that will benefit all the people. I want to tell my

friend from Diego Martin and those who have been attacking us for saying that we are against expanding the safety net, that all my colleagues—and I have been here throughout the debate; I have been talking about the manner in which some of those programmes are implemented.

I live in Couva and I am very happy that there is one of those environmental teams. As you know, I am Manager of Health, Safety, Environment and Quality in one of the large corporations in this country and I served as the Vice-Chairman of the EMA Board. I have an interest in that from an academic and professional perspective. All I say to the Prime Minister, through you, Mr. Speaker, is that what I saw in the last few days is really a follow-through from the election period, and any independent observer will tell you that the hiring process has to be reviewed. I will not say any more. [*Inaudible*] I am quite sure that any reasonable Minister will listen to a representative who is speaking from experience.

One of the best programmes that was implemented during the election campaign—and I am quite sure it was not implemented for the reason I am going to state—was the clean-up of the Couva National Housing Estate, where people who lived in the estate, worked and created a model community. I am extremely pleased that was done. I would like to see it done in other parts of the country and not because the Couva NHA is a PNM stronghold, I got 125 votes the last election—I got 126 this election—and the PNM increased their votes from 1,000 to 1,150, I am not against that. All I am saying is that there are communities across the country which can use that example as a model for their development.

I was happy when the Member for Laventille West was talking about the experience of Rock City. I could see the light in her face that here are people who are helping themselves and who, with the assistance of a self-help organization, were able to do something. However, it must not be done in such a way to appear to be in favour of a single political party or group of people.

I am very serious about it. I am not here this evening to make any wild accusations, after all I am now 10 years older than when I last spoke here. The programme has been institutionalized. You cannot simply say to the Solid Waste Management Company, which has a responsibility for many other projects, that they are going to continue this project, when responsibility lies with regional corporations. I am not telling you either that regional corporations, in spite of what the Member for Arouca North would tell you, are very well organized. I will be one of the first persons to say that we have to do something at the level of regional corporations to inculcate a culture that will ensure fair play; that will

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ensure the implementation of programmes based on community needs, as well as to ensure that skills are provided to the workers.

Clearly, the environmental programme that is taking place—that is the clean-up programme—has to be sustained. I am not too sure that the institution to do so is the Solid Waste Management Company. That might have been the ideal institution for the election period, but for continuity and sustainability, they need to ensure that the regional corporations are involved and that they are accountable.

One of the problems in this country is the lack of accountability. I do not want to sound as if I am a supporter of the Prime Minister, but I heard him saying that these service commissions do not like accountability—I am paraphrasing him—when the chairman of one of the commissions made a certain remark.

We have to have the constitutional changes to make these people accountable. You cannot just have them account to you as Prime Minister because you feel that you have been elected—and rightly so—to the top job in the country. There must be changes in the Constitution, which will have to come, at that level at least, with support from the Opposition Benches.

When we come to discuss the bills relating to the reform of the police service, I feel that before we even talk about that, we should talk at an informal level at committee stage about how we are going to approach it, if we require certain constitutional majority, although it has been a bipartisan piece of legislation. *[Interruption]* All I am saying is that there is need for cooperation in matters of this kind. That is all.

Let me go into what I came here to say. When the Prime Minister was a young Minister, perhaps even a junior Minister, he would recall that Parliament took decisions from year to year—perhaps he was a full Minister then in the Ministry of Finance—to put into long-term special funds, certain amounts of surpluses. At one time, we had about \$16 billion in that fund, and the dollar was worth then TT \$2.42 to the US dollar.

We had a similar situation occurring then, as in these times, and that is the issue of accountability. The government decided at that time that it was going to embark on a number of projects which were important to Trinidad and Tobago—the Hall of Justice, the Twin Towers, Mount Hope, Iscote, the port; and there was some kind of government-to-government arrangement in trying to secure contractors to implement these programmes.

In every single case—and the Prime Minister would agree—there were cost overruns which were astronomical. On every occasion we met here, Members of the Opposition would query why something that was supposed to cost \$60 million ended up at \$162 million. I, myself, in those days, did point some fingers. Every debate was about corruption. Of course, at that time, the PNM was in power and there were no commissions of enquiry set up.

If one were to look at what happened in Point Lisas—I heard the Member for Diego Martin West singing very high praises and I think that the world agrees that Point Lisas has been a phenomenal success, but the success that came as a result of Point Lisas came mainly after the government decided to dispose of the assets. The philosophy of the time was that the private sector was only talking and would not put any money out, so that we could not monetize gas using the private sector at the time and the State had to enter the business and the philosophy was, having entered the business, we would then sell those industries. Am I right?

Look at the cost of Mount Hope and look at the cost of Iscott. Look at the losses we incurred—billions of dollars a year. When I look at the performance of the UNC government—and they agree—in private they must agree in their conscience—that a government in such a short time embarked on so many projects. In six years we did—and I am not trying to politicize it and be carried away by these remarks I am hearing from the other side—I just warn the Member that he should not try to get me upset this evening because I would have to deal with it.

There were questionable dealings. I was a member of the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee and we summoned the Chairman of the National Energy Corporation—the Speaker of the House summoned him to appear before the Public Accounts (Enterprise) Committee—and he refused. He refused to attend to account for the people's money, because all those billions of dollars that went into building methanol plants, steel mills, infrastructure and joint venture projects, were handled by the National Energy Corporation. Dr. Julien, our eminent technologist in the country, refused to appear before the committee.

The opinion of senior counsel was that, although the Constitution provided for the establishment of a Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee, the Standing Orders did not cater for that committee functioning and I do not think the Standing Orders have been amended even to today. Fundamentally the accusations were no different. When it came to the LABIDCO (La Brea Industrial Development Company) Project, Dr. Julien, once again, refused to appear before

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the committee on the grounds that he was busy. He was Chairman of the National Gas Company. I have the report in front of me here.

They can say as much as they want about projects and overruns and come to all kinds of conclusions, I am saying that they should investigate and wait on reports before they make these very serious accusations that affect the character of people.

I say to you Mr. Speaker and hon. Members, that the kind of moneys expended under the aegis of the National Energy Corporation, and looking at the value of the TT dollar at the time, makes what they are seeking to do at this time, a big joke. I want to let them know that the public will make its judgment in due course. I want to read from an opinion submitted by Lynette Maharaj, Senior Counsel of Daltons. *[Interruption]* I do not know whose wife she is. I know the lady is an eminent senior counsel. The opinion is:

“On the facts as presented...and on the law it seems to me that common law duties of care and skill of Members of the board in particular Dr. Julien and Mr. Jones fell far short of the common law requirements whether it be on a subjective or objective test.”

[Interruption] It is ancient when they are accused of thieving. It is very relevant when Members on this side are accused of thieving.

This matter is not closed and I will tell you why. *[Interruption]* LABIDCO—and I will come to that. This is in relation to the La Brea Industrial Development Corporation. This is a legal opinion. *[Interruption]* I will give you in a little while. Do not be too anxious. *[Interruption]* I am here to talk about anything that is important in Trinidad and Tobago.

The lawyer stated that it will be hard-pressed to find that the board of directors of NGC had or could have had any bona fide or honest belief that the interest of the PNM administration and government policy were identical with the interests of NGC or its ultimate shareholders, the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

I will tell you why it is relevant because I want to quote from a letter from the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, dated May 09, 2002. I understand your concern, Member for Diego Martin West, about the Prime Minister’s relationship with the LABIDCO project. The Prime Minister has a great interest in that.

The Director of Public Prosecutions writes as follows to Mr. Fazal Karim. I will tell you who he is in a while.

“I refer to your correspondence dated April 26, 2002 in which a request was made for me to investigate alleged criminal impropriety connected with the La Brea/Brighton Industrial Estate”.

We had heard about that in this budget debate, Mr. Speaker.

“I first of all wish to advise that the DPP has no investigative jurisdiction. The DPP may provide advice to the police during the course of a criminal investigation and in instances where information is submitted ab initio to the DPP, the DPP may advise the police to conduct an investigation. The Commissioner of Police is, however, not bound to accept such advice”.

I have examined the documents presented to me and I have obtained additional information. I am concerned that the findings of the investigating committee were never forwarded to the Commissioner of Police. That, notwithstanding, I am of the view that criminal investigation is warranted to determine whether, among others, offences of conspiracy to defraud and misbehaviour in public office are revealed.

I have accordingly forwarded to the Commissioner of Police the documentation forwarded by you, with my advice that a criminal investigation be conducted.

DPP Mark Mohammed
Senior Counsel,

Dated: May 09, 2002”.

Mr. Prime Minister, can I stand to say “all you thief” and so on? Why would I do that? [*Interruption*] I am too cultured to do that. I leave that for you.

An investigating committee was appointed to investigate all the circumstances relating to the La Brea Industrial Development Project.

Mr. Anton Ramcharan, Accountant;

Mr. Claude Lee Young, whom we all know, Consultant, Technical Advisor to the Energy sub committee;

Mrs. Debra Persadie-Jones, Lead Engineer, Project Control, Petrotrin.

She is connected by marriage to the chairman of MTS, Mr. Jones;

Mr. Dhanraj Goolcharan, Lead Engineer, Electrical, Petrotrin;

Prof. Harry Phelps;

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Mr. Donald Mootoo, Senior, Geophysicist of the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries; and

Mr. Indar Narace, Petroleum Engineer, assigned from the Ministry of Energy.

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

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

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. K. Ramnath: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and hon. Members. [*Interruption*]

I do not care what you have? All I am trying to identify for the benefit of the Members of this House is that there are serious issues concerning the La Brea Industrial Development Corporation.

In this report, Mr. Speaker, we have a letter or Minutes of a meeting at which the hon. Minister of Energy and Energy Industries appeared. I also want to indicate that Dr. Rawlins Bertrand was also a member of that committee. I have difficulty in locating the Minutes. The hon. Minister, at the time he was working at Petrotrin, indicated that he was not aware of any geological survey conducted at the Brighton Industrial Estate. I will find it at the right time.

As I conclude this, my point is that a significant investment was made at the La Brea Industrial Estate, which, up to today, is unoccupied. We are talking about hundreds of millions of dollars. We are talking about \$193 million. We are talking about a project, albeit conceptualized, to expand industrialization in the Southwest Peninsula, which had very serious problems from the moment it was conceptualized. They are talking about spending money in a manner in which no one felt they were accountable to the extent that the opinion of senior counsel is that their duty of care was less than expected of these people. There were recommendations, as well, that NGC could proceed with legal action against these people.

I am not going to interpret that, as a layman. I am saying that they are talking about \$200 million buried beneath the Pitch Lake and an extremely qualified and eminent geophysicist like their Minister of Energy and Energy Industries stating facts before the committee that geotechnical work was done but no geological investigation was done. In fact, he recommended—and it is contained in the report—that we hire some specialist to conduct these services.

Mr. Speaker, one of the things we found in La Brea—we heard them talk so much about Biche—if you look at the report, you will see that much of the problems which we encountered in La Brea could have been obviated if we had done the proper service. We put \$200 million beneath the Pitch Lake. The consequence was the delay of Farmland MissChem and Atlantic Energy as a result of the uncertainty with respect to the La Brea Industrial Estate.

Mr. Manning: Mr. Speaker, I thank the Hon. Member for giving way.

In terms of the La Brea Industrial Estate, the problem was an abandoned oil field that was not properly abandoned. The technology exists to do it and the only problem that existed really was time. Had it not been for that time problem, the LNG Plant could have gone into the La Brea Industrial Estate.

In relation to Farmland Mississippi Chemicals, it was a ruse used by the UNC to transfer that company from La Brea to Point Lisas, charging the same preferential gas price that was associated with construction in La Brea and which was then used by all other users on the estate to trigger a lower gas price that deprived Trinidad and Tobago of hundreds of millions of dollars.

Mr. K. Ramnath: The Prime Minister was invited to meet with the investigating committee and he said he was quite busy. He would not even give the committee the courtesy—

Mr. Valley: I wonder whether the hon. Member could inform us who was the chairman of that committee and where he is now.

Mr. K. Ramnath: The chairman of the committee was Mr. Imtiaz Hosein. I will make the information available for him. He is just trying to take away my time.

Mr. Eric Williams, 11th April, 1996. I think the hon. Eric Williams, Minister of Energy and Energy Industries indicated that he had been involved in the gravity survey of the Pitch Lake in 1992. The study was commissioned by Lake Asphalt and was conducted by LCT Houston of the USA.

Although the service was targeted specifically at the reserves in the Pitch Lake, data also indicated the presence of what may be interpreted as pitch flows sub surface along the north east-south west trending corridor north-west of the Pitch Lake. This area of pitch intrusion appears to correspond with the location of the LNG plant and it is the same area rejected by Trintoplan Consultants in their preliminary study.

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The report reference is: Gravity Acquisition, Data Processing and Interpretation Report: Pitch Lake Gravity Survey, Trinidad, West Indies.

Mr. Williams indicated that the planners of La Brea Industrial Estate may have been unaware of this report.

The depth of the pitch in the lake was estimated to the extent of 35 metres below mean sea level.

Mr. Williams suggested that in order to locate the pitch flows more accurately, a state of the art technique called cross-hole tomography can be applied. The leader in this field is one Prof. Tokuo Yamamoto of the University of Miami. Prof. Yamamoto is expected in Trinidad soon and should be contacted for his opinion.

Mr. Williams indicated that he was unaware of any geological study conducted at the site.

His opinion with respect to geological study was confirmed because none was conducted.

This issue of abandoned oilfield, the Brighton Field—

Mr. Williams: Mr. Deputy Speaker, the gravity survey was indeed done. It estimated the amount of pitch in the lake. It was the first time such a geophysical technique was used to do that. It indicated that there are anomalies in the area but certainly it was not able to go the next step to determine whether or not an engineering solution could be found for the area. Civil and geological engineers do believe that a geological engineering solution can be found, as is similar to other difficult geological terrains around the world. I am not a civil engineer, nor am I a geological engineer and, therefore, could not comment beyond the level of my competence as I was requested.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, you may be aware that in areas as difficult as the San Andreas Fault, in which one part of the United States is moving past another part, there are engineering solutions which mitigate against some of the conditions. In addition to which, in a mega project, if one were to expend five per cent of the project on foundation work, it would be a large amount of money, but it would be justifiable based on the size of the project. If, however, one were to put a small or a lighter project in the area, but have to spend the same amount of money on something like a school, it would not be justifiable. Therefore, to cause the area to become useful—because it is a deep-water harbour and we need an additional

industrial estate—the expenditure, to come up with an engineering solution, would have been entirely justifiable.

Mr. K. Ramnath: When I was talking about an engineering solution to Biche, these were the same people who were talking about the UNC wanting to poison children. In fact, there is an engineering solution. We engineers believe that we can have a solution to just about any problem.

They went ahead and spent \$193 million on this estate. They did not do their homework and they hired Tucker, they hired Petrotrin and a lot of people. I also worked on the project as an employee of Petrotrin. This anxiety of which counsel speaks in the opinion, you could not separate them. In the desire of the PNM—because they put it in their manifesto—to rush and without any consideration for geology costs, they ran into the project; they handed carte blanche Dr. Ken Julien hundreds of millions of dollars. He was accountable to no one. He supervised the project—I do not know how much supervision—and it turned out to be a financial disaster. These are the same people who are talking about the airport. These are the same people who are talking about Biche. These are the same people who are talking about stealing money.

