

*Leave of Absence**Monday, January 27, 2003***HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES***Monday, January 27, 2003*

The House met at 1.30 p.m.

PRAYERS[MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *in the Chair*]**LEAVE OF ABSENCE**

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Members, the Member for Arima (Hon. Penelope Beckles) has asked to be excused from today's sitting. The leave which she seeks is granted.

**FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT
PRESENTATION**

The Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley): I wish to present the First Report of the 2002—2003 session of the Finance Committee of the House of Representatives of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, on the proposals for the expenditure from the public revenue which were not included in the annual estimates, 2002.

You would note that there are no questions on the Order Paper.

**DEFINITE URGENT MATTER
(LEAVE)****Weapons of Mass Destruction
(Threat of Use)**

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Members, I have received a request from the hon. Member for Caroni East to move the Adjournment of the House on a definite matter of urgent, public importance.

Mr. Ganga Singh (Caroni East): Mr. Deputy Speaker, in accordance with Standing Order 12 of the House of Representatives, I hereby seek your leave to move the Adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing the following matter of urgent, public importance, namely the threat of the use of biological and chemical weapons of mass destruction against the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

The matter is definite since it relates to the specific existence of the manufacture and possession of chemical and biological weapons, by a radical organization as carried in pages 1 and 3 of the *Express* dated Sunday, January 26, 2003. The matter is urgent having regard to their plans to use chemical and biological weapons in their possession, "if provoked".

In the *Daily Express* of January 26, page 3, the threat is very clear. It states:

Definite Urgent Matter
[HON. G. SINGH]

Monday, January 27, 2003

“With our weapons we are going to reach you. We are going to reach you where you sleep. We will reach you where you take your baths. We will reach you where you take your meals and have your drinks. Even a glass of water you hold in your hand to drink may not be safe.”

The matter is of public importance since the presence of and the threat to use chemical and biological weapons represent a clear and present danger to the lives of our people and the safety and security of the nation.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Member, I have heard the matter which you have read and I am not satisfied that it qualifies.

FINANCE (VARIATION OF APPROPRIATION) (2002) BILL

Bill to vary the appropriation of the sum the issue of which was authorized by the Appropriation Act, 2002; [*The Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister in the Ministry of Finance*] read the first time.

Motion made, That the next stage be taken at a later stage of the proceedings.
[*Hon. K. Valley*]

Question put and agreed to.

FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT

The Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley): Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Finance Committee of the House of Representatives met on Friday, January 24, 2003 and agreed on a number of proposals relating to the 2002 accounts. These proposals included the write-off of overpayments of salary and pensions; losses on government’s property and outstanding loans in accountable advances in the sum of \$1,461,551.20. The committee also approved the variation of the 2002 appropriation in the sum of \$858,978,623 on a number of heads of expenditure.

During the meeting of the Finance Committee, Members raised various issues. Responses to these issues have been circulated to Members.

Today, we are seeing another bit of evidence of the parliamentary control of expenditure. When we look at the Constitution at sections 112—114, we see clearly, that the Constitution mandates that only expenditure approved by an Act of Parliament included in an Appropriation Bill, or in a Supplementary Appropriation Bill can be expended. While we are speaking about a variation of appropriation, we are talking about supplementary appropriation under certain heads of expenditure financed by decreases in other heads. Parliamentary approval is required for the increase in the heads which are financed by reduction

of other heads. We have had other evidence just recently with respect to the parliamentary control of expenditure.

Recently, we came to Parliament to increase the limits relating to borrowings—Chap.71:05 and the Treasury Bills Act. Members would know that last week we came to Parliament to seek approval for the increase in pensions from \$720 to \$1000 per month. Members may feel that we have been meeting regularly, lately. Another critical requirement is that the accounts of the country must be submitted for audit within four months of the end of the fiscal year. Given the fiscal year's end of September 30, the accounts must be submitted for audit by the end of January. We had to meet regularly to meet that deadline. It was critical that we dealt with the Old Age Pensions Act before coming with the Finance (Variation of Appropriation) (2002) Bill, since one could not ask for variation with respect to old age pension before parliamentary approval is obtained for the increase in the amounts. Making the point, quite simply, Parliament must approve expenditure whether by way of an Act or by appropriation or supplementary appropriation bill.

One would note that the most significant item of increase in the expenditure is an investment made to all institutions to the IMF. Members would remember the period in which Trinidad and Tobago was a borrower from the IMF. That is the period from 1989 onwards. Even before that, Members may recall the manner in which the Minister of Finance ended his 1988 contribution. He told us that silver and gold have we none, or as we know that we have had, had gone. By 1988, the little reserves we had at the IMF, the drawing rights were cashed in to assist in meeting the expenditure of the country.

This evening, for me, it is rather interesting that Trinidad and Tobago, from that position as a borrower to the IMF has been a significant investor to the IMF to the tune of \$562 million in the period 2001—2002. Of that amount, it was \$163.4 million in 2001 and \$411.6 million in 2002. Trinidad and Tobago, as a member of the IMF, has undertaken certain obligations. The IMF can make a call on the country if it needs resources for some other country. That is based on the fact of our external balances, our excellent reserves position. Quite simply, the IMF would make a call. The transaction, via the Central Bank, would issue promissory notes to the Central Bank in the amount of the drawings. Those funds would go to the IMF, at an interest rate, or on-lending to a third country that may be experiencing balance of payment difficulties.

At present, we have the sum of \$562 million invested in the IMF. Because of our traditional system of the cash basis of accounting, such an investment is

brought into the accounts as current expenditure. The same applies if the Government were to make a loan to Petrotrin. While there may be good reason to say that if the Government lends to a state enterprise it should be considered current expenditure, because if you do not do that, then, subsidies to state companies may turn out to be loans. One can see very clearly, that if one is making an investment in an international institution such as the IMF, obviously, that ought not to be considered a current expenditure.

I am happy to state that one of the few good things of the last administration is that they appeared to have recognized that. In 2002, they took the decision at Cabinet to review the financial management system. A committee was established and they decided that they needed assistance from the IDB's consultants to do some work. The consultants have now reported on the financial management reform project identification study. The report contains certain recommendations which need not detain us at this time. Reform is coming. The basic concept is to move government acting from a cash basis because funny things happen under this cash basis. If you are financing a project such as a school which costs \$50 million, that will last 30, 50 or 100 years. Because you are on a cash basis, if you are building a school in a particular year, the expenditure for that item is included in that one year. Such an expenditure would normally be amortized. Because of that, one gets involved in all types of creative accounting and balance sheets.

During the budget debate, the Member for Caroni Central could not understand why one would want to finance some items of the balance sheet. When one looks at the budget, failing to take into consideration the heavy capital expenditure projects that are financed and the cash basis of accounting which will show a budget as being in deficit, when in fact, if one were to apply proper accounting treatment, that would not be so. We want to make other changes to the financial management system that would take us to the modern day.

That investment of \$552 million accounts for 65 per cent of the increase in expenditure of \$858 million. It is very significant and ought not to be there in the first place, if proper accounting is used. The other 35 per cent of the increase, a sum of \$142.6 million deals with the petroleum subsidy. That allows the maintenance of the current gas prices. The 2002 budget was authored by the then government, the present Opposition. One wonders why this amount was not taken into the original budget consideration. We want to maintain a particular gas price. One expected that would have been estimated in the original.

You are aware of the Government's commitment with respect to old age pension which was effected. Since that was not provided in the budget of the

previous government—although they made the commitment for \$1,000 in the election campaign of 2000, they failed to make provision for it in the 2002 budget. There is a variation required to cover that expenditure under the relevant Head 45. That amount is \$107.2 million.

There are other small items. There is an amount of \$27.3 million, simply to bring into account drawdowns made under the FINCOR financing facility. That is related to the implementation of an integrated human resource information system. There is \$7 million for the Elections and Boundaries Commission, under Head 8, relating to the 2002 election. The other item considered by the Finance Committee is the write-off of overpayments of \$1,461,551. Of that amount, the sum of \$1,273,760.65 relates to the period prior to December 2001. Roughly, 85 per cent relates to the period before this Government took office. That is on the expenditure side.

Because there were savings under various heads we were able to finance that increase in expenditure without coming for an overall supplementary appropriation. Supplementary appropriations are required for certain heads but because there is sufficient reduction or under spending in other heads, there is no requirement to come for a supplementary appropriation. It is being done via a variation of appropriation. This savings resulted from the fact that the appropriation for public servants relating to budgeted increase in salaries was not used since negotiations are continuing. The fact that the Opposition did not come to Parliament saved us some money. Parliament was not operating for some time. The Members could not get their stipends until such time as they were sworn in. Because of that, there is a saving of \$17 million plus other things relating to Parliament.

There was another performance under the Public Sector Investment Programme (PSIP) which also assisted. When one looks at the legislation, there is saving from the different areas. This variation does not affect the budget outturn. As a matter of fact, savings on expenditure or under-performance on the expenditure side was \$1.6 billion. While the budget envisaged an expenditure of \$15,798.5 million, the actual expenditure was \$14 billion; \$196.3 million for the saving of \$1.6 billion. Revenues were down also. While the last government budgeted revenues of \$15.8 billion, the actual out-turn was revenue of \$14,265.2 million. The under-performance of the revenue side was \$10,536.3 million. There was an overall incremental surplus of \$65.9 million. Given that the original budget envisaged a surplus of \$3 million, one sees that the actual out-turn was a budget surplus of \$68.9 million. That has not changed.

A significant question raised was with respect to the school building programme. I want to provide some more information with respect to that. Earlier

this month, the Cabinet approved a further sum of \$250.7 million for the Ministry of Education under the PSIP. This is to be spent over the period October, 2002 to 2003. The ministry plans to do the following: Construction of five primary schools, namely, Lengua TIA, South Oropouche Government, El Socorro South Government, Waterloo Hindu School and Point Fortin Anglican School.

The design for 12 replacement primary schools, namely, Enterprise Government School, Palo Seco Government School, Arima New Government School, Arima West Government School, New Grant Government School, Icacos Government School, Tranquility Government School, Mon Repos R. C. School, Maracas S. D. A. School, St. Paul's Anglican School, St. Mary's Government School, and Lengua Presbyterian School.

There is also the construction of two replacement primary schools, Harmony Hall Presbyterian School and Cap De Ville Government School.

There is construction work on the following nine denominational schools. They are: Miracle Ministries, Caroni Sanatan Dharma Maha Sabha Boys' School, Barrackpore ASJA Girls, Swaha Hindu College, Charlieville ASJA Girls', Charlieville ASJA Boys', Saraswati Girls Hindu School, Tunapuna ASJA Girls', Bishop Anstey High School, Phase II.

There would also be the construction of blocks at nine government secondary schools. They are Manzanilla High School, Debe High School, Tableland High School, Cunupia High School, Coryal High School, Brazil High School, Matura High School, Blanchisseue High School and Valencia High School. There would be construction of one new government secondary school at Malabar to accommodate 875 students.

There are security measures for 33 high risk secondary schools. Work is in progress at five of these schools. There are the designs for the technical upgrade, de-shifting and rehabilitation of 60 secondary schools under the Secondary Education Modernization Programme funded by the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago and the Inter American Development Bank. Designs would be done in 2003. Construction work on these schools would commence in 2004. There is an appendix here if Members are interested.

The designs and construction work for the technical upgrade, de-shifting and rehabilitation of 40 secondary schools under the Secondary Education Management Programme (SEMP) funded by the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago would be done in 2003. There are 40 schools on the card for technical upgrade, de-shifting and rehabilitation in 2003, while design work would be done in 2003, on 60 schools. That would be upgraded in 2004.

I just thought that I should share that additional information with Members, so that they would see quite clearly that this Government plans to deliver, because, as we say, we care. *[Interruption]* You would be there. You can use questions to find out what is happening which would be absent from the Order Paper. I can tell you when I was over there, if on any day my Order Paper had no questions, I would have to answer to my leader. We made sure that there is nothing on the Order Paper today. *[Interruption]* I can tell you that the Senate problem has been solved. The House never had a problem. Ask some questions!

Mr. Ramsaran: Mr. Deputy Speaker, would the Member give way? I had been promised by the hon. Speaker that an answer to a question I asked two weeks ago would be laid in the House. It has not been laid. Last week Friday I was promised that an answer would be in the library. I have just checked and it is not there. Why ask questions and we are not getting answers?

Hon. K. Valley: I am stating a fact. There is an Order Paper and there is not one question on that Order Paper. An Opposition of 16 Members and not one of you can ask a question.

With those few words, I beg to move.

Question proposed.

Mrs. Kamla Persad-Bissessar (Siparia): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I join the debate on this Motion:

Be it resolved that this House adopt the First Report of the 2002—2003 session of the Finance Committee of the House of Representatives of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, on the proposals for the expenditure from the public revenue which were not included in the annual estimates 2002.

I sympathize with the Member for Diego Martin Central. I thank him for the explanations that he has given as junior Minister of Finance. I know that he tries his best to provide information when he can. Regrettably, if we look at the Order Paper we would see that this Motion is listed under the name of the Minister of Finance. Sometimes I wonder whether the Member for Diego Martin Central is not suffering from political *tabanca*. For years he has shadowed the Ministry of Finance and aspired to be Minister of Finance and up to today, he remains forever, the bridesmaid and never the bride, as junior Minister of Finance. When we had the Finance Committee on Friday, the minutes before us reflect that the Chairman of the Finance Committee who was the Member for Diego Martin Central, promised that he would provide the responses to the questions raised and the clarification sought by Members in time for the debate.

Finance Committee Report
[MRS. PERSAD-BISSESSAR]

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Those of us who were at that meeting would remember the undertaking given by the hon. Member for Diego Martin Central. Those responses and the clarification did not come to us on this side until we came to the Chamber for the meeting at 1.30 p.m. If in time for the debate means two minutes or five minutes before the debate, then I am saying that is not good enough. Given the haste in which the Finance Committee Report and the Finance (Variation of Appropriation) Bill are to be debated and they wanted us to be here on Friday to deal with the Finance Committee and back on Monday, we asked if we could get the responses in time if we are to make meaningful sense out of it. The Chairman agreed to provide responses to questions raised and clarification sought by Members in time for the debate. It is not good enough. They were on this side. If you get this minutes before the debate starts, that is not good enough in terms of the undertaking that was given.

When we look at the explanation and responses they are insufficient. The Member has come—I cannot blame him for that because he has probably been given a brief by the Minister of Education to read out a list of schools which they are saying they would construct and schools they would undertake rehabilitation works for and others for which they would do designs. He read that entire list and could not provide the proper answer to the questions that we asked in the Finance Committee.

They said that they had realized savings because in the Ministry of Education there was delay in the construction of schools. Nowhere in the clarification given just before we came to the debate or in the explanation given by the Member in his presentation, are we given any reasons for the delay in the construction of the schools. We are told that there was delay for improvement and refurbishment. This is a very important question because it goes to the root of all promises the Member has just made. If you had delays in implementation of the construction in the past year, then we have absolutely no faith or confidence in all the things he just read. They have failed to say why there was delay during the last year and they effected savings in the ministry. We cannot get an explanation as to why the two Maha Sabha schools which are in the constituencies of Siparia and Oropouche cannot have a start-up date for construction. I remember the Member for Diego Martin West when the matter for the school in Carenage was a great issue for him. I know he would empathize with the feeling that here are children placed in a temporary structure and money was budgeted and we cannot get a start-up date for construction from the Minister of Education.

Money was allocated in the 2001—2002 budget and during the past year we have seen and heard nothing. What about Palo Seco Secondary School? They are

children from your constituency, Mr. Deputy Speaker. That school was an old oilfield building. It is in a dilapidated condition. I hear about all these other schools and no word about the Palo Seco Secondary School. Despite the undertaking that he gave us he has failed to provide clarification. The first question asked in the Finance Committee meeting was by the Member for Fyzabad. The Member for Fyzabad enquired about the status of payment of money owed to Members of Parliament.

The Chairman promised to have information provided during the debate. He did give us that during the debate. He said that Members of Parliament could not get their stipends until they were sworn in. I ask the hon. Member how is it that persons operating as ministers of government who were not Members of Parliament, were sworn in as ministers and never took an oath either in the House of Representatives or in the Senate—Senators were not sworn in until some time in April—but he is saying that Members of Parliament could not be paid because they did not swear? The explanation they gave us was that there was a Kirpalani oath. You take one and get another one free. They went to President's House and took a ministerial oath, that also meant they took the parliamentary oath. That is not correct.

If you look at the Constitution under the Schedule, there are two oaths. One is for a Member of Parliament to be sworn in whether in the House of Representatives or the Senate and another with respect to a ministerial oath. It is not Kirpalani country. You cannot get two in one, one for free. We are being told that we would get the money for the year that we served as Members of Parliament, but we must support the Police Service Reform Bill. They want to buy support. It is a form of intimidation and blackmail. We have taken the position that our support or non support cannot be bought or sold. We would operate in principle with respect to that. If we have to raise this issue elsewhere we would take it elsewhere.

Here we are debating the Finance Committee Report. This is about the movement of money from one ministry to another. The movement of money that has been allocated in the 2001—2002 budget, increases in one ministry and decreases in another. We are talking about a movement of over \$858 million being moved from about ten ministries into three ministries and two other commissions. We are looking at money taken away from ministries because it was not spent. When we look at the state of what is happening in the country, it appears that the Government has no regard for the poor people in this country

The *Express* editorial of January 21, 2003 at page 10 says:

“Commenting on the increase in the price of flour and subsequent rise in the price of bread and other flour based products, Prime Minister Patrick Manning

said we have always tried to urge citizens to be very judicious in the way they spend. He was of the view that the increase would impose a little more discipline on the consumer but in the long run it makes for a better citizen. What could Mr. Manning have been thinking? Bread after all is not pizza. It is an essential not a luxury food item and indeed has been so in all countries and over many millenniums.

In this context the most charitable interpretation we can make of the Prime Minister's statement is that he was advising citizens to spend less on luxuries, the better to be able to pay higher bread price...

We expect Government to be sensitive to the strain that would be put on many and perhaps most of the country's families."

Look at the *Sunday Guardian* dated January 26, 2003, page 5:

"Bread Prices Soon to Rise. The Bakers' Association has agreed on bread price increases in the wake of the flour price hike that went into effect."

No care whatsoever for basic necessities that poor people have to depend upon. When we look at what we are doing today to vary from one ministry to another, it is not unusual to have such a variation in a budget, whether in the private sector or the public sector. Money originally allocated can be moved into other areas seen fit. This need would be greater where a new government came into office as has happened in December 2001. A budget had to be passed by the predecessor government for the year to come. On the surface, there is nothing wrong with a variation Bill.

The question arises: Why did the Government delay in bringing this Finance Committee Report? Why do they appear to be hiding the information contained in the Finance (Variation of Appropriation) (2002) Bill? What do they have to hide? Is there anything in this if you examine it closely? We need to look at it very carefully. I want to make it clear that I have no problem and I am sure every Member on this side has absolutely no problem with the increase that has been allocated to the Elections and Boundaries Commission. They were given what had been requested. We agree that the Elections and Boundaries Commission should be given funds to ensure that there is a democratic electoral process in the country.

When we look at the other allocations, I would be happy if the junior Minister of Finance can answer these questions. On December 24, 2001 when the PNM was selected into office, following the 18/18 deadlock, the hon. Prime Minister created some new ministries. There were about 30 Ministers. It was a very large Cabinet. One was the Ministry of Ecclesiastical Affairs. New ministries were created and

no allocation was made in the 2001—2002 budget. If we look at the *Gazette* we would see there was no head and allocation for the Ministry of Public Administration. The Prime Minister appointed Sen. The Hon. Dr. Lenny Saith as Minister of Public Administration and Information. We also noted that the Ministry of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education was created. With due respect, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it was a ministry that was held by your good self.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, you have been in this Parliament for quite some time. When money is allocated in a budget there is a head of expenditure. When the hon. Prime Minister Basdeo Panday changed and reallocated portfolios following the 2000 elections and there was no budgetary allocation made, the then hon. Minister of Finance brought a variation and supplementary appropriation bill to allocate legally with the approval of Parliament the money that went to pay those ministers, the staff that comes under those ministries and the work that they had to do.

In the budget prior to the general elections of last year, none of these ministries were allocated any funds. Without the approval of Parliament, how could they legally pay those people? They have not included it in the variation of appropriation. You cannot move from one ministry head to another without the approval of Parliament. That is why he is here today. The Minister of Ecclesiastical Affairs may have been paid out of the Office of the Prime Minister's vote, because she was a minister in the Office of the Prime Minister. What about the Minister of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education? There was no such ministry. What about the Minister of Public Administration? At that time there was no such ministry and budgetary allocation. There was no parliamentary approval. If you are bringing this Bill, you should have brought within it, the variation to allow for a legal approval for the payments that were made. That has not been done and I look forward to the response for that.

We need to look at this Bill very carefully. It is absolutely shameful and disgusting to find in this Bill that there is a decrease of over \$124 million taken away from the Ministry of National Security. It is frightening. This is an indictment against the PNM Government. Are they serious about crime? If they are serious about combating crime, they have to equip and strengthen the protective services. They have to provide the facilities and show the commitment to the protective services so they can carry out the battle against crime. They take money from the Ministry of National Security and spend millions on providing jobs for friends, family, wives and husbands. There is no commitment to dealing with priority issues which affect the people of this country.

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I am reading in the newspaper that money is flowing like water at WASA where the CEO and top executives are collecting millions of dollars from a state enterprise that is not even profitable. As *The Trinidad Guardian* dated January 25, page 2, says Mr. Dumas could run but he cannot hide. Even though he did not want to answer the question somebody leaked it. When that question was asked 22 days' notice was given and thereafter week after week the Minister could not answer the question. The Member for Diego Martin Central does not attack people personally. I do not want to give him too much of that today. He said the problem is fixed and I asked him about the House of Representatives. There is no problem in this House. Mr. Deputy Speaker, you are a Member of this House and you have seen the Member for Chaguanas bringing questions to the Minister of Community Development and Gender Affairs week after week and she would not answer them. The Motion I brought for the Attorney General to answer, she did not answer it. She came in the Chamber one day because she had to deal with the Constitution (Election of President) Bill and when I raised the issue she said that she was there on November 22, 2002. It came up all of December and the hon. Minister said that all is well in the House.

2.30 p.m.

With the greatest respect, Ministers and Members of Parliament on the other side are treating Members on this side with contempt and are not answering the questions. The problem is not solved.

Members mentioned, even from last week's sitting, where undertakings were given to file the replies in the library. They are still not in the library. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will ask you to use your good office to ensure that the Standing Orders of the House are obeyed.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am looking at the Finance Committee Report and the Finance (Variation of Appropriation) Bill and so on, and when you think about the very idea of \$124 million decreased from the Ministry of National Security, that is cause for concern by every citizen of this country. Even if it is a five-cent reduction coming out of the Ministry of National Security, we have to be concerned. Everyone today in Trinidad and Tobago, and people from outside Trinidad and Tobago—it is not just us here, because internationally it is the same—is in fear of the danger to life, to limb and to property from terrorists and criminals in this country.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do not need to tell you what is happening with respect to the crime situation in this country and here it is we have a government not understanding the priority. Mr. Deputy Speaker, if you do not have your life then

everything else that is being provided is of absolutely no value. When we look at the crisis in the health sector—no money is being given to health out of all this money being moved and increased and decreased—it is the same thing. If you do not have your health, you could provide all the food baskets and hampers you want, and you could give all the foreign trips to Ministers to go and convince foreign officials, nothing else means anything if you do not, first of all, have your life. That is why that reduction in the Ministry of National Security and the situation in this country—We have to sit and listen to the nonsense from the Members on the other side, week after week, and if you believe them Trinidad and Tobago is a fairy tale land. All is well here in the State of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Manning: Who said that?

Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar: Even the Member for San Fernando East said the crime situation is improving. In spite of all the evidence to the contrary, he says it is improving. On the very next day, three murders in 14 hours but it is improving.

Mr. B. Panday: Crime is getting better.

Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar: Yes, it is getting better. It is increasing. So crime is on the rampage! If you look at the newspaper, every day for the past year criminals are on the rampage in the country. What do they do? They take money away from the Ministry of National Security. That is what we are debating today! Taking money away from the Ministry of National Security!

How did they respond, Mr. Deputy Speaker? They appointed as Minister of National Security, a nightclub owner. His only credential is that he shot himself in the foot. Operation Anaconda, millions of dollars on public relations campaigns, and in spite of all the calls about the incompetence of the Minister of National Security, the hon. Prime Minister defends him time and again. He is totally incompetent to deal with the crime situation in the country! Mr. Deputy Speaker, with the greatest respect, the Prime Minister is not doing any better because when you look at the newspapers, if those reports are true and they have not been denied—the *Sunday Express* dated December 22, 2002 we read that the Prime Minister is meeting with criminals; with gang leaders. I repeat, not doing any better, meeting with criminals and gang leaders.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I remember on Friday we raised the issue of the International Advisories, British, United Nations, Australia: Travel warnings because of the unprecedented level of crime in the country. The terrorist threats are here in Trinidad and Tobago. What is the response of the Government? That is why I say that there is no seriousness about the crime situation in the country. No

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seriousness whatsoever! Instead the Prime Minister sends off his Ministers, as I said, on a first-class junket to convince the foreign officials that they are lying and the advisory is totally untrue.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, they were boasting about the German cruise ship that came in spite of the warnings and the very next day a report is carried in newspaper; four of those people who came off that cruise ship were robbed. When we raised this in the House on Friday, the Member for Arouca South came here with misrepresentations and nonsense, thinking that she was fooling somebody, but she is not fooling anyone, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I am quoting from *The Probe* on Friday, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you will recall. [Interruption] What is wrong with *The Probe*? They love this newspaper, you know. They love it! They all start to get vociferous every time it is lifted. They love it! They love it! I am quoting from the front page of *The Probe*, dated January 26, 2003:

“Trini ties to Margarita terrorist cell.

Trinidad and Tobago’s International profile darkened further at mid-week with the shock disclosure of local terrorist links to an underworld cell in the Venezuelan island of Margarita.”

When we quoted this they scoffed at it—nonsense as usual—and here it is— [Interruption] Buy your own *Probe*. Here it is in the *Sunday Express* of January 26, 2003. [Interruption] It is the same attitude, that flippant, callous attitude that nothing is happening. All is well! Fairy tale land of Trinidad and Tobago! Nothing is wrong! Yet citizens in this land live in fear for their life, their limb and their property, for their families, their children; sons and daughters. And what do they say? Oh yes, *The Probe*, why are you quoting that? *Sunday Express* I am quoting, what is wrong with the *Sunday Express*? What is wrong with *The Probe*?

“TERROR THREAT

Islamic group unveils secret ‘chemical labs’”

The Member for Caroni East raised the issue earlier about chemical labs in the country, biological and chemical weapons to be used in this country. Weapons of mass destruction! So nothing is wrong with this! They do not see anything wrong with this! When we read today’s *Express*—Monday January 27, 2003—at page 3:

“‘Security’ moves to counter terror threat.”

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is very interesting.

“National Intelligence officials met yesterday amid reports that a local radical Muslim group is planning to attack United States and British interests here with chemical and biological weapons.”

It means nothing to them but the intelligent officials are meeting. That means nothing! It is okay, kill and kidnap, that is quite all right. Have biological and chemical weapons; that is quite okay as far as they are concerned. Here is what I find very frightening.

“...a Ministry of Health official told the *Express* that public health institutions would not be able to cope with any type of large-scale chemical attacks ‘simply because we are not fully equipped to deal with it’.

And lower in the article it says:

“Top brass Special Branch officers said yesterday that they were unaware of the group’s activities and, in fact, were in the dark over plans to attack US and British interests using chemical and weapons.

Last week this newspaper was taken to one of the secret ‘labs’ and shown several ‘organic and inorganic chemical compounds’...”

The article continues, Mr. Deputy Speaker. How is it, I have to ask, that everybody else seems to know that there is crime on the rampage and there are terrorists in this land except the Government?

How did the *Express* know? How did the British who issued their advisory know? How did the United Nations organization know to warn people about it? Yet we have a government who is saying, “No, no, no, all of that is wrong, go out, go out”! My colleagues are reminding me of the response of the Minister of National Security in the past which I suppose will be his response now: “Be calm.” Amidst all of this everybody seems to know but the Government does not know and here we are debating a reduction in the allocation to the Ministry of National Security.