When they asked Dr. Julien to appear before the committee, he said he was very busy. That was his response. This is the second time he said he was busy. Once he brought Mr. Michael de La Bastide SC in the matter against Speaker Ramcharan, not to appear when sent a summons by the Speaker. If you were Speaker, I do not know how you would have reacted to that, to prevent having to defend his position with respect to moneys expended by the National Energy Corporation. I will not say any of these people were guilty of anything. I will not be as irresponsible as my colleagues on the other side to make these accusations. All I am saying is that when the boot is on the other foot they must understand the consequences.

There is a lot more to be said about this report, but I do not want to spend my time on it. The DPP has the matter in front of him and I am quite sure that he and the police will act. What I find interesting is that all other matters referred to the DPP, and ultimately to the police, receive lots of public attention: commissions of enquiry, the newspaper, the police are actively trying to hound down people who stole, especially if the accused is on this side of the House. In this matter, you have not heard a word from the Government, the police or any one else and there are 200 million reasons as they would say on the other side, for conducting a full scale investigation.

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You know what the tragedy is: anyone else who is being encouraged to invest in La Brea will find such a report and tell the Prime Minister and his government that they are not going there. There was no conspiracy with Farmland MissChem and the country did not lose hundreds of billions of dollars. The country lost hundreds of billions of dollars as a result of ineptness and incompetence with respect to the Brighton Industrial Estate. I know it is close to your heart because you are the representative for La Brea; it is in your constituency and I am sure as a long-standing Member you would have liked to see, but they set you up.

Mr. Speaker: Please do not bring me into this!

Mr. K. Ramnath: Not the Speaker, Sir. The Member for La Brea was set up into believing that there was going to be a huge industrialization of the south-west peninsula right in his constituency, only to realize that it was all based on misinformation, poor information, lack of geological information and nobody wants to go there.

That brings me to the subject of this pipeline that the Prime Minister wants to run from here to wherever and also to set up a port in Tobago. Instead of setting up an industrial park in Tobago, where we can use natural gas for projects, to fire the turbines, modernize the electricity generation as my friend, the Chief Whip, did with respect to InnCogen, a man who provided futuristic solutions to today's problems, they are talking about shipping LNG from Trinidad to Tobago and transshipping it up the islands.

I think they are "mamaguying" Tobagonians, judging from the way one Member from Tobago spoke. It appears that Tobago's representatives are easily flattered. What is this terminal they want to set up off Tobago and there is a terminal right here in Trinidad from which they can load their ships and send up the islands if they get the NGC to work with governments to set up degasification plants and send ships up the islands right up to the Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico and even to Mexico?

This First World dream has now become a nightmare. It is about constructing a pipeline. The demand for gas in these islands is so small that you cannot recover your capital expenditure in a hundred years. We have to be realistic. I am doing a lot of work on greenhouse gas inventory and vulnerability analysis under the CDM—Clean Development Mechanic.

Let me say to the Prime Minister that the possibility of projects that will clean up the environment only exist in the area of converting these diesel-driven and

fuel-oil driven electrical power generating plants. There are no other opportunities of substance that will increase the demand for natural gas in these islands.

Frank Look Kin who is the CEO has, in a very diplomatic way, cautioned him when interviewed. It is not that Mr. Look Kin is always right, but one simply has to look at the demands for gas up the islands, because you are not taking your pipeline all the way to Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic. He said he was going close to Antigua and that is it.

Then there are people who come from the South Chamber of Commerce. This sycophantic behaviour that they exhibit in the south, especially when the Prime Minister goes there to talk, giving him moral support for a project which is a pie in the sky pipe dream. I am saying, let us ship LNG to Barbados, Grenada and all the islands, as we are shipping to Spain for REPSOL to use that gas in their power plants and they have no problem. Why are we talking about a pipeline to Grenada, Barbados and all these places when we can set up small terminals in these areas? That is my advice to you.

Let me say, Mr. Speaker, that not because we are once again fortunate to—I am talking about serious business, he is talking about URP. Let me talk a little about the BHP Billiton find. I am very happy, and I am sure all of us are happy—I do not know whether the Minister in all his years ever thought that we were going to because all the drilling was done in the south-east coast.

We have found this oil and gas field, even BHP has now indicated that their projections are not as optimistic, but I am quite sure that we are going to have a lot of oil present and we are going to increase our oil production by 80,000 barrels, but we must be careful that our emphasis is not once again on drilling for oil either exporting it or sending it through to an inefficient refinery as the one we have in Pointe-a-Pierre. We need to upgrade that refinery. We have to be talking in the gas business, not only about converting gas into liquefied natural gas and shipping it, we have to put money and investigate in a serious way what the Minister said in the document. We are talking about ethylene plant. We are talking about polypropylene and ABS and all kinds of products that will add real value.

We are not going to reach far if we simply become involved in industrial activity that ships raw material out of this country. When you look at the Metback Pricing Formula, I am sure that is what prompted the Prime Minister and other Ministers and even the Governor of the Central Bank to start talking about increase of royalties in the gas area.

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I do not want to get into that because we have made it abundantly clear that if we are going to talk about increase in taxes in the oil industry, we have to talk to the stakeholders. I am quite sure no one will disagree with that. I am saying that we are regurgitating and repeating what has been said in previous budgets and in previous *Reviews of the Economy* by saying that we are going to build an ethylene complex. Up to now we have not decided on the route. Are we going from methanol to acidic acid? Are we going to extract ethane from the LNG stream at Point Fortin? Are we going to take it to Conoco Phoenix Park Gas and build an ethylene complex? We need such a complex. However it is done, we need it to be done so that we can add real value to our gas and oil.

I was happy when the Prime Minister announced that he is holding discussions with the possibility of constructing 100 per cent conversion refinery in the country. I want to recommend that the discussions continue because what we have in Pointe-a-Pierre is an old refinery and the money that we spent to upgrade the refinery, when the Member for St. Augustine and I were in the Cabinet of the NAR, for the first time we were able to influence the IDB to give us a loan outside of their traditional lending areas, all we were able to do was to bring the refinery to a certain decent level.

We are not at cutting edge. We are still producing 40 per cent fuel oil, which sells at a price below the crude that you put into the refinery. So you can very well understand.

In a period when we had buoyant oil prices, in the last year, apart from some sporadic changes, Petrotrin lost \$200 million. When you look at the closing accounts at the end of September this year, you will see that Petrotrin would have lost more than \$200 million. You ask yourself if, when prices are at their best, you can lose that kind of money, what is the fate of an organization like Petrotrin that has all of these leases.

I want to suggest that you take a serious look at the taxation structure with respect to our lease operators, our joint ventures, our farm outs. The Member for Ortoire/Mayaro knows exactly what I am talking about. He was involved in a company that had a joint venture operation with Petrotrin and they understand the difficulties that the taxation system poses and therefore they are seeking to convert the joint venture into a lease operatorship. Am I right? I do not know whether Ortoire/Mayaro benefited from that.

I say for the benefit of the Prime Minister and the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries that there is much potential on land. You do not have to build

industrial estates to lease out acreages that have been produced by oil companies in Trinidad. They will take those wells, as they have done in the past and produce them. They will pay an overriding royalty and you will collect taxes, but the present system of taxation is onerous, particularly for these local entrepreneurs. If they are trying to build a local cadre of entrepreneurs in the oil industry, we have to do something about the onerous taxation system.

Could you tell me how much time I have left, Sir?

Mr. Speaker: Two minutes.

Mr. K. Ramnath: In conclusion, I want to say that one of the things that motivated me to return to politics was when I had the living experience of looking at the magnificent performance of the United National Congress. When I saw, in the Couva NHA—not in Carolina nor Balmain—the most modern primary school in the Caribbean, built by the UNC. When children from Balmain and Preysal can walk to high school in Preysal and Waterloo; when my constituents can train in an environment for international sporting events at the Ato Boldon Stadium in Balmain, I said to myself that I had a duty to return and ensure that we return to power. This time around we were not successful, but I think that when the dust has settled and the people have come to their senses and they will no longer accept small tokens in order to vote, they will return the progressive party into government.

Thank you very much.

8.30 p.m.

The Minister of Legal Affairs (Hon. Camille Robinson-Regis): Mr. Speaker, it is clear, based on the contributions of the Members on the opposite side, and I am convinced that they are still recovering from the blows of the last general election. [*Desk thumping*] Mr. Speaker, they are clearly on the ropes. They are punch-drunk; and it is also clear that they are refusing to take the count, they are waiting for the towel and waiting for the bell to ring [*Desk thumping*] but we are here to tell them, “Come out of your state of denial. You are in Opposition for five years and you will stay there for those five years [*Desk thumping*] and after those five years you will be in Opposition again.” Just to borrow some words from your leader, where he promised to drive us into the Gulf of Paria, we, by a pincer movement, will drive you into the Caroni Swamp. [*Desk thumping*]

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It is unfortunate that I have to commence my contribution to the budget debate in this way but really, Mr. Speaker, I am echoing the sentiments of the vast majority of the population of Trinidad and Tobago, a population that is shocked and outraged at the boldfacedness of those in Opposition today—boldfacedness and shamelessness; a shamelessness exhibited clearly by the Member for Couva South; someone who was told by the Member for Couva North—and as I say this I join him with the Member for St. Augustine. The Member for Couva North told them both that they will never see the doors of the Parliament again.

He called them “neemakarams”, and it seems as though they have forgotten; but whilst they sit on that side, we will constantly remind them that they have eaten humble pie, swallowed their pride and groveled in order to return to the Parliament. [*Desk thumping*] I know they felt that they would have returned to the corridors of power as the government, but they will sit there for those five years and continue to eat humble pie and wait for the Member for Couva North to leave the office of Opposition Leader.

Mr. Speaker, even though I have begun in this way, I must take this opportunity to congratulate you on your ascendance to the Chair, trusting that your time as Speaker would be measured, as we have seen already, by a certain amount of skill, dedication and grace. [*Desk thumping*] I know that you have had a certain amount of experience and apprenticeship in the people’s Parliament; and let me take this opportunity to remind this national community of the reasons we had to have a people’s Parliament in Trinidad and Tobago at a certain time.

Whilst they were in government, they had virtually closed down the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago. Despite the fact that they spoke about transparency and sit on that side today and stand and talk about transparency, they were at one time in the government of Trinidad and Tobago and gave up their responsibility as parliamentarians and, having gone on several trips around the world, forced us, because Parliament could not be called, to have a people’s Parliament. They are a picture of contradiction. They talked about transparency, but kept away from the Parliament, where they would have had the opportunity to be transparent; but, Mr. Speaker, contradiction is the norm with those on the opposite side.

Just yesterday we heard the Leader of the Opposition say that we on this side are promoting a dependency syndrome, that we are indulging in handouts. In that, he had the support of the former Minister of Finance, the Member for St. Joseph, who said that we are developing a welfare state and taking the country back to the IMF. Handouts, Mr. Speaker; a welfare state; loafers? This budget, entitled

“People, Our Priority”, has been widely acclaimed as one of the best budgets ever in Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] The most all-embracing—and I must take this opportunity to compliment very highly the Prime Minister and Minister of Finance for such a brilliant budget, Mr. Speaker. [*Desk thumping*]

This budget, I repeat, “People, Our Priority”, has increased disposable income for individuals. This budget, “People, Our Priority”, is protecting vulnerable groups by social intervention by ensuring that development is all-inclusive and all-embracing and is aimed at transforming and developing the nation’s youth. This budget, “People, Our Priority”, will provide quality education to all children and expand tertiary education. “People, Our Priority”, will strengthen the health sector to ensure that all are cared for and, among other things, improve consumer welfare. So while they on the other side talk about handouts, loafers and about a welfare state, we on this side recognize that this widespread approval and support is making them pale with envy and it is clear that the rejection of the people of Trinidad and Tobago is weighing heavily on them.

In fact, it was clearly evident, from the response of the Member for Couva North, who appears to be suffering from rigor mortis, and it is also clear that those on the other side are going through that state of rigor mortis, a state in which their party now exists. You would also know, Mr. Speaker, that after rigor mortis there is a time when that body rigor mortises, comes back to a certain amount of flexibility and then it decomposes. If you look at those on the other side, you will see that they look almost like cadavers and what we are hearing from them is a mournful wail as they sing their swan song. [*Desk thumping*]

They are talking about handouts? The United National Congress, whilst in office, institutionalized handouts. Mr. Speaker, I am sure that you have been following the report of the Piarco Airport Commission of Enquiry. Under oath, it was revealed that the actual cost of the airport will be \$3 billion, including interest, for which there was absolutely no Cabinet approval; and they are talking about handouts, Mr. Speaker? Imagine that; and after doing that, they are hot and bothered because the Minister of Finance has budgeted for people of Trinidad and Tobago to get free medication. Three billion dollars; and they are vexed because the people of Trinidad and Tobago will now get free medication.

Even more alarming, in that Commission of Enquiry it was revealed that they on that side had authorized the underwriting of \$189 million to Calmaquip, a foreign firm, to finance the cost of their contract to provide specialty equipment for the airport—a foreign firm, Mr. Speaker, and we have to pay \$51.6 million in interest. A total—[*Interruption*] Yes, you would say that that is all in circumstances

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where one of your Ministers had \$52 million pass through his account, so \$51.6 million is nothing, okay? Mr. Speaker, \$189 million added to that \$51.6 million, gives us a total of \$240.6 million. It also appears that those on the other side are upset because we have allocated money in this budget for a Scarborough library, for new health facilities in Tobago, for a Scarborough hospital, for housing programmes, for new primary schools and a new airport in Tobago. They are upset because of that, in circumstances where they authorized, without Cabinet or parliamentary approval, the expenditure of over \$240 million for a foreign firm.

Another foreign firm, Mr. Speaker, Birk Hillman, also benefited by hundreds of millions of dollars but they are quarrelling because we have allocated the sum of \$34.3 million to ensure an immediate response to the housing crisis that they left after their six years in office. [*Desk thumping*] They are talking about loafers, Mr. Speaker? With your permission, allow me to quote from the *Newsday* of Sunday, October 30, where it says, and I quote under the heading “Airport Inquiry—Week In Review”:

“In addition, Kuei Tung recommended that the Permanent Secretary get a salary of \$42,000 a month when he was made Director of a unit under MTS to do work for the Ministry of Finance.”

Forty-two thousand dollars a month, Mr. Speaker, for a permanent secretary who was made a director of a unit at MTS!

In the budget, we indicated that the SHARE Programme would be increased and hampers would move from \$150 to \$200 and that the number of hampers would be increased from 8,000 to 15,000. Mr. Speaker, do you know how many hampers could be bought with \$42,000 per month that one person was getting under their administration? Yet they are talking about loafers? They sit on that side, or stand when they have to make their contribution, and are riled and ruffled because public servants are now going to get what is duly owed to them, what had been owed to them for over 15 years.

Those on that side were there when public servants lost their COLA. They sat passively by when 10 per cent of public servants’ salary was taken from them and, Mr. Speaker, now they are upset because public servants are being given what is due to them. Just to give them a history lesson, they took the COLA and the 10 per cent from the public servants and when we returned to office in 1991 we, first of all, reinstated public servants’ salaries and reinstated their COLA. We stopped the accumulating debt and this was done for all public servants, all—

regardless of race, regardless of colour, regardless of creed, regardless of religion, regardless of political affiliation—[*Desk thumping*—all public servants.

Whilst we moved to stabilize the economy, and it was not possible at the time to make cash payments, the Member for Couva North used the plight of the public servants in 1995 to say, and I quote, trying to make mileage under the heading “Money for public servants—Panday”, and it is dated October 16, 1995 the *Trinidad Guardian*:

“When the UNC gets into power, it is going to put an end once and for all to this running sore of the problem between the public servants and the Government,” Panday said, adding that ‘a debt is a debt and must be paid.’

‘If when we get into office we find that there is a constraint on funds, the UNC Government will make a bond issue and so raise the necessary money in cash and pay the public servants,’ ...”

Seven years later, Mr. Speaker, we are coming to the rescue of those public servants. [*Desk thumping*] It was a political ploy then and now the reality is that the PNM that started to settle that debt is now going to pay each and every public servant in Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

The Members opposite, each and every one of them, or practically all of them, are well known for the kind of pretence and diatribe that they make as contributions in this House. The Member for Fyzabad on this occasion stood today in this House and spoke with the poison of a viper. Just as an aside, and to show the Member for Fyzabad that he must read before he comes to this House, I would like to take the opportunity to point out that the *Employment Practices in the Public and Private Sectors in Trinidad and Tobago Volume I* page 9, where it talks about the public sector, said:

“It will be observed that this level”

Of the clerical staff:

“in 1988 and 1989, over 50%”

I repeat:

“over 50 % of the applicants were Indians, with only a slight decrease...for the years 1990 and 1991. Indian females were also making up an increasing”

I repeat:

“increasing proportion of the applicants—”

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Mr. Speaker, the Member for Fyzabad came to this House today and pretended that he did not know the reality. He came and spoke poison and diatribe because, when they feel that all else is failing, those on the opposite side run to the race card. [*Desk thumping*] We on this side have had a history of not using race [*Desk thumping*] because we are clear in our belief that the People's National Movement is a party for all, for all, Mr. Speaker, and of all. [*Desk thumping*]

If you look on this side, you will see people of African descent, people of Lebanese descent, people of East Indian descent, people of dubious descent, [*Laughter*] people of Chinese descent, people of Portuguese descent and people of "dougla" descent. [*Desk thumping*] The rainbow that is real exists in the People's National Movement and even though this is not a mechanism of descent, you will also see "Rastafarians", Mr. Speaker. [*Desk thumping*] We have every single thing on this side and we have gender balance also. [*Desk thumping*] So, Mr. Speaker, when they come to this House and try to influence the population with words that are highly untrue, we on this side will consistently bring the truth to the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

While they talk about discrimination, we on this side are happy to report that we cannot be accused of paying any party supporter two salaries, [*Desk thumping*] one in the Office of the Prime Minister and one at the North West Regional Health Authority. [*Desk thumping*] We on this side can never be accused of paying one person over \$100,000 as a monthly salary. While they talk discrimination on that side, Mr. Speaker, we can never be accused of allowing a minister of government to have \$52 million pass through his account which he cannot explain or which he refuses to explain or which he does not care to explain. We on this side can never be accused of having a Minister of Works and Transport vary a maintenance contract from US \$20 million to US \$50 million for a foreign firm without Cabinet approval. Imagine all those excesses over the last six years, Mr. Speaker! They had absolutely no care or concern for the people of Trinidad and Tobago. His file must be opened. The Ministry of Health must open his file.

Mr. Speaker, I am sure that you will recall the big song and dance they made over their first budget in which they said they removed VAT from food items. I am sure that you would have anticipated that, with the removal of 15 per cent, at least the prices would fall by 15 per cent. Amazingly, the evidence shows otherwise. Let me just give you an example. Cheddar cheese, before the removal of VAT, in 1995, the price was \$10.47 and the expected price after the removal of VAT was

\$9.10. The actual price was \$9.30 and, between 1995 and 2001, the price of Cheddar cheese increased from \$10.47 to \$10.90.

They talked about removing VAT and helping poor people? Let me just give you a couple more examples. Smoked herring—the much touted smoked herring—before the removal of VAT—\$6.84; the expected price—\$5.95; the actual price was \$6.09. Yeast—\$5.61; the expected price was \$4.88. It went to \$5.22. Butter—before the removal of VAT—\$10.73; expected price—\$9.34. The price in 1996 after the removal of VAT was \$11.09. While they were talking about removing VAT and varying contracts without Cabinet approval and fixing their friends with fat contracts, Mr. Speaker, they were not looking after the interest of the people of Trinidad and Tobago because, what is clear from the figures I have given is that what they allowed to continue was a cartel of supermarkets, a cartel with their friends who were supposed to bring prices of food down yet continued to keep prices of food high because they knew that they could afford it but the ordinary man in the street was allowed to suffer under the last UNC administration. [*Desk thumping*]

What was even worse is that the ministry that was supposed to ensure that consumers' rights were taken care of was allowed to languish under their administration. The Ministry of Consumer Affairs is a division under the Ministry of Legal Affairs. What I have seen over the last nine months is that division, which should have been equipped in the last six years to deal with a liberalized economy, being allowed to operate in the past so that where cartels continued and where prices of food, in particular, continued to skyrocket, they did absolutely nothing to empower the Consumer Affairs Division to ensure that they would be able to operate in the interest of the consumer in a changed economy.

In 1994, a consumer policy was prepared for Trinidad and Tobago. There was a certain type of economy existing at that time, but what happened in 1995 and between 1995 and 2001, the entire paradigm of the type of economy to which that consumer policy spoke changed. Those on the opposite side did absolutely nothing to enhance the Consumer Affairs Division because they knew that if consumers were educated, if consumers were empowered, if consumers understood their rights and responsibilities, they would have operated in a way that perhaps would have been inimical to their friends and supporters. That will stop under this current administration. [*Desk thumping*]

In the same way that the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago spoke on October 07, 2002 and understood their rights and responsibilities, so during the currency of this administration, the Consumer Affairs Division will understand its rights

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and responsibilities, will learn how to teach consumers their rights and responsibilities and will, in fact, Mr. Speaker, force businessmen and businesses to stop their unethical practices and operate in a way that is in favour of the consumers of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

We would have thought that with a liberalized economy, in circumstances where competition usually drives prices down, that that is what would have been happening in Trinidad and Tobago. In fact, Mr. Speaker, an examination of the retail price index from the Central Bank indicates that in all other areas—clothing and texture, transportation, housing, rental accommodation—there has been a slight increase in the cost of living in the *Index of Retail Prices*. However, in relation to food, there has been a phenomenal increase, more than 150 points on the retail price index between 1997 and 2001. This can only be attributed perhaps to two things: one, a cartel of supermarkets and, secondly, a government that allowed the food import bill to rise to phenomenal levels.

Through the revamping of the Consumer Affairs Division, through legislation that will be brought to this Parliament to enhance the rights and responsibilities of consumers, we on this side, in our vision to protect consumers and to ensure that consumers understand their power, will ensure that, through that mechanism, prices will actually start to take a nosedive in relation to food. That is an undertaking that we on this side give to the people of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, it is clear that they had no intention of moving this country forward. In the debate on the Appropriation Bill of December 12, 1996, the hon. Minister of Finance at that time said, and I quote:

“Mr. Speaker, we are developing a competition policy for Trinidad and Tobago and, accordingly, appropriate legislation will be ready for consideration by this Parliament by the third quarter of next year. However, while awaiting the legislative support to deal with the problem of monopoly there must be some interim measures in place to address certain industries and activities which have remained virtual closed shops.”

To date, absolutely nothing was done by the last administration to bring a competition policy to the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago.

Today, Mr. Speaker, our citizens face the indignity of a cable company with a monopoly that raises its fees without any indication of why this was necessary or even the decency to indicate that an increase was imminent. Today, because there is no consumer policy that is relevant and no competition policy, our consumers

are subjected to mounting bank charges by banks making exorbitant profits. However, you have seen in the budget that the Minister of Finance has indicated that we will be instituting the office of financial services ombudsman to provide independent and prompt resolution of disputes relating to all products and services offered by licensed financial institutions. This is an imperative, because the banks and the other financial institutions in Trinidad and Tobago cannot be operating at levels where they make those kinds of profits and the consumer must continue to pay exorbitant fees and charges.

The issue of false and misleading advertising and labelling is also becoming a critical consumer concern. Again, through the Ministry of Legal Affairs, the Consumer Affairs Division will ensure that consumers are assured of the truthfulness of product claims by performance testing to ascertain their merchantability, reliability and safety. Mr. Speaker, we have seen six years where ministers responsible for consumer affairs have virtually ignored that division but, with this administration, all existing consumer legislation—and I make the point that the consumer legislation is dated 1985, and I make the point again that the entire economy has changed and, as a consequence of this, all existing consumer legislation will be reviewed and requisite new legislation will be introduced [*Desk thumping*] to the effect that we will be introducing truth in lending legislation. We will also be introducing legislation to ensure that there is an amendment to the Companies Act, legislation for consumer fair reporting and personal property and security legislation—all consumer concerns.

We on this side have also seen a situation that developed over the last six years where insurance companies were allowed to take advantage of the population with no regard to any consequences of what they had done. This year we will be embarking on a series of activities aimed at protecting the consumer from unscrupulous insurance companies and we will ensure that those companies that continue to refuse to settle legitimate claims are brought to book. The intention is to also ensure that the Supervisor of Insurance gets the kind of strength and teeth so that the office of the Supervisor of Insurance will operate in a way that benefits the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

One of the more salient announcements in the budget of Trinidad and Tobago was that promise of free birth certificates. Mr. Speaker, as you well know, within the first three months of a birth, if the child is registered and a birth certificate is applied for, that certificate is free. However, what we have found is that there has been an increasing incidence of persons not registering births and, as a consequence of that, this is an incentive to ensure that parents will, in fact,

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register the births of their children because birth certificates are of extreme importance.

Let me also indicate that a proposal that was brought to the Cabinet since 1995, which was never implemented by the last administration, was to ensure that district registrars were placed in the hospitals of Trinidad and Tobago. What we have found, Mr. Speaker, is that only one hospital had a district registrar and that was the San Fernando General Hospital. Ninety per cent of the babies born in Trinidad and Tobago are born in the hospitals and it is clear that if you bring the office of the district registrar into the hospitals it would be easier to have births registered. The district registrars will ensure that births and deaths are registered, and it will mean that there is a more accessible point for citizens of Trinidad and Tobago to make sure that these registrations take place.

Only last week, in an attempt to continue this service, we placed two district registrars in the Port of Spain General Hospital and within the next three months we will be placing registrars in all the hospitals of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] What they failed to do in six years, Mr. Speaker, we will ensure happens within the next three months in Trinidad and in Tobago, Mr. Speaker, and this is a measure for all the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

The Ministry of Legal Affairs has been working assiduously now in ensuring that there is a population registration system for Trinidad and Tobago; and I repeat, working assiduously now, Mr. Speaker, because this is a project that got Cabinet approval since 1994. Let me just give an idea of what this project is intended to achieve. This project, the population registration system, would serve as a means of uniquely identifying each citizen of Trinidad and Tobago.

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

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

Question put and agreed to.

Hon. C. Robinson-Regis: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I also take the opportunity to thank my colleagues for this indulgence. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, I repeat that this is a project that was approved by the Cabinet in 1994. Although approved in 1994, between 1994 and the year 2002, practically nothing was done by the Member for Siparia, by the former Member for Couva South and by the Member for Pointe-a-Pierre, in ensuring that this project got to a

point where it could, in fact, be used by the people of Trinidad and Tobago. This is a project which would give a secured and confidential unique number for every citizen. It is a project which is necessary for the immigration services, it is of absolute importance for the National Health Insurance System, it is of absolute importance for eliminating the incidence of voter padding because, I repeat, it gives each citizen a unique identifier number, and this is a project that essentially was left to languish between 1994 and 2001.

Mr. Speaker, it is a project that is characterized by a chronology of hitches, of wrong information being given, of a committee being set up to ensure that the project goes forward but being blocked on every occasion, of a contract essentially being awarded and then being taken away. It is a project that has had a history of being allowed to languish and the last point I made about this project giving you a unique identifier number and ensuring that voter padding would not be possible, it leaves you to wonder, Mr. Speaker, if it was a deliberate attempt by the other side to keep a project of that nature, which was approved by the Cabinet since 1994, from not moving forward [*Desk thumping*] because it would have stopped some of the things that they would have liked to do through the Elections and Boundaries Commission, which in fact they did, Mr. Speaker.

Let me just say, however, that despite the protraction, despite the bungling and despite what appears to be deliberate sabotage on some occasions, there has been the delivery of the first package of information regarding this population registration system. [*Desk thumping*] Mr. Speaker, I am not saying that this delivery took place because we came into government; I am saying that we moved swiftly to move this project forward to completion and we are continuing to move the project forward. We have set up a new team to ensure that the project moves forward without further bungling and deferment, Mr. Speaker.

It leaves you to wonder if that statement of bungling, that protraction, that inability, apparently, to move projects forward is what characterizes those on the other side, because, Mr. Speaker, in the Biche enquiry it was said by Justice Sealey and I quote:

“No one with the authority to stop the project or influence the cessation of construction seemed willing to take the initiative. Instead, what the Commission found was that whenever the advice suggested any minimum of safety for construction or occupation of the site, there was a consistent disregard for the highest standards of prudence and care and a marked unwillingness to be proactive.”

That is what was said and that is why I am concerned that that is what marked the population registration system—a marked unwillingness to be proactive. That is the legacy of the last administration.

Indeed, the Ministry of Legal Affairs, Mr. Speaker, from the building that Ministry occupies to the various projects of the ministry, over the last six years appears to have lost its way. The building, bought at a cost of \$10 million and refurbished at a mounting cost of almost \$20 million—clear bungling, clearly having lost its way—to date cannot efficiently and effectively house that Ministry. It is characterized by leaks, by flooding, by a vault system that is not working for the ministry and they sat there for the six years and allowed that to continue. They are characterized by an unwillingness to be proactive and a certain amount of unscrupulous behaviour.

That is the same description that could be given of the Ibis School, which was refurbished at a cost of over \$30 million, and to date that school remains closed. The Land Registration Rationalization and Development Programme and the enhancement of the Companies Registry both began in 1993 and to date they have not been completed because those on the other side have not been proactive about taking these projects forward, Mr. Speaker.