If that money had been utilized by the Ministry of National Security properly, then it could have been used to enhance the intelligence gathering of the security forces. It could have been used to enhance their equipment, their facilities, generally, to better equip them in the fight against crime and against terrorism. But instead they have reduced by over more than \$124 million; they have taken it away from the Ministry of National Security. Is that a commitment to the fight against crime?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, on Friday again we raised the issue and I quoted from the *Sunday Express* of January 23, and the Member for Arouca South who

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appears not to really believe that she is now on the other side, in Government and is still in opposition mode, discounted the *Sunday Express* editorial which talked about airport bandits. [Interruption] The *Sunday Express* editorial of January 23 spoke of airport bandits. She was so determined to paint everybody on this side as airport bandits, Mr. Deputy Speaker. That is the problem they always go back, they cannot see what is happening today in terms of the life and limb of the citizenry of this country and what will happen to our children tomorrow. They are not concerned about that. Their tactics have also been to label everybody as ‘thief’ and that is good enough for them. I do not have to do anything as far as they are concerned because everybody else is ‘thief’. “I am to only clean one in this country.” That is how they see it. And so they ignore every issue of priority—and I made it clear the last time that I am no airport bandit.

What is the more important point for today’s debate, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is the misrepresentation of the Member for Arouca South, and several other misrepresentations that she made which I will deal with when I reply to her with respect to that debate. However, I will now speak about this airport bandit debate which is relevant to National Security. She said, No, no, no airport bandits since April 2002! What are you talking about airport bandits?” Express editorial. She said, “No, no, no, I am answering you and I am answering the Member for Siparia, no airport bandits.” I am asking her to pray tell me how and why.

In today's *Newsday* Monday 27, 2003 on page 4:

“Anti-crime plan to reduce robberies of tourists and visitors

AN ANTI-CRIME plan aimed at reducing robberies against visitors leaving Piarco International Airport for various destinations throughout the country, will be put into place next week.”

The Member said on Friday, “No airport bandits”. So why are they putting an anti-crime plan now to deal with airport bandits? Why? Why? Mr. Deputy Speaker, misleading and misrepresenting the facts!

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: To keep it like that.

Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar: When we were talking on this side as well about airport bandits—[Interruption] No, what Members say, and their concern and their attitude—When we were talking about the state of crime in this country; that people are living in fear of life and limb and the Member for Couva South pointed out bandits for the cruise ship passengers, she said: “Well, that is okay, that is not airport.” So it is quite okay if you came off the cruise ship and you got robbed! But I am not talking about that she says. We need to talk about it! This must be a

priority issue! The situation with respect to crime in this country has to be dealt with! We have to deal with it! And if you continue to bury your heads in the sand then how many more must die in this country whilst they hide their heads in the sand and continue to take money out of the Ministry of National Security, as they are doing in this Finance (Variation of Appropriation) Bill.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is crime and then when we listen to the hon. Prime Minister and you pick up the budget statement, and they have repeated it *Vision 2020 People...Our Priority*. The only priority on the other side, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is the priority of the criminals. That is all they are concerned about. The priority of the criminals; the kidnappers, terrorists and friends and families; that is their only priority. We listen to the nonsense that comes from the other side and we hear about economic growth; unemployment down, and all the nice things; rosy, fairy tale Trinidad and Tobago; all is well in the State of Trinidad and Tobago. This is clearly not what is happening in Trinidad and Tobago today.

What is happening in this second year of the PNM—we are now into the second year, you know. Oftentimes they say: But it is only October! We have only been here in Government since October! Mr. Deputy Speaker, let us remember this is the second year of the PNM administration. To everyone in this country it is apparent that nothing is working in Trinidad and Tobago! Nothing is working! [*Desk thumping*] The administration spent one year talking, talking. While all around us we see the fabric of this society ripping apart, they are sitting doing nothing. Do you know what they do? Through you, Member for Laventille East/Morvant, like all the others, fraud squad and police, they want to lock up everybody! But they are not locking up anybody! I hold no brief for anyone who commits a crime, so when you say who ‘thief’ and did not ‘thief’ and do fraud; whoever did the crime must do the time. I hold no brief for anybody! And nobody on this side holds brief for anybody. If you break the law then you will feel the full brunt of the law, so do not come and threaten me with fraud squad. I am not afraid! My hands are clean! [*Interruption*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Members, the *Hansard* reporter is getting some difficulty in recording the proceedings. Could you please lower your tone? You may continue, hon. Member.

Mrs. Kamla Persad-Bissessar: Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. So the situation has reached to such a head—I will read page 1 editorial— [*Interruption*] Usually the editorial is inside the newspaper. The situation is so glaring, so appalling. The *Sunday Guardian* dated January 26, front page says:

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“Time to Act!

TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO has slid far enough down the slope of criminality that it is teetering on the edge of a precipice.

The burgeoning of violent crime, whose most visible indicator is the horrific murder rate, becomes more intractable every passing day.”

These are not my words, Mr. Deputy Speaker, these are the words of the Editorial from the *Sunday Guardian*, the front page. I continue:

“What was once the isolated behaviour of individuals is fast becoming a widespread culture.

That process can only be halted by a combination of immediate-term and long-term measures implemented by the police, the Government, the institutions of civil society...

This is a war between the vast majority of citizens, residents and visitors, who wish to live in and build a humane society, and a tiny but growing minority which is determined to spread nihilism and fear like a plague.

Government, which is ultimately responsible for the efforts of the police...unimpressive. Nothing Security Minister Howard Chin Lee or Prime Minister Patrick Manning has done amounts to more than shooting in the dark.”

And I repeat from the editorial; not me:

“Nothing Security Minister Howard Chin Lee or Prime Minister Patrick Manning has done amounts to more than shooting in the dark.

The infamous Anaconda project, like many police exercises, dredge up little more than petty offenders, illegal motorists, whe whe players, small-time drug users, and the like.”

“Time to act!”

This is where it has reached!

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when we look all around us, I am saying nothing is working. The flooding we experienced recently; deterioration in our infrastructure, of our roads, with respect to drainage, bridges and we look in the Appropriation and we know where moneys came from as well. They took money from the Ministry of Infrastructure; they reduced that money as well. The health care system is in shambles, crime, terrorism, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And so I am saying nothing is working, and the country is in total crisis with every system breaking down.

I want to quote from the *Sunday Newsday* dated January 26, at page 13, 2003 by Donna Yawching. Your friend perhaps? Very well. Well I am quoting Donna Yawching.

“Institutional breakdown

The current craziness in the hospitals tells us (if we didn’t already know) that our health-care institutions are (literally) moribund. It’s no use pretending that just because we have some hospitals and a bunch of clinics, we somehow have a health system.

We don’t.”

With respect to the health system, every institution, breakdown. Again, not my words, although I agree with it totally, it is the words of Donna Yawching from the *Sunday Newsday*, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

“Another major institution: education. Again we all know that our systems have failed us.”

Today, the gross callousness that underpins our educational institutions is creating not merely an acquiescent army of hewers of wood and drawers of water, but carriers of guns and traders of drugs. If you don’t give people the tools to make decent lives for themselves, they will make indecent ones.

Moving on to our security institutions. Our police force is a joke. No-one trusts it, no-one respects it, no-one has any confidence in it.”

Health, education and now we are speaking of the security systems.

“In short, the only institutions that seem to be running efficiently and according to definition are the criminal ones. Perhaps, in the final analysis, that’s what brought Mr. Manning to the Ambassador Hotel.”

But he still has not learnt anything. Only the criminals; that is the only institution that appears to be working. And so we debate moving money out of the Ministry of National Security.

If we are to believe them, Mr. Deputy Speaker, Government is powerless. If we really listen and interpret what they say then it appears that Government is powerless and the Opposition is the most powerful institution in this country. I have to agree with Dr. Hamid Ghany in yesterday’s *Guardian* dated January 26, at page 25.

“Powerlessness of the Government.

In almost all quarters of State activity, the Government has advertised itself as being powerless to handle a variety of situations. Instead, the Opposition has been blamed for a host of crises facing the country, whether it is in the health sector, the crime situation or the image of the country.

It almost seems as if the Opposition has the power to determine the political agenda and the inability of the Government to govern can only be blamed on the Opposition.

For example, the failure of the Ministry of Health to address the problems of ensuring there are doctors in the State-run hospitals is blamed on the fact that most of the doctors are considered to be supporters of the UNC.

The problem of crime in this country is to be blamed on the UNC because they are reluctant to give their support to some bills on the Police Service...

What all of this is demonstrating is that collective and individually Ministerial responsibility seems to have been handed over to the Opposition and the Government cannot solve these problems.”

If you listen to them everything is being blamed on the Opposition. The international image, Mr. Panday and Mr. Baksh. The health crisis, they say the doctors are UNC. Health, education, security in the country, blame the UNC. Blame it on the UNC.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Member for Couva South, the hon. Member for Siparia is delivering a very eloquent contribution; will you please give her an opportunity.

Mr. Ramnath: My apologies, Sir, and also to the Member.

Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar: Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am just advising the Member that he should not take on the ranting of the Member for Laventille East/Morvant, he is almost at the edge of the Bench and may fall off at any point in time. He might be in the public gallery next, so do not take him on. He is my brother, like yours, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in law, and I am sure he is doing very well in the courts of law. The Parliament does not seem to be his forte. But I will not be sidetracked.

The point I am making is that if you listen to them—they have nothing to do with it, the agenda is the Opposition agenda. They are the Government, they are in charge, but they continue to look for scapegoats. No one is being fooled. They are the Government and they have to deal with this issue of crime and terrorism in this country.

When we look at the reallocations, we look at the Finance Committee Report, we look at the Finance (Variations of Appropriation) Bill and we see, as I said, there is this variation to increase the expenditure in about three ministries but the vast majority of the moneys that has been taken away from about ten ministries is to go to the Ministry of Finance. Over \$574 million taken away from productive ministries to go into the Ministry of Finance.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is value added by taking the moneys away and putting them into the Ministry of Finance. There is absolutely no improvement in the quality of life for the people of Trinidad by the transfer of the money. If you look at the Ministry of Infrastructure—the largest decrease has been to the Ministry of Infrastructure. On the figures presented and they are saying that it is savings; that is money that they did not spend, that is work they did not do in terms of infrastructural development in this country, over \$126 million is being taken out.

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

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

Question put and agreed to.

Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar: Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I also thank the hon. Member for Diego Martin Central for his moving of the Motion, and hon. Members of the House.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are looking at the Ministry of Infrastructure, the largest decrease, the greatest amount of money is being taken out of the infrastructural development. That money could have been used in La Brea to build roads. I remember, Mr. Deputy Speaker, your plaintiff cry in this Parliament, walking with pitch into the Parliament. I sympathize with you because that money could have been used to fix roads in the constituency of Siparia, San Fernando, Port of Spain, in Diego Martin West or East, in any part of the country. That money could have been used to fix bridges. That money could have been used to deal with drainage, instead it was taken out, sent to the Ministry of Finance where there is no productive value added. Book entry into the Ministry of Finance! No productive value added! Every other Minister of Works and other Ministers, when there are savings realized from one project to the other would use it within the ministry to get more productive work done: build schools, fix roads, build hospitals, build police stations, equip the police. That did not happen in the Ministry of National Security, money taken out; that did not happen in the Ministry of Infrastructure, money taken out; that did not happen in the Ministry of

Education, money taken out. Mr. Deputy Speaker, to go where? If it had gone somewhere—and I am saying I have no problem with the increase in the EBC because we all agree that is where an increase should go, and in any case the EBC's increase is a drop in the bucket in terms of the sum of over \$800 million which has been moved from ministries. But you take it all out of the productive ministries and no value and no improvement in the quality of life of the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is what we are debating today, no value added! They were in Government for the year and I am saying they had all discretion to vary and come back to the Parliament for approval. They had that as a new Government. But it seems that they went into the productive sector of every area of every ministry and took out moneys that could have been used to improve the quality of life of the people of Trinidad and Tobago. Perhaps that is why they took so long to bring the Bill and the information. Perhaps they were ashamed that they could not spend the money in the Ministry National Security, which is our greatest priority. Health is our second greatest priority because as I said, if you do not have any life you cannot enjoy anything else, and if you do not have health you cannot enjoy anything else. Those are priorities one and two. Life first, security of person first.

With respect to the Ministry of Education, they could have re-allocated within the ministry. If it is that they could not pay increments to teachers and that is a serious issue in itself, they could have used the money within the ministry to build schools. All these schools, Members have asked questions about them, in all the constituencies in Palo Seco and then you go further down into Point Fortin, you would see the school shut down, in Icaos children are not going to school. They could have used the moneys towards that purpose. But no, they put it in the Ministry of Finance where there is no productive value; book entry into the Ministry of Finance.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when we look again at the Ministry of National Security, I want to remind the hon. Prime Minister of his promises on the campaign trail; promises which he repeated when he came here in his budget statement about all the police stations and fire stations that they would build but yet they took the money out of the Ministry of National Security and did not do one of those; they did not build one police station, they did not refurbish one, did not repair one and they are saying that they are committed to helping the police and seeing about crime. Look at it here in your manifesto, under National Security. The construction of seven new fire stations; Sangre Grande, Piarco, Mayaro, San Fernando, Fyzabad,

Point Fortin, La Brea, Couva, Arouca, Black Rock, Plymouth. Infrastructural upgrading of police facilities: new police stations, Gasparillo, Brasso Seco, Roxborough, Arima, Belmont, Mathura, Besson Street, Matelot, et cetera. All of this? What did they do? They took the money and sent it away! They did not want it in the Ministry of National Security. When one goes to the budget statement at page 33, the same thing again:

- We will construct five (5) new police stations in Manzanilla, Mayaro, Mathura, Cumuto and Brasso”

Notice the number of police stations from the manifesto to the budget statement. The manifesto was just in prior to October but by the time you reach the budget statement in the Parliament now—because this is recorded in the *Hansard*—from the seven and the fifteen, it now drops to five police stations.

- We have started a programme of repair and refurbishment of police stations that have fallen into disrepair...”

Again, it does not mention them you know, all the names drop out so nobody could come and pick up the budget statement and say: “You said these 15 and you said these 20. No commitment whatsoever to the security of people! None whatsoever! We look at the Finance (Variation of Appropriation) Bill again—we see variations within Heads. I see the Ministry of the Attorney General; moneys have been taken out from that as well. Again, where has the majority gone? Ministry of Finance; no productive value; book value! No value added! No improvement in the quality of life for people in this country. Gone!

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we come to the Parliament week after week and what are we debating? Foolish bills, little bills about 15 minutes, extension at the Registrar General’s Department, something to validate some stamps, which they were doing all the time, anyhow. Those are the priorities of this Government, not the issue to deal with crime, health or education! Foolish bills coming to this Parliament! We are spending the Parliament’s time here with little bills but the priority issues, no chance to debate. None whatsoever!

In the budget statement, and I want to remind hon. Prime Minister—it was also done on the campaign trail and I would ask him to take note of this because it seems when the hon. Prime Minister makes a statement the hon. Attorney General says something totally opposite. In the budget statement the hon. Prime Minister promised this country, at page 33 of that statement and I quote:

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“Turning to the crime of kidnapping, we propose to introduce legislation aimed at combating this crime. A Kidnapping Prevention Act with stiff penalties will be placed before Parliament within ninety (90) days.”

Mr. Deputy Speaker, 90 days came and gone. You said that when you were elected within 90 days you would lay in this Parliament the Prevention of Kidnapping Bill and every day—Look at this story, I mean when you think about it—Listen to this, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This is someone from South where we live. [*Interruption*] Talking to criminal leader that is what he is doing. Ninety days he promised us, and where is it? Nothing in this Parliament!

Listen to this and I want you to feel the pain because they do not seem to understand that the crime is getting closer home. You always feel it is would not be you or your children because you are walking around with security; you walking around with police protective services all around you. So it is not you! It is every other citizen in this country living in fear. I have to ask the Member for Diego Martin Central whether this is true, because it is now reaching home to you. I understand that your business place in St. James was robbed over the Christmas holidays; kept totally under cover, not in the newspapers, but it is coming straight home to you!

Member for Laventille West, it is coming home to you! Talking to criminals, community leaders; that is the answer! Flying off on foreign trips to tell lies! I cannot get over that, you know! Trying to convince them that what they are saying in the advisory is not true. If it is not true it means it is a lie!

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Maybe that is what you should say; it is not true.

Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar: It is not true. It is an untruth. The British are misleading! They misunderstood! Everybody else knows it except they!

Sunday Guardian, January 26, page 24, written by Jocelyn Karmody. Listen to this, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this person is from where we are, down in the South in Rousillac. It says:

“Listen, Trinidad!

TODAY my baby sister cried.

Pupils and students at St. Gabriel’s Girls’ RC School, San Fernando Boys’ RC, Holy Faith Convent, Penal, and Presentation College, San Fernando, used time that is usually spent absorbing knowledge with heads bowed in prayer, last week.

My sister's teacher, Mrs. Hector and her daughter were kidnapped on Wednesday around 7 p.m.

I cannot think how I can convey the horror that I experienced over this.

All my thoughts are jumbled and I really want to reach people, to make them feel enough horror to act.

Mrs. Hector and her daughter had already pulled into her driveway when they were confronted by a man with a gun who snatched the teenager and her mother and drove off.

Mrs. Hector was released, but her daughter spent a night in captivity before escaping on Thursday."

I really must commend the courage of that young girl when she said she worked the sweat on her face to get the duct tape off and used her fingers nails to open the—think of your child in that situation! Think of it and act! Do something!

"I was told the police did not show up until Thursday morning. That is 12 hours after the fact. WHAT THE HELL? What is happening to Trinidad? Where were the police? Why didn't they respond immediately? What are they doing right now?

I am a teacher. I see young criminals every day. We suspend them for what is basically assault on other students, only to have to welcome them back five days later, bitter and vengeful.

We as teachers see what these children will become, but we are not trained to deal with it. Where are the counsellors?

When you look at the Finance (Variation of Appropriation) Bill you will see that there are vacant posts within the ministry. They say they got savings because they did not fill the vacant posts in the Ministry of Education. They took \$62 million out of the Ministry of Education and sent it to a book entry in the Ministry of Finance.

I repeat:

"Where are the counsellors?

I have been teaching two years and have made several pleas for a psychologist or counsellor.

LISTEN, TRINIDAD! Listen to those who educate and interact with your young. They need help before it's too late."

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Mr. Deputy Speaker, I come back to the promise made. Kidnapping Prevention Bill within ninety days. The ninety days came and gone and look at what has happened. [*Interruption*] With due respect you may wish to speak with your hon. Attorney General because she contradicts you most of the times, you know, I can give you a list of the contradictions because I have them documented.

I quote *Newsday* January 21, 2003 on page 5. I notice all of these are from the *Newsday*. A reporter from the *Newsday* said: “Kamla is that you? You are actually quoting from the *Newsday*. Is that not something? The *Newsday*, Mr. Deputy Speaker, a good newspaper. It says:

“Attorney General Glenda Morean-Phillip revealed last evening that Government’s new kidnapping legislation has been sent back to the drawing board.”

Why? Because the Attorney General is worried that the penalties for kidnapers are too severe. The Attorney General says: Look I do not want the Bill that they have drafted because she is concerned about the penalties for the kidnapers. The whole country is under duress by kidnapers but the Attorney General says I am not bringing the Bill to the Parliament, I am sending it back, why? Not because she is concerned about the kidnapped, the victim, she is concerned about the kidnapper, that the penalties are too severe. Can you believe this, Mr. Deputy Speaker? And so you take the money out of the Ministry of the Attorney General.

On the same page 33, the hon. Prime Minister promised this country.

“...terrorism and kidnapping for ransom resides in the same criminal household; accordingly, we shall also introduce a Terrorism Prevention Bill to deal with the threat of terrorism.”

Where is the bill? These are the priorities of the country. The *Express*, the British, the Australians, the United Nations, everybody is speaking about the terrorist threat in this country. Where is your terrorist bill? And so you continue to hide your heads in the sand; you cannot bring the bills before this Parliament. Mr. Deputy Speaker, it has reached the stage where people are totally fed up; they are absolutely fed up with the PNM and the way in which they run this country!

We have spent a year listening to the ol’ talk; nothing has improved, as I said, not a road built, not a police station built, not a single piece of drainage, not a school! Nothing, nothing, nothing built by the PNM in the past year! Yet they take the money from the Ministry of National Security, take it from the Ministry of Infrastructure, take it from the Ministry of Education and all the others, book entry, Ministry of Finance! Nothing, nothing productive!

Then I mentioned about their not filling the vacant posts. When you look at the variations, many of them in the Finance Committee Report, you will see the explanation given as to why they got money to decrease some ministries' Heads—I mentioned it before—is that vacant posts were not filled. Here it is, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are thousands of people in this country who do not have a job and are starving; they cannot buy food, they want a job. I quote from the *Daily Express* dated Monday January 27, 2003 on page 9:

“More people without jobs, says ILO.”

And here you have posts but you are not filling them. But they are public service posts so maybe they have a problem with that. You do not fill them through the public service procedure so you do not have to go through all those criteria. Instead hire friends, families, husbands and wives through contract positions. So you could put who you want and how you want them, but you do not fill the public service posts. What else can we interpret, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when all these savings they say they got—It is because they do not fill posts, they do not fill jobs and thousands of people in this country are without a job. They want a job. They are starving! They cannot buy food! Mr. Deputy Speaker, you know when you feel it is when you go to the supermarket. When you go to the supermarket and you look at the 2001 prices and look at prices now, the same items you paid \$200 for in the supermarket now you are paying \$400 and \$500. Food prices have gone up! I just quoted for you what is happening with flour and all flour products; sugar and oil have gone up, all beverages. Check the price of soft drinks now—it contains sugar—prices have gone up! From 2001 to now—*[Interruption]* You bring the evidence. *[Interruption]* I buy it in the supermarket, you know. I have time now to go to the supermarket and buy groceries. Flour, sugar and oil have all gone up.

That is what is happening. *[Interruption]* You could pull out all kinds of figures you want to but that is the reality. The supermarket bill is the reality so it is not what you say on the other side. You cannot fool anyone. People out there know what is happening, so all the ol' talk about how good things are, everything is fine, that is quite all right for you, all of that is totally falling on deaf ears. How great things are; PNM doing this and that, but people are out there starving, dying, being kidnapped and murdered! That is what is happening and you could talk all you want you are not fooling anybody in this country anymore. People just do not have the money to buy the basic necessities. Under the PNM administration people are struggling to live in this country. You talk to a man who does not have a job—you are not filling vacant posts—how does he buy food at the end of the week or month to feed his wife and children? Mr. Deputy Speaker, I say they spent this year fooling around talking and mismanaging.

They have failed! So if they think people are seeing these things and are thinking highly of the PNM they have another thought coming. I have been seeing—and several colleagues have mentioned it—that many people who traditionally supported the PNM and did not support the UNC are now supporting the UNC and are asking to join and to work with the UNC. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Ramnath: They have regretted! They have apologized!

Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar: Those activists from other parties are saying they want to work with you us to deal with this administration because they know that they are suffering and struggling to survive under the PNM administration.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we all know that the Government is supposed to improve the standard of living, the quality of life of the people of the country. The Government is supposed to ease problems, not to exacerbate the problems of the people. This administration have failed, they have totally turned priorities upside down, they have mismanaged, they are incompetent and they have not performed at all. As I said earlier, nothing is working. They do not understand what they are doing and it this total lack of performance on their part. The frustration in the society, that stress level, is increasing as well.

I have a serious problem with the incompetence of the Government as well but I have the confidence that the people of this country are not stupid, they are just waiting for the right time. It is just a matter of time. As I say, so many people are coming back saying that they would work with us. Let us not be distracted, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, you remember Operation Anaconda was like this huge, total distraction to take people away from what was happening. They were stopping people on the road, there were traffic pile-ups, endless cars flashing and everybody knew where the police roadblock was so they passed on another road. Every criminal knew, because in the police roadblock there was traffic piled up on both sides of the road. Which criminal would be so “dotish”, in local parlance, in these days of cellular and other technology and so on to pass through that roadblock? Operation Anaconda, total, total failure! They spent millions of dollars on a massive public relations campaign.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the same thing in education huge full-page advertisements every day about kinds of things in education—I will file a question—and not a school built. Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Member for Couva North is reminding me that during their administration not a single school was built, today they are going to build 60 and 40 and de-shift and so on. Whatever

happened to the de-shifting process? Every time you hear something from the Ministry of Education, we are going to de-shift! We are going to de-shift! We are going to de-shift. Stop going and do it!

[Mr. Manning raised his hands]

Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar: I think the Minister of Education could answer for herself sometimes. *[Laughter]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when we look at this out of the Finance Committee Report let us see what happens. The Ministry of National Security \$124,268,078 taken out; Ministry of the Attorney General, \$11,192,027 taken out; Ministry of Food Production, \$58,241,179 taken out. I wonder what the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources had to say about that. Was there nothing in the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources that you could have done to develop the agricultural system in this country? Were there not any agricultural access roads? If you would please come to Siparia constituency you will find so much that you could do with respect to agricultural access roads. Instead all they want to do is shut down Caroni (1975) Limited and put all the workers out of jobs.

Mr. B. Panday: And take the lands.

Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar: Take the lands, Mr. Deputy Speaker. For what purpose, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do not know, it is being rumoured that there is a particular community that wants to grab the land out of Caroni; a community very close to the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West. I do not know if that is true! Grab the lands, like colonial times! Take back. Was there nothing—\$58,241,175. We still cannot produce what we need to eat in this country but money is taken out of agriculture. I keep asking, where did it go? The Ministry of Finance, book entry on this.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, our information is that there were millions spent during the last election campaign on all kinds of projects to buy the election, in Ortoire/Mayaro, Tunapuna, in San Fernando West. I am told that in San Fernando West there are people who woke up Tuesday and saw people who did not live in San Fernando asking directions out of San Fernando West. They were looking for maxis and taxis to leave! They wanted to know how to go back to Laventille and Diego Martin! That is the truth, Mr. Deputy Speaker. They housed them, they fed them prior to the election to vote on election day and by the next day they were leaving.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Ministry of Education, I cannot leave this ministry alone because it deals with our children; the children are our future, trite to say but so true. Mr. Deputy Speaker, \$62,147,449 out of the Ministry of Education;

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the Ministry of Information, \$33 million; the Ministry of Enterprise Development \$85 million; Ministry of Human Development, Youth and Culture, \$42 million. What has happened with the Dollar for Dollar Programme? I am not hearing a word about the Dollar for Dollar Programme. Minister for Tertiary Education, what is happening with it? Are those students getting their moneys under that programme? What is the plan for the new year? I heard the hon. Prime Minister in his budget statement say that that cannot work. What are you doing with those students?

Ministry of Transport, \$10 million gone; Ministry of Housing, \$28 million; Ministry of Environment, \$17 million; Ministry of Infrastructure, as I said, \$130 million. All these productive ministries that could add value; could improve the quality of life for people, where has the money gone? The lion share has gone, book entry, no value added; Ministry of Finance \$574,968,647 gone! Then some of that is gone to the ministry responsible for empowerment, sport and consumer affairs. When I look at it in the Finance Committee Report maybe someone else would pick it up because my time is coming to an end.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, let us not be distracted, the infrastructure is deteriorating, crime is on the rampage in the country, terrorists, carnage on the roads. Yesterday's newspaper: Six Die In Highway Smash Up; flooding; the health sector in crisis; people cannot get jobs; they cannot buy food; the whole fabric of our society is being ripped apart and that is what we should be focusing our attention on. That is what is important. Those are our priorities and therefore we should see useful re-allocations of our expenditure, not what we are seeing here from this Finance Committee Report.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to close with the *Newsday*—a very good newspaper, there is almost everything in it now where you can find out anything that is happening in the country. I quote from page 10 of the *Sunday Newsday*, dated January 26, 2003. Like the Editorial I have to ask:

“Who's in charge?

A Duly elected Government must not only be in charge of the country it was elected to govern, it must also be seen to be in charge.

Can we say with any degree of honesty that our present Government looks like it is in charge of this country? We certainly do not think so and indeed as the issues of the day weigh more and more heavily on our shoulders we make this appeal to the elected Government that it takes charge of the country and does whatever has to be done to deal with the critical issues that are seriously affecting our lives.

The *Newsday* editorial, not Kamla, not Member for Couva North or Caroni East or Tabaquite, the *Newsday* Editorial which we agree with.

“We have written over and over again on the crime situation. Not a day passes that there is not a murder or a kidnapping.

The crime situation is bad.

Mr. Manning’s statement on crime is almost as bad as his statement on the doctor’s strike and the effects of such action.

The Government needs to act now with respect to the containment of crime which calls for tough measures, which while they may inconvenience many of us, are clearly required. They also need to deal with the issue of health care, which calls for the strongest possible action.

As we said earlier, a Government must not only be in charge. It must be seen to be in charge.”

With these words I close, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The intellectual backwardness of the PNM, the bankruptcy of the PNM, the trivia with which they come here every week in the Parliament and regale us with these issues, are all being ignored. So I am appealing to the Government: you are not a “jour ouvert” band! You are not clowns! You are not a pick-up side! Do your job now! Do your job as a government before it is too late for all of us in this country.