I will not be unfair. To some extent there has been some movement, but the level to which they wanted to raise this country—they claim they wanted to make us the jewel of the Americas—yet a companies registry system and a land management system, which continue to be essential for investment promotion, were not brought to the standard that was necessary to ensure that this country moved forward. As my colleague, the Member for Diego Martin West said, they did not take that quantum leap to ensure that investment promotion and land management operated at its optimal level, Mr. Speaker—all approved under the previous PNM administration and allowed to languish under that administration.

What happens when that takes place is that things like document fraud and fraudulent behaviour are allowed to continue and it leaves you to wonder if that was one of the reasons behind allowing these projects not to move forward. In the Ministry of Legal Affairs at this time we are in the process of putting physical and technological instruments in place to ensure that the incidence of document fraud is brought to a minimum and we are also ensuring that the land management system and the Companies Registry will operate optimally.

Mr. Speaker, the Intellectual Property Office was established in 1997 and this also falls within the purview of the Ministry of Legal Affairs. This office operates

quite effectively except to say that the legislation is in place but the people of Trinidad and Tobago, for whom intellectual property could become the source of an ability to really make money—[*Interruption*] very good words—financial viability, Mr. Speaker, they are left in the dark about the value of their own intellectual property. The office is operating but they have neglected to inform the customers, the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago, as to what intellectual property is all about.

Mr. Speaker, the Bible says that faith without works is dead and I did say that they looked as though—

Mr. Manning: St. Paul.

Hon. C. Robinson-Regis: St. Paul I am being reminded—and I did say they looked like cadavers, Mr. Speaker, and faith without works is dead. They have established the office but they have not ensured that the people of Trinidad and Tobago are benefiting from that office at the optimal level. Intellectual property is a mystery and that cannot be allowed to continue.

They operated without a vision and we on this side have shown that we have a vision for Trinidad and Tobago and, consequently, intellectual property will be understood by the populace because we will be instituting an across-the-board education programme for the people of Trinidad and Tobago. We will be demystifying intellectual property.

One other area that I must mention, Mr. Speaker, under the rubric of intellectual property, is the issue of local content. That issue has become a very sore issue because the last administration had indicated that they would be bringing legislation in order to force radio stations and other purveyors of culture to ensure that the local content on the airwaves is increased.

9.30 p.m.

We on this side, Mr. Speaker, are of the view that at this time, moral suasion should really be used to ensure that this is what takes place. We have had meetings with all the stakeholders, Mr. Speaker, and we are of the view that we will, in fact, find a solution without going the route of legislation.

In fact, we are moving swiftly toward this, as you will see in this year's budget, companies that sponsor local cultural, educational or entertainment productions—and those productions are broadcast either locally, regionally or internationally—will be allowed to make deductions of up to \$450,000, and this

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Government will also be establishing an academy of the performing arts to ensure that our local artistes are well served and well looked after.

Mr. Speaker, there is another issue that has almost been created by those on the other side and has created conflict. That is the establishment of a second organization for collecting royalties. Whereas there was an organization, Copyright Organization of Trinidad and Tobago (COTT), which collected royalties, a new organization was established under the watch of the last administration which has set a conflict situation in Trinidad and Tobago where they have said that one society is essentially to collect royalties from Indian artistes and the other society collects from other artistes. But we have been meeting with the two organizations and the conflict situation which appeared to have been set up by those on the other side is on the way to some form of resolution.

It is clear that the Member for Pointe-a-Pierre apparently is still very involved in the Ministry of Legal Affairs, but she will eventually realize that she is no longer the Minister. [*Interruption*] She is no longer the Minister.

Miss Lucky: I thought we were working together?

Hon. C. Robinson-Regis: I see she is offering her assistance, but she is no longer the minister. This Minister of Legal Affairs under this administration will do all the things that she promised to do and never achieved under the watch of the United National Congress.

Mr. Speaker, let me just indicate that it is clear that the Member for Couva North has lost his enthusiasm and I wish to assure him that we know that those other 308,000 people who voted for us and even the 200,000 who voted for them are in complete support of this budget.

I am reminded that there are some in this country who have said—and some of them sit on the opposite side—that what we are doing is creating a welfare state. Mr. Speaker, permit me to give you the definition from Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary of “welfare state”:

“A social system based upon the assumption by a political state of primary responsibility for the individual concerned with the improvement of the welfare of disadvantaged social groups to ensure the good fortune, happiness, well-being and prosperity of its citizens.”

Mr. Speaker, governments worldwide ensure that they must secure the welfare of all its people. They were the only government that was ensuring only the

welfare of those who supported them. We will ensure the welfare of all citizens by increasing disposable income, by ensuring that the rates of tax for corporations continue to decline, by ensuring that the health sector is financed in such a way that the people of Trinidad and Tobago can benefit from the measures put in place by the budget.

If I may be allowed to take the words of a song, if loving the people of Trinidad and Tobago is wrong, then we on this side do not want to be right. [*Desk thumping*] Because, this is a government that enjoys widespread support, and it is clearly awesome and perhaps even awesome to those on the other side what we have been able to achieve in nine months and what we will continue to achieve for the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

In such a short time we have already begun to propel this country forward. We are taking our country forward in a progressive way, and that is why the people of Trinidad and Tobago have gone to deeper depths and greater heights in every area to ensure that the orgy of bedlam that they perpetrated was stopped on October 07, 2002.

Mr. Speaker, for the past six years, we on this side and the people of Trinidad and Tobago were subjected to the threats, belligerence, crude and unstatesmanlike behaviour from the Member for Couva North. If we are, you think, being pretentious, I will even go back to 1977 at a time when the population had to endure violent utterances from the Member for Couva North, I quote from the book *Panday An Enigma Answered*:

“I want also to make it perfectly clear that as a matter of principle, I am not against violence as an instrument of change when all other methods fail.”

And today—[*Interruption*] perhaps that is why he used the Muslimeen. I am glad that you are admitting it. Today he is accusing us of waging a campaign of terror. He is accusing us on this side of waging a campaign of terror, a campaign of intimidation. We on this side say that he has neither the moral nor the spiritual authority to make any such statement.

Mr. Speaker, if you thought that in 1977, because he was perhaps a younger man, that he was more inclined to speak off the cuff, I would like you to take a short time to listen to the same Member for Couva North in the last year when he was the selected Leader of the Opposition.

I quote from the *Newsday* of Sunday, October 20, 2002:

“Panday—A year of fiery speeches

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At last Sunday's first UNC post-election rally at Chaguanas, UNC Leader Basdeo Panday used inflammatory language to predict the fall of the newly elected PNM government.

...Panday declared: 'When the money runs out as it is bound to sooner or later, the demonstrations and fires will begin. Robberies, killings and kidnappings will be the new form of distributing the wealth.'

But provocative and incendiary speeches have been Panday's staple fare..."

The *Newsday* says:

"January 24, 2001:... 'PM (Panday) links Robinson, Manning with Jamaat,' Panday said: 'Interests opposed to the UNC administration are in collusion to seize power, some by violent means...'

February 23, 2002:... 'Panday calls for civil disorder'...

May 15: ... 'Plot to arrest me says Panday,'...

June 15: A report from...Canada... 'Panday: TT in grip of executive dictatorship,'...

June 19:... 'Panday tells IADB President 'Don't come to TT'...

June 22: Claiming the PNM was a bunch of thugs, he added, 'You give them a good right cross to the jaw and flatten them in the yard. That is what we have to do with the PNM.'"

Violence, intimidation, terror! This is what characterizes their leader.

"June 29: 'If we have to take our motor cars and block Port of Spain, we have to intensify our struggle.'

July 4: '...if Prime Minister Patrick Manning continued the way he was going...'

We will have killings in Trinidad and Tobago like Guyana. July 6: Panday says he is afraid of licks and jail.

"August 22: After the police searched his Gulf View home... 'Struggle will continue from a police cell' Panday said..."

September 19: Panday, the day he was charged with breaching the Integrity Act says, he is not afraid of the forces that will come against him.

September 20: '...the PNM is involved in crimes...'

October 1: 'I hope the elections would be free from violence...'

October 3: 'Lose your life, not Ortoire/Mayaro',"

But they did not listen to him, Mr. Speaker, because the population of Trinidad and Tobago has moved light years ahead of the leadership of the Member for Couva North and the type of administration that the United National Congress attempted to perpetrate on those of us in Trinidad and Tobago.

Let me point out to them that they lost their franchise. They lost their mandate, because they lacked fairness, they lacked standards, they lacked accountability, they lacked integrity, they lacked moral and spiritual values. I am not the only one saying that. We on this side are not the only ones who are saying that.

Permit me again to quote from the *Newsday*, Thursday, October 24, 2002:

"Jagan knocks Panday

Cheddi Jagan JR, son of the late President of Guyana Dr. Cheddi Jagan, said on Monday that the results of the October 7 general elections meant the end of the line for UNC political leader Basdeo Panday.

He said Panday was once a close collaborator of leftist causes in the Caribbean but after coming to power he 'like many other communists chose to pretend that the free enterprise system was the path to follow'.

'While this pretense was being carried out, the personal life of Mr. Panday took a turn in the direction of grandiosity and hobnobbing with the 'big shots' while becoming more and more dictatorial in his own party, a common trait of most leftists when in power'.

Jagan said it was Panday's 'arrogance and lack of commitment to real development' that did Panday in and it is time he step down and left.

He said that Prime Minister Patrick Manning won the elections because 'he presented a vision of stability and reliability to the electorate thus receiving crucial cross-over votes from Panday's party'."

Crucial crossover votes from Panday's party.

"Jagan said the people of Trinidad and Tobago deserve a better leader than Panday even in the Opposition." [*Desk thumping*]

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Mr. Speaker, whilst they are talking about the *Newsday* and talking about Jagan, let me make the point that *The Economist* of October 12, 2002 said on Trinidad's election under the heading:

“A Mandate for Manning

A triumph for electoral politics

Mr. Manning has been prime minister since last Christmas. But parliament, tied 18-18 between the PNM and the...UNC could not function. Now Mr. Manning, prime minister from 1991—95, again has a mandate. His avuncular manner goes down well in a country shaken by three years of nonstop politicking.

The election marked a perhaps final defeat for Basdeo Panday.”

A final defeat.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, please wind up.

Hon. C. Robinson-Regis: Mr. Speaker, I will in fact take this opportunity to wind up by again quoting from Cheddi Jagan Junior, because he says it so well:

“I wish the people of Trinidad and Tobago well and I know that with Panday now headed to retirement the country has a chance for real development and responsible leadership. Trinidad can now really exert its true potential to show the way forward,”

Under the leadership of Patrick Manning and the Government of the People's National Movement, Trinidad and Tobago, with this budget and with the budgets that will come for the next four years and the next five years and five years and five years after that, and with the previous budgets from 1956—1986 that built Trinidad and Tobago, will exert our true potential and take Trinidad and Tobago forward.

Thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

Miss Gillian Lucky (Pointe-a-Pierre): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It would certainly be very remiss of me if I did not join with my other colleagues in this honourable House in congratulating you on your recent elevation to the high office of Speaker of the House.

Might I indicate though, Mr. Speaker, that I certainly was going to follow the Budget Statement 2003, which is Vision 2020, People our Priority, and show that I really cared by ensuring that in my contribution I tried to be as economical with time as I could and I had, therefore, given an earlier indication and undertaking

that I would only be about 30 minutes. But having been so wrongly accused by the hon. Member for Arouca South that me along with my colleagues look nothing more like cadavers, instead of the 30 minutes, let us sit back and enjoy the ride which should take approximately 75 minutes.

What I could ensure, however, is that I am not going to be launching personal attacks nor am I going to be commenting on the contributions made by others in terms of whether they have the veracity or whether, in fact, they have the normal gumption that they would usually display. What I intend to do, however, is to stick to those areas that I know and know very well, such as intellectual property, such as what was happening in the Ministry of Legal Affairs for the 10 months that I was there.

What I would like to indicate, Mr. Speaker, is that continuing with the vein of working together, I hope that through my contribution we can really take Trinidad and Tobago forward. I have no problems dealing with the reality that it is the PNM that sits there, it is the UNC that sits here and we must now move our minds off from the platforms, Mr. Speaker, and remember that we are in the Parliament and we must work together as a team with a government and a very strong and responsible Opposition taking this country forward.

It is said that one must always ensure that we have the right when we make accusations, for a person to face his or her accuser, and what I have to say now is that in my rebuttal to many of the statements made by the hon. Member for Arouca South, I do not see her here now, but I am sure that she is listening wherever she is and I am sure when she hears my responses to some of the statements she has made she will remember what the truth is and we will therefore be able to set the record straight.

First of all, Mr. Speaker, I am very concerned about the reason proffered by the hon. Member for Arouca South for the granting of free birth certificates. What the hon. Member indicated, is that the reason for granting the free birth certificates is to ensure that persons who have recently had children would be given the impetus or the encouragement to come and have their children registered within the timeframe.

What I would want to indicate to the hon. Prime Minister through you, Mr. Speaker, is that in the short tenure that I had as the junior Minister, but stationed at the Ministry of Legal Affairs—and I say this to you in the only way I know how to say things, and that is in a free and frank manner—the problem has never been the payment of the fee that is the sum of \$25, there had been a problem with the

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late registration of births, and certainly there was a drive to encourage persons to rectify that situation. That was something that was done under the UNC regime.

The real problem you face, and again through you, Mr. Speaker, hon. Prime Minister, is that the office will be bombarded with requests for birth certificates and the problem will be the inability to give, or to use your words, deliver what has been promised. The problem being the lack of personnel in the first instance and, in the second instance, lack of the computer technology that is needed.

I no doubt understand that the response to my concern would be, "Well we will provide for it", but it is not that easy, because when one operates within the Government services, as I have done, both as an officer in the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) office and then as a junior Minister, one recognizes that there are certain constraints, and that is why I make the point, Mr. Speaker, from the outset that merely patting yourselves on the back and saying that you have delivered because you have stated what will be your good intentions in a budget is not good enough.

The critical issue is implementation and unless you can ensure implementation, then you have not delivered. I feel very confident as I speak here tonight that unless there are miracles worked at the Ministry of Legal Affairs, it will be impossible within the timeframe given in this budget, which is within this fiscal year, to give the free birth certificates.

What is necessary, and I make this offer through you again, Mr. Speaker, to the hon. Prime Minister, is an assessment of what presently exists in terms of the personnel and the computer technology, lacking though it is, and before any promises are made, to ensure that there is an increase, a significant increase, and then when there is a significant increase in the personnel so that they can handle what will be the bombardment they will get for all those persons who want free certificates, only then can you really shout with acclamations of glee and say, "We have delivered".

In any event, what I found quite amazing was the Member for Arouca South seemed to have limited the ability to get free birth certificates to only persons who would recently have had a child. It is my understanding based on what I read in the budget that the free birth certificate would be for anyone who would want to get or make a request for a birth certificate.

That just now compounds the problem, because it means that while this measure might have had the honourable intention of encouraging persons to have their children registered in a timely fashion, what you have really done is open the

floodgates for every citizen in Trinidad and Tobago to go to the registry section, the registry of births, and say “I want a birth certificate. I am entitled to get it free.”

How are they going to implement the measure? How are they going to prioritize? How are they going to ensure that it is for children now born as opposed to persons who are making the request after a number of years? Because from time to time people need birth certificates for a variety of reasons. These are things that must be thought out. So again, I make the point, delivery without implementation is no delivery at all. Enough on birth certificates! Let us move on. I promised a very interesting ride.

With respect to the allegations made by the hon. Member for Arouca South about the lack of proactivity in the Ministry of Legal Affairs, all I can say to that is I believe in teamwork. I have always said that one of the things I always wanted to ensure in the school curriculum, and the UNC I know was very committed to it, was making sure that young children had enough access to be involved in things like sports. Because when one is involved in sports one knows what is teamwork.

What I would have thought the hon. Member for Arouca South would have done, bearing in mind she seemed so preoccupied with saying the truth, is she would have done the honourable thing and said the truth and said that what she inherited, that I left for her in that Ministry, was a goldmine and what she had to do was just take the baton passed to her and run. I would just now want to put on the *Hansard* that so generous was I that when I cleared out my office of all my belongings I made sure I left her some plants, but I understand she did not even want the wonderful green plants that I left for her.

Mr. Speaker, as I move on, let us talk about the Intellectual Property Office. The Member for Arouca South did recognize the level of enthusiasm that I still have with respect to the whole issue of intellectual property. Why? Because intellectual property is, in fact, a mysterious area but it is an area that if we all really put our efforts and work together, we can help to demystify.

[MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker, while at the Intellectual Property Office we went on a very comprehensive drive to educate the public about intellectual property—Intellectual property comprises the components of copyright, patents and trademarks—and various personnel in the Ministry with the level of expertise appeared on radio and television shows. We even produced a booklet and I can

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assure you—Am I speaking too fast? No. Mr. Deputy Speaker, what I can assure you is that we did, in fact, print a booklet.

Mr. Valley: Slow down, Hansard.

Miss G. Lucky: I shall take the instruction from you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. What we did is ensure that those booklets printed gave details in a simplified form about all the aspects of intellectual property. So we explained to the public about copyright, patents and trademarks. In fact, with the greatest respect, I was the one who came up with the tag line, “Intellectual Property, Creative Genius at Work”. But I suppose it being a UNC idea created by a junior Minister in the UNC, that too will be removed. If it is removed, let me give another suggestion, let us say, “Your Creative Work Being Protected”, if they want to change it.

The fact remains we did not keep those booklets, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We made sure every embassy and High Commission in this country got a copy. We made sure every secondary school and primary school got a copy, that the University of the West Indies got a copy, and even if there was a University of Trinidad and Tobago, which I am not in favour of, we would have given them a copy too.

Most importantly, we sent this booklet to be assessed by the World Intellectual Property Office (WIPO) and that is the international organization that guides and directs developing countries like Trinidad and Tobago that are committed to ensuring that the standards of its intellectual property meet international requirements.

When I went myself to Geneva and I met with the officials at WIPO, they said they would use that booklet as a model for other jurisdictions because of the manner in which it was presented and the simple way in which what appeared to be difficult concepts were explained. The point is, I am not here to pat myself on the back. There are enough other persons who can do that for me. What I am saying is if we are really committed to working as a team, let us do so and let the hon. Member for Arouca South admit that when she has gotten the assistance it is just for her to take it forward.

So we talk about public education, and then the hon. Member for Arouca South, perhaps not thinking that I remember as far back as the year 2001 when I was the Minister, seemed to suggest that I must remember I am not the Minister. Mr. Deputy Speaker, let me say from the outset, because we have a number of years to see each other—those of us on this side and those who sit on that side—

that power is not something that goes to my head, nor do I think as a citizen of Trinidad and Tobago I need to hold high office in order to contribute.

I always say when people make those kinds of accusations it tells me how they think, but that is not my thinking. And nothing the hon. Minister for Arouca South says, and maybe in her wisdom she really is not here because I would not like to face myself at this hour of the night, especially when she would not be able to answer the manner in which I am putting the truth to her, it just proves to me that she cannot face the truth. So I look at that empty chair.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the issue of local content. What I could say, I was eight years as state prosecutor where I was taught not to persecute. I was taught to present facts, and there is a phrase that you would know very well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, let the chips lie as they fall. In other words, when the hon. Member for Arouca South speaks about local content and pretends as though it was the UNC literally forcing legislation on to others and the stakeholders, she is not wrong. She is absolutely wrong!

I remember going to the former Attorney General, Mr. Ramesh Lawrence Maharaj, as he then was the Attorney General, and I said to him that it was very important that we got the stakeholders to get together, because the idea of passing legislation would have been forcing people in the country to accept something which they may not be minded to accept, and Mr. Maharaj agreed.

As a result, I met with the Trinidad and Tobago Publishers and Broadcasting Association. I met with a group called RIATT; not riot, but the Recording Industry Artistes of Trinidad and Tobago (RIATT) and I met with all the other stakeholders, including the cable company and representatives from COTT.

What was indicated was that we were going to try to get what would be a resolution and some method by which we would not have to resort to legislation. Those talks were very productive. It was not just ol' talk. So much so that I brought to the attention of the group meeting that there had been a decision in Canada, one of the jurisdictions in which local content has been legislated for, and there was a constitutional motion that was brought, because the point being made is that it went against—that is when you legislate for local content—the constitutional rights of those who are broadcasting. Mr. Deputy Speaker, you would appreciate the context in which I speak.

So what I am saying is that the hon. Member for Arouca South should understand that when she is making accusations that are falling in my yard, make sure she comes with facts because I deal with facts and I can face reality.

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What we had decided with the local content, and it was a very important point that was raised by Miss Josanne Leonard, because I want to give credit where it is due, because I am very mindful of the concept of copyright, and one must not steal other people's ideas. If you steal it or you are taking it, make sure you give them credit for it.

She made a very important point when she said in that meeting dealing with local content, it is critical that we must get some policy with respect to how we want to treat local content in this country, and then we recognize what would be the definition of local content. If, for example, you have 10 persons in a band and one is Trinbagonian and they are playing a song, are you going to say it is local content because of the presence of that one person? Another point was raised. How are you going to make a determination for television purposes, for example, whether a programme is local or not? Is it in terms of its content, in terms of its presenters, in terms of its producers, in terms of its directors?

These were all issues because—I see the hon. Member for Diego Martin Central nodding, because when we looked—[*Interruption*] Well, nodding could be this way or down. I did not say you were in agreement with me. You were moving your head. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker, what we recognized—let us not waste time in which direction heads are moving. Let us say you were disagreeing. Whatever you were doing, let us not be distracted. What was critical was that when we looked at the definition of local content it varied from jurisdiction to jurisdiction. The simple point I am making is that we in the UNC recognized that we did not want to force anything down anybody's throat. We recognized we had to talk to the stakeholders and we did. But more importantly, we wanted to go to the people of Trinidad and Tobago, the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago, and get their views on it. That is where we had reached, and I am very happy that the Member for Arouca South was able to take all the wonderful foundation that we had laid for her and build on it, because that is what really taking a country forward is all about.

The hon. Member for Arouca South said that we did not have a vision for the IP office—and through you Mr. Deputy Speaker, again, I speak to the Prime Minister, the hon. Member for San Fernando East—but I will tell you what a true vision is. The vision that the hon. Member for Arouca South speaks of shows, with the greatest respect to her, that she is not thinking really with 2020 vision. She is shortsighted.

I will tell you why now. If you really want to show that you are concerned about intellectual property in this country, do not tell us about things we have already done in the UNC, local content and so. Let us talk about where the international intellectual property is taking us. The first thing you should consider, hon. Prime Minister, Member for San Fernando East, is whether the Intellectual Property Office is rightly placed in the Ministry of Legal Affairs. What I mean by this is in Barbados, for example, and in Jamaica, and upon recommendation by the WIPO office and other jurisdictions that have very vibrant Intellectual Property offices, as they are called, they are really placed in the Ministry of Trade, because it is recognized that the Intellectual Property office is an office that is really an economic tool for growth. It involves, for example, the Ministry of Culture, and I know that my good friend, the hon. Member for Arima, would recognize that culture is certainly something that—

Mr. Manning: Does the Member for Siparia agree with you?

Miss G. Lucky: I am sure that she will agree with me, because these were policies that were discussed but, in any event, I am just saying, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that these are certainly issues that ought to be discussed. Intellectual property involves ministries such as the Ministry of Culture.

One will remember recently there was a problem with respect to the steelpan in this country where two Americans received the patent for the steelpan and there was a big furore in this country, why had we not done it before and we have lost our rights. As I explained, the steelpan had been put in the public domain. We had never sought to patent it. I am not into blaming one government or another. We did not do what we ought to have done. We should now do damage control. In the same way those two young Americans have been able to patent, not the steelpan, but a method that they are using to make the steelpan which gives it a particular tone, then we have to see now how we are going to develop the steelpan, our national instrument and ensure that we patent it.

When it comes to the steelpan, I am glad it is our national instrument, because ever since I studied at the University of the West Indies at Cave Hill Campus—and I know many of us who are attorneys in this honourable Chamber studied there—I remember I was taking part in the calypso monarch competition—and I just go into this aside to make sure I have the interest of the House—when I took part and won the competition [*Desk thumping*] I was singing on Caribbean unity, but I know my friend, the Member for Arouca South, refers to the lyrics of other

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songs. I am creative enough to use my own lyrics. The name of my song was *Caribbean Unity*. One verse, and I am not singing it, I am quoting it, says:

“We are creative here in the Caribbean

We invent calypso and the music from the steelpan.”

The “Bajans” who were in the band room at the time said, “Well I am glad you are mentioning the steelpan, because we invented it in Barbados”. To my horror I said, “You invented the steelpan?” Trinidad and Tobago invented the steelpan! And they said no, no.

Then we had a Bahamian student who said they invented the steelpan. If we ever saw the episodes of *Love Boat*, when the passengers came off you saw someone beating a steelpan? It was at that point I asked the Bajans, when did they discover oil in their country to even have steel drums!

So I am trying to show that was the level of patriotism that we in the UNC possess and that is when I started realizing it is important that when we have something of which we are proud, let us not just pay lip-service. Let us do something about it. We cannot patent now the steelpan in its original form; let us perfect it. We invented it. We had that creative genius. Let us put it to work and let us protect it and ensure that we do not suffer years from now and look back and say this is what we could have, would have and should have done.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I just want to point out that the Intellectual Property Office—and that is why I said perhaps it should be under the Ministry of Trade and Industry—it also involved the Ministry of Energy, and I am sure the hon. Prime Minister will be concerned that many oil companies are very concerned when they are investing that there is a very vibrant and proactive intellectual property office operating in the jurisdictions in which they seek to invest, because they want to ensure that patents will get the protection that they deserve—which is really big business—especially when they will be investing in a country, and no doubt developing certain ideas and plans they wish to execute.

It involves also the Ministry of Agriculture. I know the hon. Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann’s West is not here, but I did tell him informally, and I put it now on the *Hansard* record that, for example, the intellectual property laws have so advanced that there is now legislation protecting new plant varieties. So once again in our country, persons interested in agriculture who might be able to do cross-fertilization with whatever plants are available might be able to create some strain of plant that they would want protection. Again, if not, years from now once it is in the public domain it will make protection impossible.

The fact is the intellectual property office can be made economically viable. And that was what the United National Congress was about. But I am not surprised the hon. Member for Arouca South is not here to face me because she might not have been understanding much of what I was speaking about.

Another point, Mr. Deputy Speaker, just so that I can bring closure to the whole idea of intellectual property in this country, is how then do we create this vibrant office? It is not good enough to say we should do something and not give ideas. First of all, what I would point out is that the other side continue with what was being done in that office to ensure that we have the necessary professional staff.

Intellectual property, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as you would appreciate, is a very highly specialized area and, therefore, it is not simply about taking persons who have just O'levels or A'levels. They have to go through professional training because they are looking at patents, they are looking at trademarks, to see whether there is any falsification, whether there is any duplication.

The unfortunate reality is that many of the persons who are appointed at the Intellectual Property Office, after going abroad and receiving that high level of expensive training, return to our jurisdiction, they spend a year or two, fulfill their contractual obligations and then they leave us, so we start right back from scratch again. How then do we deal with this problem, Mr. Deputy Speaker?

The reality is we have to provide better terms and conditions for the staff; not just the staff at the Intellectual Property Office, but to all the trained professionals who work in our state departments. I will be coming to that soon when I am dealing with the issue of crime, but I am just saying for far too long we have really been mistreating state counsels who are attached to all the state departments, be it the Director of Public Prosecutions Office, the Solicitor General's Office, the Chief Parliamentary Counsel, the Chief State Solicitor, those state attorneys in the Board of Inland Revenue and Value Added Tax departments.

What happens is these persons give yeoman service. I know some of them have been sitting through the parliamentary debates until very late hours. I myself was a state attorney. I remember as a senior state counsel my take home salary was just about \$8,000 or \$9,000. The reality is for doing similar work in private practice an attorney would have been taking home without exaggeration at least eight or nine times that amount.

Mr. Manning: Paying how much tax?

Miss G. Lucky: I cannot really say. Well you have to pay your fair amount of tax. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the reality is, and let me deal with state counsel. I will prove beyond all reasonable doubt that what I say is the truth. When I joined the office of the DPP in January, 1993 I had decided that I really wanted to commit myself, as I always had planned to do, to Government service. We have always believed that one should be entitled to make a career in the public service. It must not just be a transit point where you give three to five years and then you move on.

What has been happening is that there has been a massive hemorrhaging at the state departments. It did not happen now; it did not happen 10 years ago. It was just a cycle. I remember in 1993 going to the Attorney General, the PNM was then in power, and I presented to him a document in which I thought, having worked with a team because I was the President of the Association of Legal Officers (ALO)—a body which I hope still exists—we had shown what the salaries of state attorneys were and we had shown what the salaries if these attorneys were in the private practice attached to the private sector would get.

We were not asking for equal. We were just saying that there was a need to improve the terms and conditions. The terms and conditions in the DPP's Department in 1993 were so bad that we only have one Archbold. I am sure Mr. Deputy Speaker is familiar with that book. There was one Archbold which is the Bible on criminal law, and we would all have to literally grab that book and run to court, and it was not even the latest edition.

When the UNC assumed office in 1995 I was still the president of the ALO which was now a dwindling body, and when I went to the then Attorney General and pointed out to him that we needed better terms and conditions, a very legal creative method was used to at least provide us with interim increases. I know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the Salaries Review Commission (SRC) is responsible for assessing the salaries of the state counsel and making various recommendations but, unfortunately, by the time their recommendations are implemented—the fact is, at the end of the day, it is really outdated.

I wish now just to move on to the issue of crime, and I will be very short because I am sure that the hon. Member for San Fernando East listened to me very carefully; moving aside the picong, listened to some of the ideas that I suggested when we were on the platforms. Now we are in Parliament we have to make sure that we can implement.

Let me just say, and I will deal with the points very quickly. Firstly in the budget, it is said that:

“Our war on crime cannot be waged in the traditional fashion. We must take a holistic approach.”