I thank you.

The Minister of Planning and Development (Hon. Dr. Keith Rowley): Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. When I came to the Parliament this afternoon it was not my intention to take part in this debate but having heard the contribution from a senior Member of this Parliament for the last 75 minutes, if it is, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the Parliament is viewed by the population as a waste of time, and parliamentarians are viewed by the population as being unworthy of notice, there has been no contribution in this Parliament which supports such a notion better than the one presented by my colleague, the Member for Siparia. What is bothersome is that the Member for Siparia is a senior Member of the Parliament and it makes you wonder what we are dealing with here, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it ignorance? Is it malice? Is it mischief? Or, is it concern?

My colleague from Siparia spent the last 75 minutes talking about allocations, removals, crimes, terrorism and whatever. One would think any Member of this House who chooses to get up, as she voluntarily did, to respond to the Minister of Finance on this matter, would first have gotten the information available before

she stood. Mr. Deputy Speaker, we had a Finance Committee meeting and documents were presented to all the Members of this House.

In fact, persons in the public gallery and the media were asked to go outside, while Members of the Parliament dealt with this matter. Therefore if the public and the media were surprised by what they heard this afternoon and they go away thinking that the Member for Siparia said something useful, it is not their fault. What they would have to try to understand is the depth of the deceit presented in an argument in the Parliament by a Member of Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago. And you have to ask yourself: Is this what the Parliament is for?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Member made heavy weather—half of her time was spent trying to create an impression that the reason we are all—and I am saying all of us in this country—exposed to a crime wave in this country and all that goes with it, is that some irresponsible government took away \$124 million from National Security. All of a sudden the Member knows what \$124 million can do to improve the quality of life of the people of Trinidad and Tobago. But when they were “thiefing” out the airports’ millions they did not know.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar: Mr. Deputy Speaker, on a point of order. Standing Order 36(5), please.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Member, you were saying 36(5):

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

I did not hear the Member impute any improper motive to any Member of either Chamber. [*Interruption*] No, he did not say that.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar: Yes, he said when they were “thiefing”. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Who are they? That is the exact answer. Please continue, hon. Member. We have listened to the airports enquiry and we have heard no Member of the Government mentioned.

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: Mr. Deputy Speaker, let me assist my colleague, the Member for Siparia, by making it abundantly clear. I am not saying that the Member; so the Member should not be—What I am saying is that when they were removing hundreds of millions of dollars, the Member apparently did not come to this House and tell us what that money could have done for the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, since she has chosen to misinform the public in this way, I have entered the debate this afternoon to try to assist those persons who were not

party to the Finance Committee discussions and deliberations, so they would not be misled by the mischief of any Member of this House who, deliberately or otherwise, seeks to put in the public domain what they would like out there, contrary to the facts.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when a budget is presented in this Parliament—a budget is in fact just that. In fact it is called the Estimates. On the day the budget is presented one has to assume zero dollars; there is no money but you expect that during the next 12-month period moneys will come from a variety of sources and you estimate how much money will come. Having made that estimation you then decide how you will spend it if you earn it.

3.30 p.m.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, my colleague from St. Joseph was the Minister of Finance who presented the estimates for the year 2001/2002. What did he estimate? He estimated, when he looked at the entire scenario of government revenues from all sources, that we would have earned, during that fiscal year under discussion this afternoon, \$15.8 billion. That is what he said the revenues would be and, having made that assumption for that estimate, he then decided to apportion those moneys to the various heads of expenditure. That is what the national budget is.

However, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if my memory serves me right, it was a matter of days after the Member read his budget—or was it before? I think September 11 was before the budget. The budget came a few days after, I think three days after. The two events were so close that he did not have a chance to take into account the implications of September 11. So we went ahead as a Parliament and passed a budget, anticipating \$15.8 billion in revenue, but we knew that there would have been serious consequences as a result of those developments. At the end of the year—the Member for Siparia was here, you know. She was here in Finance Committee. She was here when the last budget was presented. She had the budget documents, which showed what was supposed to happen as estimated, and what the actual out-turn was.

So the estimate was \$15.8 billion. How much did we actually earn as government revenues? Fourteen point three eight billion. In short, Mr. Deputy Speaker, having estimated at the beginning of the year that you would earn \$15.8 billion, having actually earned \$14.26 billion, it meant that you had overestimated by \$1½ billion. In short, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the money was not there and the Member for Siparia, as a senior member of this Parliament, must know that; because, you see—[*Interruption*] So she comes here this afternoon—

Dr. Nanan: Mr. Deputy Speaker, on a point of order, 36(7).

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Member for Tabaquite, the hon. Member said, “The Member for Siparia” and he said “She”. I admit that you must call Members by the names of their constituencies or their office, however, the pronoun “She” is not entirely banished or the pronoun is not entirely banished from the proceedings of this honourable House. Continue, hon. Member.

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The Member for Tabaquite has never demonstrated any prowess with the English language so I am not surprised that he is having trouble with the pronoun “She”.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the position today—*[Interruption]*—the position is—*[Interruption]* Mr. Deputy Speaker—*[Interruption]* Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am speaking to you as a Member of Parliament and a Minister of Government of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago and I tell you, without fear of contradiction, because these are the numbers of the Ministry of Finance as of today. The source I am quoting from is the Budget Division of the Ministry of Finance and it says that the budget, as we all knew—a public document—as read here in September of 2001 was for \$15.8 billion. By September 30, at the end of that fiscal year, the actual revenue was \$14.265 billion. Therefore, simple arithmetic: the original was \$15.8; real—\$14.2; there was a shortfall of \$1.5 billion.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the PNM came into government on Christmas Eve day, December 2001 by which time the government, of which the Member was a part, had almost a quarter of the financial year. When we took over in 2001, one of the first things facing the Government of Trinidad and Tobago in January 2002 was to reorder Government business to face the reality that the revenues he had projected for that fiscal year were not going to be realized. So what did we do? We set about to adjust our expenditure in step with the anticipated new realities.

Take, for example, the development programme. The development programme, the list of construction she talked about and schools and playing fields and so on—*[Interruption]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member.

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: The hon. Member, she talked about—Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am going to have to speak using the word, “She”, you know. The hon. Member, she spoke of those things. So as an assignment—in fact, I seem to recall an editorial in a newspaper pointing out to the PNM Government early in 2002 that it will have to make adjustments in the expenditure patterns because the reality is that the circumstances had changed and we were expecting shortfalls in revenues

as I have just outlined. So, the budget of that year, which was the one we were discussing now, had, for the development programme, projected an expenditure of \$1.339 billion.

The first thing we did was to try to see how we could manage without stopping programmes that were underway and how we could keep a priority list of programmes going. The target that we set ourselves at that time was to reduce the projected expenditure from \$1.3 billion to \$850 million. We were cutting our suit to suit the cloth we had and we did that. We managed on a monthly basis to marry the revenues and the expenditure and, by the end of the fiscal year, we did better than we had anticipated, because initially we thought we would only have had \$850 million for the development programme but, by the end of the year, we were able to have a development programme of \$1,011 billion. So here we had a situation where the revenues are not independent of expenditure and expenditure is never independent of revenue.

So the Member spoke all afternoon about money to be spent. Never once did she make any reference whatsoever to the revenue situation and that discredited her entire argument because it was a flight of fantasy. The Member spent the entire afternoon talking about money that did not exist.

Mr. Partap: So what are you transferring?

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: It was—and that is a good point. That is an appropriation. It said, in the event that we had those moneys, these were the heads under which we were authorized to spend those moneys. We are not talking about primary schoolchildren here; we are talking about Members of Parliament who ran a government in this country. No wonder the government was such a disaster, because, if they do not understand basics like that and come here and waste parliamentary time and try to fool the public—[*Interruption*]

Well, I think that the Member for St. Joseph is smarter than that. When he gets up to speak, he thinks he has something useful to say, if not, he keeps his seat; but fools rush in where angels fear to tread. It is a comment. I do not want to call my colleagues fools but I say clearly, my colleague from Siparia thought that she had some tremendous point to make about moneys not being spent and X, Y, Z. The money simply was not there. We never got the money because the circumstances did not permit the revenues to come in, as the Member for St. Joseph had anticipated—simple, straightforward matter.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Member spoke about a National Security reduction, so within the wider concept of the misrepresentation of moneys not being spent

and being shifted around and being carried I do not know where—she focused on National Security and this is where the mischief is highlighted because the Member was a member of Finance Committee and the Member would have received this document. This is the document we used when Finance Committee met here a few days ago, asking the public to go outside—because we do this behind closed doors—asking the media to go outside but now we are on the floor of the Parliament and they hear the Member for Siparia talking about \$124 million taken away from National Security and if that money was spent it would have caused the police to prevent murders and so on. That was absolute mischief-making because she knows better because she has this document and if she looks on page 16—the Member comes here to give the impression that she does not know what it is all about.

Page 16, Head, Ministry of National Security; item 22; and I refer you, Mr. Deputy Speaker: “Amount, reduction—\$124,268,078”. That is what was approved in the appropriation. That was the estimate, the expectation to be spent. Why was that money budgeted to be spent in National Security? It was spent to pay salaries to the existing staff of the police service and other services. Why was it not spent? The reason is there on page 16. With your indulgence I quote for you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because I know you probably did not have time to read it because you were so flabbergasted by what the Member was saying. I will read for you:

“\$124,268,078a) Salary negotiations between the Public Services Association and the Chief Personnel Officer was not finalised in the fiscal year as anticipated.”

So my friend, the Member for St. Joseph, knew that there were negotiations taking place with an expectation to pay higher salaries for the security services. He budgeted to pay. The assumption was that those negotiations would have been concluded during that fiscal year so he budgeted for it. The negotiations were not concluded during that fiscal year so therefore the expenditure could not have been incurred and the Ministry of Finance gave Finance Committee that clear and simple explanation. Yet my colleague, the Member for Siparia, a former Attorney General, a former education minister, a senior Member of Parliament, comes here and has us sitting here for 75 minutes belabouring the point that the PNM Government took away \$124 million from National Security and that could result in criminals running all over the country.

It is because there is a deliberate conspiracy in the camp of that party that formed the last government to create hysteria and to mislead the country into

believing that we have problems we do not have! [*Desk thumping*] How do you expect that? I am a Member of Parliament now for about 16 years. Sometimes I am ashamed of my colleagues in this Parliament. This place ought to be a place of higher intellect and when people come to this Parliament or when they listen to parliamentarians it must mean something; but when a Member behaves like that, what do you think? All of us are tarred with the same brush. You get a document, Government pays people in the Ministry of Finance to prepare a document and give it to you; we talk about it here, you come here and you take parliamentary time to mislead the country about \$124 million taken away.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, had the negotiations been concluded, or whenever they are concluded, people will be paid. This country is not a banana republic. We are an orderly arrangement, notwithstanding the best efforts of the last government. That accounts for the bulk of it. Item b), the explanation, on the same matter, the same sum of money.

“Payment of increased salaries to Second Division Fire and Police Officers was lower than projected”

So the Minister of Finance had anticipated he would have been having a charge that was higher for these officers. When the matters were finalized and it was paid, according to the arrangements, it turned out that the projections were a little higher. So therefore there was no need for that portion of the expenditure.

Item c) under explanations, with respect to the development programme in that part of the Ministry of National Security, it does not say the contracts were not done or the work was not done. It says:

“A number of contracts were awarded in 2002 but delivery and payment effected in fiscal year 2003”

Simple. Contractors do work and they are paid after they work. Some of the work that was done in 2002, fell to payment in 2003 and some time in the not too distant future those payments will form part of our discourse. Those were the simple explanations for that figure of \$124 million. [*Desk thumping*] That should make you ask, why would a senior Member of Parliament come here and “get on” like a “ra-ra” for 75 minutes, misleading the whole country and the whole world that we do not care about national security, that we are creating the environment for criminals to run the country, knowing full well that statements like that in today’s climate, in today’s world, would be dangerous to the country of Trinidad and Tobago? They do not care.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I started off by telling you that the budget of 2001/2002 was immediately affected by that development on September 11, 2001 in New York. The actions on September 11, 2001 changed the world, fundamentally. Even as we speak today, two things flowed out of the events of that day: one was economic instability across the world and the other one was terrorism and security—those things. The world has changed completely. The economic effects show up in the money, in the dollars or lack thereof in our budget, and the dust of terrorism has not yet settled. Every country in the world is making an effort to demonstrate to its people and the world that it is trying to ensure its security, personal and national. The only place I know where there are people in a country trying to tell the world that we do not have security and that we are the worst as far as terrorism is concerned, is Trinidad and Tobago, because UNC mouthpieces are at work trying to tell the world that we have some terrorism problem; but, you know, the plot unfolds so openly that one does not have to be a kindergarten child to understand it.

I notice, notwithstanding the damage that is being done to our country, they perpetually keep talking about it in and out of the Parliament in such a way as to give the impression that Trinidad and Tobago is a special case under this heading of terrorism. Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have no doubt that we, too, small as we are, are exposed to terrorism. Why do you think when you go on a BWIA plane they check you and recheck you and double-check you? It is because BWIA is as vulnerable as any other airline. Terrorism knows no bounds in today's world. We are trading in the international world market. We have institutions here that can be targets. We know that but we do not go around beating a drum telling the world—the Member talked about the Minister of National Security, his famous statement of “Be calm”.

What is wrong in saying to people in a crisis, “Be calm”? Their approach is, create hysteria. They somehow believe that by creating hysteria it will better prepare us to deal with any crisis that we face here. What I say, too, to the people of Trinidad and Tobago, with respect to all that we are facing as part of the global environment, is, be calm and the Government of Trinidad and Tobago will discharge its responsibility to ensure that the people of Trinidad and Tobago are as secure as they can be under the circumstances. [*Desk thumping*] We will not be part of any hysteria.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, what is this fixation with terrorism? I have been reading the newspapers since I was 7 years old and I was absolutely astounded on Sunday when I picked up this *Express* and saw the headline and the way it is presented—

dramatic—“Terror Threat”—some bottles of things and an Islamic group saying this and saying that and a whole-page story. So my attention—when I read the article, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I was annoyed, I was furious, I was disappointed, and I would say, since I have been reading the newspapers, I have never seen a more irresponsible piece of journalism than this. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Manning: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I thank the hon. Member for Diego Martin West for giving way and I would just like to advise this Parliament and the national community that the Minister of National Security is going to address the nation tonight on that matter. [*Desk thumping*] [*Interruption*]

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: Mr. Deputy Speaker, when I read the article, I looked at the cover. I saw a number of little bottles and phials with whatever they contain; but when I read the article I asked myself—the article is very dramatic—blindfolded and going to this secret location and so on, but apparently the person who took the picture was not blindfolded. So two persons from the media went to this site. It was so important that the media do not know where the site is, so you blindfold one to be photographed blindfolded, but the other one apparently took the photograph through his blindfold. It is either that or somebody else took the picture and gave it to the media. Either way we have to ask, what is going— [*Interruption*]

I read the article and, as I read the article, here are the substances that give us this headline and create this hysteria. Mr. Deputy Speaker—potash, borax, sulphate—you find that in any school chemistry lab in Trinidad and Tobago. Every chemistry lab in Trinidad and Tobago has those products in it. Carnauba wax. Do not get frightened, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Carnauba wax, I have a tin at home with which to polish my car. Talc—talcum powder—carbohydrate—carbohydrate is in the Port of Spain market by the tonnes—dasheen, yam, potato and peas. Mr. Deputy Speaker, when I read this—and, you know—cobalt, heavy metals.

What does that mean? So any person from anywhere in this country can just get up and call these names and say, “Well look, I am going to mix up all these things and blow up the country” and our citizens who run the newspapers could put that on the front page and tell us that there is this great terrorist threat and this newspaper now is all over the world; a world that is fearful of terrorism, absolutely no fact, the ranting and raving of the lunatic fringe, unsubstantiated, except for my colleagues on the other side who believe that this is quite dangerous and to be taken in the greatest terms and we must all now panic.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I read that article and I was unconvinced that there was any substance warranting the people of Trinidad and Tobago [*Desk thumping*]

being presented in this way to the world. We are doing ourselves an injury. We are doing ourselves an injustice. The people who are most exposed to those kinds of things are not doing that to themselves and we are trying to label ourselves. I do not know who is doing it but what I notice is the glee that my colleagues on the other side demonstrate when things like this appear. So this comes up on Sunday, we are in Parliament on Monday, my friend, the Member for Caroni East, comes up, right, hot on its heels, seeking to move a motion on the adjournment because—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Singh: “Yuh want me stay quiet?”

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley:—the country has to take this—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Singh: “Yuh want me stay quiet?”

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley:—now as a serious matter, adjourn the Parliament and deal with that. Mr. Deputy Speaker, in Shakespearian terms I would say I smell a device. In common, normal English I say, it may very well be that elements of the media are part of a conspiracy of the other side to defame this country [*Desk thumping*] [*Interruption*] because common sense and professional journalism would not express itself in that way. Common sense would not express itself in that way; and I will tell you all something. If you all believe that in so presenting this country “yuh” hurting the PNM, rest assured that “yuh” hurting every person in Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

The Member for Siparia spoke about the UNC mantra. They would like it to be so. “Nothing is working. Nothing built.” Those were her phrases. “Nothing is working; nothing built; terror!” They would like that to be the situation. They would like us to go down in flames and end up in ashes so that they can offer themselves as savers of Trinidad and Tobago. That is what it is all about, you know; mash up the country so that they could present themselves as saviours. They do not care, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if, in so doing, at the end of the day, all of us will pass in the rush [*Desk thumping*] because when you hurt Trinidad and Tobago you are not separating the PNM from the UNC or from anything, it is the entire country.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, my colleague, the Member for Siparia, stood here and says nothing has been built; no deshifting. Where does she live? If the Member was paying attention to what is going on in this country, that Member would never have come here this afternoon and said, “Nothing has been done about deshifting. We have not heard a word.” It was only last Monday the Marabella Junior Secondary was deshifted to start the programme of deshifting insofar as we

can go with it—last Monday. I am sure the Member for San Fernando East can confirm, the Marabella Junior Secondary was deshifted—

Mr. Manning: Last Monday.

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: Last Monday. [*Desk thumping*] She says not a school has been built. Mr. Deputy Speaker, on December 02, 2002 I went to Tobago. I spent two days with my colleagues over there and, as part of my visit to Tobago working with the THA, I went out to look at the development programme at work in Tobago. I went to Mason Hall and one of the finest secondary schools is almost complete in Mason Hall due to be opened in a matter of a few months, the same Mason Hall Secondary School that they refused to build. She said, “Diego Martin West should know because he was here fighting for schools”. Yes, I was fighting for the Mason Hall Secondary School and I can tell you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the school is about 90 per cent complete, being built during the same period of time when the Member for Siparia is saying nothing has been built.

I went to Goodwood. The Goodwood Secondary School is complete and about to be opened sometime soon. I went to Calder Hall. The Calder Hall school at that time was about 75 per cent complete, scheduled for completion in March. I went to the site in Speyside where I met work underway to start the construction of the Speyside school. The Vessigny school—I mean, why would a Member of Parliament come here and say, not a single school has been built in the last year when the Member knows for a fact that is not true?

The Member says not a road has been built. I would like to invite the Member to my own constituency in Diego Martin now where the Diego Martin highway is under construction. We are about to award contracts for the extension of the Churchill Roosevelt Highway out to Wallerfield; but a Member of Parliament comes here and makes a statement as if it is fact—“Nothing has been done.”

Housing; a few weeks ago I went out to Arima to look at some housing units being constructed as part of the national housing programme. I took part in the launch of the housing programme in Castara two weeks ago. All over the country houses are being constructed.

Mr. Sharma: None in South—none in South!

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: You want to discuss that?

Mr. Sharma: None in South. [*Interruption*]

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: This might be a good—[*Interruption*] This might be a good time to discuss that. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Member for Diego Martin—would the Member for Fyzabad please refrain from shouting across the floor?

Mr. Singh: Oh no; but you must have one law for some, not for the others? *[Interruption]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I just said refrain.

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: Mr. Deputy Speaker, they can shout, you know. The intention is that you must not hear what I have to say, right, *[Interruption]* that the people of Trinidad and Tobago must not hear what I have to say. He is shouting—*[Interruption]* He is shouting his normal mantra, implying that there is some discrimination. I mentioned a few projects to which I was personally and directly exposed in the last few weeks. The Member is shouting, but, let me draw to your attention *[Interruption]* why he is behaving like that. The list of primary schools that is *[Interruption]* agitating them—they are agitated about the list of primary schools.

Listen to the schools—St. Mary's Government *[Interruption]*; New Grant Government *[Interruption]*; Waterloo Hindu; Munroe Road *[Interruption]*; Cunupia Government *[Interruption]*; Reform Presbyterian *[Interruption]*; Reform Hindu *[Interruption]*; Tulsa Trace Hindu *[Interruption]*; Rock Road Government *[Interruption]*; Debe STMS; El Socorro South; Maloney Government; Icacos and Nariva. Except for Maloney Government—*[Interruption]*—except for Maloney Government, which the Member for Tabaquite removed from the programme, every other school was in a UNC constituency. *[Desk thumping]* *[Interruption]* Every other school—*[Interruption]*

Dr. Nanan: A point of order, 36(5). *[Interruption]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: No Member shall impute improper motives to any other Member of either chamber. Please continue.

Dr. Nanan: I never removed any school, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: Keep your seat. *[Interruption]* I mentioned—the package of schools that government of the UNC saw fit to treat with, interestingly enough, every single one just happened to have been in a UNC constituency. *[Desk thumping]* They did not—*[Interruption]*—in seeking to upgrade *[Interruption]* or replace old schools—*[Interruption]* and the shouting of the tall fellow from Nariva down there will not disturb me—they did not see the Point Cumana RC School, an old two-storey building where our children are in very difficult circumstances, far worse than any of the ones they are going to replace here,

but Point Cumana RC could not have formed part of the replacement package because it was not in a UNC constituency. That is how they run the country [*Desk thumping*] [*Interruption*]*—*and it is the same thing with Boissiere and Maraval. We talked here until the cows came home and they would not listen to us.

This is the package of schools. When the contract was awarded for Maloney—a contract was awarded for the construction of the Maloney school and the Minister of Education then said they offered the contractor money to walk away from the contract. [*Desk thumping*] They instructed the consultant to negotiate with the contractor to accept money and walk away so as not to build the school. So if you hear them getting on like that, you know why they have to get on like that, because they “doh” want you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to hear that. That is why it is only now that the PNM is in office that the officers have gone to Point Cumana RC, we are now designing a new school for Point Cumana and there will be a Point Cumana RC because there is a PNM Government. [*Desk thumping*] Not a single—[*Interruption*]

You want to tell me, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that a government of Trinidad and Tobago looks around the country to upgrade primary schools—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Member for Fyzabad, you are carrying on a constant tirade across the floor. The Hansard reporter cannot hear. Would you please be quiet?

Mr. Imbert: He is a disgrace.

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: So a government of Trinidad and Tobago sits and looks at all schools in the country which require attention and they would have us believe that nowhere in the whole of Trinidad and Tobago was there any other school that warranted attention but these schools that happened to be in their constituencies. Then they have the gall to come here Friday after Friday and either say or impute or imply that there is discrimination in the handling of public affairs!

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the reason I had to mention the Mason Hall school is because that was also a demonstration of how the UNC managed the affairs in this country. When we left government in 1995, we left World Bank approval to build four secondary schools at the time—Cunupia, Sangre Grande, Mason Hall and Diego Martin. The government changed at the end of '95. The new government, which happened to be the UNC government, moved post-haste and built the Cunupia school which has been in operation now for years. They took the Diego Martin school completely out of the development programme. It took me two

years of agitating in this Parliament to get the Diego Martin school put back on the programme and now that the PNM is in office we have to start from scratch. A school that should have been constructed in 1996, we are now starting from scratch to do designs and to proceed to construct under a PNM Government.

Mr. Sharma: “How many you build in Caroni?”

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: The Mason Hall school should have taken in students in September of 1997. I am now telling you, the construction is about 85 or 90 per cent complete because it is now being built. Sangre Grande is the same thing. The point I am making is that the way they were thinking, because the other three schools were not in their constituencies—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Member, stop. The hon. Member for Tabaquite is constantly raising points of order but does not know how to behave. If you do that again I shall be forced to deal with you in a way that you may not like.

Mr. Singh: I would like to get your ruling very clear, Mr. Deputy Speaker. [*Interruption*] Is it that you are saying the Member is prevented from raising a point of order?

Mr. Imbert: Sit down.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: He did not raise a point of order.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Not a point of order. [*Interruption*]

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: “You did not see what going on.”

Mr. Deputy Speaker: You—[*Interruption*—you—[*Interruption*] No, please, let me answer the hon. Member for Caroni East. All I am saying is, the hon. Member is very nice on his points of order but his behaviour, when he is sitting, is not of the same quality and therefore, because he knows his Standing Orders so well, I am telling him if he continues to misbehave by raising that newspaper anymore, I shall deal with him. That is the point I am making.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: “You not seeing what going on behind you.” [*Interruption*] “What I doing?” You see me raising a paper? [*Interruption*]

Hon. Dr. K Rowley: So, Mr. Deputy Speaker—so we had four schools in the programme. [*Interruption*] It is by pure happenstance that the only one of the four that could have been built during the tenure of the UNC is the one that was in a UNC constituency. That is just—[*Interruption*] The point is that you ran this country purely on discriminatory grounds, [*Desk thumping*] and the facts are there to show that. We would have had children in the Mason Hall school since 1997.

[*Interruption*] The Diego Martin school would have been built. The Sangre Grande school would have been built. You built along constituency interests. [*Interruption*] So when you come here and shout about discrimination, you are weighing our corn in your bushel. [*Interruption*] We do not behave like that. We run the country equally from Charlotteville to Icacos, [*Desk thumping*] from Carenage to Toco; and you will see that in this five-year term and the next five-year term and the next five-year term because the country has adjudicated on that kind of behaviour that you demonstrated. [*Interruption*]

Imagine, I had to sit here and hear the Member for Siparia asking, “Where de money gone?” [*Interruption*] talking about—paper money, expectation money, estimates, revenues not realized. We have not realized the revenue so the expenditure could not have been incurred and she stands here and talks about, “Where de money gone?” Would you believe these are the same people who are trying to make you think, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that they “doh” understand. They are pretending they “doh” understand. In the PNM’s case, “Where de money gone?” can be answered very simply in that we never got the revenues so there was no money to go anywhere.

Mr. Singh: That is not true!

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: In the UNC’s case—[*Interruption*] In the UNC’s case, we got the money and we paid it out to contractors in such a manner that what should have cost X ended up costing 10X. [*Interruption*] That was not a question of money not being there, it was a question of the money being there. [*Interruption*] You saw, Mr. Deputy Speaker, all the revelations—when I spoke in this Parliament about this government and its agencies approving a bifold door that you can buy from Young Sing for \$400 and they approved it for \$98,000, [*Interruption*] and closer home to the speaker, the Member for Siparia, Mr. Deputy Speaker—[*Interruption*] I have to speak to the Parliament, and I am, Mr. Deputy Speaker, asking your protection from that element over there.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Members for Nariva and Fyzabad, the hon. Member is asking for protection. I have sought on at least three occasions today to ask you to behave and to be quiet; at least, if you are talking to each other, to speak in a tone that does not disturb the proceedings of this House. You know very well that if I so desire I have the means to make you behave or to ask you to leave. I do not wish to do that and I am asking you, please, you will have an opportunity to speak and definitely the time will not disturb me. I will stay here all night if necessary. Please behave.

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I thank you for your ruling because I think it is important that the people of Trinidad and Tobago know the facts of their situation.

With respect to “Where the money gone”, real money, no less a person than my colleague, the Member for Siparia, should know, because this was the Member who went to Sackville Street before there was approval from Cabinet, the ministry that she ran went and committed the government to buying an old warehouse on Sackville Street—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Sharma: Nonsense!

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley:—painted it in green, and that expenditure was supposed to have been—

Dr. Nanan: On a point of order, 36(5).

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Overruled.

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: That expenditure totalled in the order of about \$35 million, and today the Government and people of Trinidad and Tobago are saddled with a property on Sackville Street that was meant to be a school, which cannot be used as a school. We own the property. There are two things that we can do with it now. We can either sell it or try to use it. If we try to sell that building, we would be very surprised if the Government can recover even a significant fraction of what was spent on the building, so the Government is now going to have to try to find some way to use that building that the government of a previous era, that the UNC government, saddled us with, by buying somebody’s warehouse and trying to use it as a school—\$35 million—and the Member comes here today and is trying to tell us that certain moneys could have been used to give children school places, knowing full well that, when she had the opportunity to spend government money, it was spent in the manner as it was spent on that Sackville Street school. [*Desk thumping*]

The Member comes here and talks about dealing with the accounts and accusing us of spending money illegally, and, “the Prime Minister appoint Cabinet” and the Cabinet did not have any head and did not have any foot and they could not “spend money from head to foot” and whatever, trying to confuse the public, to give the public the impression that the PNM Government has done something wrong, completely forgetting that the country has records. This is a record of a Report of the Auditor General on the Public Accounts of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago for the financial year 2000 October to 2001 September when the Member was a part of the Cabinet. Listen to what the Government’s

auditor had to say about their behaviour. I direct you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to the Ministry that I am now running, Planning and Development.