Again, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we agree with this. This is exactly what the UNC had done. The UNC had simultaneously, refurbishing the Magistrates' Courts, providing more vehicles, putting more police recruits, Operation LEAP, ensuring that the police—there was technology and computerization, and also, our social programmes. So we recognize that one has to address the root causes of crime but, at the same time, making sure that those who are involved in the whole aspect of fighting crime are given the necessary resources—always remembering that we are dealing with crime prevention, crime detection and criminal prosecution.

Through you again, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because I know I am now competing with the digestive juices of hon. Members in the House, what I want to indicate to the hon. Prime Minister and Member for San Fernando East, and it deals with the Forensic Science Centre, I have read all the booklets that deal with this issue where there is some degree of amplification—might I just mention that passing laws is not enough?

We already have the law dealing with DNA and the admissibility of DNA evidence. We already have the Forensic Science Centre, but somehow even though we have the law and there exists the Forensic Science Centre, there is some glitch and, unfortunately, that was only brought to my attention quite recently when I entered private practice, and I am afraid I have not been able to get any sort of proper explanation. But I am saying through you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that perhaps those who advise the Member, those who give him the good advice, because not all of them advise him well, I must say, he could probably determine what that glitch is and then there would be the implementation, rather than the enforcement of the law.

Might I also indicate my whole concept of this Operation Anaconda. It is amazing how snakes always tend to reach high places. In the Bible we have a snake entering the Garden of Eden. Now in *Hansard* in the Budget we have the anaconda. I do not mind admitting that Operation Anaconda has its virtues or its value. What it really is, is a massive roadblock that causes inconvenience, yes, and you will be able to detect those persons who are driving without their driving permits or insurance certificates and, therefore, they are committing what would really be traffic violations.

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In the unlikely event—and it is very rare—you might find more by inadvertence, you catch a criminal. Operation Anaconda has not worked in terms of fighting crime. In the budget, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it says Operation Anaconda brought immediate relief to our citizenry who were literally under siege and, like my colleague, the hon. Member for Princes Town, I agree only with half of that sentence. Our citizenry were literally and still are under siege. Operation Anaconda did not bring any immediate relief.

In fact, I can tell you, and I see very few people have mentioned it, there is a problem we have now with the kidnapping, because up to this time—I have not seen the news tonight, but I would be very happy if this young girl who has been kidnapped has in fact now been freed. I do not know, but up to when I entered the Chamber this morning—*[Interruption]* Not as yet, I am reliably informed by the hon. Member for Chaguanas. Again what it is showing is that criminals are not in fear.

I am going to deal with issues. When one is fighting crime—I have spent nine years of my life working with persons and listening to them and seeing it implemented as to how one goes about fighting crime. Again, I say the three pillars, crime prevention, the most important, crime detection and criminal prosecution.

I have spoken over the years when I was a criminal prosecutor and quite recently with members from the Forensic Science Centre and they gave me a very interesting concept in crime prevention that I just want to share with the hon. Member for San Fernando East. In crime prevention, if there is a very comprehensive aspect of crime detection, it would assist in removing those gangs or persons who are criminally minded who, in fact, commit the crime.

So by having a comprehensive system of detecting them, you are able to remove those criminal cellblocks, so to speak, and that in fact reduces or prevents crime. That is where, hon. Member for San Fernando East, the Forensic Science Centre comes into play: Right now our Police Service depends on witness statements and information through Crime Stoppers, the various programmes that are available, but the reality is we have to move forward. Fighting crime means that we recognize that criminals are not operating as they did 25 years ago. They are looking at television, they are able to bring in certain equipment, unfortunately. There are now persons who are technologically advanced and we have to make sure that we can meet them and that we can detect them using even better equipment than they are in possession of.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to make a point when I say that when something is written it may sound good, but without implementation it is nothing more than idea. It is not delivery. One of the things mentioned in the budget on page 32 is that in addition to 30 vehicles which were recently acquired they are securing 74 special vehicles for the Police Service. Through you again, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to bring to the attention of the hon. Prime Minister and Member for San Fernando East, what is happening right now as we speak in the St. Margaret's Police Station which is in my constituency of Pointe-a-Pierre.

Apparently police stations are graded and based on the grade given to this police station, very nice building, the UNC really provided a very nice building that can work. It was given, I think it is a grade C. I may be wrong on the grade, but I am told it is not one of the high scale in terms of grading. What is happening right now, that particular police station, which of course sees about all those residents in the St. Margaret's area and criminal activity in that area, it opens, or rather I should say it closes at 9.30 p.m. So that station is now closed, and it reopens at 5.30 a.m. There is no car assigned to that police station. Criminal activity, statistics show, normally takes place between 10 p.m. and 4 a.m.

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, bearing in mind that criminal activity would most likely be taking place between 10.00 p.m. and 4.00 a.m., it means that at the St. Margarets' police station there is no car and no personnel. The simple point I am making is that stating that more vehicles will be given, that is 74 more vehicles, but without determining which stations need it and that it is properly distributed, it means that we will not have effective crime fighting taking place in this country.

Mr. Speaker, much has been said about the rehabilitation of offenders and I know the hon. Member, my colleague, the Member for Princes Town, spoke about the rehabilitation process and what is needed. Again, I just want to make the point as I am now going to be winding up in terms of my contribution, through you, Mr. Speaker, to the hon. Prime Minister, on our books we have many laws dealing with penal reform. There are laws that in fact have been laid in the Parliament and at the end of the day we have to recognize that a lot of time and effort was spent by qualified persons, state attorneys and others, putting this legislation together.

So, if the approach of looking at the laws, no doubt we will have to revisit them, revise them, but instead of starting from scratch, the UNC has given a foundation upon which a proper and comprehensive crime plan can be built. Let

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us not just discard because it was the UNC or it came under the UNC regime. We have to take the politics out of the common evils that we fight, and that is why when persons on the other side—some of them not all—stood up and made some of the worst attacks on Members on this side, saying sometimes the most horrible things, it just showed me that they were not—not all of them—really serious about performing their role as Members who are in government. The assurance I give is that myself and my colleagues are very committed to our role in being a responsible opposition. [*Desk thumping*].

There is a book called *The Law and You*. This book I want to recommend highly to those on the other side because it indicates the legislation that has been passed and the legislation that has been laid in Parliament, and it gives a good idea as to what laws presently exist, and I just want to indicate, for example, I agree that no laws—in fact, I will send a copy.

What I can say, Mr. Speaker, is that take for example the Administration of Justice Act which, in fact, gave the State the right of appeal in a criminal matter. This is something which never existed before and something which we fought very hard to get, but recently in a Court of Appeal decision—and I am sure the hon. Member for La Brea will be familiar with it and also my colleague for Princes Town—the Court of Appeal ruled that a special majority would have been needed to pass that particular legislation and as a result the State does not have the right of Appeal.

What I am saying is, Mr. Speaker, with the greatest respect, the UNC had a very comprehensive and aggressive legislative agenda and certainly put a wonderful legal framework, but nobody is perfect, and what must be done now is we must revisit those laws, we must revise them. Stiffer penalties will not be enough. We have proven that. Sometimes you are right; sometimes we are right. But I am not looking at who is to blame.

What I am saying is that merely stating—which this budget does, it talks about stiffening laws—that we are going to stiffen the penalties, rather, is not enough, because the criminal does not think about what is going to happen to him when he is convicted. It does not act as a deterrent in this country. That is the reality. What we have to do is improve the Magistrates' Courts. I do not have to say more because the honourable Chief Justice of this country in his address at the opening of the law term went into detail, and I know that I am winding up, I just want to end on this note through you, Mr. Speaker, to the hon. Prime Minister.

10.30 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, take for example, what is written in this budget. The hon. Member is not a connoisseur or an expert in all fields, so he depends on advice, but written in the budget, to deal with kidnapping, which is something that affects all of us and worries us, is the following:

“Mr. Speaker, this legislation will, among other things, criminalize the demand and payment of ransom by any person or entity for the safe return of any person who has been kidnapped...”

And it goes on to say “prohibiting bail” and so on. The way this is written, hon. Prime Minister, is that when you say you are going to criminalize the demand and payment of ransom, then what is being suggested is that, one, there is—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Manning: When the budget speech was actually delivered, the question of payment was removed from it; it is just “demand for”.

Miss G. Lucky: But it would not change the point, because I think the person would then recognize that payment was suggesting that if a victim’s family had paid, it would mean that they would be wrong. [*Interruption*] Through you, Mr. Speaker, I am saying that they recognized that there was a problem, but, hon. Prime Minister and Member for San Fernando East, there is still a further point, kidnapping is already an offence in this country. I do not doubt that, like England which also had it as a common law offence, we too must criminalize it statutorily. That is the critical word, “statutorily”, because then we can, through our sentencing, make the distinction between kidnapping, let us say a child—you know when parents get divorced or separated, a parent feels he/she wants greater custodial rights and kidnap for ransom—that is where you make your categorizations.

Secondly, with respect to the fact you are suggesting that no bail will be granted, these are things one has to be careful of because, again, you would need a constitutional majority but, more than that, it really impacts on the issue of bail. I just want to say concerning the issue of bail, I know the hon. Member—[*Interruption*]*—it is not to deal, with the greatest respect, hon. Prime Minister, with circumscribing the jurisdiction of the judge; it is just that one of the things we had indicated is that the whole bail system in this country has to be addressed. There is a fundamental difference between what is written in the law and what operates.*

The Bail Act provides for taking money for bail and if anybody goes with money and says, “Well, I will give money,” they do not accept it. Yet still there is a section that makes a provision that deals with forfeiture of money and if there is

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forfeiture of money, it suggests that you give money. At the end of the day, the point is well made. The point is simply that when we are dealing with crime or any other thing, we have to remember there is no delivery unless there can be implementation.

We have given ideas. The hon. Member for San Fernando East has indicated that he is willing, not only to listen but to seek to assist. What we on this side are saying is that we are willing to give that assistance. I can only hope, Mr. Speaker, that the hon. Member for San Fernando East will take serious account of what my colleagues and I have said in giving constructive criticism; whether the honourable thing will be done at the end of the day is left to be seen.

I thank you.

The Prime Minister and Minister of Finance (Hon. Patrick Manning): Mr. Speaker, this is the first opportunity that I have had to present a budget on behalf of my colleagues on this side to this honourable House. I would like to thank all those Members of this Parliament who contributed in this budget debate, which I would say was of a relatively high standard.

Indeed, Mr. Speaker, I have been in this Parliament for quite some time now and I have reached the stage where I look forward to hearing a good speech no matter where it comes from. Even if I am the subject of the attack, the professionalism of the Member of Parliament always impresses me.

I congratulate my colleagues on this side who I think did very well in the debate and on the other side I would like to reiterate that I thought that the contributions were generally of a high standard, without wanting to be discourteous to anybody. There are three contributions on that side to which I would like to make reference; the first is the contribution from the hon. Member for St. Augustine. He brought to the debate a certain intellectual content for which I would like to congratulate him. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, he was, in the not too distant past, the Governor of the Central Bank and I could not help but feel, while he was talking, that something must have gone wrong for him to be Governor of the Central Bank a few days ago and now to be Opposition Front Bencher. I would just like to place on the record what I said to him on the occasion of the completion of his term of office, that the Government had nothing against him, that we were prepared to assist him in serving this country in any appropriate capacity, however, we had a candidate for Governor of the Central Bank. We had nothing against him. I would like to tell him that the offer that was made then remains open today. [*Interruption*] I am not soliciting; I do not have to; I always have the option of silence; I choose not to

exercise that option. I just do not see the Member for St. Augustine spending the next five years as an Opposition Member of Parliament; I just do not see that, but it is not for me, it is for him.

The second contribution, to which I would like to make reference, is the contribution of the Member for Couva south. [*Interruption*] Yes, we have a way of describing him as poison. He has a particular brand of venom that always makes debate in this House quite interesting but, on this occasion, he brought to the debate a certain level of generosity, which I must say is uncharacteristic, but it merely seems to suggest that over the last 10 years as he has put it, in the interregnum, something must have happened. I think he has matured considerably and, therefore, it is with some pleasure that I welcome him back to this honourable House.

The third contribution to which I would make reference and where I got a real surprise, Mr. Speaker, was the contribution of the Member for Naparima. [*Desk thumping*] It might well have been that he spoke extensively on the social sector, an area in which I have a special interest, but I was very impressed with the facility with which he was able to treat with the issues involved in the social sector and I would like to encourage him to continue to do his work. He is going to find that he runs afoul of us on this side, from time to time, but whatever it is, that is the cut and thrust of a political existence.

We wish to assure him and all the Members opposite that whenever we make comments here, nothing that we say must be taken personally. We are professional politicians and we try to act, at all times, in a professional manner and, therefore, we are not really personal in the utterances that we make; we try to avoid that. Even if, from time to time, we may cross the line, then let us treat it as a temporary aberration; it is not our intention at all to make that a feature of our discourse. Like I said, Mr. Speaker, there were other persons on the other side, whose contributions were very good.

A particularly bad contribution, however, came from the Member for Fyzabad. I was disappointed because I know that the hon. Member for Fyzabad is capable of contributions that are much, much better than the one to which this House was subjected today, choosing, as he did, to carry on the foolishness that took place in the election campaign, in some quarters, importing some of those inconsistencies and improprieties into the Parliament itself and demonstrating the worst side of a political existence, by seeking to exploit the issue of race for narrow, partisan political ends. [*Desk thumping*]

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Mr. Speaker, that is not a joke, because the biggest problem that this country faces today is the issue of race relations. Whenever we look around the world we can see examples of what happens in countries where differences exist among the people and the people have not succeeded in managing those differences well. When that happens, then it can lead, in the extreme, to conflict as, indeed, it has led to in countries like Cyprus and Northern Ireland, even if it may not be the issue of race. Therefore, the issue of race is nothing with which we must play in this country. [*Desk thumping*] Do not play with it. That is why we set up the Centre for Ethnic Studies and, as the Member for Laventille East/Morvant said quite clearly, while the Member for Fyzabad was making a contribution on race relations and talking about the work of that centre, he did not read the report, because had he read the report that emanated from the two distinguished sons of the soil, Prof. John Le Guerre and Prof. Selwyn Ryan, he would not have brought the perspective that he brought to bear on the debate that took place in this Parliament today. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, it is not a joke. This is the year 2002; we say that we want to make Trinidad and Tobago a developed country by the year 2020. With all the economic prosperity that we may see at hand; with all the success that we may very well enjoy in terms of our physical and economic development of the country, all of that will mean nothing and go to naught, if we are unable to manage race relations in this country. We also know that whenever the country—well, let me not go into the details of that—but we know that there are many similarities that exist between the people of difference races and the problems emerge mainly at election time. It is the politicians, more than anybody else, who are responsible for exacerbating this issue of race and perpetuating divisions in the society [*Desk thumping*] which, at the end of the day, will not redound to the credit of any of us.