Mr. Sharma: What is the source?

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: The source? Auditor General's report—that is the source; and you have a copy.

Mr. Sharma: Which report?

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: I just quoted for you—2000 October to 2001. You are trying to distract me. I am not speaking to you. I am speaking to the public, the Deputy Speaker, the media and the people of Trinidad and Tobago. Under appropriation account, Ministry of Planning and Development, this is for the last year you were in the government—the UNC in government—October 2000 to September 2001. This is your record, your report—*[Interruption]*—2002, yes, sorry. It was the last year they were in government—appropriation account. This is an example, Mr. Deputy Speaker, one example and using my own Ministry to demonstrate it for you.

“Parliamentary approval was not seen for expenditure totalling \$32,219,508.93 which was incurred under a Development Programme project.”

Under one project; they have not been able to provide for the country's auditor—*[Interruption]* Mr. Deputy Speaker, since my colleague, the Member for Siparia, is shouting it did not say that, I would like to repeat what I just read.

It is here on page 48, Head of expenditure 21:

“Parliamentary approval was not seen for expenditure totalling \$32,219,508.93...under a Development Programme project.”

I will tell you worse than that. *[Interruption]* I will tell you worse than that, Mr. Deputy Speaker. While she is here holier than thou, talking about how the Government is handling the accounts and the variation bill and not accounting for last year and trying to fool the public, the Member knows full well that that accusation can only be properly placed at the foot of the UNC government which failed up to now, *[Desk thumping]*—it was the UNC government that did not close the accounts for the year 2001. The accounts had to be audited without being closed. Do you know what the implication of that is, Mr. Deputy Speaker? *[Interruption]* Do you know what the implication of that is? I want Members to understand what the implication of that is.

It means that all public servants that authorize expenditure on the instruction of those Ministers are now exposed. They are all exposed because they carried out—*[Interruption]*

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

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

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. Sharma: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I wonder if the Member would give way for a point of clarification?

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: I am not giving way. You spent half your time disturbing me and shouting at me.

Mr. Sharma: For a point of clarification.

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: I will not accommodate you. Normally I would accommodate a colleague but you have been very disruptive because you do not want the public to hear the facts. [*Desk thumping*] [*Interruption*]

Mr. Sharma: You are misleading the House.

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am reading from the report of the Auditor General from 2000 October to 2001 September. The UNC was in government for that entire period and the election took place in December, [*Interruption*] so they had from October 01, 2000 to December to close the accounts. [*Interruption*] They did not close the accounts. That is why— [*Interruption*—that is why, as you go through this document, I can give you some examples.

You go to the Ministry of Housing and Settlements and the report of the Auditor General would say:

“Parliamentary approval was not seen for expenditure totalling \$97,785,721.00...”

That is the Ministry of Housing and Settlements. [*Interruption*] You go to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; no approval seen for spending \$65 million. Every single Ministry where they spent these substantial sums of money, they did not follow the procedure, they did not close the accounts, they went out of office and the accounts had to be audited without being closed. Those public servants who used their office and authorized those expenditures are now exposed. They are exposed because the government never came to Parliament to protect them by closing the accounts and accounting for the expenditure; and she has the unmitigated gall to come here this afternoon and take up our time talking about the Government not treating with expenditure in ministries and moving funds

from one head to the other! *[Interruption]* The lawlessness that took place in this country was done under the UNC—*[Desk thumping]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when we come to the Parliament on a Friday, some people seem to leave their senses at home. The Member comes here and talks about—she asked about two schools, the Oropouche school and the Siparia school and is telling us that for four years those children in Oropouche and Siparia were suffering by being cooped up in some fowl coop somewhere. It seems as though during that four-year period, when they were the government of Trinidad and Tobago, they had no compassion for the children of Oropouche and Siparia. *[Desk thumping]* They only learn compassion when there is a PNM Government in office and that is good because they understand that compassion and good governance comes when Trinidad and Tobago has a PNM Government in office. *[Desk thumping]*

That is why the children in Siparia and Oropouche who, for four years, were in those conditions, can look forward to improved school conditions under a People's National Movement Government. *[Desk thumping]* The same way the children of Point Cumana can look forward to a new school, Point Cumana RC, so can the children of Siparia and Oropouche, because the Government of Trinidad and Tobago is not prepared to feed some and starve some. *[Desk thumping]* The PNM Government is not prepared to do that—*[Desk thumping]*

Mr. Imbert: Do not forget Paramin.

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley:—and we will not forget Paramin.

So here we have, Mr. Deputy Speaker, a situation where Members of Parliament are leading the charge to label the country in a devastating and damaging way, even when they cannot support it with information that is credible or with fact and substance. *[Interruption]* Even when they cannot, they are trying to give the impression that the country is in chaos and that circumstances are what they are not and that there is supposed to be fire and brimstone falling on the people of Trinidad and Tobago, as if we do not know what goes on in the country.

We are not saying that we have not got a crime problem. We have a serious crime problem. *[Desk thumping]* *[Interruption]* I live here, I do not need you—*[Interruption]*—I do not need anybody on the other side to convince me of the seriousness of the spate of crime. I do not need anybody on the other side to tell me that we are all exposed to the wiles of the criminal element; but when you come here and try to give the impression that was not or would not be so under a UNC government, I draw the line between fact and folly. In fact, a significant

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portion of the UNC is either in jail, in the courthouse or on the way to the courthouse. [Desk thumping] [Laughter] So “doh” come here and tell me about crime. You think crime is only murder? [Interruption] [Laughter] You know they say, “Hell hath no fury like a woman scorned.” Hell in Trinidad and Tobago hath no fury like a UNC voted out of office. [Desk thumping]

Mr. Imbert: “Like dey get a bad horn!”

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: They intend to destroy the country if they could, but the people of Trinidad and Tobago are smarter than that. They know how to ignore you. The same way the people of Trinidad and Tobago will ignore the Member for Siparia who came here this afternoon trying to mislead them into believing that the PNM Government refused to spend over \$100 million on national security is the same way they will ignore all your fulminations.

We will treat with our problems; we will treat with our ne’er-do-wells, including you, but at the end of the day we are asking you, please, stop bad-mouthing Trinidad and Tobago. It is damaging to the interests of the people of Trinidad and Tobago. [Desk thumping] [Interruption] If you held no title it would have been okay, but you hold the lofty title of Members of Parliament, former Prime Minister, former Attorney General, so when you speak people would listen to you, unsuspecting persons who think that what you are saying is true. [Interruption]

You know, as she mentions newspapers, it is only when the PNM is in Government that my friends from the other side give any credence to newspapers. They spent the whole time in government telling the country, “Doh read the *Newsday*. Doh read the *Guardian*. Doh read the *Express*”—[Interruption]

Mr. Imbert: “Doh buy the *Newsday*.”

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley:—and she comes here this afternoon and spends her entire contribution reading ad infinitum page after page after page of the newspapers; but when the same newspapers talk about corruption, they say no. When they talk about assassination of their members, they say no. It seems as though it is only when stories in the newspapers can be used to foster their intention to paint Trinidad and Tobago as an unpleasant place, that is the only time that the UNC mouthpieces [Interruption] acknowledge the existence of the newspapers. That is the only time. [Interruption]

However, we do not need advice from you about reading the newspapers. We do not call on the people of this country to boycott and sabotage the newspapers. We want them to read the newspapers because the newspapers inform them and

an informed population is an advanced and enlightened population. [*Desk thumping*] We ask them to “read papers”. [*Desk thumping*] We know that it will not all be good news. We know that there are days there will be bad news in there. We do not terrorize editors. We do not ban newspapers.

Mr. Sharma: Oh yeah?

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: You only come up and say—[*Interruption*—it is only when it serves your purpose. You come and spend the whole afternoon reading the *Newsday*—Donna Yawching. Could you imagine a member of the UNC coming to this Parliament quoting Donna Yawching?

Mr. Imbert: “Oooh good! She do dat? Yuh joking!”

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: When Donna Yawching was writing about their excesses in the last six years, she was the devil incarnate.

Mr. Imbert: She was a criminal.

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: She was a criminal; but today her writings are being held up, hopefully, to demonstrate that Trinidad and Tobago is going the way the UNC would hope it would go.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have no doubt that we have difficulties and that is why you elect governments. Every single day there are problems to be solved. The people of Trinidad and Tobago, in their wisdom, got out of office persons who were not serving their interests. Some problems can be solved immediately; some problems have a longer gestation period before you get to a solution. What we can guarantee, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that the manner of doing business in Trinidad and Tobago is quite different. We observe the law, we follow procedures and we address the problems in the best interest of the people of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

We will not deny where there are problems but we will not fuel hysteria. We will address some problems simultaneously, and others one by one, as the circumstances warrant or permit; but what we expect of our colleagues on the other side is that, since we have been selected by the people of Trinidad and Tobago to look after their interests, we are pleading with our colleagues on the other side to use the Parliament in a way that would be a credit to the people of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

It does no one any good when a former minister of government stands here and performs in the way my colleague, the Member for Siparia, performed and, as she sits, every single point she tried to raise can be refuted as mischief, malice or

ignorance. [*Desk thumping*] It does none of us any good because sometimes you wonder, is it that the Parliament cannot be used for the development of the people of Trinidad and Tobago?

In my portfolio, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I spend a lot of time telling the country that it is the intention of the PNM to encourage Trinidad and Tobago, all our people, to aspire towards becoming a developed country by the year 2020. I say that the behaviour of my colleagues, as demonstrated this afternoon, is not worthy of any Parliament or any country wanting to become a developed country. [*Desk thumping*] The Opposition has a duty—[*Interruption*—the Opposition has a duty to question the Government, to criticize the Government; and the Government has a duty to answer those questions and face up to criticism. What we cannot accept is Members coming day after day, purporting to present facts when, in fact, what they are doing is twisting information to fool the public into creating scenarios to make us look, as a people, as if we had lost our way. [*Interruption*] We have not lost our way. Trinidad and Tobago is on [*Interruption*] towards treating with its problems and by the time your shoutings are over and your “ra-ra” behaviour is over, the people would thank us again for saving them from what was your tenure, a period of unmitigated disaster. I thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Members, the sitting of this House is suspended till 5.00 p.m.

4.30 p.m.: *Sitting suspended.*

5.03 p.m.: *Sitting resumed.*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Member, did you complete your contribution?

Dr. Rowley: Yes, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Oropouche.

Dr. Roodal Moonilal (Oropouche): Thank you. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I rise to join this debate that has taken on several dimensions in the pre-tea interval session. We have had two statements from the Government Benches and one contribution from my colleague, the Member for Siparia. I will seek to address matters raised, not only as they relate to the Bill itself, but also to respond to issues and criticisms raised by our friends on the other side.

The Bill seeks to vary the appropriation provided for by the Appropriation Act 2002 and to authorize the utilization of any sums accruing from a reduction in expenditure under certain heads of expenditure for the purpose of meeting any liability incurred through the increase in expenditure in other heads. Our understanding

is that this Bill seeks to approve the lateral movement of funds from one head of expenditure to another and, by implication, from one ministry to another.

Apart from that, there are certain fundamental issues that come to the fore in addressing this Bill, which Bill has wide ranging implications, not only on matters of spending but on matters of governance. There are issues of governance and political culture and there are issues as they relate to the framework within which the Government operates. So there are two levels; one is to look at the Bill and discuss issues as they relate to the sums of money, \$27 million here, \$7 million there or \$53 million wherever. The other area is really to focus on matters of governance and political culture and to raise matters that we on this side feel are critical and important in the national interest.

We use this opportunity as well, as we do every week, to raise matters which we believe are in the public interest and for which we owe a duty to the Parliament and to the country, to warn in some cases, to advise, to counsel or to humbly suggest. This is all part of our duty when we meet here. It is on those two levels which I would base my contribution. I would also seek to respond to a few issues raised by our friend, the Member for Diego Martin West, in his contribution to this debate. I would do that as we move along.

It is our understanding that this Bill is about lateral transfers. It is not a bill that seeks approval for new spending, for more money. It really seeks approval for juggling funds, as it were, between one head and another. That is why we were a bit confused when the Member for Diego Martin West, in his wide ranging contribution, suggested that there was a shortfall in anticipated revenues of \$1.5 billion—that is the figure he gave—and because of that shortfall and the global economic realities arising out of the post-September 11, 2001 events, this gave rise in some way to this movement, transfer of funds and so on. He sought to condemn those of us on this side, as if we did not understand the global economic reality; as if we did not understand events arising out of that and as if we were talking about increasing funding, when we were talking—and the Member for Siparia made the point—about transfers and what this means for policy.

The issue here is: If you move funds from the Ministry of National Security, as they did, into another heading, that will be done according to some priority—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Valley: Let me try; I know my colleague tried to explain. What you are moving, really, understand it, is an appropriation, an approval. This Parliament gave approval to spend \$124 million more in national security. However, because there was no money, there was not that cash, that was not spent. So one is simply at book.

Dr. R. Moonilal: Mr. Deputy Speaker, if my friend, the Member for Diego Martin Central, would allow me to finish when I am making a point and not rise in that way, I will also explain what I mean. Let me just put Members on the other side on notice; if you spring up when I am on my first or second sentence, you will not understand clearly what I am saying. I will have to make this sort of comment time and time again, so please, allow me. The Member for Diego Martin Central and others on that side will have ample opportunity to correct me if I am wrong and to make criticisms on my contribution.

The issue is the movement of funds, but the Member for Diego Martin West introduced to this debate that issue about the shortfall and the need to transfer funds to meet what we presume to be policy objectives, meaning, that if the Government before 2002 had budgeted a certain sum for the Ministry of Finance and a certain sum for the Ministry of National Security, it was felt, by their thinking, that they needed more money in the Ministry of Finance, for example, and because funds were not being used for the purpose for which the funds were there in the Ministry of National Security, that purpose no longer existed, so they moved funds in accordance with some preconceived policy framework. I think I made myself very clear.

The argument we are raising is that when you quote from page 6—[*Interruption*]

Dr. Rowley: Thank you. I am indebted to the Member for clarification. On the matter of national security, what I did was to reiterate the explanations given. The explanations were that the moneys could not have been paid because the negotiations to which the moneys applied were not concluded in that year and, in one instance, in item B in your own report, that the estimates were generous and they were beyond what were actually incurred with respect to certain aspects of the security services. So it was not a question of moving the money here and not carrying out what the approval was supposed to do. That is all I said.

Dr. R. Moonilal: Thank you Member for Diego Martin West. [*Crosstalk*] I do not want to go over those lines that I made earlier for the Member for Diego Martin Central. We are not disagreeing. It is very interesting; they are disturbing me as if I am saying something with which they do not agree. I understood thoroughly the point made by the Member when he outlined point, A, B, C, on page 16 and suggested that the money was approved for a particular purpose, the purpose was no longer necessary, given contract negotiations and so on, so that money was not used for that.

The point we are making and to which we are sticking firm, is that National Security is a critical department of this Government. National Security is a critical

need for our population at this time. The point we are making is that not a day goes by when those in the protective services, be it the police, army, fire service and so on, do not complain and raise an alarm about the resources that are available to them.

Quite recently, the Minister of National Security, at a function to give out a certain number of vehicles, another minister colleague made a joke about the police destroying a vehicle and the head of the army, the Chief of Staff—it is in the newspaper—said that the resources we were giving to the protective services were but a mere drop in the bucket; meaning that those resources were by far insufficient. That is the point. When you transfer \$124 million from the Ministry of National Security to other ministries, because the reason it was there in the first place does not exist, it suggests that you do not take into consideration the demands of the protective services for carrying out their job, which is to protect the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] That is the point.

So whether you had contract salary negotiations with the public service or the Chief Personnel Officer, there was no need for payment of increased salaries. We accept “Number of contracts awarded in 2002, but delivery and payment effected in fiscal 2003”, but we are saying there are needs in that service which those men and women are pleading and begging for but they are begging and pleading on deaf ears. They are removing \$124 million from the Ministry of National Security, because there is no use for it there. So they are saying to us that there is no use for extra vehicles; there is no use for modern weaponry; there is no use for more manpower for the protective services and there is no use for those resources to protect our citizens. I hope they understand my point now. They may disagree, but I hope they understand. [*Crosstalk*]

This country has reached a stage today where terrorists are holding press conferences. People who are claiming to threaten this country are now inviting members of the press. When I read that report, I thought it was in Afghanistan or Kabul somewhere. It was on television, on CNN and so on, that you Christiane Amanpour was going into the caves at Afghanistan, secretly, to get an interview with Osama Bin Laden and whoever. Imagine in Trinidad and Tobago, blindfolding journalists to take them to their labs. This Trinidad and Tobago! [*Crosstalk*] They are having press conferences like the Cabinet. This is like a Cabinet press conference. Every Thursday they have a press conference; terrorists calling in the press as well. In fact, the next person to be called in might be the Member for San Fernando East, because he is in a state of disbelief as to the threat posed by certain elements in this country. This is the situation we have reached.

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When time and time again we raised this issue, those on the other side made fun of us. Let me make the point very clearly: I do not believe that all the Members on the other side will deal with this issue in such a flippant dismissive manner. The Member for Diego Martin West said that there was a picture of some things, which he has in car polish, shoe polish, head polish or something like that, at his home. I forgot which polish he said. That is how they deal with this matter; flippant, dismissive. It is a joke for them; national security is a joke and it must be a joke for them.

We are getting to newspapers now. Several editorials in the newspapers over the past 12 months, with monotonous frequency, have raised questions and even gone so far as to condemn the Ministry and the Minister of National Security. Several editorials have raised questions about the handling of national security by this Government and, particularly, the Member for San Fernando East, the Prime Minister. That is a fact. I will not spend time pulling up on my computer all the editorials which we have filed or spend time quoting from the *Express* editorial of Monday, December 30, 2002:

“Poor judgment by Manning”

I do not have to quote from the *Trinidad Guardian* of December 31, 2002:

“No time for rubber talk”

I do not have to quote from other clips from the newspapers dealing with crime in security. It is a fact; it is beyond doubt, that in this country the majority of citizens have no faith in the Government and the Minister of National Security in dealing with crime. [*Desk thumping*]

I want to say, for the benefit of those on the other side, particularly, the Member for Diego Martin West, there is a reason we rely on the newspapers.

Dr. Rowley: You do?

Dr. R. Moonilal: There is a reason we now quote newspapers, because when we ask a question in the House, we get the answer in the *Business Guardian*. [*Desk thumping*] So we must take what they are writing seriously; we must read; we must quote, because before the information comes to the Parliament, chances are it will be at a media house. This is why we are quoting from newspapers.

You know what is interesting, Mr. Deputy Speaker? The Member for Diego Martin West, on his feet a few minutes ago, held up a copy of the *Express* with the blazing headline, “Terror threat” and he said that was an example of irresponsible journalism, if ever he saw one. [*Crosstalk*] But it is very interesting,

when that newspaper and other newspapers were giving a daily ball-by-ball account of the enquiry into the Piarco Air Terminal, that was responsible journalism.

Dr. Rowley: That was fact.

Dr. R. Moonilal: Whether the business of that commission of enquiry is being conducted with a level of integrity or not, is a different matter. When the newspapers gave those exposés, that was responsible journalism, but when they have a headline “Terror threat”, that is irresponsible. “How can they write that? That is irresponsible.”

It is also part of another problem which came to the fore very early in their term of administration. Usually the problem I am now going to single out would develop later on in their third or fourth year, but there is a problem that has emerged after a few months in office. So I imagine that their few months in office constitute their midterm; this might well be midterm. They have developed a worrying habit, paranoia with the UNC government. At every turn they are blaming all the ills that beset us on the UNC.

The travel advisories of the United Kingdom and the United States issue warnings about bandits, robbery, kidnapping and murder. Their response to that is: “The Member for Couva North bad talking the country all over the world;” send senior Cabinet Ministers to do damage control.

Mr. Partap: Retirees.

Dr. R. Moonilal: I have here as well on my computer, Mr. Deputy Speaker, a new travel advisory from Australia:

“Armed robbery is also prevalent, particularly in the Capital of Trinidad, Port of Spain and when traveling from Piarco Airport. “

Apparently the Australian authorities did not hear the contribution of the Member for Arouca South. Had they heard that, they would not have issued this advisory. Had they the benefit of being reassured by the Member for Arouca South that banditry to and from the airport is not an issue any more; it ceased since last April—so you were in trouble last April, but not this year—had the Australians the benefit of that contribution, they would not have highlighted this. In fact, the responsible Australians could not have done that.

So Australia is now warning their travellers in this travel advisory to beware. I quote again:

“Petty crime, including bag snatching, pick pocketing and thefts from cars is common, especially in and around major tourist attractions, public transport and in larger cities.” [*Crosstalk*]

The conclusion I have now reached is that we need to dispatch a senior Cabinet minister to Australia to do damage control. I might suggest my friend, the Member for Diego Martin East; he has done enough damage here and cannot control. He might now go to Australia and seek to do damage control; so we need to go to Australia.

When it was confronted by all these travel advisories, the Government said that it was a domino effect. It is really a domino effect. I do not want to abbreviate the word “domino” to say what type of effect I think it is. It is not a domino effect; it might be something else. The new paranoia of the day is that the Member for Couva North and the former Minister of Housing are responsible; they “bad talk” the country all over the world and the authorities in Britain and the United States listened to the distinguished Member for Couva North and wrote into their travel advisories, “Beware”. I think that the distinguished Member for Couva North should now tell these people in those capitals that the PNM is the problem. If he is held in such high esteem and his advice is held in such high esteem that he could shape a travel advisory, that is what we suggest.

This Bill brings to the fore issues of governance. Mr. Deputy Speaker, you will recall that in the last campaign we raised issues—[*Interruption*—you could sleep as you normally do—dealing with crime and terrorism and we told the country that if, by “hook or crook”, the PNM got into office—and it was the latter in our view—this would happen. We told the country that there would be rampant crime if the PNM came into office by “hook or crook”. There would be rampant crime, kidnapping and murder; so said, so done. I am now saying, “Delivered on that promise”.

We told them that the health services would collapse—delivered. We told them the price of food would go up—delivered. We told them there would be joblessness and unemployment—delivered. We told them there would be more corruption, waste and mismanagement—delivered. [*Crosstalk*] The UNC delivered on our warnings, aided and abetted by the regime on the other side. This is what confronts us today: crime and insecurity—delivered. [*Crosstalk*]

Another matter that raised its head early in their administration is wanton waste, mismanagement and corruption—delivered.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Delivered!

Dr. R. Moonilal: That matter has raised its head early in the administration. I am happy that the Member for Arouca South is so vocal, because she reminds me of a point related to her. The Member for Arouca South reminds me of a matter

which I may have forgotten. It came to the public light, just recently, a major scandal involving recruitment at the Water and Sewerage Authority.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Fritz.

Dr. R. Moonilal: Not that; I am coming to that just now. Another scandal came within recent times. While they could not explain to this country why they spent thousands and thousands of dollars to introduce a gentlemen to the national community, it came to light recently, courtesy the *Business Guardian*:

“Money flowing like water”

Today, their administration is covered in dirt and grime—[*Laughter*] that is where they have reached—delivered; and they wanted to jail poor Roodal Moonilal. Let me read this article: The Chief Executive Officer of WASA is receiving—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Please state where it is from, just for the record.

Dr. R. Moonilal: The *Business Guardian*, Sir, of Thursday January 23, 2003, business@ttol.co.tt, which we could pull up on the computer as well. The CEO receives, on a contract for three years: \$50,000 per month; \$600,000 per year; 10 per cent housing allowance, \$5,000 per month; bonus of 15 per cent contract fee—I guess that bonus would be for performance at WASA—\$90,000 paid annually, bonus; gratuity, 25 per cent of contract; overseas travel grant, \$2,500 per month—that is whether the gentleman goes overseas, over land or water, whatever, \$2,500 per month; professional and club fees, \$500 a month, \$6,000 a year. So because of that stressful job he could pay to go Moka the Sunday before Carnival. [*Crosstalk*]

Let me continue, Mr. Deputy Speaker. He gets an unlimited entertainment allowance.

Hon. Members: Oooh!

Dr. R. Moonilal: Not even the distinguished Member for Couva South could get that at Petrotrin. [*Crosstalk*] Telephone and utilities paid; cell and landlines, free; gasoline, free; executive level car, \$450,000, maintained by WASA with a driver; that is the package. You know the bigger scandal is that they are not paying for his water bill. They are not paying for the WASA bill, but they are paying for everything else. Cabinet would have approved this, of course, surely. [*Crosstalk*] Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are informed that this package is over 50 per cent higher than the last CEO of WASA who they got rid of; a national scholar. [*Crosstalk*]

I have here information that at the Water and Sewerage Authority there was a performance appraisal at which this lucky gentlemen came third out of three

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managers. He came last in a performance appraisal; look at the contract. When we raised those matters, they only wanted to dwell on the airport. This matter strikes at the heart of governance, look at this. [*Crosstalk*]

On the other matter dealing with WASA, in terms of appointment, I do not want to go there, because I do not want anybody to jump up and talk about imputing improper motives. All I want to say, for the benefit of the Government, is that a school-leaving certificate is not an attainment. You get a school-leaving certificate for leaving school; it is not really a professional attainment. If you leave school, you get a school leaving certificate.

Dr. Rowley: Like you like him or what?

Dr. R. Moonilal: We have witnessed the rampant—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Members, please.

Dr. R. Moonilal: We have witnessed the rampant misuse of funds. While we look at the misuse of funds and the mismanagement and corruption, they want to dwell on the UNC; there is a paranoia. You would think if the UNC did not exist everything would have been great in this country. [*Crosstalk*] There would have been no crime, no murder, no kidnapping. The travel advisory would have been rosy, if the UNC did not exist. This is their attitude: to blame the UNC.

When you look at how they use these funds, which they are transferring, since coming into office by decree—We need to put on record continuously that they came into office under very suspicious circumstances of a transfer of power outside of winning an election. In the last election, 1,200 citizens over about three constituencies put them there, and we have serious doubts about how that election was conducted. It is really unfortunate for the Government, not the country, that they cannot point to an international advisory group or international watchdog group that could say categorically that the last election was fair and free and free from fear, because when we sought to invite international observers they rejected that. So, today, they can sit there in their glee, happy; of course, murder, kidnapping are irrelevant, but there is no international observer group to testify on the conduct of the last general election. That is important—1200 people.

Throughout the 2002 term we raised the matter of spending. We raised the matter of using taxpayers' money to set the stage for an obscene buyout of the electorate. They transferred and created programmes, so much so that it led us to suggest that they were conducting their business in a 10-days mentality. [*Crosstalk*] They are about handouts and hands up; that is how they conduct

business. They created programmes for temporary employment so they could trap a voting block and get into office.

They credited the Youth Apprenticeship Programme for Agriculture (YAPA) and, as soon as the election finished, that programme finished. As soon as the election was finished, they said, "We are reviewing that programme." As soon as they hired 600 people in certain constituencies, they reviewed the programme. I suspect that the programme will return near the local government election. This is how they spend the money.

We raised the matter of corruption in the Unemployment Relief Programme. [Crosstalk] In the *Trinidad Guardian* of Saturday, July 6, 2002 on the front page:

"Government probes URP ghost gangs" [Interruption]

This is in the *Guardian*, not *The Probe*, you heard wrong.

"Minister of Local Government Jarrette Narine has promised a shake-up in the Unemployment Relief Programme after an investigation has uncovered several ghost gangs operating in several districts." [Crosstalk]

What shake up?

Hon. Member: He is shaking down.

Dr. R. Moonilal: It was not milkshake. What shake-up is this? We are waiting for the report. The Minister said that they would undertake to do an investigation and report to the population on these ghost gangs. This was in July 2002; to this day, the population has heard nothing of a report on the findings. [Crosstalk]

We also raised another matter. It became public knowledge earlier on that there were ghost gangs operating in the National Housing Authority programme, so much so that there were people collecting money going by the name of Jennifer Lopez and Serena Williams. On that occasion we said that they were taking corruption to star status; it was the first time. When that matter was raised the Member for San Fernando East assured this House that an investigation was going to be conducted and the findings will be made public. [Crosstalk] We are still waiting for the investigation, the findings, the revelations; NHA ghost gangs; millions of dollars of taxpayers' money, but every time we raise our voice, they ask, "What allyuh talking about, the airport?" The same airport everybody is using; I notice that nobody has boycotted the airport.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: What do you want us to do?