It makes no sense if we can do very well economically and for ourselves and our families we can do well, but we cannot live in our own society because we have ethnic tensions that prevent us from doing so comfortably. Thus, I want to warn the Member for Fyzabad, I am charitable on this occasion, but the next occasion on which this happens I will not be as charitable to the hon. Member. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, I agree entirely and the Member for Oropouche sailed very close to the wind. He sailed very close to the wind and I do not want to deal with him this evening. He is my constituent and, therefore, I will deal with him in San Fernando East. [*Interruption*] I will treat him as a constituent; I will call him and

talk to him; he is a constituent. *[Interruption]* I have an office yes, but I will even go and look for him, because I do not like to see young people make the mistake that I think he was heading to make today; he sailed close to the wind, but let the milk of human kindness remain. I just want to warn him, please.

Mr. Speaker, one of the things that we have to consider as we modernize our education system, beginning this year, and I make reference to the contribution of the Member for Siparia, is that we are going to have to put race relations squarely on the curriculum of our primary and secondary schools; we have to put it, because for too long the thing has been swept under the carpet. There has been a pretence that it does not exist; it exists; it is very real and the society is reaching the stage now where we have to come to terms with this problem and if we do not come to terms with it, it threatens to engulf all of us.

I have a group you know. There is a group of four of us, two of us of African descent and two of East Indian descent and we have decided to meet to discuss, in a frank and open manner, the question of race relations; that is why we meet. Of course, we do it over a beverage.

Mr. Ramnath: I am sure you excluded most of them. *[Laughter]* *[Crosstalk]*

Hon. P. Manning: We have something to eat at the time we meet. But the reason why we meet and the reason I get involved in it is because I wish, at all times, to understand the point of view of persons who may be physically different from myself and I try, at all times, to see myself, not as of this race or that, but as a politician representing all the people of Trinidad and Tobago. *[Desk thumping]* All the politicians in this Parliament and all the politicians in this country have to get to the stage where we all see ourselves in that way, because if that does not happen then we are going to be the purveyors of that particular brand of poison that threatens to destroy the society. *[Interruption]*

The Member for Pointe-a-Pierre made the suggestion on more occasions than one, and it is a suggestion that we welcome, that is, that we need to get together to talk on a number of issues. Mr. Speaker, with your kind permission—*[Interruption]*

Mr. Ramsaran: I appreciate your lecture, but I am a person who believes in this thing not being swept under the carpet, but coming out in the open. In your campaign you said something and I would like to know what you meant when you said, let us take back our country.

Hon. P. Manning: Mr. Speaker, not only that, and I am going to make reference to another one to which some reference is being made, let us take back our country from the UNC. It has nothing to do with race; it has to do with integrity; it has to do with moral and spiritual values [*Desk thumping*] that is what it has to do with; it has nothing to do with race. Everything you say, there are those in our society who will always see race in it.

Mr. Speaker, when I said that the mistake that we made between 1991—1995 was that we did not sufficiently look after our people, they got the impression that we are talking about PMM people. Who are my people? As Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago and as a politician in this country, my people are all the people of Trinidad and Tobago; all the people. When we say, as we have said in this budget, that we are going to cut personal income taxes by 5 percentage points, we never said that the beneficiaries are going to be people who supported the PNM; we never said that people who are going to be beneficiaries of that are persons of African, Chinese or East Indian descent; it is implemented for everybody and there are some of us—[*Interruption*] [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker: Order!

Mr. Sharma: It does not apply to housing.

Hon. P. Manning: Mr. Speaker, when they were speaking, I did not interfere with them. If I wanted to intervene I rose in my place and asked them to give way; look at them now.

Let us revisit the Crowne Plaza Accord. [*Interruption*] You see, because it was the Member for Couva North who appears to be a man who is not, today, comfortable with himself. I could not understand the contribution that he made in this budget debate; I could not understand it. For us, a response to the budget was an opportunity to demonstrate to the national community that we had the opportunity to govern the country; that is how we saw the budget; we spent a considerable amount of time preparing these budget responses. I could not help but feel that the Member for Couva North wrote that budget response on his way here on Monday morning; it was, as budget responses go—let me put it differently—I do not think that the hon. Member distinguished himself in his contribution, [*Desk thumping*] but let us revisit Crowne Plaza.

When the Crowne Plaza agreement was signed, do you remember what was happening when we left the hotel? When the media asked the Member for Couva North, “What happens if somebody violates the agreement, if somebody does not accept the agreement?” His comment was that that person will pay the ultimate

political price. Mr. Speaker, a truer word has never been spoken. [*Desk thumping*] In fact, I would like to now ask the hon. Member for Couva North, if he will now agree with me that, perhaps, it might have been much better if he, in accordance with the signature affixed to this document, had honoured the accord that was worked out at Crowne Plaza. Let him now sit, in his quieter moments, and consider whether he was right or whether he was wrong; it does not pay.

I still hope that the spirit of Crowne Plaza is alive, because in this document we gave certain commitments. One was the commitment to the establishment of two parliamentary committees: one to discuss the issue of foreign policy, the other to discuss the issue of energy policy. Mr. Speaker, Crowne Plaza or no Crowne Plaza, whether it was adhered to or whether it was not adhered to, it is the view of those of us on this side that that is something that we would like to introduce in this Parliament. Therefore, I make the offer, once again, to hon. Members opposite that, as we seek to take this country forward, I think the time has come, we on this side believe, for two Parliamentary committees to be established: one to discuss, on a continuing basis, foreign affairs of Trinidad and Tobago and the other to discuss energy policy. If we had one discussing energy policy, some of the comments made today by the Member for Couva South would not have been made. He would have been much better informed than he appears to be, but we will come to that.

I take it one step further. The Crowne Plaza Accord calls, at page one article six, for consensus building at the parliamentary level, but not at the Executive level; that is to say, to establish mechanisms to achieve collaboration and cooperation on legislative matters and other parliamentary business. This is something that the Government wishes to implement; not that we have to. We have enough numbers on this side not to have to do any such thing, but that is not the point. What we are looking for is a continuing evolution of the political processes in Trinidad and Tobago and the processes of governance and, therefore, we feel that the time has come where this whole question of winner take all must be the subject of some modification and we are prepared to circumscribe our own authority, given to us by the people of Trinidad and Tobago, by offering discussions with the Opposition and seeking to forge consensus-building at the level of Parliament.

We would have tried it in this budget had we not been running in such a short timeframe but next year's budget, I can tell the Opposition from now, that we will be seeking discussions with them, well in advance of the budget, so that we can seek to incorporate in the budget whatever ideas the Opposition feels it might

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wish to bring to bear on the development of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] You cannot have it any better than that. This is 2002 fiscal 2003 and the paradigms of the past must now change. Times have changed; the people of this country expect no less.

Mr. Speaker, in the constituency of Couva North in the general election in the village of Felicity, which is the UNC heartland, the PNM won a polling division. [*Desk thumping*] Understand what these things are saying, that the people are getting fed up of a certain brand of politics. The people felt that for nine months this Parliament had not met; for nine months we were deprived of the contributions of hon. Members opposite. This country breathed a sigh of relief, it exhaled on October 07, 2002; the country exhaled. People in this country feel much lighter today; within two weeks, not only have we had a decisive result in an election campaign, but the Parliament has met, we have elected a Speaker, a budget has been presented and we are now debating it; in two weeks. It is not yet three weeks; significant advancement.

The people of Trinidad and Tobago expect a certain standard from us and it is for us to decide whether we are prepared to live up to it or whether we will disappoint our people for yet another time and when I say “our people” I mean all the people of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

Those of us who have a responsibility for directing the affairs at the leadership level of the PNM, have often asked ourselves, why is it that the PNM has been so successful over its 46-year history; what is it that has led to that and a strong case could be made out to suggest that the strength of the PNM really lies, one, in the party structure and, two, in the party’s internal processes.

We have a party group at the basic unit of the party, representatives of the party group form an Executive of the party group and officers; three representatives go to the constituency group; three representatives of the constituency group sit on the General Council from the party group and all other units; you have the youth link, the women’s league, the legislative group and so on and that, in its highest incarnation, at the level of the annual convention, it is also a body that is representative and made up of people from all over the country.

Within the party itself there are open and frank discussions and many people who were not members of the PNM, and who have subsequently joined, are always amazed at what they see in terms of the way discussions take place as opposed to what they were led to believe; always surprised at it. That is why you see leaders of the PNM always have available to them the views of a wide cross-section,

because the people who form membership of the PNM are from all walks of life, of different cultural and social backgrounds, of different geographic origins within Trinidad and Tobago. You have all of that available to you in the PNM.

Mr. Speaker, I have taken the time to explain to this Parliament, through you, because I wanted to say to this Parliament that we fully recognized that no political party can operate without a vision for the country for which it exists and as we sought to develop a vision for Trinidad and Tobago, not only did we utilize the internal processes of the party, as indeed we did, but we began by setting up a committee chaired by the very distinguished Dr. Cuthbert Joseph and involving, at the time, some of the Members of Parliament who were in Opposition.

They spoke and they did a draft document, a vision document which was the subject of comment by people outside the PNM and also inside. At the end of the day, we ended up with a draft document which was circulated far and wide within the party. It was discussed within the party; it was modified based on contributions that were made at all levels of the PNM; the most humble person, the average party member had a chance to discuss it in his party group and we presented a document to a special convention of the PNM on the occasion of the 44th Anniversary of the founding of the party; the date was 23 January, 2000.

Mr. Speaker, there were discussions taking place there. We modified the document based on the discussions that took place on that day. We circulated a modified document to the party again and we met on the 30th of April, 2000 and we adopted the document as the party's vision. It was finally published on the 24th September, 2000, which was the 44th Anniversary of the PNM in Trinidad. It took us three and one half years to arrive at a vision that the PNM has for the country and the document is entitled "*Positioning Trinidad and Tobago for the Global Age 2000—2020*".

It is necessary to advise this Parliament of the steps that we took to arrive at this position, because it has become very fashionable, especially by people who choose not to inform themselves, when they wish to criticize the PNM and anything that the PNM did, especially budget presentations, that the presentation lacks vision. Our vision is clear: to make Trinidad and Tobago a developed country in the shortest possible time [*Desk thumping*] and, certainly, by the year 2020. The vision is clear and those who say that the budget that was read in this honourable House lacked vision, are persons who choose to continue to bury their heads in the sand.

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In the budget statement itself, on the very first page, it is on the first page, and it goes like this:

“This Budget is settled in the vision of making Trinidad and Tobago a developed country in the shortest possible time and, certainly, by the year 2020.”

And it goes on to the next page to paint a picture of the Trinidad and Tobago that we conceive in the year 2020; a very clear vision outlining that vision and locating this year’s budget squarely into the vision division that we set for ourselves for Trinidad and Tobago. It is just not true to say that the budget lacks vision and it has been said inside this House and outside.

The second issue that I would like to address is the view expressed by some, the reservations expressed by some on the Government’s projections for revenues in fiscal year 2003. May I say, that those who have fears, fears about the revenue position are well-founded. Indeed, the biggest challenge that is going to face us in this fiscal year is to ensure that we maximize the revenues that are available to us, while keeping a very tight rein on expenditure. But we have already demonstrated that we are up to that task when, at the beginning of January this year, the Dhanayshar Mahabir Committee identified a shortfall over the next nine months of revenue, a gap of \$1,769 million. The task that faced us was to contain expenditure in line with revenue to keep our deficit, if deficit is the way it turned out, to within 1 per cent of GDP.

Mr. Speaker, it is a major achievement, and one of which we are very proud, that we were able to turn a surplus at the end of September, the end of fiscal year 2002, a surplus of \$68.9 million, and so it is the same challenge that faces us this year. We want to give the assurance to the national community that we possess the ability to properly manage the country’s affairs. We give the assurance that we will do so with integrity. We will maintain transparency in the conduct of the people’s business and we are confident that while, at this time, we project a deficit of \$623 million, \$600 million of which is a one-time payment to public servants, we are confident that at the end of the year, not only would we have contained that expenditure, but the financial situation may be significantly better than the 1 per cent of GDP that we have planned, less than 1 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, the oil price outlook: You must remember that the international community is anticipating the war between the United States and Iraq. What that is doing is adding between \$5 and \$6 a barrel to the oil price and so while we used \$22 a barrel as the price for Galeota mix, that is a very conservative price, very

conservative indeed. Indeed, it may well be at the end of the day that the oil price is somewhat higher, giving us a slightly better revenue position. Incidentally, as the oil price goes up, so it affects gas prices, so we are going to benefit all around if that happens. In the worst possible scenario—and your crystal ball is as good as mine—I do not know what is going to happen, the war could take place; we do not know. Whatever it is, we have taken a very conservative view of the oil and gas revenues of the country.

In the same way, we have taken a conservative view on our tax and vat collections, because we recognize that there is some room for improvement in this matter and we are going to be taking special steps this year to ensure a greater measure of compliance, in terms of tax and VAT collections, which will have the effect of enhancing our revenues and putting us in a much better position to bring expenditure in line with revenue.

Mr. Speaker, we have expressed fears and some Members opposite in their contributions have expressed fear about this whole question of off-budget items, and they are quite justified in expressing reservations about it. Remember what happened in the last three months of last year. The net increase in debt or the net increase in the contingent liability based on the issuing of Letters of Comfort, was some \$1,157 million; that is a lot of money, in three months. It would have been desirable, if we did not go the route of Letters of Comfort, but it is not possible for us to just suddenly back out of it; our approach is to wind it down.

The net increase in the public debt, based on Letters of Comfort, over the nine-month period January to September this year, is \$469 million. The figure they said we will never give them, the figure is \$469 million in nine months, as opposed to \$1.57 million in three months. We do not like that approach and we are going to back it up, because it comes under the country's books eventually.

The development programme, therefore, and the implementation of the development programme will be done, not purely on the basis of \$907 million allocated in the Public Sector Investment Programme, the development programme, but there is going to be a development programme in the country that is also based on Letters of Comfort, albeit in a restricted sense, a more restricted level than the levels that we had become accustomed to last year. We are going to maintain prudence in the way we conduct our business, but we are going to ensure that there is a level of activity in the country that ensures we retain a certain level of economic growth.

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I also want to draw to the attention of hon. Members that the Urban Development Corporation of Trinidad and Tobago (UDEcOTT) is going to have a programme of development that will not be insignificant. Over the years, the 1970s, 1980s, 1990s, this country carefully amassed very valuable pieces of real estate in Port of Spain, Richmond Street has a very consolidated site, and there are other sites; UDEcOTT has now been able to confirm that on the basis of a contract from the Government to utilize office space, the banks will lend the money to UDEcOTT to build on lands owned by the State and handed over to UDEcOTT. The banks are prepared to lend the money without any Government guarantees and without any Letters of Comfort. The projects can stand on their own. [*Desk thumping*]

Therefore, we are going to have a whole development programme that is based on that, because there is quite a bit. In fact, just before the election, UDEcOTT made a 20-minute film, which I would like to commend to all Members of Parliament—we can show it to you, if you want—and you would see the amount of construction. In fact, next week they should be going out for bids on the Customs building and very shortly they will go out for bids on the Treasury building, both of them, of course, coming under revenue authority. The revenue authority is a mechanism by which we improve the efficiency of the tax and VAT collection levels, and there are other buildings in the development. In fact, it is a 10-year development programme, not just in Port of Spain, but also San Fernando and we are going to see a significant amount of it entered into the next fiscal year 2003.