Dr. R. Moonilal: Another piece of information on a former Senator on the other side, Muhammad Shabazz, quoting from the *Newsday* of December 21, 2002:

“Shabazz fired from NHA job”

He was dismissed on the grounds of using materials from the programme to construct a wall behind his house. That is the explanation they gave. This is how they conduct their business. So corruption NHA, corruption URP, WASA, high salaries and so on, they cannot explain; paying all that money.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, you will recall some time in November when a child fell in a hole that was left uncovered by WASA and died. They could not find the funds to cover up this hole, but they could find the funds to pay club fees and so on for the Chief Executive Officer; that is how they use the resources of the State. [*Crosstalk*] They had to transfer more and more funds, because they appointed high level party operatives on their side to very high paying jobs in the public sector. One such job was at the Airports Authority, where the former public relations officer of the ruling party—*Interruption*]

Mr. Manning: Current.

Dr. R. Moonilal: I stand corrected by the hon. Prime Minister and Leader of the PNM, the current Public Relations Officer of the party is the executive assistant to a non-executive Chairman at the Airports Authority. That by itself is one thing, but we have some doubts about that position and how someone could occupy a position like that as a sitting member of the executive committee of the ruling party.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, do you know that if you apply for a job with the Airports Authority as an estate constable—imagine that, an estate constable, not a manager, supervisor, accounting manager or communications officer—you must have some qualifications; of course, a school leaving certificate, but you must apply to the executive assistant to the chairman. You do not apply to the human Resource Manager or the Director of Human Resources, you apply to the public relations officer of the ruling party, if you want to be an estate constable at Piarco; that is where we are today. It is no secret what would be the bias. It is not secret the employment patterns that will follow. [*Crosstalk*]

In the Southwest Regional Health Authority, if you want a bigger job, let us say, like administrative secretary, general manager and so on, you have to apply, again, not to Human Resources, not to the Vice-President of Human Resources, for example, but to the Chief Executive officer. You apply to someone who has been appointed by political means. This is the problem we have had all the time with jobs for family members.

I want to put on the record and to be fair: If the relatives, friends or acquaintances of those on the Government Benches are qualified and they are able to do the job, like the relative of the Member for San Fernando East, they have gone through the procedure by applying through the newspapers and so, they have been interviewed and selected, by all means, whether they are UNC, PNM, NAR, Team Unity or whatever, they should get the job.

We have no problem with the appointment at the Ministry of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development, if they follow the process. What we have a problem with is where you have friends and relatives not qualified to do a particular job, getting the job at astronomical salaries. It is a problem of ethics and misuse of funds. There are two problems. They can bring a string of allegations about the UNC; they can bring them, we like hearing that every week like a mantra, but we have to deal with the problems that confront society today, which are mismanagement and abuse of office in this way, nepotism. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker, they have conducted their business and when they are caught they quickly rush to the House and under the arrangements for proceedings they indicate that a report is coming; investigations will be made, for example, on the NHA and the URP. We have seen no report. Those of us on this side raised the issue. The issue was not raised in secret, behind closed doors; it was raised in the Parliament. We get assurances in the Parliament that investigations will be undertaken and reports will be made public. We are waiting for the URP. We are waiting for the NHA.

We had two others, another headline:

“\$20m TSTT fraud”

December 28, 2002, in the *Guardian*. Again, reports are being done, investigations are being made, but you have not heard anything about this \$20 million fraud at TSTT. *The Wire* in October 2002:

“Parents uncover \$40 book grant racket at Treasury”

Serious matter; no investigation. [*Crosstalk*] We do not hear of these commissions of enquiry into all these allegations. Nobody is interested in that. You know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when we talk about crime, another pet line of theirs is that we are concerned with murder and kidnapping, but white-collar crime is also important. We know their position on white-collar crime; we want to know what is their position on the other colour crimes. What is their position on that? We know about the commissions of enquiry and so on, but what is your position on the other colour crimes, blue colour crime, robbery, kidnapping and murder?

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There are businessmen and women and others who are packing up themselves or packing the suitcases of their children and shipping them off to other areas in the world. They are leaving because of the inability of this administration to address the issue of crime. We want to clarify another issue. It is not simply a matter that in 1991 there were 91 murders and in the 2002 there were 171; it is not simply a matter of statistics, because 91 murders is 91 murders too many. What matters is that they have not demonstrated the capacity to deal with the problem. Whether it is AIDS as a social problem, delinquency, poverty or crime, what is required is strong political leadership and innovative public policy, because to deal with any social problem, whether it is poverty, delinquency or HIV/AIDS, public policy is important. [*Crosstalk*] Public policy is really driven by political directorates. When the entire society believes that this Government is weak in dealing with crime and terrorism, therein lies the problem.

They can huff and puff how much they want and blame the hon. Member for Couva North for ill speaking the country, but they cannot abdicate responsibility for these serious problems that bedevil Trinidad and Tobago.

When we had the honour to lead this country and provide good governance, sure there were problems in the health service, I want to admit: nurses were up in arms; junior doctors; maintenance workers. When we had the honour to provide good governance, we had problem, but the health services did not collapse on us. It was not reduced to a ghost town. The San Fernando General Hospital was not reduced to a ghost town.

Last week a reporter reporting for the TTT news—not the irresponsible *Express* and CCN—said that she was at the San Fernando General Hospital with a relative who had a problem needing emergency treatment. On the news she gave an account of what was happening there with patients bleeding, needing treatment, no doctors, no support. That is under their watch; that did not happen when the UNC was there. Do you know who is responsible for that? The local version of Dr. Jack Kevorkian is responsible.

Just as that medical doctor in the United States would take lives, there is also one in Trinidad who is responsible for that crisis. It is the result of the brinkmanship of the Member for Diego Martin East that the health sector has collapsed on us. That has collapsed so let us move forward and forget health now. That has collapsed; it has gone; move on and try to prevent the water system, telephone and electricity from collapsing. We should just leave the health sector out of this, because it has collapsed and gone. Draw a line; that has gone, there is nothing to be done. [*Crosstalk*]

A few weeks ago, I had to appeal to the Member for San Fernando East, my parliamentary representative, that if he wanted, in some way or another, to influence the political life of the Member for Diego Martin East, he could have done that without destroying the health services. He did not have to destroy the health services—

Hon. Member: To get rid of him.

Dr. R. Moonilal: I say no more. That is where the health services have reached in this country. You do not have to destroy that. Then, if he wanted to destroy the Minister of Public Utilities, what will he do? Those are serious issues.

The doctors have all said it is abundantly clear that there is only one burning issue with the health sector crisis and that, really, is the conduct, the attitude, personality and the brinkmanship of the Minister of Health and, of course, there is a heavy word which I do not use normally, the arrogance. We believe that the Member for San Fernando East should take note of that.

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

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

Question put and agreed to.

Dr. R. Moonilal: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It is not just in the areas of health, crime and terrorism that today this country is unrecognizable from what it was in December 2001. It is also the issues that affect ordinary people in terms of their capacity to buy food, to live and to meet a decent standard of living. While the Government has moved late, but with precision, to implement the recommendation of the Minimum Wages Board to issue an \$8 minimum wage, on the one hand, the price of flour has now increased, by what we have calculated, to 30 per cent since the transfer of power in December 2001. The price of food is now going up.

Whenever this issue is raised in the public domain, there is a response emanating from the Government that the increase in the price of flour will lead to us becoming better citizens, more disciplined. Then we should increase, not only the price of flour but also the price of all foodstuff, because we would be much more disciplined, if that is the case. That is the response we get to the food price increase. It is really consistent with the response we will get on crime; the situation is getting better.

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It is tragic that last week when all these travel advisories came out, the state-owned TTT carried a broadcast that a German cruise ship had arrived. They interviewed these people who were speaking a mixture of German and English. They said, “We feel safe here; there is no problem, and they portrayed it as notwithstanding the travel advisory people were coming. Two days after, a next report:

“4 Germans robbed”

I imagine we will now have a travel advisory in German, because the last advisory was in English. We might have one in German to warn the German tourists about coming here. But the Government’s response is the same, blame the UNC. So food prices go up, they blame the UNC for that.

It is interesting that in all the transfers of funds here, the Ministry of Health is not featured; it had enough money. They did not add to or decrease from the Ministry of Health; I do not know if that is good or bad. So this is the issue here. [*Crosstalk*]

The issues of jobs and joblessness are also coming to the fore. I predict, as is already happening now, that a big tidal wave of protest will come flowing as it relates to unemployment and retrenchment, that is what will happen. You look at the newspapers: job loss at Petrotrin; job loss at Trinidad Cement Limited; job loss at the National Broadcasting Network; job loss at BWIA; job loss all about—delivered. The bombshell of all will be 9,000 to go at Caroni (1975) Limited. So there is no consideration of the implications for the community in Caroni or the businesses of Caroni (1975) Limited.

In my constituency, in places like Penal, Debe, Friendship Village and Golconda are sugar settlements. They are very close on the border, if not within San Fernando East. These are villages supported by the sugar industry in San Fernando East. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Members, please. The din is disturbing the Hansard reporter. I am not hearing the Member for Oropouche at all.

Dr. R. Moonilal: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Notwithstanding all the parliamentary seminars, it seems that some things will not change.

The point I am making relates to how the Government conducts the business of the people. Job loss is a serious issue, several people will lose their jobs. Communities will be wrecked in the Caroni environment, south and central. While that is happening, the Government points to the statistical surveys that suggest that unemployment is going down. So we hear from those on the other

side that unemployment has now reached a new low of nine point something per cent. They are now suggesting that this has something to do with their policies and patterns of governance and with their giving out brooms, rakes and so on.

In the last issue of *Economic Review*, Vol. Six, No. 4 of January 2003, issued by the First Citizens Bank, they take note of the decrease in the unemployment level and they put a figure for June 2002 as 10.1 per cent. [*Crosstalk*] I have seen January 2003; this is January 2003. So in the third quarter—I am not doubting the Central Bank reports that the unemployment figure fell to nine point something per cent, but single digit unemployment.

It is interesting that the Government raised that, because the First Citizens Bank said that with the decrease in unemployment, the lowest rate recorded in 20 years, the main factor behind that decrease was a reduction in the labour force numbers from 582.6 thousand to 577.4 thousand. So the unemployment figure went down because the labour force went down as well. [*Interruption*] The First Citizens Bank, January 2003. That will not show anything positive. The labour force was reduced, so unemployment went down; less people unemployed, vis-à-vis, the working force. Do you understand? That is the point; so we will not accept that.

I want to come back to the Member for Diego Martin West's contribution. He began by saying that it was not his intention to participate in this debate. If it was one statement I believed from his entire contribution, it was that he did not intend. If he did not intend, he would not prepare and, clearly, he was not prepared. It was an opportunity to take advantage of the media and the lights and so on, and I do not blame him but, clearly, it was not his intention to participate and because of that, understandably so, he did not prepare himself. We believe that.

6.00 p.m.

He went on to castigate the UNC and suggested that we did not close the accounts of 2001, and what an unforgivable crime it was that the UNC had committed again, and he quoted from the Auditor General and so on.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the accounts for 2001 would have been closed in 2002 because they were in office, put there by presidential decree. There was no Parliament in 2002 and they failed to elect a Speaker, so they are trying to close off the accounts for 2002 in 2003. The logic is that for 2001, it would have been done in 2002 when there was no Parliament. That is how they con people.

There is a committee to look at the Standing Orders and Members should not get up—and the first thing being said is how many years they are here in

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Parliament because their presentation really betrays that. They should not say they have been here for 16 and 32 years. It is better if they say nothing, then we will accept their contributions.

The Member then spoke about the UNC being in conspiracy with the newspapers to portray a negative image of the country. [*Interruption*] With the *Daily Express*, of all newspapers. In a conspiracy, not with *The Probe*, but in a conspiracy with the *Daily Express*. They like the headline when it talks about the enquiry into the airport, but they do not like it when it deals with terror and the threat of terror.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the knowledgeable Member for Diego Martin Central will tell us, as well, what were the implications for the budget from the increase of oil revenues in the year 2002. The price of oil went up beyond what was budgeted. We would like to hear from them on that matter. Those are some issues which the Member for Diego Martin West raised and he went on as is customary. If something is wrong it is the UNC. Anything goes wrong, it is the UNC. That is no problem; crime, health service—the health service collapses, they say that the UNC is in conspiracy with the doctors and so forth. Murder, kidnapping, bandits galore; they say the Member for Couva North bad talking the country. That is the reason that happened. Unemployment—I do not know how they will excuse themselves on the matter of rampant unemployment that is facing this country. Maybe they will find some way to suggest that the UNC is also responsible for that.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Member for Diego Martin West also sought to mislead the House with the statistics on a \$1.5 billion shortfall as if we were in the House now approving an increase in funding, while we are debating an internal transfer from one head to another for policy reasons, which we have not heard of, incidentally.

We know how much money was not used in a particular ministry and why—contracts were not signed, but we do not understand why they went to certain places like the Ministry of Community Development. How much is the increase to that ministry? A big increase because that ministry was used as well to fuel a 10-day mentality job growth for electioneering purposes.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, on that note, the media correctly pointed out to the Government that you cannot have state sponsored entrepreneurs. An entrepreneur by definition is one who takes risk, one who, on his or her own, mobilizes funding and resources and gets into a business with risks, makes a small profit, and reinvests; that is the definition of an entrepreneur. One cannot take people and make them entrepreneurs by state funding, or by a transfer. That leads to an

important point. The point is, there are two different models in which we operate. On our side, our pattern of government, our manifesto dealt with developing this country by human resource development, that is why we made a massive investment in education. Our model was human resource development. Develop the people themselves so that they would take charge of their lives.

The model on the other side is one of redistribution of income transfers. There are people who need income and the State must play a role in providing it for them. For example, people who may have National Housing Authority (NHA) apartments and they cannot paint them, so the role of the Government is to paint those apartments. That is the model with which we are dealing. So those people in those apartments would never find the drive, zeal, and the thrift to get into their own business, or to seek employment to upgrade their skills or to paint their apartments because they can depend on this Government to paint them. That is the problem with the model of governance that we get from the other side.

They may do that only at election time, but when they do it only at that time those people are being nurtured and weaned into a dependency that they would get their apartment painted, and they would get an extra amount of money if they were squatting. Once human beings are weaned and conditioned into getting, it cannot be easily removed. Once you try to do so, there is a bigger social problem. There will be protests, disobedience; you may have warfare if you nurture people that way. That is the threat this country faces. That is governance for them.

They talk about having a developed country by 2020, but the country will not be developed by 2020 if people do not have jobs, training and education. In the developed world, notwithstanding their problems—and they do have problems—what defines development is their level of skills, and training. What develops a country is the capacity of their private sector to expand into small business, medium-sized, and large-scale business. What develops a country is really education and training and giving to the business community the conditions for them to expand and create jobs.

When businessmen and women are leaving this country in droves, who will hire people? If there are no employers, how will we have employees? That is the fundamental issue. How will you create jobs if the people who create jobs are all leaving because they are scared for their lives? They are all running in fear of being kidnapped, terrorized and murdered. These are the problems that bedevils the country and that will impair any attempt to develop this country by 2020, 2030 or 2040. A country cannot be developed unless steps are taken to deal with the issues I have raised.

Today, this nation is seeking leadership and it is just a matter of time when, once again, the time is coming—and already we are feeling it out there—that the country will look to the Member for Couva North to provide leadership to the country. Already people are saying that they want to go back to the days of the UNC when they could live in peace, and walk the streets without fear.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we put street lights so the people could walk the streets at nights. People want to go back to the time when they were feeling safe in their own land. They are fed up with the crime and terrorism. People are fed up with the Minister of National Security. There was a headline in a weekly newspaper about the Minister of National Security. [*Interruption*] The *Sunday Mirror* and I do not know if it might be unparliamentary but it says:

“Chin Lee comes under fire from colleagues—He too damn childish!”

This is in the *Sunday Mirror* of January 05, 2003. They are talking about a Minister of Government in this way and the population is depending on leadership from this Minister of National Security. That is scary, that is frightening. It is as frightening as terrorists having press conferences. I am not referring to the post-Cabinet press conferences, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am referring to the people who are carrying you into the labs to see what concoction they are making. Of course they dismiss that; they dismissed all those chemicals and so forth; we can get that in shoe polish or something like that.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have a responsibility to stand up to this Government and point out where they are going wrong. We have a responsibility to caution the national population, we have a responsibility to really bring salvation to this country. That is where it is reaching and there are people—as my colleague, the Member for Siparia said—who would not have supported us years ago and when they meet us now they are crying out that we need to go back under the safe umbrella of the rising sun. [*Desk thumping*] We need to go back to the visionary leadership, the courageous leadership of the hon. Member for Couva North who is the only leader in recent memory who had the guts and the fortitude to stand up against terrorists stalking this land. We are still waiting to see the leadership on the other side. The Member for Couva North had the courage to do that and the population will remember that. Notwithstanding all the airport enquiry and Biche enquiry and other enquiries.

They talk a lot about commissions of enquiry and I am never one—as you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker—to attack a Member personally. That is something I do not do, but when the Member for Diego Martin West could tell us about how

many UNC Members, or Members of Parliament go to and from the courthouse and police are looking for them—very unkind, of course—I would not want to remind him in detail that there are Members on the other side who are also going to and from the courthouse. We do not want to remind him that at this moment there are agencies in the police service that are seeking out Members on the other side for information as it relates to the conduct of the Government in 2002. I do not want to get into detail with that. I am pointing out the issue as a pattern of Government. I do not want to get into whether police are looking to interview the Member for San Fernando East, looking to interview you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I do not want to get into that at all. I only want to say that when they point one finger at us, generally three point back at themselves and this is the beginning. They do not have six years, they have a few months in office and police are looking for them. They are going to and from courthouse and so on, but they stand up to attack us in this Parliament with that now boring argument.

We have seen the Commission of Enquiry into the Airport, and the Law Association has made two statements on the conduct of those proceedings. In fact, in another period—[*Interruption*] Nine hundred and forty thousand dollars paid for what? The Commission of Enquiry? Well that is a scandal again.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when they were telling us about developed country, they wanted to introduce local programming on television, but the only local programming we got is the Commission of Enquiry into the Airport. [*Laughter*] That is the only local programming we got. Then they tell us they want to introduce Spanish as a second language—they who cannot speak English, they have a problem with it, but want to introduce Spanish. All this is part of 2020 and, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do not want to provoke the Member for San Fernando East by suggesting that the PNM has no vision, then I might get a lecture on the People's Charter and the five-year development plan from 1956 which I prefer not to get.

Hon. Member: Let sleeping dogs lie.

Dr. R. Moonilal: Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is so much wrong with this country today. There is so much that has changed over the last year or so and it reminds me—you know every time I hear the Member for Diego Martin East—of the crisis in the health service but I remind him that when we were there, there were doctors in the hospital. They talk about charges against the former chairman of the North West Regional Health Authority. All charges were thrown out. There were still doctors in the hospitals, but now they come to pretend to be pious and self-righteous. They do no harm, they do no crime, and they do no grime. That is how they want to appear to us today.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when we stand in this honourable House and bring these matters to the attention of the national population, we know that with respect to those on the other side, it is really like water on a duck's back. I do not expect that the Government will get a jolt of integrity and suddenly tell me that they agree with us and want to implement some of our manifesto pledges. They are numbed. With 171 murders, they are numbed. That is where they have reached. We now will take our battle to the public domain and educate this population and those people who were conned and terrorized in the last general election, those who were terrorized into staying home to ensure that the election results go a particular way. My friend on the other side knows but, again, I do not want to attack people individually, I do not want to call names of people in Barrackpore, I do not want to get into that. They know what they did, but all of this is emanating from that.

There is a saying; how you win power determines how you govern. They came into office with a dangerous cocktail of spending and terrorism and today they will have to remain in office by spending and terrorism. That is why they are there and we are here. We are very clear on that, they could make jokes as they normally do. We also know why the population is waking up every day and will ensure that in less than five years Trinidad and Tobago is returned to a path of economic growth of social development, prosperity and job creation without the labour force declining and a state where citizens can walk the road with a sense of security.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is my intervention and I thank you very much.

Mr. Harry Partap (*Nariva*): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I wish to make a brief intervention in this important debate on the Motion to adopt the first report of the Finance Committee of this House for this session. Mr. Deputy Speaker, the report, which gives substance to this Motion, is supposed to contain the proposals for expenditure from the public revenue which were not included in the annual estimates for 2002.

It is my understanding that the Motion really seeks parliamentary approval for allocation that was moved or transferred from one head of expenditure to another, or from one ministry to another. This approval is sought after the fact, and it is not really abnormal once the Government has a majority in Parliament. What will be abnormal is if full disclosure is denied Parliament; that is, if the Government skilfully conceals expenditure so that it can look good; to look as if it exercised prudent financial management when, in fact, it did not.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it would be abnormal for the Government to come to this Parliament with cooked-up figures and conceal expenditure. I have observed that

the Variation of Appropriation in the Finance Committee Report made no mention of funding for the 25 ministries created by the Prime Minister to accommodate the feeding at the public trough of family, friends, supporters and financiers of the PNM.

Perhaps these PNM raiders at the door of the Treasury had been shifted to the Ministry of Finance which, according to the Finance Committee Report, benefited from a substantial increase in its 2002 allocation through the Variation of Appropriation for fiscal 2002 to the tune of \$574,968,647. The fact is, that the Ministry of Finance's allocation was increased by \$574,968,647, or two-thirds of the value of the Variation of Appropriation, which we are now debating.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, what we have also observed is that the Ministry of Community Empowerment, Sport and Consumer Affairs, which had been split in three in 2002, benefited to the tune of \$107,169,384 in the Motion. Added to this, the Government transferred \$308,558,336 between subheads under the same head of expenditure. We do not know where the transfers took place and how or where the funds were spent.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are yet to see how the country benefited from the total budget of some \$18 billion, which was handed to the PNM as a Christmas gift on December 24, 2001. What we know is that millions of dollars were literally given to PNM supporters through the formation of some of the most spurious agencies, funds and companies. There were several levels of frenzied feeding from the public trough. These included Cabinet appointments; consulting and other contracting services; appointments to state boards and other agencies; public relations advertisements; overseas appointments; the Unemployment Relief Programme (URP); Youth Apprenticeship Programme in Agriculture (YAPA); Community Environmental Protection and Enhancement Programme (CEPEP), CREP; On-the-Job Training (OJT) and many others that money had been put into for election purposes.

Cabinet appointments, state boards and agencies, together with consulting and other contracting services were reserved for the big boys and girls of the PNM. The little people did not benefit from this, while the URP and CEPEP were available to the lesser mortals in the PNM.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Finance Committee Report shows an increase in the allocation for consulting and other contracting services in at least three ministries: the Ministry of the Attorney General, \$13,592,598; the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Affairs, \$612,000; the Ministry of Housing and Settlements,

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\$400,000; a total increase of \$14,604,598 and this is for consulting and other contracting services.

I have referred to this sub item in allocation to all ministries. I have referred to the consulting and other contracting services because the PNM administration is using this sub item for its pork-barrel operation available only to close family, friends, financiers and supporters of the PNM.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, from this subsection flows contracts with hefty remuneration for all kinds of consultancies and public relations advertisement that cover our newspapers. For example, the Ministry of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development is paying the sister of the hon. Prime Minister a salary package of about \$23,000 a month.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: As I recall, hon. Member, the position was explained that the sister of the hon. Prime Minister is a public servant. Do you think it is wise to go where you are going? I think not.

Mr. H. Partap: Thank you for your guidance, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but the person is not a public servant, the person is a contract officer and it is not covered under the public service. This is why her package comes from consulting and other contracting services, so she is not really a public servant. I refrained from calling the name, but I think the population will know who I mean eventually.

Mr. Hinds: I would just like to ask the Member to address two matters:

Firstly, is that individual employed as the sister of someone, or as a particular contract worker to offer a particular service? That is the key thing. Everyone is somebody's brother or somebody's sister. Is the Member saying that the sister or the relative of some person ought not to be employed in Trinidad and Tobago?

Secondly, I want to ask the Member if he can demonstrate in his contribution that the consultants who are contracted by the Government across the public service are more than usually high or significantly different from what has happened in all past governments?

I would like the Member to address those points.

Mr. H. Partap: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am sure that the question would be posed to the appropriate Minister when the time comes and we would know the truth.

I was talking about how the consulting and other contracting services subheads in the various ministries had been used by the PNM administration for their friends

and family and that was when I was interrupted and I am sure that the appropriate Minister will answer that question in due course.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, at the Water and Sewerage Authority (WASA), the husband of the hon. Minister of Legal Affairs was employed after the PNM was handed office in December 2001 and that person is getting a wage of \$15,000 together with perks and other things. The brother of the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries gets a job as a member of the board of the Vehicles Maintenance Corporation of Trinidad and Tobago (VMCOTT). [*Interruption*] They are asking what is wrong with that. When the UNC had people on boards and committees, everybody was family.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is from the sub item of consulting and other contracting services the Government is finding work for family and friends. If the hon. Member for Diego Martin West did not have his own job to protect, I am certain as day follows night, that he would call that nepotism, and cry from the rooftops of Parliament about corruption, but he is silent today as the swirling cesspool of corruption surrounds him, PNM style.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am still examining the sub item of consulting and other contracting services. The Ministry of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development, again, has also created a special position of labour consultant to the Caribbean/Canada Seasonal Farm Programme. I suspect the money is coming from the consulting and other contracting, and this position has been filled by a defeated PNM candidate from Couva South, and he is getting \$25,000 a month and has a guaranteed position for five years.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, you know that this person—Mr. Rudranath Rampersadsingh is getting more money than the Prime Minister's basic salary and, of course, he is getting more money than his boss, the Permanent Secretary. That is what is taking place under the PNM. Member for San Fernando West, do not laugh, that is what you put yourself in, or maybe you knew. Who knows?

I understand that the Ministry of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development received approval from Cabinet—and I am not reading any Cabinet Note—to resuscitate the three labour attachés. They are finding more work for the PNM, that means three more PNM hacks will soon join the feeding trough, financed by taxpayers.

I am saying labour attachés in the Caribbean/Canada Seasonal Farm Programme is a waste of taxpayers' money. This is a non-performing job created as a golden handshake for loyal PNM supporters. Why can you not buy a plaque and give the man, but do not use taxpayers' money to keep him there for five years.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, what is happening now is that the PNM Government is converting the ministries and the Ministry of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development particularly, into a PNM party group. They are doing exactly what they used to do when WASA was a party group, T&TEC, the old TELCO, PTSC, were all party groups where only members of the PNM could have been employed. [*Interruption*] No, I am not envying. What I am saying is this is taxpayers' money and, therefore, every citizen in the country should have access to these jobs. We are not concerned about the positions you know, what we are saying is giving people the opportunity to do the job.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the PNM Public Relations Officer is—as my colleague, the Member for Oropouche said—now an executive assistant to a non-executive chairman and that person is taking away a salary of about \$15,000 per month. Feeding at the public trough. We are not jealous. I am not sure if the former PNM Mayor of Port of Spain, who was fired from the North West Regional Health Authority by the Member for Diego Martin East is still an Advisor to the Minister of Local Government. I know he said a few things that would have cost him his job, but the Minister of Local Government would say at some time. I do not know if he is finished, but he also used to get a \$15,000 package to take home. Feeding at the public trough.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the sub item of consulting and other contracting services carries a heavy burden. At the Ministry of National Security, there are two Special Advisors to the Minister and yet crime is on the rampage in this country. Perhaps he needs more advisors, but things are not well in terms of crime. When we were in office, the Member for Laventille East/Morvant said we were living in Cuckoo Land as if we did not know crime was taking place. Now Members on the opposite side, you are living in Cuckoo Land as well, because you do not seem to understand that crime is running away in Trinidad and Tobago.

At the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, there are three Special Advisors who are all pensioners and I understand there are four Special Advisors in the Prime Minister's Office. Well, he is the Prime Minister and he needs advisors and they have been giving him bad advice.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, advisors and chairmen of statutory boards are some of the forms in which the PNM is spreading its corruption. When they came into office, they raised the stipend of the chairman of a board from \$3,000 to \$7,000 and they knew what they were doing because they had to pay back people. I only wish that they would have paid off the farmers. I have not reached there yet.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, do you know what I find strange, this holier than thou, this sanctimonious Member for Diego Martin West, sits in that Cabinet and has corruption swirling around him and he says nothing; every instance speaks of nepotism and cronyism but he sits there and says nothing. He is no longer interested in transparency; apparently he has turned soft on corruption, and has given up the fight to save his Cabinet position. People do change sometimes, I imagine.