So the fears that have been expressed about the level of activity and, therefore, the level of economic growth in the country, are fears that are not very well founded and we would like to put the minds of hon. Members to rest on this matter.

Mr. Speaker, in the late 1970s, two leaders came to power; one in the United Kingdom and one in the United States—Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan. Both of them espoused an economic policy which suggested that the private sector must be responsible, really, for the economic activity in a state and as that activity takes place the economy expands, so there is an expansion opportunity, people are employed and as people are employed they spend and as they spend the wealth trickles down to people at the base of society. It is called the trickle-down theory.

We are now—[*Interruption*—would you like me to wind up? [*Interruption*]
Mr. Speaker, we are now in a position to say to you and to this House and to this

country that the trickle down theory does not work. Trinidad and Tobago is a classic example of the trickle down theory not working, because while there has been economic expansion for the last nine years—I think hon. Members opposite were boasting about that and taking some credit for it, as I suppose they must—while they were doing that, in the 2000 development report of the United Nations, it indicates that 40 per cent of the people of Trinidad and Tobago live below the poverty line; 40 per cent.

Mr. Ramsaran: Will you give way Member? Could you present that document? I have the 2000 report here and there is nothing about that; that is not true at all. As a matter of fact, if you want to have a copy of the document, I will give it to you. Just cite it for us.

Hon. P. Manning: I do not have my copy here, but even if they were right, that it was not 40 per cent, the one thing that I am sure—*[Interruption]* we would all agree on is that it is not insignificant; it is a large number; it is a large number. *[Interruption]* We could want to make political marks if we want you know, but those of us whose responsibility it is to govern the country have to deal with truth and not politics. It is truth we are trying to deal with. *[Desk thumping]*

Mr. Speaker, I am now convinced and so are my colleagues, that the trickle down theory does not work and, therefore, the answer to the problem of poverty eradication in the country is a more direct intervention by the State in the lives of those who find themselves in circumstances of adversity; no question about it; more direct intervention. That is what we sought to do. In intervening more directly, there are two sides to it. There are some programmes that are designed purely to bring relief and there are other programmes, which not only bring relief, but have a developmental side attached to them; they are of two kinds.

All this talk about dependency syndrome and so on. I heard all of that talk in 1986; I was around. That is the National Alliance For Reconstruction talk and that is the talk that was used to cut out many of the social programmes and to put the people in problem. They never had it so hard as they had it between 1986 and 1991; that is the reality. Those who say are those who live quite comfortably and those who make a lot of money and have two cars and who could send their children to school in the United States and who could travel every two weeks to go on holidays to see their children based there. Mr. Speaker, you know that kind of thing? It is those who live that lifestyle who talk that kind of foolishness.

In 1996, when I was being vilified all over Trinidad and Tobago—hon. Members opposite were having a field day—I was walking through this country

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and as I walked I listened. I heard it loud and clear; as well as you thought you did in government you did not spend enough time being with us. You see, Mr. Speaker, I said it again; and when I say “us” I mean all the people of Trinidad and Tobago not PNM people. Do you understand? *[Interruption]* That is what people were saying.

Therefore, we felt that we must intervene more directly in the situation that we met. When we came into office it was a situation that we considered unacceptable and we had to stabilize the social situation; we did it. Of the programmes that we have put in place, there are two of them that are direct hand-outs. One is the Public Assistance Programme, together with the old-age pension and the other, which is a form of public assistance, and the other one is the expanded SHARE programme, to which reference was made in the budget; not the original SHARE programme, the expanded SHARE programme. What we were contemplating was a food stamp programme, but when we looked at it we thought that that was too inefficient a method, it lent itself to too much corruption and, therefore, we tagged it onto the SHARE programme which we thought would be far more efficient.

Mr. Speaker, that apart, every other programme is a programme that has a developmental aspect attached. We do not care how we say it, they insist on calling it soup kitchen. As they call it soup kitchen, they delude themselves. We have said before that they are not soup kitchens, they are relief centres which we now call transformation and development centres, because the main objective is not to provide soup and bread. The soup and bread as we have said before, are merely inducements to bring people to the centre and when they come to the centre then they will meet somebody who has been trained—such people exist at the centre—who can talk with them and see how they can fit them into one programme or the next, of the many programmes run by the centre. And no matter how we say it, they insist on calling it soup kitchen.

Mr. Speaker, with your permission, I have a bag here *[Member displays bag]* containing products that have been made by people who have passed through the relief centres and who have formed themselves into a company for the purposes of production. *[Desk thumping]* This item *[Member displays item]* was made from banana peel, *[Desk thumping]* a product of the relief centres. *[Interruption]* It was made with straw, not with peel—I stand corrected—with straw. *[Desk thumping]*

[Member displays bottle]

This one is a gourmet sauce; it is a ketchup alternative and it is made from pumpkin and other ingredients. It was made by a company called South Port of Spain Cooperative Society. [*Desk thumping*] Persons who were attracted to the relief centres, in the first instance, by soup and bread, but who, having come to the centre, were spoken to and were the beneficiaries of some of the programmes at the centre, are today forming themselves into a cooperative and they are producing gourmet sauces, a ketchup alternative.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to make a present to you. I hope, of course, that you do not count me as a Greek bearing gifts. [*Member displays item*] This item is a botanical shampoo made from herbs, again, made by a company set up by people who passed through the relief centre and who learned their skills in the relief centre. [*Desk thumping*] They insist on saying soup kitchen, not understanding. At first I thought they were malicious, and while there might well be malice, not in this honourable House, of course—by definition, Members of this honourable House cannot be malicious—but by people on the outside—at first I thought it was that, but I realize now that it is a high level of ignorance.

Mr. Speaker, look at this one, another gourmet sauce [*Member displays bottle*] with a different composition, similar to that one. [*Member displays bottle*] This one is a no cholesterol ponche a crème and you can see what it is made from. [*Member displays bottle*] This one is mango chutney, all of them packaged for export, bar code and everything. [*Member displays bottle*] This one, Mr. Speaker, is bodi kuchela; kuchela made from bodi and it tastes good. All of these they learned to make in the relief centre and the persons left the relief centre, went outside and established a company and they are producing these things. [*Desk thumping*] [*Member displays trivet*] Of course, this also is made from banana straw, not peel.

Mr. Speaker, I thought it necessary to bring these items to this Parliament to once and for all put an end to the misinformation that the hon. Members opposite seem determined to put into the national community. The transformation and development centres are, by no means, hand out organizations, but very important instruments of social development and social transformation, as we seek to take people from a position of dependence to a position where they can fend for themselves and they can become productive citizens of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] You want to know who made the bag?

It is not just that, you name the programme and I will show you the developmental aspects of it. The CBEPEP programme that the Member for Couva

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South has made reference to, do you know what it does? It takes unemployed people, forms them into companies, sets them up with equipment and so on and gives them a one-year contract. They clean up the earth and landscape so that the environment is improved as a result. The Member for Couva South was very loud in his praise of what has happened in the housing estate in Couva; very loud in his praise. Just as I could have demonstrated it with the relief centres, just as I could demonstrate it with the CBEPEP programme, I am in a position to demonstrate every other social intervention that the PNM has made from January to now; in every one there is a developmental aspect. [*Desk thumping*]

Therefore, all this talk about dependency syndrome is nothing more than a political strategy designed to get the PNM to move off of a course which they know will have political successes and, in fact, which, if we were to identify any single incident that might have been responsible for it, was responsible for 50,000 more votes to the PNM. [*Desk thumping*]

Yet, the question of equity arises and quite properly so. Hon. Members opposite have raised the question of the equitable availability of these programmes to the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago and the point is well taken. What hon. Members may not be aware of is that earlier this year the Cabinet took six decisions, the first one was to employ, on contract, 39 persons as cultural development assistants; 39 persons as youth assistants; 39 persons as sport assistants—I may not be using the correct terms, but outside the public service it is youth, sport, culture, community development, environmental assistance and there is one more, social services.

Hon. Members: Were they advertised?

Hon. P. Manning: These persons, 39 of them with a geographic spread all over Trinidad and Tobago—and we are doubling up. In fact, parts of the country which have a large aerial extent and where the population is relatively sparse, the responsibility of those persons is to ensure that our programmes in the respective sector reach every part of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

So, Mr. Speaker, we are not unmindful of the concerns that have been expressed by hon. Members opposite and concerns that have been expressed outside. We are making an effort. It is possible that if it does not work as well as we would like it to, if it does not work well enough, we will modify it and do something else, but we are making an effort. It is a good start and a tangible demonstration to all citizens of Trinidad and Tobago that when we say we care we do not just care about some, we care about all. Our policy is that if we say we are

a family, when we sit to eat at that table, there must be something for everybody; that is our policy [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, the Member for Couva North was particularly caustic in his condemnation of the PNM's position as it relates to the minimum wage, suggesting that we gave a commitment to pay a minimum wage this year and we did not do that. If you look at our manifesto you will see a one-year programme in it. Nowhere in the one-year programme did we commit ourselves to pay a \$10 minimum wage in fiscal 2002/2003. Therefore, the budget speech quite correctly said that the \$10 minimum wage we will implement over a five-year period. The Minister of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development has been working for some time on this matter and very shortly the Cabinet is going to be approached with a proposal to increase the minimum wage. Mr. Speaker, I think that I will have the support of my colleagues if I say to you that effective January 01, 2003, the minimum wage in Trinidad and Tobago will go to \$8 an hour. [*Desk thumping*]

I am not able, really, to answer every issue that has been raised, but I just want to answer a couple more.

11.30 p.m.

The Member for Siparia indicated that in the documentation there is no Head 19, well that is very simple. The budget for Trinidad comprises several parts, some are direct charges on the Consolidated Fund and Head 19 is one such thing where it is debt service. You do not have to appropriate that, that is a direct charge and, therefore, the Bill that is before the House comprises only the moneys that have to be appropriated from the Consolidated Fund. It does not include Head 19 because Head 19 is a direct charge, so it will not form part of the Bill. A very simple explanation, which I am sure, the Member will understand.

I will leave education matters for the Minister of Education in the Senate, but suffice it to say that all of us adopted the same policy document which was the one that was presented and adopted by the PNM in 1993—The Ten-year Plan 1993—and, therefore, we started to implement it and they continued it because they adopted the same plan. The regret, of course, is that they did not do much in their time and the little that they did, Mr. Speaker, they almost made a big mess of the education system which we are now spending some time to correct, and if it appears that we are continuing the policies that they were implementing, it is merely because they were continuing the policies that we were implementing. [*Desk thumping*]

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Talk about the \$1,100 million transferred to the Prime Minister's Office and that the Ministry of Social Development has been emasculated. I do not know what her concept of the Ministry of Social Development is, but in our concept the Ministry of Social Development is the social sector equivalent of the Ministry of Planning and Development. It is responsible for social planning and it is also responsible for the implementation of the major projects that were planned. The method is that the Ministry of Social Development—and it deals really with a problem of planners; planners will always have the problem of planning, planning and never getting to implement anything. We sought to change that with the Ministry of Social Development to plan and implement, and when their products are off and running, it goes to the Prime Minister's Office, Social Services Delivery whose responsibility it is to make all programmes efficient. That is why the moneys are allocated in that way. There is no sinister reason for it.

Mr. Speaker, the Member for Couva South, towards the close of his contribution began to address the energy sector. Again, we do not want to do so at length, that is a whole debate by itself and we are quite capable of doing that. We have in our ranks a number of persons whose background is the oil industry and who are geologists. We have four geologists; the Member for Ortoire/Mayaro, the Member for Diego Martin West, the Member for Port of Spain South and yours truly.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to tell the Member for Couva South that you cannot export LNG to Grenada, St. Vincent and St. Lucia. The reason is that the demand is too small to justify the outlay in the reclassification plant as it is required to do. It is simple and, therefore, when he talks about LNG to the region, it just does not make sense. As you go up the islands, Jamaica has a large enough demand for an LNG terminal so you could see one there, and he talks about a gas pipeline.

Mr. Speaker, he makes the point himself that the demand is low in some of the islands, but what he forgets is that there are two islands in the Caribbean not too far from here; one is Martinique and the other is Guadeloupe and both those islands together have a demand for natural gas of between 80—100 million cubic feet a day and it is that market that is able to justify the pipeline from Trinidad and Tobago, and that is why those islands are the strength and we service the smaller CARICOM territories by—and we will have to see the economic justification, there are some 4,000,000 cubic feet a day and that kind of thing.

In terms of Tobago at Cove Point, and again I think an attempt was made to deceive the people of Tobago. At Cove Point, what we intend to do is to put natural gas in the Industrial Estate at Cove Point. An Industrial Estate at Cove

Point that has natural gas—since it has natural gas at Cove Point, and because Tobago is to the north of Trinidad and closer to the territories of the Caribbean to export natural gas, Cove Point appears to us to be an ideal location. In addition to an industrial estate, also to have a terminal that can export natural gas in compressed form, CNG to some of the territories in the Caribbean. So it is all very logical.

Mr. Speaker, when this debate is over, we have already laid in this Parliament and we will debate the Police Service Legislation. That is a legislation that has developed over a period of time and we already have the commitment of hon. Members opposite of their support. In fact, we gave a commitment before the 2000 Election that had we lost the election we would have supported the legislation. That commitment was given and it is a proper way to start a Parliament like this in these circumstances. The politicians have a credibility problem with the population and they have to understand that we have to find ways of conducting our business that will return the confidence of the people in us and in the profession of which some of us form a very proud part. That would be a very good way to start.

I can only hope that when that is over, we can get together to discuss other service commissions: Teaching Service Commission, Public Service Commission and begin to modernize our system even in advance of the wider exercise on public service reform.

So, Mr. Speaker, I think that we are coming to the end of a very historic budget debate. I would like to thank Members once again for the support and the contributions they had made. You would notice that in this budget, at no stage did the Minister of Finance say; I will do this and I will do that. It represents a radical departure from the past. The Minister of Finance recognizes that when he speaks, he does not speak in his own right and he is not a law unto himself, and he is speaking on behalf of the Government of which he is a proud part. [*Desk thumping*] The budget that has been presented, Mr. Speaker, is not the budget of the Minister of Finance; it is the budget of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank hon. Members for their contribution, for their patience, and forbearance as we discussed this budget over the last two days, and I can only hope that when this budget is passed I certainly will be able to give the assurance that the Government will work assiduously to implement all the provisions of this budget for the benefit of all the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Speaker, I beg to move.

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Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a second time.

Mr. Speaker: The House will now resolve itself into Finance Committee, and in accordance with Standing Order 64(1), I now ask all strangers to leave the Chamber during the deliberations of the Finance Committee.

Bill and Estimates committed to Finance Committee.

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

12.13 a.m.: *House resumed after Finance Committee.*

Bill committed to a committee of the whole House.

House in committee.

Schedule ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 1 to 3 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 Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley): Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this House do now adjourn to Friday, November 08 at 1.30 p.m.

Hon. Member: What would we be dealing with?

Hon. K. Valley: Provisional Collection of Taxes Order.

Question put and agreed to.

House adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 12.15 a.m.