The Finance Committee Report on the Variation of Appropriation has no reference at all on the movement of funds to finance the National Entrepreneurship Development Company (NEDCO) at the Ministry of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development. We understand that \$30 million was put into NEDCO as seed capital. We have not been told whether this was done by a virement or whether it was a transfer, or how the funds were attained. All we know is that within the three months, which included the period of the campaigning for the 2002 general election, a total of \$17.4 million was distributed to 826 entrepreneurs.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when you examine the criteria used by NEDCO in granting these loans and the documentation required for processing the application for these loans, it raises serious questions about the reliability of the processing of these 826 applications.

In that time frame of six weeks or thereabout, the programme came into operation during the 2002 campaign and my information is that the 826 applications were processed and money disbursed without a thorough examination of the applications. That is my information.

According to *Hansard* of January 17, 2003 in which the Minister of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development gave a breakdown of the loans disbursed and the geographical area served, one cannot help getting the smell of the PNM pork barrel. It is overwhelming, it points to a political patronage in return for votes. It points to a blatant use of public funds to buy political favours. The NEDCO initiative is seriously tainted. The PNM has tarnished a good initiative.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I just want to analyze that information which the Ministry of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development gave. The Minister said that 102 loans were approved in the north to a value of \$3 million. That means that each applicant received about \$30,000 and then in the south, 216 loans were approved at a value of \$6,400,000. This means that each applicant received about \$25,000. That is an average. That was in the south. In the east 247 applications were made and \$6,400,000 was disbursed. In the west, 97 loans were disbursed at the value of \$2.1 million; each applicant got about \$20,000.

In central, 93 loans were approved at a value of \$2 million and this meant that each applicant got about \$19,000.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is my view that the disbursement of the loans under the Ministry of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development was politically motivated. I say this because I was informed that NEDCO had bunched the regions to focus on the marginal seats so that the regions identified as north, east and west were focused on the Tunapuna seat and, to a lesser extent, the St. Joseph seat.

The 446 approved loans meant that each applicant received between \$20,000—\$30,000 during the period of the campaigning for the 2002 general election. When they bunched them together, it was 446 that came mainly from the Tunapuna area. So some PNM people had \$20,000 in their hands. With the PNM handing out of \$20,000—\$30,000 in Tunapuna you knew Carlos John did not stand a chance. Similarly, the regions identified as south and central were focused mainly on San Fernando West and Ortoire/Mayaro. The 309 PNM activists—when you add south and central, you got 309—got between \$13,000 and \$19,000 each. Clearly, Sadiq Baksh and Winston “Gypsy” Peters began their campaign at a serious disadvantage.

Remember, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that those on that side sit there because fewer than 1,282 votes separate them from us. So you see from where the 826 applicants for NEDCO came? I do not have the Tobago figures with me but they got some too.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, who could give more corn feed more fowl. What a scandal! They stole the election. You can say what you want, the PNM stole the 2002 election and I hope you listen carefully to what the Member for Oropouche said.

The Variation of Appropriation notes as well that \$58,241,179 was transferred out of the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources. My question is why? The reason I ask why, you are moving money out of the ministry while farmers in Kernahan, Cascadoux and Plum Mitan have not been paid their compensation for flood damage to crops since December 2001.

So there was a flood in December 2001, farmers did not get their money. All the necessary applications were done for the processing of goods, finalized but no compensation paid. There was a flood in March 2002, similarly, the farmers lost their crops. Again, they made the necessary application and provided all the documentation, but again, no payment in March 2002. Then, of course, you know of the big flood of which the Member for Ortoire/Mayaro is aware. They also lost

crops and the application forms were made out but no money was paid for December 2001 and March 2002.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, some of these farmers spent their life savings investing in their crops, now they have lost them and they were expecting compensation from the ministry and the Minister has not addressed the matter. The Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Affairs had gone into the area called Kernahan campaigning for the 2002 general election and he promised the farmers that he will pay the compensation one week after election. Of course, only five persons voted for him, so maybe that is the reason they acted like that.

Today, this is almost three months since the election and there is a new government in office. Why not pay the farmers? The farmers want their "pisànt". They want it. I do not know why they are not paying them. Mr. Deputy Speaker, you know why they are not paying them, and I would not draw you into the debate, but I am sure by now people know why they have not been paid. I told you it is only five votes they got. Maybe that is the reason they have not been paid.

I am asking you now to please pay the farmers. I raised a question in the House, and the Minister said they are looking for money. How could you be looking for money when you gave away \$58 million? They are farmers, yes, but they are not fools.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are saying the Minister must not mislead the farmers, neither must he mislead the House because he misled the House when he told me that he was looking for money when he had \$58 million to play with and he gave it back. You can talk about appropriation, that does not matter with me. The fact is, you cannot transfer what you do not have, you transfer what you have. It is money you are transferring so you could say what you want. I have nothing to do with your troubles, all I am saying is please pay the farmers, and every time I come to this House and the Chief Whip gives me an opportunity to talk you will hear about Kernahan, Cascadoux, Plum Mitan and very soon I will talk about the discrimination and I am sure you do not want me to do that.

Also in the areas where I represent, Nariva and some parts where the Member for Ortoire/Mayaro represents, there are agricultural access roads that need reopening, repairing and rebuilding; \$58 million could have gone a long way. Why take it away from the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources? You do not care about the farmers.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I also want to make reference to the \$130,531,777 that has been taken from the Ministry of Works and Transport. This money had been

moved out of the Ministry of Works and Transport when there is so much deterioration of roads in this country because of flooding and so forth.

I am appealing to the Minister to take a look again. He had promised to look for funds for the Cunapo Southern Main Road. I am appealing to him to find the funds because that is an arterial road; it is a main road into Sangre Grande and it is in a terrible condition. It did not come under his time but it was over a period of time, so I am asking if he can use his office to have the road repaved.

When the Minister does something good I must say it and I want to thank the Minister of Works and Transport for the dredging of the rivers around Charuma. It was initiated under the UNC, but I am glad he has sent the machinery so work should start this week.

There are other areas like Coalmine and, while I am on that, I want to tell the Minister of Works and Transport that the Plum Mitan Road at the 7.5 kilometre mark has been in a bad state. Of course, no fault of any government but that road may have to be realigned. I am not an engineer and I cannot give advice. Then in Ecclesville there is a one-mile area with about nine landslips.

The point I am making is that the \$107 million that was removed from the ministry by the Minister of Finance and put elsewhere, could have been used to alleviate the discomfort of many people in Trinidad and Tobago, particularly in Arima.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, with these few words and the appeal to the Minister concerned, I thank you for allowing me to intervene in this debate.

7.00 p.m.

Dr. Adesh Nanan (*Tabaquite*): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I join this debate on the Motion:

Be it resolved that this House adopt the First Report of the 2002/2003 Session of the Finance Committee of the House of Representatives of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, on the proposals for the expenditure from the public revenue which were not included in the Annual Estimates 2002.

We heard from the Member for Diego Martin Central in terms of his contribution and what this particular appropriation is all about. He gave us, what I would call, "ratched" finances. That is what we are seeing from the Government this evening. We are seeing what they normally describe as funny money. He talked about old age pension and the budgetary allocation that was not there; he spoke about Fincor, but he thought that we on this side would not be aware of

these particular allocations in the Variation of Appropriation. I want to let him know this evening that we are very aware.

The Member for Diego Martin West held a clinic in terms of budgetary allocations, but when the budgets were being prepared in all ministries, as former ministers, we were quite *au courant* with what was going on in our ministries. I cannot say the same for some of the ministers on that side. So when he spoke about line transfers, in fact the United National Congress government was trying to change the whole concept of the Ministry of Finance in terms of line transfers, because the Member for Diego Martin Central is aware that from year to year, all they do is have the same subhead, the same identified vote, and all they do is, they change the figures. He is well aware of that. We were trying to change the concept of budgeting and move away from the line financing or line transfers, to bring a kind of more comprehensive, holistic approach to delivery of services, using the ministries.

That is why, when the Member for Diego Martin West came to give us a clinic in terms of budgeting and line transfers, I was very taken aback, because he should have been aware and been informed by the Member for Diego Martin Central and technocrats in the Ministry of Finance, of the new dimension and the whole new outlook in terms of budgeting. So I am sure he has something to report on now.

He spoke about a \$1.6 billion—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I notice you are saying “he”. That is okay, use the pronoun. I would not be upset.

Dr. A. Nanan: My apologies, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Once you live by the sword you have to die by the sword, I agree.

The hon. Member for Diego Central mentioned \$1.6 billion in terms of the shortfall. He went on to say, in fact \$15.7985, that was the—\$1.5798—

Mr. Valley: No, \$15.8—

Dr. A. Nanan: It was \$15.798. That was the exact figure—\$15.7985. I wrote that there. That figure that came up was \$14.196 billion in terms of the allocation. So we are looking at a \$14.265 billion revenue stream coming into the country in terms of the financing, and he gave us a surplus of \$65.9 million and an eventual surplus of \$68.9 million. All of this gave us the impression that the Government did deliver, but I want to let him know in terms of this particular document that he presented in the Finance Committee—and I want to quote from the House of

Representatives, Republic of Trinidad and Tobago in terms of the Finance Committee Report. I want to go to the Ministry of Education, because the Member for Diego Martin West spent a lot of time on education and he pulled out a document to use as a smokescreen for the non-performance of the Ministry of Education. I am sure you can see that in all the ministries. The Minister is aware, but they cannot come here and say that the Minister of Finance did not release the money for them to have the programmes. They have to come and pussyfoot here and bring documents to say that it is because of a measure that was not implemented in terms of an arrangement with unions and also in terms of contract projects that they had to refinance in the year 2003.

But if you look at the PSIP document—I do not know if the Member for Diego Martin Central walked with his document; I am sure he did—you would see on page 35 of the *Public Sector Investment Programme, 2002*, and I quote:

“General revenues amounting to \$42.4 million will be used to finance other primary school construction projects.”

We heard earlier today from the Member for Diego Martin West about a \$250 million increase in the Ministry of Education. He gave us a tirade in terms of what are the plans for 2003—2004. But I want to ask the Member for Diego Martin Central, if he would turn to his document on page 73—and we are looking from Head 26 to Head 26 of course, but when we look between subheads, what I want to point out here, is that there is a major sub-item 20:

“Fees for students at private secondary schools totalling \$10 million.”

He is probably seeing that for the first time because he probably did not go to that particular section. Of course it is going to finance book grants for secondary school students. I guess that was not budgeted for in 2002, but it is an election promise and they went around the country and every time they appear in Parliament, they say “We delivered”. So we are seeing \$10 million.

Now what is this \$10 million for? [*Interruption*] I was on page 73. Actually, I went to page 74, sub-item 20: “Fees for Students at private secondary schools”. That particular item, for his information—I am sure he may or may not be aware—this is where the Government would pay for students to attend private secondary schools. That particular facility was introduced because of the shortage of secondary school places. There is an allocation made in terms of the payment of the fees for students. In fact, that would have increased because the Government was paying at the time, students of Bishop’s Anstey, the Trinity College in the Member for Tunapuna’s constituency—I am sure he is aware—and other private secondary schools.

What we are seeing is because of the situation with the non-implementation of the building programme for the secondary school programme, that is SEMP—and I want to send a red flag here, Member for Diego Martin Central, because in the debate we heard from the hon. Member for Siparia in terms of vacant posts—I am just shifting around to give you an idea—in the Ministry of Education. I want to send a red flag that although the money has been moved from that particular subhead, the money was placed there for a specific reason. If I remember correctly, when we were negotiating the SEMP loan, part of the conditionality was to have people in the ministries in strategic positions and even upgrade of public servants' positions. So that was part of the conditionality before the second tranche distribution of that particular loan. So I want to send a red flag and to let you know that is a critical area in terms of filling of vacancies in the Ministry of Education.

We heard from the Member for Diego Martin West—and that is why I really spoke in this debate. I did not want to get up and speak but when he spoke I did not get a chance because the Speaker said that was overruled. The Member for Diego Martin West said that I, as Minister of Education, instructed the officers to remove the Maloney Primary School from the programme. We heard the Member talk about the Point Cumana Primary School, and then he went on to say that the United National Congress government built and repaired schools only in UNC-controlled constituencies.

I know that all the Members on that side could testify that what he said is not true. But again, it is the philosophy of the PNM, that kind of culture that once a Member stands up in this House and says anything to attack the People's National Movement, the culture is "you crooked; you are a thief; you are a criminal." That is what happens in public life when you stand up in the Parliament to defend certain issues.

It is not for me to set the standard for Parliament but I want to let the Member for Diego Martin West know that when he speaks in this House, he should speak the truth. He cannot come here and use the privilege of Parliament to speak untruths. I want to let the country know—because the Members on that side are aware—that in every single PNM-controlled constituency we did extensive work under the Ministry of Education programme.

I would start with the Member for Tunapuna. He is always asking me to speak; well, I am speaking this evening. The Member for Tunapuna is aware that we went in there and repaired and upgraded the St. Michael's School for Boys. The Member for Arouca North—

Mr. Narine: The St. Michael's School for Boys is in Diego Martin.

Dr. A. Nanan: The St. Mary's, sorry. I am glad for your correction.

In terms of the Arouca North, D'Abadie Government School, you remember you posed a question here and we had to go in and repair the entire plumbing system in that school, which you all constructed. And I could continue. In fact, the Member for Diego Martin West came into this Parliament this evening and I almost got thrown out of the Parliament for this headline. It is in the *Trinidad Guardian*, Monday, January 20, 2003: "SEMP schools setback."

Mr. Deputy Speaker: You were not thrown out, you were cautioned. Could you go back to it again, please?

Dr. A. Nanan: The headline is "SEMP schools setback".

Mr. Deputy Speaker: And what day's *Guardian* is it?

Dr. A. Nanan: Monday, January 20, 2003, page 3. Ricardo Premchand is the author of this particular article. I make reference to this particular article because the Member for Diego Martin West spoke about the schools in his constituency. I just want to draw reference to a part of this article. I quote:

"Manning also disclosed that the construction of two secondary schools in Diego Martin will get off to a late start as designs are currently being drafted by contractors, Gillespie and Steel Ltd."

I would not read the whole article because I do not want to be accused of having my whole contribution being made up of newspaper clippings, but I just want to show that in terms of performance, this is a major setback for the Ministry of Education and the Government, because this is the blueprint. In fact, this is the backbone of the Ministry of Education, this SEMP \$105 million programme by the Ministry of Education.

So when the Member for Diego Martin West stood up in this Parliament and said that I instructed that the Maloney Government Primary School be removed from the development programme, that is not true. The Member for Arouca South, I remember very lucidly, in fact, when I went to turn the sod for the Maloney South Government School, she refused to shake my hand at that particular function. That is the kind of conduct that takes place outside of the Parliament. In fact, I extended my hand and she refused to shake my hand and we were building that school in her constituency. So you see, in terms of the nepotism, cronyism and favouritism with which they labeled the United National Congress government, it is not true. I also wanted to clear that up because it is

about time that we get that off the agenda. You might even say that I “lie”, but as Minister of Education at that time, this is the truth.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I remember very clearly when I went into the Ministry of Education there were two permanent secretaries there. There was Justin Paul and Claudia Harvey. Both permanent secretaries had over 120 days’ leave.

Mr. Valley: How many permanent secretaries did you change?

Dr. A. Nanan: I will come to that. Mr. Justin Paul had about 212 or 280 days’ leave and Claudia Harvey had about 180 days. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Do not let them disturb your mind. Would you please speak to me?

Dr. A. Nanan: I am too seasoned a Member of Parliament for them to disturb me. [*Desk thumping*] Mr. Deputy Speaker, there were those two permanent secretaries accumulating over 200 days’ leave and I decided that I would ask Mr. Justin Paul to take his leave. This is the truth. When I asked him to take his leave and I called in the other permanent secretary, Dr. Claudia Harvey, to explain to her that I was requesting Mr. Justin Paul to take his leave—[*Crosstalk*] Those are the regulations. But the point is—and this is the point I am getting at—when I mentioned that, the permanent secretary, Dr. Claudia Harvey, told me that it looked as though I am a racist; that I am sending a Negro permanent secretary on leave. As an Indian Minister, that is a racist kind of approach. That is what I wanted to clear up here this evening. That is the truth. That was no justification; I just wanted to let you all be aware.

I was dealing with the Member for Diego Martin West and his contribution about nepotism. The hon. Member for Port of Spain South, when I was minister of education, came with his delegation—

Mr. Williams: Two delegations.

Dr. A. Nanan: Well, two delegations, the Nelson Street Boys’ Government School and Moulton Hall Methodist. Both schools are completed, or almost completed as the case may be. So I just wanted to point out in terms of examples, what was happening. Of course, the Member for Toco/Manzanilla had work done in his constituency and in every single constituency in PNM-controlled areas.

The Member for Diego Martin East, I remember reading the newspaper over the weekend and they were talking about a “dead pan face” for the Member for Diego Martin East, when he was giving his report. In fact, when I had the ceremony at that particular school, it was in his constituency, River Estate.

So it is not advisable to come into the Parliament and give false information under a privileged kind of setting. That is why it is important that we clear the record. So in terms of nepotism and cronyism, I showed you quite clearly that as Minister of Education, the United National Congress did work in every single constituency. Probably Point Cumana, if I remember correctly, was never brought to my attention. So it was not that we just left out Point Cumana. Remember we were dealing with 474 primary schools at that time and I think 100 secondary schools in the Ministry of Education, and what we inherited was a total disrepair of the entire secondary school infrastructure that we had to put together.

While he spoke about the World Bank loan, he must be aware that when we came into office we could not implement that loan because we had to put, what you call, a particular unit in place, and the conditionalities for these loans are so rigid that you must have had—at that time it was, I think 15 people as a cadre working in that particular unit before you could move ahead to draw down on any of the tranches of the loan.

I remember quite correctly Mason Hall Government Secondary School was part of the loan, as well as the school in Sangre Grande. But he said when he went to Tobago he saw the Mason Hall Government School completed. It was not because of a lack of trying that the Mason Hall Government Secondary School was not constructed. You would recall that there was a problem with the Tobago House of Assembly and because of the communication breakdown—in fact, we had several meetings—[*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Members, the Member is speaking softly and the Hansard reporter is getting much difficulty. So if Members really want to speak you could do it somewhere else, but not across there.

Dr. A. Nanan: The Mason Hall Government Secondary School in Tobago, as I said it was not for a lack of trying. We had several meetings with the Tobago House of Assembly, trying to have an agreement, a memorandum of understanding, because the way the World Bank loan was drafted, you had to have a memorandum of understanding between the agencies. That is what stymied that particular project, in fact, the projects in Tobago.

So we tried. In fact, the money was voted. In every single budgetary allocation there was money voted for that particular school, but it was just because of the bureaucratic hurdles that the school was not constructed. In fact, if I remember correctly, at the Mason Hall site, we had a situation where people were trying to say that the site was not suitable because of the terrain and there was going to be another site. When I visited the school as former Minister of Education, there was

the bridge being built and the school was going to be constructed and then the school stalled. So that was the history behind the Mason Hall Government Secondary School.

We know what happened at the Carenage Government Primary School in terms of the contractor. The contractor tendered for that school with a figure that was far below the required final figure, and while they were excavating the school they found it was probably on a landfill site because in the basement area they had to do a lot of structural adjustment to make sure that the school would be suitable. So, again, there were problems in terms of the particular site and it is not that we just did not want to build the school in Carenage. There was a budgetary allocation for that school.

We got a reply from the Member for Diego Martin Central this evening in terms of the questions that we asked in the finance committee. We also got a circulated document here from the Member for Diego Martin Central, but I would deal with the document from the Member for Diego Martin Central later.

In the Member for Diego Martin Central's reply, he was very vague in certain areas, and I think for the benefit of the House we should have been provided with a better description for some of the questions that were asked, in fact, for the particular question I asked. We saw on page three. "Progress under the following Primary Schools:

"Munroe Road, an allocation of \$900,000. No expenditure in 2002."

In fact, we are not sure the school was started; if the contracts were awarded; if you were going to honour the contracts in 2003. I hear from the Member for Chaguanas that there was nothing done. [*Interruption*] This is your vague reply to the questions asked.

I even have the St. Mary's Government School. You have an allocation of \$900,000. As you say, it is just an appropriation; it is not reality. But I want to make the point that even if you said it is not cash, it is a projected figure that is to be used, and, in fact, that figure comes from the actual scope of works of the various projects. You cannot have that figure there, identified, if it does not come from the actual scope of works and what is going to be done in that particular area. I am sure the Member would agree with that.

Somebody made the point—in fact, the Member made that point that if the school costs \$28 million, you would not put \$28 million for that particular vote for that year. You would put the actual figure which may be \$5 million or \$4

million because of your designs, and then if you have construction it might be \$3 million. It would not be the whole \$28 million to give you a budget deficit, as you said.

So the \$900,000 allocation, there was no expenditure. But again, \$900,000, that is basically designs. I do not think we go into any construction there. That is not even taking place. We heard from the Member for Chaguanas, he is not even aware. I am sure in his winding up he would give the Member for Chaguanas some idea of a time frame, if you could get the information.

I could go on:

“New Grant Government.”

That is good information for Members on this side.

“No expenditure was incurred in 2002.”

But again he did not say if the expenditure was incurred in 2002 or if it was transferred to 2003. He said it for Waterloo Hindu. You know, the Member for Diego Martin Central, when he spoke about his \$215 million increase in the Ministry of Education, he mentioned, if I remember correctly, Reform Hindu in his contribution, but when I listened to the Member for Diego Martin West in his contribution he said Reform Presbyterian. I know it may be a slip of the tongue, but I want the Member for Diego Martin West to know that Reform Presbyterian is in the constituency of Pointe-a-Pierre but children from Tabaquite also go to that particular school, and Reform Presbyterian was one of the schools that was built under the Fincor loan. It was Reform Presbyterian, Guayaguayare, and I cannot remember the other one. That school was constructed a long time ago. The Reform Hindu is the one to be constructed in the constituency of Pointe-a-Pierre. I just wanted to put that on the record.

We heard about the de-shifting programme and this great, what I would say, mosaic for the Ministry of Education. We have seen the transfer, whether it be just a paper transfer, but there was an allocation and the Minister of Finance in the United National Congress government made that allocation based on submissions from the technocrats as well as considering all the stakeholders in the education sector. So it was not a figure that was just placed there. So the \$63 million that is being transferred out of that Ministry, as we said savings, and he said it is just a paper transaction, I want him to know that \$63 million, whether it is a paper transaction or not, would have been for particular projects, as he is aware, and it is not for him to come and say, or the Member for Diego Martin West to come and say, that these are the reasons. Of course the technocrats would be bringing those

reasons. But I want him to understand that we recognize his dilemma, because certain ministries—in fact, if all the ministries are not performing, if the Government comes to the House and actually gives us that figure in terms of what is the actual performance of the ministries, we would recognize that there is a major problem. There is a major problem but it is being cleverly disguised in terms of the reporting mechanisms from the Member for Diego Martin Central and the Government must be aware—in fact, there is a nice term, you know: political viagra.

What we are seeing in terms of the legislative agenda is a tardiness by the Government and I want to point out that as the former environment minister. When we look around this country—the Member for Arouca North is not here—we are seeing tremendous garbage pile-up and the Member for Arouca North is in charge of the Ministry of Local Government—well, he is indirectly responsible for the garbage collection. I did not specify any corporation. But it is happening and I want him to be cognizant of the fact that if we are trying to attract tourists into this country we must have a clean landscape.

That leads me on to the point of the crime situation. I want to spend a few minutes on crime, but I would not go too far. I just want to stay within the confines of the debate. The political viagra situation I was talking about is the tardiness by the Government in terms of its legislative agenda. There are two important pieces of legislation that are sitting on the desk of the Attorney General. All the Attorney General has to do is to have it vetted and bring it before the Parliament. I know the Attorney General gave the excuse that the United National Congress' legislation was not drafted properly. But that is a flimsy excuse, because it is the same persons who are working in the Attorney General's department. They have not hired any new people to draft legislation. It is a basic piece of legislation that is to be brought before the Parliament, that is, the National Parks and Wildlife legislation.

The Member for Toco/Manzanilla and the Matura situation—*[Interruption]* You all could go ahead and scoff about that, but I know the Member for Toco/Manzanilla is very keen to have the legislation brought before Parliament because it would describe the three national parks in Trinidad and Tobago. As I speak about the three national parks, there is a situation in the Trinity Hills in Moruga that we have to be very aware of. In fact, we have to bring it into the public domain. What is happening with Trinity Hills, people who are occupying certain parcels of land in terms of hunting camps, are being asked to leave and are actually being forced out. I do not know—I have been informed—if it is because

people want the land for their own use. [*Interruption*] I do not know if they want to occupy the land for their friends and families, but they are using—and this is the point—the game wardens to do their dirty work, to remove people from the Trinity Hills, illegally.

I want to send a signal that they have to be very careful. Probably the Minister is not even aware. In fact, the Minister of Public Utilities and the Environment, you know, he had that big fiasco in the other place in terms of not bringing the answer to the Senate for the particular question. I have thought about the situation and it may be, when he made the statement that he had to verify the information coming from WASA. He was not even aware that the board of WASA took that decision to increase the salaries, and he had to accept what was before him and the Prime Minister then had to come back and defend that indefensible position.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, you are seeing the link in terms of that Minister. But I went to the Ministry of Public Utilities and the Environment because he is the Minister under whom National Parks and Wildlife fall, and the legislation has to be brought by that particular Minister. [*Interruption*] Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Member for Laventille East/Morvant, as somebody pointed out, does not have too far to go into the public gallery. The only part that he could actually contribute to this particular debate is when he has crosstalk with me. So let him have his say.

Another piece of legislation that is before the Attorney General is the Water Pollution Rules. When you look at the state of the environment you have to recognize that—and the relevance of what I am saying for Members on that side, is the movement of the \$17 million from the Ministry of the Environment. Part of that \$17 million was for the Institute of Marine Affairs for the construction of a new building. Now the answer came in there that they are re-prioritizing and the Institute of Marine Affairs is not a priority project. But the Institute of Marine Affairs, in terms of the country, in terms of the environment, is pivotal. So when he comes here and says that it is not a priority project, just like they said when I spoke in the debate about the international conference centre and tourism complex, the Member for Diego Martin West said that is an Airport Two. I pointed out very carefully the revenue stream that would have been coming from that particular tourism complex, bringing that kind of revenue into the country.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in terms of the tourism outlook for the country, the crime situation—you have in today's *Trinidad Guardian* of January 27, 2002, a headline: "Tourist kidnapped, shot and robbed". The Member for Arima was not here, as the Minister for Tourism, but the Member for Tunapuna was here. When I was the former Tourism Minister and there was an incident in Tobago where a

tourist was attacked, I worked with the Ministry of National Security and we went to Tobago and we had proposals brought forward to deal with the crime situation. We took a hands-on approach in dealing with that situation in Tobago, because we recognized the importance of the tourism industry in the economy of Trinidad and Tobago.

Part of the proposals coming forward was for marine patrols; there were proposals coming to have mounted police in Tobago. In fact, the dogs came in. I think there is the canine division now in Tobago and there is the mounted patrol and there are marine patrol boats. We also worked with the hoteliers around the island, to have private security working along with the police. All that worked quite well, and that is the kind of approach we would have liked to see, which is a hands-on approach and not this “be calm” approach.

We heard today there is going to be an address to the nation. I hope it is not a “be calm” approach again. Because certainly “Operation Anaconda” failed.

As I speak about that, the Member for Diego Martin East said that he is drawing a line in the sand with respect to the doctors. I want to tell him this evening that he should bury his head in the sand with shame, as ostriches. Because that is a situation that is not only national, it is international because our doctors traverse all parts of the world. You are talking about a terrorist threat, that situation with the doctors would be affecting the tourism industry because when you have that kind of strike taking place, nobody wants to come into any country where there is not proper medical care provided. When you look at the holistic picture, you would see that the Member for Diego Martin East is affecting directly the revenue stream coming into this country. That “dead pan” face that the reporter said that he has—

Hon. Member: Jealous!

Dr. A. Nanan: There is no jealousy, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to assure you of that.

The point I am making is that with respect to the infrastructure for the tourism industry, you also have the environmental situation, the movement of the money from the Institute of Marine Affairs for the new building and the Institute of Marine Affairs is very important in terms of doing the research for the country. The waters that surround Trinidad and Tobago, they do the studies to see the level of pollutants in the particular areas and if there is any report coming in from the Institute of Marine Affairs, we can allay any fears that may be coming from the international arena in terms of pollution around our waters. Because we recognize

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that the waters around Trinidad and Tobago, these are a major attraction for tourists: Maracas Bay; you have Chaguaramas and all those areas. You have that particular situation in Maracas where there was a report that the waters were polluted and it almost directly affected the tourism industry.

When we look at the Variation of Appropriation, the environment, the \$17 million that was moved out—part of it—from the Institute of Marine Affairs—you also see there was a \$500,000 allocation—it may look like a small amount—for the Forestry Division of the Ministry of the Environment—only \$42,000 of that allocation went to any development or any park. I am told that some of the money was used for furniture in various offices.

Mr. Valley: With those few words, I beg to move—

Dr. A. Nanan: No, that is only the opening remarks. [*Laughter*]

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

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

Question put and agreed to.

PROCEDURAL MOTION

The Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley): Mr. Deputy Speaker, before the Member continues, may I move the procedural motion? I beg to move,

That this House continues to sit until the current Motion as well as the Bill relating to the Motion, that is the Finance (Variation of Appropriation) (2002) Bill, 2003 be completed.

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. Sharma: Mr. Deputy Speaker, may I obtain your guidance before the Member for Tabaquite resumes? At the Finance Committee Meeting held last Friday, some questions were asked by Members of the Opposition, including my good self, to which the Member for Diego Martin Central indicated that before the start of today's meeting that information would be made available. Something was circulated earlier that does not represent in total what was asked. Since I may be required to speak, is there some way of knowing if the information would be made available?

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Mr. Deputy Speaker: As you realize, I was not at the Finance Committee Meeting and accordingly, I am unable to deal with that matter. But if you are going to speak, then maybe in your contribution you could raise it.

FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT

Dr. A. Nanan: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to give the Members on that side the assurance that I would be taking my full 30 minutes.

The Member for Diego Martin West spoke about the terrorist threat and he said that the terrorist threat is a hoax. He spoke about the particular chemicals being portrayed in the newspapers. It is public knowledge that if you want to make a bomb you could go on the Internet and you would find all the information there. In fact, the bomb that created havoc in Oklahoma was made very simply with ammonium nitrate and diesel oil, a very explosive combination. With my chemistry background, we all know that one of the major components of gun powder is sulphur. So in terms of what they are being shown, potage and sulphur, we have to take that threat very seriously and we cannot just say that it is a hoax. We have to investigate and ensure that wherever you are in the world, you have cells and you never could know, you have these fanatics who would just utilize the opportunity. As you saw after the September 11 disaster, anthrax letters were sent to all parts of the world.

So it is an opportunity and people mimic a lot of ideas, so we cannot say that it is a hoax, because who knows, you might very well end up with a kind of chemical explosion at your home, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I did not intend to bring you into the debate. I just wanted to point out that although the chemicals are very simple, they are very dangerous when combined in the right proportions.

Another interesting point raised by the Member for Oropouche in terms of the Community-Based, Environment Protection and Enhancement Programme (CEPEP) [*Interruption*] It affects the economy. The point is, he made it quite clear—I do not want to repeat it in terms of irrelevance but let me just point out what he said in terms of entrepreneurs. He said that the State cannot create entrepreneurs. That is what he said. [*Interruption*] Well, you missed the valid point so let me explain to you the valid point. Let me quote from the editorial of the *Trinidad Guardian*, Monday, January 20, 2003.

“Creation of 110 businesses in one year is a commendable achievement in a Trinidad and Tobago economy not yet demonstrably experiencing boom conditions.”

That is a very important, “boom conditions”. You would recall when there was the windfall in this country with oil, money flowed like water. Money was no problem. We see that in the WASA situation. The point here is that you are setting up a parallel organization. I do not know if you are afraid to go through the Public Service Commission for people to be brought into the system, or if there is a bureaucratic hurdle. But what you are trying to do is to create an organization—I do not know if it is for party politics or for patronage. As I speak of patronage, I remember the Prime Minister said that he only wore his jersey because he was coming from a general council meeting. But the hon. Member for San Fernando East wears his balisier tie all over the country. He even wears it in Parliament and internationally. What signal is he sending?

I was getting back to the point of the Community-Based Environment Protection and Enhancement Programme and the creation of entrepreneurs and what is called, state-sponsored entrepreneurship. That is really what is happening, but in terms of the parallel organization. When I was in the Ministry of the Environment as the former Minister of the Environment, we had a situation—and it is a fact—where, in our rural constituencies we were not getting proper dredging of the rivers. We were having floods. We came up with a particular programme called the Re-naturalization of Rivers and we used that programme to cut the grass and remove bamboo and other obstacles in the watercourses and we moved all the old fridges and stoves that were in the rivers at the time. If there was any necessary bridge-building to do, small as it may be in terms of alongside the particular river—probably \$50,000 to \$60,000 construction of wooden bridges—we did so. Why did we do that? Because of the need for immediate relief. So what we are seeing here, a parallel organization is being brought into the framework.

For grass cutting, there are two ministries involved: the Ministry of Works and Transport and the Ministry of Local Government. They are well aware of that. *[Interruption]*

Hon. Member: The Ministry of Public Utilities deals with CEPEP.

Dr. A. Nanan: Okay, it is the Ministry of Public Utilities. You are also seeing, too, that the Ministry of Public Utilities, quite correctly, T&TEC cuts the branches that overhang wires. So you have all these areas. CEPEP now is cleaning the coastline, cutting the grass, and I quote:

“Blue-overalled CEPEP workers cleaned coastlines, cleared drains and watercourses, weeded highway verges and replanted forests.”

It is a good programme, but it is a programme which is supposed to be run in the various Ministries. Listen to what they are doing: “cleaned coastlines”, that is a task for the Ministry of Works and Transport or the Ministry of Local Government; “cleared drains and watercourses”, the Ministry of Works and Transport and the Ministry of Local Government; “weeded highway verges”, Ministry of Works and Transport and “replanted forests”, the Forestry Division.

What are they doing? They are creating a parallel organization. You could just go through a process where you use the public service system and use the local government, because I am sure—

Mr. Singh: Get the local government to work.

Dr. A. Nanan: Exactly. Rather than put a parallel organization, have the ministries working efficiently. So you are creating a parallel organization to take up the slack of these various ministries. I quote again:

“In the truly private sector of environmental works, little people are investing in equipment and doing deals with householders who need their lawns and backyards mowed, and other landscaping services affordably provided.”

So what you are seeing, as I said before:

“Mr. Manning has now targeted creation of 5,000 entrepreneurs a year.

The idea of the State’s ‘creating’ entrepreneurs is at once suspect. Entrepreneurs, as people who follow their dreams, taking initiative and risk, typically respond by their own lights to economic and business opportunities.”

The Member for Diego Martin Central is well aware of that.

Mr. Valley: I can answer you when I wind up. But you see, I think the people who say that missed a fundamental thing. The Government’s responsibility is to create an environment, and that is what it is. To say that entrepreneurs are self-motivated, fine, but there must be an environment. If entrepreneurs cannot have access to credit, then you are not going to have entrepreneurs.

Dr. A. Nanan: I take his point but I want him to understand in terms of the functions of the various ministries and the role of ministries in terms of the delivery of services, because taxpayers’ money is being utilized for these services. In fact, the role of a government is to deliver services to the people, utilizing the public service, not to create a parallel organization.

I wanted to make that point in terms of CEPEP and that particular programme, because it is just a variation of other programmes being carried out, a duplication

of effort. As I am reminded by the Member for Caroni East in terms of duplication of effort, when we went into the various ministries, we saw duplications of programmes in those ministries. You had YTEPP in one ministry for training; you had other programmes for training in various ministries and through the Ministry of Planning and Development we pulled all together and we surgically removed the programmes that overlapped. So we ensured that you did not have all these various budgetary allocations for small programmes where you had a lot of staff. You had staff in one ministry, staff in the next ministry and you had this public services debit accumulating because of the duplication of programmes. So in terms of CEPEP, that is the view of this particular programme and the role of the State in entrepreneurship.

In fact, when you look at the economy and the persons living below the poverty line, 22 per cent increase in the price of flour is a large increase because it has a ripple effect in terms of the price of foodstuff. There is a very nice cartoon here in this same *Guardian* of Monday, January 20, 2003 which says: “Just now yuh go have to call hops bread Mr. Breads!”

8.00 p.m.

This variation of appropriation gives us an idea—although there is a paper transfer, we can see that various ministries are not performing. The Ministry of National Security is a pivotal ministry in the whole structure of governance. It is very dear to my heart because the Gasparillo Police Station was supposed to be constructed in 2002, but there is not even a pillar on the ground. When the allocation was made for that particular ministry, the Gasparillo Police Station was included. At that station there is a shortage of vehicles and that is a situation throughout Trinidad and Tobago.

The United National Congress worked extensively in that area. We provided more vehicles and communication mechanisms for the police service. We also put more police officers on the streets. There is so much you can do at one particular point in time. We are seeing a shortage of vehicles in terms of poor maintenance. We had set up that vehicle management repair company in Laventille. We recognized that a number of vehicles were parked up because parts were missing. The money that was allocated from 1995—2001 strengthened the police service in terms of infrastructure. We built and repaired many police stations.

We are seeing that this “stay calm” attitude is continuing in governance. There is a lack of drive. It took over 20 years to pass Bills in this Parliament by the People’s National Movement. They continue with this lackadaisical attitude to governance. It is reflected in all sectors.

The transfer from the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources affects me as a Member of Parliament, because the constituency of Tabaquite is considered to be one of the breadbaskets of the nation. There are many farmers in that constituency and like my colleague for Nariva, many farmers are being owed money for the flooding that occurred over the last year.

Before I conclude, I would look at this \$250 million programme that we are reminded of in the Ministry of Education. I sent a few red flags because it is important for the country in terms of the education system. I pointed out the variation of \$10 million for private secondary school students to the Member for Diego Martin Central. I will close with that transfer of sub-heads in the Ministry of Education. They were trying to find money from every single sub-item to facilitate the political agenda of the Government. I saw the book grant of \$1,000 for secondary school students and the provision of library and text books, \$12.6 million. The book grant which is important, just over \$104 million is a significant amount of money. The ministry utilized various areas.

I hope you take my advice as a former minister of education. They moved \$870,000 from the Rudranath Capildeo Learning Resource Centre. There is very important communication equipment at that centre. If I remember correctly, between the sum of \$22 million and \$30 million was allocated for the audio visual equipment at that centre. It is being underutilized. At that particular time there was a problem with the contract, but that has been worked out. Instead of removing money from that resource centre, put more money into that particular programme and use it for the distance education thrust.

I see replacement of \$500,000. I do not know if that is a car for the Minister. The \$250 million allocation only went for the building programme. The ministry has other needs.

I want to make mention of the \$917,000 for the commissions of enquiry. On page 69, Head 13, sub-item 09, we see the approved transfer by the Minister of Finance. We would raise questions in Parliament on the expenditure of that particular commission of enquiry. We are not trying to shut down the enquiry. The country needs to know how much money is being spent in that particular political agenda of the Government. That is your policy.

The other point I want to make, as the Member for Nariva said, is about the consulting and other contracted services. I call that "ratching the finances". That is a particular area where there can be a lot of movement of money in and out. We are seeing it quite clearly in terms of this particular report under "Consulting and Other Contracting Services".

I hope that I have brought some kind of holistic approach to governance in Trinidad and Tobago. Although they say otherwise, we are interested in our country in terms of the local situation and the international arena.

Thank you.

Mr. Nizam Baksh (*Naparima*): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I take the opportunity to commend my colleagues for the way they have addressed the issues. I know that we have had various styles in presentation, but I think that all augured very well for the interest that has been kept alive. I want to take a slightly different approach which is neither left nor right, to raise some issues with regard to getting projects done very early.

As a former public servant with the opportunity to work at middle management level, I have had the opportunity and experience to deal with some of these projects. I am aware of the difficulties that ministries have in implementing projects. I take this line to raise one or two issues which could help address the implementation of projects. We have had the opportunity to address at length, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of National Security where funds have been unspent. In some areas if we have greater devolution with respect to the funding in various ministries with the release and disbursement of funds, it would assist in the speedy implementation of some of the programmes. Then we could have the ministries and the line ministers more accountable for these programmes.

We are aware that the UNC government took the bold initiative to change the financial year which was effected to enable government to take full advantage of the dry season. When the budget debate was held in January or February, it took a number of months to get funds to the various ministries. When they were ready to start, it would have been the rainy season. This is why the UNC government took the measure to bring forward the financial year to October. When you have to embark on any programme you have to develop the scope of works and then there is the tendering procedure which takes much time. This is one of the problems we are facing as the financial year has been moved back. The Ministry of Finance should release funds on the basis of claims of reports from the ministries. This is how it operates and it also causes some delays. Once you start a project in any particular field, you get off the ground but the contractors need the funding. After a month or so you end up with stoppages. Once these project reports go back to the Ministry of Finance, queries come up and this causes delays. I suggest that we allow the line ministries more autonomy to avoid some of these delays in commencing projects and to achieve our target in time.

The background of the people at the Ministry of Finance is in finance and they know very little about the projects. I know that the Ministry of Works and Transport would experience some difficulty with this because it deals with projects. We have experienced when there are bureaucrats in the Ministry of Finance without the necessary expertise, they revel in trivialities which cause delays in releases. We need to change the machinery and make sure that we could deliver to the people of this country.

There are some recommendations I would make with regard to improvement. The Ministry of Finance should be officially responsible for reviewing progress reports; Claims for contractors—they must be exposed to training in project implementation and management. These people have a financial background and they need to get exposure with regard to project implementation and management. They would have first-hand knowledge of the projects. I suggest that releases should be made on a quarterly basis to ministries so you could drive these projects very quickly. I also recommend that the Government consider changing the financial year from October to June, so that we would have adequate time to start projects when the dry season begins in January.

I would look at some revenue earning areas that we are not putting focus on with respect to getting revenue. Sometimes projects are stymied because of inadequate funding. In the energy based sector LNG, Petrotrin, bpTT and Trinmar, where foreign contractors are employed, those who earn monthly wages are forced to pay tax. They cannot escape it. There are contractors who earn huge sums from these companies. Are we gaining or recovering sufficient tax from these people? Do we have a list of those subcontractors so we can find out the funding they receive so we can get the taxes? We may need to overhaul the tax regime with regard to the oil companies. My understanding is that once they have income they get their profits. If they plough back the profits into additional businesses they do not have to pay taxes. I feel that we should find a way for them to pay taxes because this is the only way that we would benefit.

We know that those industries employ few people. Do we have the list of contracts awarded and its values? Are these companies being audited? We have to ensure that these auditors are not on the payroll of these companies. In what currency are the contract payments and salaries made? We know that negotiations are being made that when these foreign contractors come you have to pay in US dollars. Sometimes this is paid outside of Trinidad and Tobago.

I read in the newspaper that the Customs department is in trouble. *The Trinidad Guardian* dated January 27, page 1 states:

“A severe staff shortage now exists at the Customs and Excise Division, Comptroller of Customs & Excise Division, Ralph Newton revealed yesterday.

The revelation comes at a time of increasing seizures of arms and ammunition by local law enforcement agencies and the reported importation of chemicals by terrorist groups to make bombs.

‘We are woefully understaffed,’ said Newton. ‘We are attempting to change this situation. We are talking about a 38 per cent shortage.’

Newton said one of the reasons for the staff shortage is the creation of the Customs & Excise Passenger Analytical Unit, Customs Canine Enforcement Unit and the Marine Interdiction Unit.

This has resulted in vacancies being created since customs officers were transferred to these units from their former posts.”

We know that for years that division has been grossly understaffed. If you look at the figures paid in overtime to customs officers, it amounts to millions of dollars, far in excess of their annual income from wages. I recommend that we start training people as a matter of urgency, so we could fill those vacancies identified and keep that division running smoothly and effectively. If we provide the strength that is needed, we can do a lot of surveillance work even at our borders.

I would now touch the community section. When the UNC was in government, it was our objective that we try to build as many community centres throughout the country. We had allocated the sum of \$1.2 million per centre. Today, while we have allocated for seven centres, we are seeing that two community centres are being built. The PNM has re-prioritized that list of building community centres. I am questioning the amount being spent on these centres. One is being built in Point Cumana at a cost of over \$2 million. The Government is now allowing the village councils to be in control of community centres. I understand that in Point Cumana you do not even have a functioning community council. I hope that by the time the construction is completed, there would be a functioning village council.

In Mon Repos, San Fernando, over \$4 million would be spent to build a community centre. I know that centre because I was a community development officer and I worked in that district. That is an area that services a small National Housing Authority (NHA) community. In that centre there were a pre-school and handicraft centre. We are spending over \$4 million to build a community centre and next door in Cocoyea we are spending over \$20 million to build a multirecreational park. I think it is a good opportunity to keep certain activities in the Mon Repos centre, so you could encourage people to go across and let the

community merge. In Mon Repos there are other centres by private organizations. There are the Lions' Community Centre which is a stone's throw from that community centre, the OWTU Hall and Centre for The Performing Arts and the Cocoyea Community Centre. I think the money we are spending is quite exorbitant. It could have gone to build two other community centres in the areas.

I recall the old days when the village councils used to control the community centres. Very often, when other organizations wanted to use the community centres, if they did not support the village councils, they would have problems in accessing the use of the centres. We changed the management of the community centres by placing a community centre management team that comprised of representatives of all the various organizations. Today, the present Government has given control to the village councils. This is causing some problems in various communities.

Something is now happening, I assume in many ministries, where hundreds of contract workers are coming to do jobs and the system in the public service is being bypassed. This is demoralizing employees in the public service. You have people coming on contract with higher salaries than the public servants who have to supervise these contract workers. These public servants are becoming disenchanted and there is much mismanagement in the public service. We need to address this.

I know that the Government has taken good care of the people 18 to 60 years. There is a vulnerable group of citizens over 60 years in the autumn of their lives. We have to address this because those people have limited access to any assistance, other than what the Government can give them. I make reference to the old age pension of \$1,000. While that is good, we have much reservation about the conditions which must be met before one can source the old age pension. This situation will continue to pauperize and frustrate a large group of low-income citizens. Sooner or later, we would have a large group of impoverished, depressed and frustrated citizens. This group is destined to grow larger and larger if policies of this Government towards social benefits are not addressed expeditiously, with equity and fairness.

In the public service, such as the Ministry of Local Government, WASA, Solid Waste Company, and MTS, there are many daily-paid workers. These people have very little to get after they leave the public service. They are very vulnerable. When they retire they have very little income. Sometimes they have to pay off debts from the severance benefit they get. They may have to pay off the house loan or some loan they took to renovate their house or for the education of their

children. Money they get on retirement would go immediately. We are experiencing this problem. When they become beneficiaries of NIS, it is a pittance of \$300 or \$400, after contributing for their working lives. We need to address that area of concern. The Government has addressed the younger ones very well. They are looking at a number of projects. I want to look at those areas where we are not satisfying the demands.

The only source of income for these people is between \$300—\$400 per month. Those who do not satisfy the 750 contributions for NIS pension obtain a lump sum which is used to clear mortgages or invest in a small house. I urge you to adopt the UNC manifesto and reduce the age for old age pension to 60 years. You would bring much needed relief to more citizens. I take the opportunity to quote an article with regard to the NIS programme. It is an article from The Trinidad and Tobago Association for Retired Persons (TTARP) by Hubert Dolsingh, national insurance consultant. Page 12 states:

“The more you pay the less you get.

...If the rate of National Insurance pension is increased to \$1,000 per month, recipients of Old Age pension could suffer a loss in income. For you to benefit there must be some changes.

Let us examine the payment of \$1,000 per month as the minimum pension under the National Insurance Scheme. At present, the rate of Old Age pension is based on an income qualifying condition apart from attaining the age of 65 years. Subject to correction, as I understand the law pertaining to the Old Age pension, if your total income which includes Bank interest and pension such as NIS is less than \$100 per month, you will be entitled to receive \$1,000 per month. If your income is more than \$100 but less than \$720 per month, you will receive \$900 per month.

If the Government increases the rate of NIS pension to a minimum of \$1,000 per month and does not remove or revise the income qualifying condition for Old Age pension, all recipients of NIS pension who are receiving Old Age pension will not benefit but would suffer a loss in total pension. For example, if you are receiving NIS pension as your only income, say, \$433.33 and \$900 from Old Age pension totalling \$1,333.33, then the proposed revised NIS pension of \$1,000 per month will result in a loss of \$333.33.

The following five examples would give you a clear picture that it is not true to say, that the more contributions you pay to the National

Insurance Scheme, the more you will receive in benefits.

1. As explained before, an Insured who has paid all his contributions in the highest Class from the inception of the scheme to date will receive only \$591.09 per month.
2. An insured person who has paid only 750 contributions backwards from today, will receive a monthly pension of \$604.50 as compared with the first person who has paid over 1600 contributions.
3. A Retirement pension is payable where an insured person has to credit at least 750 contributions. Where a person pays less than 750 contributions he will receive a grant which is a lumpsum payment. Therefore, if you paid 749 contributions in the highest class backwards from today, you will receive a grant of \$68,603.49. If this sum is invested to create a voluntary pension at a rate of 8%, you can get about \$460 per month. It must be noted that your capital sum remains with you. Unlike numbers one and two, if you die after one month of receiving your pension, no further sum is payable to your Estate.
4. An insured person who has paid 150 contributions at a rate of \$68.04 between May 1999 and to date and becomes an invalid, can receive \$1,053 per month regardless of his age. On attaining the age of 60 years based on the present conditions, he would have his invalidity benefit converted to a retirement pension at the same rate of \$1,053 per month.
5. Where an insured person paid 10 contributions at the rate of \$19.35 before May 3, 1999 and was medically declared as an invalid and now reaches the age of 60 years, he will receive a retirement pension of \$433.33 per month in place of his invalidity benefit.”

You will agree that the more you pay the less you will get. The scheme has to be revised to address this imbalance. We recognize that while there is talk in the air that the National Insurance pension would be increased, it would put a number of people at a disadvantage. We need to look at it thoroughly.

What options are available to address the increase in poverty? I recommend that we should adopt and reduce the old age pension to 60 years. We should remove all NIS benefits from old age pension qualifying income. If NIS benefits cannot be removed from qualifying income, raise the ceiling of qualifying income to \$2,000. Let us take the national community to universal benefits, that is, use

age only as the qualifying requirement. At this time we have about 64,000 old age pensioners. By adopting this we would increase it by about 25,000 persons. On the other hand you have 84,000 NIS pensioners.

I turn to the increase in public assistance. In the budget presentation, the Minister of Finance had indicated that we would get increases from the passing of that budget in October. It is now four months and these people have not received the increases as promised. We have to recognize that the public assistance recipients have no alternative or other avenue to get income. For these people to receive assistance, they must have some sickness and cannot work. It applies also to their children who may be of school age. We have to think about them buying their drugs and paying for transport for their school children. The Minister promised that the drugs would be free.

I had the opportunity of visiting Saudi Arabia during the time of pilgrimage. At that time there were 3 or 4 million people coming from outside on the pilgrimage. I marvelled at the health facilities in place for these people. You could go to every street corner and find a health centre. Within 15 minutes you could be diagnosed and get a prescription. If it is more serious they refer you to another doctor or the bigger hospitals. In our country, for people to receive medical treatment at the hospital, they go there from 3.00 a.m. to get a number. When the public servants come you have to get another number. Very often they wait for the entire day and do not get the medication. These poor people do not have the means to buy the medication. We need to address this urgently.

I understand that they want to introduce the income ceiling with regard to receiving public assistance. If this is done, we would be introducing the dole system. I recommend you do not go that way and allow the recipients of public assistance to have the opportunity to gain employment. Do not strike them off the list of beneficiaries of public assistance, immediately. Let it be a slow change. When you do this people would want to get jobs. As it obtains at the moment, once you get employment, you are taken off public assistance and this creates greater problems. This would also destroy the attitude towards work.

I want to talk about the system of payment with regard to public assistance and old age pension. We know hundreds of cheques are misplaced and cashed by unauthorized persons. The Minister can tell us the status of the investigations with regard to missing cheques. I recommend that the Government ask these recipients to open bank accounts so that these cheques can be forwarded to the relevant accounts. We can counteract all these missing cheques.

I also suggest that we put greater emphasis with regard to the construction of homes for the elderly. I have visited some of the homes in Canada where special homes have been built for these people and there are medical facilities close by. During the night they can access medical treatment.

With regard to old age pensioners they are getting \$100 relief with the WASA bill. To ease the plight of these people, we should consider raising this to a higher figure. We should consider relief in the T&TEC bill as well.

Let me touch on crime. We are hearing a lot about travel advisory. Down on the streets, everybody knows the criminals. We are wondering why these people are not apprehended by the police. They know them as well. Many allegations are being made with regard to the connection between the police and criminals. The police need to be more proactive rather than reactive with regard to the crime situation. It is only when something happens you get some action. We need to go back to the days when we could do the things to prevent the crimes. In the current situation, we are hearing that the Government does not have answers for the crime situation and they using the UNC as a scapegoat. We are being blamed for everything in the current situation.

I empathize with the people who have experienced such trauma. We do not know until we are hit with it. I have my experience. In early December I had a kidnap threat on the family. I can tell you we lived in fear. When you look through the window you look to see who is there, which strange car is there or any strange movements around the area. You can hardly sleep well because of that fear. I have been hit with it. When your family travels you want to know if they are safe. You have to call all the time to find out what is happening. I thought as a Member of Parliament, perhaps, I would have had a little support. I have spoken to the Commissioner of Police, the head of the police in San Fernando, Barrackpore and Princes Town. Every other day the police would call me and ask if there were any new developments. I was so mad that one day, I told the police when they kidnap I will call you and tell you they kidnap me. I was really angry.

On the *Express* dated Saturday January 25, I read where the resigned junior doctors were called on to repay education loans. When you look at the critical situation in the health sector, the entire country is experiencing problems. Somebody looking for dialogue. They want to address the situation. They want to contribute to society. We have people being addressed in this way: it is vindictive. Once they confront you, you talk about payment of the loans. I think this is asking for confrontation and it is not the way to go. I wonder if when they "lay-off" Caroni workers, they would ask them to pay back the loans.

I look at the social aspect of the Caroni situation. We are talking about \$400 million that comes from the Treasury to fund Caroni (1975) Limited. I want to look at the social implication. The health sector is in shambles and crisis. At Caroni, 60,000 persons benefit from the health services offered there. When Caroni is closed down and these 60,000 persons have to go to the public sector for health care, what will happen? There would be no facilities for them to access. We are experiencing problems in the health sector.

It is the first time that I am hearing that a VSEP plan is compulsory. People usually have options. The newspaper headline said that 9,000 must go. You have to look at the social implication. They are saying that 9,000 employees would have to be retrained. We are not seeing any signs of any programmes or plan to re-train these people. Where would they get the jobs we are talking about?

As a result of this social implication, I can see the crime situation worsening as we have a greater crime situation looming in this country. There would be the expansion of illegal trade, drugs and prostitution. With these remarks, I hope that the points I have raised would be given serious consideration. As a citizen, I am concerned that we live in a peaceful country, that our children and grandchildren would live happily in this country.

Thank you.

The Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I wonder what could be in one's mind, that for a very simple—when an individual comes prepared for a debate, as the last Member has done, to speak for 40 minutes and tells you, "I will just speak for 10 to 15 minutes", what is in that individual's mind? What can you trust him on? I find it extremely amazing.

What is worse is that it seemed as though he was unaware that we debated old age pension and public assistance last week. He is a week late. He went on and on, on a merry-go-round having nothing to do with the legislation before us. For me, quite frankly, it is disgusting.

The first Member seemed to be the only one who came prepared for this debate. Everybody else prepared for something else. When we saw that the Member for St. Joseph did not open the debate and, more importantly, did not take part in the debate, we should have known that they came for ol' talk. That is the former Minister of Finance. I hold a responsibility to you to respond to some of the issues you raised. We have other things to take care of.

Quite simply, on the issue of flour, we are looking at liberalizing the situation rather than subsidizing flour. We would be opening the market.

Delays in projects—in 2002, we know that project implementation under PSIP has been barred for some time. The Ministry of Education has now set up some implementing strategy to deal with that to be more effective. They are trying to have different project managers for different projects. They would continue to use Nipdec and MTS, but in-house project management. By so doing, they expect to have a higher level of effectiveness.

A critical point is the variation of keeping with the ministry structure. There is precedent for that. If you go back to 1981, after Dr. Williams died and Mr. Chambers came in, although there were Cabinet changes, they continued with the old structure. Every individual will fit in the division. Although we have changed the name of the ministry, we have not changed the appropriation. There is some logic in continuing that structure within the budget period and changing it at the next budget. It varied in the new budget year. If you were in Parliament as you should have been, we would have had ample time to do as you say.

With respect to the difference between appropriation and actual cash, I think Dr. Rowley dealt with that.

Thank you.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved:

That this House adopt the First Report of the 2002 session of the Finance Committee of the House of Representatives of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, on the proposals for the expenditure from the public revenue which were not included in the annual estimates.

Hon. K. Valley: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think we would take a break at this time until 9.45 p.m.

Question put and agreed to.

9.00 p.m.: *Sitting suspended.*

9.45 p.m.: *Sitting resumed.*

FINANCE (VARIATION OF APPROPRIATION) (2002) BILL

The Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley) Thank you very much. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I beg to move

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That a bill to vary the appropriation of the sum the issue of which was authorized by the Appropriation Act, 2002, be now read a second time.

This Bill comes out of the report of the Finance Committee, which was debated earlier today. You would recall in that debate I attempted to make four points, emphasizing the concept of parliamentary control of expenditure. In the Bill the major supplementary provision or expenditure increase relates to an investment fund going on to the IMF for on lending to countries in difficulty. This accounts for about 65 per cent of the appropriation. In fact, the expenditure budget was down by \$1.6 billion and because of that it allowed for the variation of appropriation, quite distinct from the actual cash. All that talks about, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is the authority of the Government to spend up to a particular figure. That is what the budget gives; like any budget, giving authority to spend up to a given figure but to be able to do that there must be the revenue. However, since revenues were down expenditure had to be curtailed.

I ask Members to take the point that were it not for this significant item of \$574 million, the variation of appropriation would have been extremely small relating to about three items. I made the point also that the variation does not affect the fiscal balance. The surplus remains at \$68.9 million.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I beg to move.

Question proposed.

Mr. Manohar Ramsaran (*Chaguanas*): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Let me also thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak on this Bill to vary the appropriation of the sum the issue of which was authorized by the Finance (Variation of Appropriation) (2002) Bill.

I want to read this into the record and to agree with the Member for Diego Martin Central. I am quoting section 113 of the Constitution, which states:

(1) “The Minister responsible for finance shall cause to be prepared and laid before the House of Representatives before or not later than thirty days after the commencement of each financial year estimates of the revenues and expenditure of Trinidad and Tobago for that year.

(2) The heads of expenditure contained in the estimates, other than expenditure charged upon the Consolidated Fund by this Constitution or any Act, shall be included in a Bill, to be known as an Appropriation Bill, providing for the issue from the Consolidated Fund of the sums necessary to meet that expenditure and the appropriation of those sums for the purposes specified therein.

- (3) If in respect of any financial year it is found—
- (a) that the amount appropriated by the Appropriation Act for any purpose is insufficient or that a need has arisen for expenditure for a purpose for which no amount has been appropriated by the Act; or
 - (b) that any moneys have been expended for any purpose in excess of the amount appropriated for the purpose by the Appropriation Act or for a purpose for which no amount has been appropriated by the Act,

a supplementary estimate showing the sums required or spent shall be laid before the House of Representatives and the heads of any such expenditure shall be included in a Supplementary Appropriation Bill.”

Mr. Deputy Speaker, clause 5 of the Bill before us states:

“The sums appropriated to the Heads of Expenditure set out in the First Column of Part II of the Schedule by the Appropriation Act, 2002 and not utilized by the commencement of this Act and not exceeding the amount specified as reduced in the Second Column of Part II of the Schedule may be utilized, notwithstanding anything contained in the Exchequer and Audit Act, for the discharge of any liability incurred by reason of the increase in the expenditure in respect of the Heads of Expenditure set out in the First Column of Part I of the Schedule.”

Mr. Deputy Speaker, my understanding is that reading these into the record would show that we have a budget brought by the Minister of Finance and passed in this House. In that budget the expenditure and revenue will be outlined before the Parliament and the nation. Trinidad and Tobago will look at the expenditure and the revenue and if at the end of the year, that is September 30, there is found to be moneys in excess or moneys to be allocated; overspending and so on, the Minister of Finance comes with an appropriation bill.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in my humble opinion, what has happened here today is that over the last financial year 2001/2002, expenditure was suppressed and spent in another area. It was not done how it should have been done from my understanding of the Constitution. It was willy-nilly spending! It was to suppress expenditure here and spend moneys elsewhere, as was outlined by my colleagues earlier this evening, in buying votes and creating social programmes and so on.

When I look at what happened over the last year, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I feel disturbed. The sum of \$15 billion was appropriated in this Parliament to be spent

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in this country and when the present administration got the opportunity to spend these moneys, it was done against what was set out. I have a problem with that. Mr. Deputy Speaker, the record would show that. If one looks at page 15 of the Finance Committee Report one would see “Head of Expenditure”, “Amount” and “Reasons for Savings.” I have a problem with the term “Reasons for Savings”. It was said before that we had a surplus of \$68.9 million. I am sure you understand that here we have Recurrent Expenditure and the PSIP, under Development Programme. We have the Government lumping all these together and coming up with a surplus. I have said it before and I will say again, you cannot say you have a surplus when you did not perform in your PSIP. The money that was spent and blocked together would give a false sense of prudent management. I would like to quickly go through some of the savings to make my point.

The Ministry of Integrated Planning and Development: the reasons for saving \$22 million, delays in the execution of a number of development projects. My point is that we have development projects that were not done and there is a saving but, as I said before, I do not see this as a saving. I see this as moving money from the development project and putting it into something that was not approved by this House.

I would have expected the Minister of Finance to come and tell us where the money was spent? What happened? Why was \$22 million moved from Integrated Planning and where did it go? For what programmes was it used? Was it YAPA? Was it the Community-Based Environmental Protection and Enhancement Programme (CEPEP)? We want to know? How could they use Government funding to do as they like? We have a problem with that, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The country is waiting on the answers. Of course there was no Parliament in the year 2001/2002, at least most of the year, but the fact is that money was allocated in this Parliament and the Government was running our Treasury. The people want to find out! Mr. Deputy Speaker, the reasons given are delays in the execution of a number of development projects.

The Ministry of National Security: \$124 million, today, as far as the country is concerned there is a lack of everything, manpower, vehicles and so forth, but there are savings. The reason given is that there were a number of contracts, which were awarded in 2000, but delivery and payments were effected in fiscal year 2003. Again, what is the excuse? I thought the Minister would have told us why we have the savings and the surpluses. If you look at the development projects in the former ministry, which I had the honour to lead, you would see that they were all shelved. They should tell this honourable House what was done with the money. If the explanation had come we would have been home by now.

In the Ministry of Education, \$62 million was saved and the excuses given; delays in the construction of a number of secondary schools; delays in the execution of a number of development projects. Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is what a Parliament is about. They should come and explain to us why they did not build the schools, what happened—[*Interruption*] But you called it a saving. I hope I get my point across before I put down this document.

Ministry of Education and Telecommunications Technology: delays in the award of contract for the supply of paper. Let me repeat this. Delays in the award of contract for the supply of paper to the Government Printery. They saved \$33 million.

Ministry of Human Development and Youth and Culture: Provisions made in the 2002 estimates for lease payments for the new library building were not utilized due to the delay in the completion of the project. That Government made a hullabaloo with that National Library, Mr. Deputy Speaker. All they put here is a paragraph; they saved moneys because they did not complete the building. They accused us of delaying and being politically biased because it was in Port of Spain and they come to this Parliament to say they saved \$42 million because they could not complete the project.

Ministry of Transport: \$10 million. Funds were released to the undermentioned agency based on actual requirements: PTSC, Airports Authority but the tendering process for the following projects were not completed in fiscal year 2002. Mr. Deputy Speaker, \$26 million saved. I want to repeat what I said earlier, these were not moneys saved. These were moneys not used, if it was suppressed, I do not know. The Minister could get up and tell us. We have had many reports of spending over the last general election. I do not want to go there as yet, maybe later on.

Ministry of Housing: \$28,610; the reason for savings; conditions precedent to disbursements have not been satisfied with respect to the following projects—squatter regularization. Preparation of 2,000 green field sites, expenses of the Project Coordinating Unit—Mr. Deputy Speaker, in my constituency there is a small squatting village called La Paille. I think a meagre \$130,000 was awarded to do some drainage work. The Government, however, was not able to spend that \$130,000 on that village. This PSIP is a record of non-performance. [*Desk thumping*] We have a problem with that. You cannot come to this House and say because of your non-performance you have savings. That is nothing but negligence.

Of course, mention was made this morning of the savings in the Ministry of Infrastructural Development and Local Government; delays in the award of contracts with respect to the following projects, reinstatement and stabilization of

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failed slopes, institutional strengthening and trunk road expansion. They must come to this Parliament and tell us the reasons for these savings. As far as I am concerned it is nothing short of non-performance and the country must be told this.

I thought after all criticisms levelled against the Government over the last year, they would come here today and justify what happened. My friend from Naparima extended his—maybe some agreement was made—The Member for Diego Martin Central got up as if he was a schoolmaster; as if this is his House, and chastised him and I have a problem with that. We must not allow ourselves to become arrogant and to treat people like that. We have to be humble in our approach. As we are talking about humility maybe later I will come back and give you one or two quotations on that.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is another area on which I want to touch to show you how our moneys were spent—when I say our, it is your money too, it is not only the moneys that belong to the Government of the day but, indeed, to the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

Statement of Approved Transfers: Mr. Deputy Speaker, this one is not an excuse for savings; these are some expenditures I want to point out to you. Office of the President: This could be done actually with the approval of the Minister of Finance where he does not have to come to Parliament but, of course, it has to be laid in Parliament. Here we have expenditure that was transferred from one subhead to another. Under Head: 01, President: Vehicles, \$819,000 and other minor equipment, total \$1.174 million, which was transferred to overseas travel. I am sure my good friend, the Member for Diego Martin Central, could tell us the original figure for travelling by the President. I do not have it on record but if I remember correctly it would be about \$1.5 million. Mr. Deputy Speaker, \$426,800 was added to the President's overseas travelling allowance. So you see what is happening. This is where the money was spent.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will not go through all, I will just touch on a few. Office of the Prime Minister, Goods and Services—that is the original subhead—and General Administration. Would you believe from that hard-earned money allocated for the people to do the government business in the Prime Minister's office, \$914,000 was transferred to remunerations to chairmen and members of commissions of enquiry. Was this told to Trinidad and Tobago? We in the Parliament must get the Minister of Finance to tell the people where the moneys are coming from to pay these commissions of enquiry. It is coming from the Prime Minister's office from Goods and Services and then the Minister gets up here and says this is a simple matter. How could \$15 billion be a simple matter?

My colleagues talked all day about nepotism and cronyism and help for their friends and families but when you go through this document you will see everything here.

We now move quickly to Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs. Moneys approved for general administration and filling of vacant posts, increased salaries to public officers amounting to \$2.9 million—my friend the Member for Nariva, would be interested in these figures—Consulting and Other Contracting Services in Ministry of the Attorney General, \$13,592 million. Mr. Deputy Speaker, let the Minister get up and tell us who were these people contracted; what moneys were paid to them and the names of the firms or companies. The Minister of Finance must not come to this House and say this is a simple matter when the moneys allocated to the Attorney General's office to do work that the UNC administration thought was important to the development of this country was transferred for consulting and other contracting services. I am sure, there would have been moneys already allocated to the Ministry to deal with that. So this is \$13 million added to that. Maybe it is to prosecute somebody. I do not know. Let them tell us. The sum of \$203,000 was added to, I am sure an already heavy official overseas travel vote for the Attorney General's office. That is why the Member was not here to speak to my friend, the Member for Siparia.

Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources: Mr. Deputy Speaker, moneys cannot be found to pay the farmers. My friend, the Member for Nariva, spoke about that this morning. In my constituency farmers were affected by the floods in 2001, no moneys were paid! Flooding occurred a few months ago, no moneys were paid! There was a big speech by the hon. Prime Minister about moneys to be paid but nothing has happened! Mr. Deputy Speaker, moneys were transferred from Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources Subhead 25, Subhead 1 to Subhead 2 and travelling and contracting services. With respect to this question of contracting and consulting and other services, the Government should come to this honourable House and give a statement on it because every time I mention contracting and consulting and other services this is the amount of money that comes forward. Who are the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources contracting and for what? Mr. Deputy Speaker, \$612,000 or \$.61 million.

In the Ministry of Education moneys were transferred as if it was going out of style. School Intervention Strategies: \$4.2 million. I would like to know what are these. This was money coming from building and the upgrade of schools that was transferred to this School Intervention Strategies Unit. Provision of library and textbooks, \$12.6 million: I am sure somebody on this side would ask the question: where were these works done?

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The Ministry of Health: \$20 million transferred from General Administration to Head 28, Ministry of Health, Subhead 3 and, again, we have the North West Regional Health Authority, \$14 million. Maybe it is for a good reason, I do not know. Maybe they want to pay somebody to do something. They hired many advisors! Tell us so we would not say that you are corrupt and that you are stealing the moneys from the Treasury.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs: \$1 million transferred. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am sure you are going to be frightened by this figure, \$1 million transferred from the Ministry of Enterprise Division and Foreign Affairs to Head 32, Subhead 02. I repeat, Official Overseas Travel: \$1 million! This morning my friend called it feeding at the trough. This is just a wild spending spree by this Government. I remember when we went into office in 1995 the entire overseas vote was not \$1 million, today we have \$1 million transferred in one ministry in addition to what was already allocated. You see what is happening in this country, wild spending, spending without coming to this Parliament. That is why I quoted the Constitution.

When there is a shortfall in our revenue collection, when there is an over expenditure and when you are sure, at September 30 then you come to this Parliament to vary the appropriation. But what has happened is that they have suppressed expenditure and transferred it for their friends and other people for joyrides. One million dollars added to the overseas travel expenses for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs!

Ministry of Human Development, Youth and Culture: \$7.6 million was transferred—and of course they have mentioned that they paid some calypsonian—from Head 3304 to Head 3305 to non-profit institutions. What are these non-profit institutions? To be given the sum of \$7.671 million I would like to know what are these non-profit institutions. Who are these people? Are they only from Trinidad and Tobago?

Ministry of Community Empowerment, Sport and Consumer Affairs: again, non-profit institutions, this time to the tune of \$1.784 million. So if you add both of them it would be about \$4 million to non-profit institutions? Is this political patronage? Who are these non-profit institutions? Mr. Deputy Speaker, maybe it is good business to form a non-profit institution if we have the Government giving \$4 million to non-profit institutions. Recently when I raised in this honourable House the question of giving the 50 per cent rebate for sporting clubs and so on, the hon. Prime Minister and Member for Diego Martin Central said that could encourage corruption because poor clubs might take a \$30,000 and say they got \$60,000. But here you are giving away millions of dollars to non-profit

institutions. This evening I did not merely stand here to criticize but to find out where the money went. I have gone through these two documents before us and it is quite clear that what happened over the last year could be described as horrendous and mismanagement of the worst kind. The UNC government was accused of so many things but here \$15 billion was just frittered away by this administration in their 10 to 11 months in office. We will talk more about that later.

I want to quickly touch on what the Minister said this morning on “Question to Ministers”. He said nothing was on the Order Paper. This is the same Order Paper, nothing was changed—*[Interruption]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hon Member, you did not speak in the previous debate and we are not going on to this one without debate, so you have got to deal with what has been dealt with in this debate. *[Interruption]* No, you cannot have your cake and eat it. If you want to debate them separately, debate them separately and we move on.

Mr. M. Ramsaran: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am very grateful for your guidance and I am not challenging your ruling, of course I would not do that, but the Order Paper is still the same and there are no questions on the Order Paper.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: No, no, that is not the point. Do you understand what I mean?

Mr. M. Ramsaran: I understand quite clearly, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

[Words expunged]

Mr. Sharma: Who did that?

Mr. M. Ramsaran: *[Words expunged]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Are you making a connection?

Mr. M. Ramsaran: Sure, I will be there. I know it might be a bit late and you might not recollect what I said before but the fact is I am talking about transfers and moneys spent.

[Words expunged]

Mr. Sharma: *[Words expunged]*

Mr. M. Ramsaran: *[Words expunged]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Member for Fyzabad, you are obstructing the Member for Chaguanas. Would you please be quiet?

Mr. Sharma: My apologies, Sir.

Mr. M. Ramsaran: Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for your kindness but the fact is that—Let me ask the question again. [*Words expunged*] As Members of this House we were told that if we received gifts to the tune of \$500 they must be declared. So when I read that article it boggled my mind, it had me thinking many evil things, so just to clear it up when the hon. Member—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I do not know that the hon. Member has to clear it up. You are not being relevant. I asked you to connect the two and you cannot tell me—[*Interruption*] Please, let me explain so that you do not cause any problems.

Mr. Sharma: [*Words expunged*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: [*Words expunged*] Where is that connected to the Appropriation Bill? If you cannot say, you are not supposed to go there any more. You need to connect it for me now.

Mr. M. Ramsaran: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will desist. The fact is—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: So you cannot connect it?

Mr. M. Ramsaran: I could. At the end of my contribution it will be well connected, I assure you.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: No, if you cannot, I will expunge that portion from the record.

Mr. M. Ramsaran: I assure you I can, Mr. Deputy Speaker. [*Words expunged*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Member, I have told you that and you have continued to go on in that direction. I have asked you not to go in that direction. Would you please not do it?

Hon. Member: Put him out.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: No, you do not tell me what to do.

Mr. M. Ramsaran: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am so guided.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have a book in front of me that I would like to quote from. Maybe this could help us in our deliberations. [*Interruption*] I want to quote from this book. It is a letter written by Hasrette Ali. This is back in history.

The following instructions in the form of a letter were written by Hasrette Ali to Malic E. Ashta whom he appointed as a Governor of Egypt in the year 57 AD. It is a letter written from a prophet to a leader.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am talking about the poor.

“Beware! Fear God when dealing with the problem of the poor who have none to patronize them, who are forlorn, indigent and helpless and are greatly torn in mind—victims...”

Mr. Williams: Would the Member give way?

Mr. M. Ramsaran: Let me finish this.

“...to the vicissitudes of Time. Among them there are some who do not question their lot in life and who notwithstanding their misery, do not go about seeking alms. For God’s sake, safeguard their rights; for on you rest responsibility of protecting their interests. Assign for their uplift a portion of the state exchequer (Baitul-mal), wherever they may be, whether close at hand or far away from you. The rights of the two should be equal in your eye.”

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I just quoted this to indicate that we must not play with our poor. I want to go back to that question but I would abide by your ruling. You know what I am talking about. I will now give way to the Member so maybe he would clear up his—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: No. Hon. Member, if you are going to deal with any question of hampers, I instruct you that I have told the hon. Member he must not go there unless he can connect it and that is the end of it. [*Interruption*]

Would the reporter expunge all references to the hampers from the record, please? [*Interruption*] Yes, you can do that.

Mr. M. Ramsaran: Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is news. Another question that I have a problem with is the staffing in our various ministries. As quoted by my friend, the hon. Member for Naparima, there is a staffing shortage in the Customs and Excise Division where they are operating with 62 per cent of their staff. This is a pattern, which developed over the past year where nobody has been appointed, except on contracts, which are strictly given to patronize certain people. But other than that, as I quoted before, moneys that were allocated for staff expenditure were transferred to do other things.

In the Social Welfare Division they operate with less than 70 per cent of staff. I received reports from the San Fernando, Sangre Grande and Chaguanas offices where they are so short staffed that they do not have officers for old aged pension, disability allowance and public assistance. I am calling on the Government to let us now get real, tell us why these vacancies were not filled. They must tell us why they used the money elsewhere. Why the money was not used as was approved?

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When you read the excuses they sound so pathetic: they could not do it because of X, Y and Z but the fact is that people are suffering today.

There is an article in the today's *Guardian* with respect to that link with that chemical warfare so you need many more officers to deal with things coming through the Customs and Excise Division but we do not have them. They are operating with a 68 per cent staff. That is public knowledge, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am calling on the Government to do something about that because now more than ever before, Customs and Excise is becoming a more technical aspect of life in Trinidad and Tobago. The global village is now so small that you can have Al-Qaida moving into Trinidad and Tobago. We need customs officers to be very vigilant. I remember that laws concerning the importation of chemicals and so forth, had to be approved by the Food and Drugs Division but then these could come in forms and fashion that resemble another drug and by the time the Food and Drugs Division is aware of what is happening it would be too late. I think we should strengthen these divisions. If you go through these documents you would see that positions that were supposed to be filled—I cannot accept the given. They should tell us so we could have on record what are the real reasons for not filling these vacancies.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, look at the misspending and what is taking place in this country. As I said earlier in my contribution, I am not accusing; I just want explanations and if explanations cannot come we on this side have no choice but to say that moneys have been misspent. As far as our taxpayers are concerned the Government cannot spend \$15 billion and then come here and say it is nothing important, it is a small bill. That cannot be small! When you look at the expenses that they have put forward, there is cause for concern. I want the hon. Minister, when he is winding up, to deal with these issues. I want to let him know that we on this side would not sit by and allow this to happen. We will continue to ask for explanations because this is a money bill.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, maybe because of the newness of some of us we are not aware that we could go as wide as possible with a money bill. This is about dealing with the finances of this country. That is why our founding father found it necessary to put in our statute that when you receive gifts over \$500 it must be declared as property of the State. This is something we have to be careful about. No commission of enquiry could make that right. So when we want to assume leadership in this country we have to be above board. We cannot hide behind any technicality.

Recently—and I will elaborate on this matter another time but just to say that in dealing with people's money in this country, we have to be fair—an accusation

was made, and I have all the documents in the briefcase. I will bring it out because it is not going away from the debate at all, in my humble opinion. I went on the Internet—On July 12, 1996 when we debated the Public Assistance Amdt. Bill I was accused of certain things and among the speakers on that day was the Member for Diego Martin East. Everything here was approved. The *Hansard* of July 12, 1996 could be checked. At that time too, I remember the Member for Port of Spain South commending the Bill and talking about his own son who has Down's syndrome. He commended us, but he said we should do more, but the fact is he spoke on this Bill. The Regulations were made and everything was done in accordance with the law. If I may quote briefly:

“Disability assistance”

Remember the accusation was made that all my family was disabled. [Interruption] I know but it has to do with the money of this country. I have to tell you that even as we talk about money in this country and we have people paying their national insurance, I am calling on the Government today—I want to repeat what my friend said, that we have to look at the national insurance benefit payments. Mr. Deputy Speaker, the day will come when you will need that money too, because you paid national insurance for a long time. Maybe hard times would come upon us. We do not know. [Interruption] Let me read the part the Member had a problem with. I quote:

“Notwithstanding any provision of this Act a person is entitled to receive disability assistance...”

I will not read the others but the particular section. He is certified by a government medical officer as—

“...is attributable to an intellectual psychiatric, sensory or physical impairment or a combination of such impairments...is permanently or likely to be permanent, and results in inability to earn a living which in the opinion of the local board will be adequate.”

Mr. Deputy Speaker, nowhere is there the mention of hypertension or heart disease. I think we should come with a substantial motion to censure that Minister for misleading this House.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Member, you do not want to do that.

Mr. M. Ramsaran: No, I do not want to do that. You see when accusations are made about thin skin and so forth we have to be careful. I did my homework so I can put on the record what that Member said. I could lay it on the table again.

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I am sure the hon. Member would also agree with me on this. *[Interruption]* Mr. Deputy Speaker, with respect to the expenditure and how money is spent, we have the question of URP, CEPEP; various social programmes which were established in the country, but where were these placed? I want to tell this honourable House that there is unemployment and poverty across Trinidad and Tobago. Unemployment and poverty unfortunately or fortunately, are not only linked with certain areas or certain political constituencies. So when URP is distributed in such a way and these other programmes—It was quite well put by my colleague, the Member for Nariva, as to the various areas in which they were placed, and remember this is government funding we are talking about; government funding should be placed throughout Trinidad and Tobago. Poverty is across Trinidad and Tobago. I visited the URP office in Chaguanas recently and the selection and the hiring process of the URP does not reflect people from Chaguanas at all. We have poverty there too. We have poverty in south, north, east and west and it is time that we—*[Interruption]*

This grumbling across the board would not help this country and when we talk about it they say that we are responsible for placing the country on advisory. But we have put the problems on the table. We have to talk about it. We have a murder a day. Since this administration came to office we had 233 murders; newspaper headline, “Six people killed.” Carnage on the roads, Mr. Deputy Speaker! They would get up and say they did not cause that but when last did you see a patrol car on the highway? This was something we had there. The negligence is showing and the “poor” in this country—not in terms of quantity of money, but their unfortunate dying on the roads, their being kidnapped and we have a government that scoffs at everything.

The Ministry of Health and the doctor problems—I am sure my friends would elaborate later about what is happening. What we are seeing is a confrontational attitude by the hon. Minister. He draws a line on the sand. I hope he is on the side with the quicksand. Mr. Deputy Speaker, that same article we read in the *Guardian* where the surviving child in that accident, a young girl who waited for hours to see a doctor in Couva Hospital—her parents were dead and that Minister came here and talked about who would win the war and he will do this and that. We are not supposed to treat our citizens like that. The doctors in this country are citizens of Trinidad and Tobago and they should be negotiated with and not be treated as though they were aliens. If we have this confrontational attitude we would not go anywhere. *[Interruption]* The hon. Member for Diego Martin East said I should know about poverty. The fact is that they are in Government and I could tell you that when we were in office it was never done like this. I am challenging the Minister to come to this House and tell us about advertisements—

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

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

Question put.

The House divided: Ayes 10 Noes 9

AYES

Persad-Bissessar, Mrs. K.

Rafeeq, Dr. H.

Ramsaran, M.

Khan, Dr. F.

Sharma, C.

Partap, H.

Nanan, Dr. A,

Panday, S.

Baksh, S.

Moonilal, Dr. R.

NOES

Valley, K.

Imbert, C.

Narine, J.

Williams, E.

James, Mrs. E.

Hart, E.

Callendar, S.

Seukaran, Mrs. D.

Roberts, A.

Question agreed to.

Mr. M. Ramsaran: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I thank my colleagues for extending my time. This is a shameful day in the history of the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to put on record that the hon. Member for Diego Martin Central insulted my colleague, the Member for Naparima, this evening, when he asked him if he did not know the difference between 10 minutes and 30 minutes. It happened in this House before when agreements were made and Members spoke for 75 minutes and we on this side sat and wondered and wondered.

I have been here for the last seven years and what has happened this evening should be registered as a shame and disgrace by the Government and the Leader of Government Business should do the honourable thing and resign. He called for a division and lost. He cannot control his Members but he wants to control the Members on this side of the House. I am asking you to check all the Conventions of Parliament where something like that happened. He is not in control of his Members. He did not even know if he had the majority but he called for a division.

I am putting in the *Hansard* that today should go down in history as the blackest day of the Parliament. Again, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Member for Diego Martin Central is the culprit and I hope that you are not put into a compromising position. This is why in this country we have parliamentary democracy, a Westminster system where winner takes all. *[Interruption]* I am sure that when we check the record because, as I have said, Westminster system *[Interruption]* winner takes all, Government and Opposition—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Members, I will suspend the House for a few minutes if you continue to make noise because it appears that nobody wants to continue with the business of this House.

Mr. M. Ramsaran: Mr. Deputy Speaker, when the traditions of the Parliament are treated like this where you have the distinguished Leader of Government Business bringing this House into disrepute, you would expect the Member for Diego Martin East and others to follow suit. *[Interruption]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Member, I have said before that for every action there is a reaction. If we are continuing the debate, let us continue and do not look for those points. I am serious, if I get any more crosstalk from Members, I will suspend the House.

Mr. M. Ramsaran: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I thought I would use a few minutes to tell you how I feel. I will now continue with my contribution. I am sure we will hear more about this, maybe in a substantive motion.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, just to remind you, we are debating an Act to vary the appropriation of the sum, the issue of which was authorized by the Appropriation Act 2002. I took the liberty and the pains to describe—I remember when I joined the public service a long time ago, that moneys to be spent in this country, whether it was one cent above or below, had to be approved by the Parliament. [Interruption] And I took the liberty to do that. I am sure my friend in this honourable House would understand that expenditure. Spending of Government's money is not a simple matter. I want to tell Members on both sides of the House that when dealing with the taxes of the people of this country it should never be described as a trivial matter. It is keeping the public trust; keeping our integrity intact as we deal with the country's finances.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I dare say that what has happened over the last fiscal year 2001/2002 is a total abuse of the parliamentary system as we know it. Here we had a budget in place, which would tell you where moneys collected from taxpayers, oil revenue or what have you, would be used. Mr. Deputy Speaker, when they come to this House that money must be spent as appropriated. Nobody should come with a fat package as this and tells us about all the illegal spending. They are now trying to legalize all the illegal spending: increase in overseas travel, entertainment allowance, paying friends and families \$1 million a year. We must not allow that to happen. It is our sacred trust. We have been given the privilege and the opportunity to serve this nation, all 36 of us, including the Speaker, and to deal with the country's wealth. When we spend one cent more than we are supposed to spend, this Parliament is the only body in this country, which should authorize that spending.

I was appalled at the Member for Diego Martin West when we lambasted the Opposition. But we did not spend money for the last fiscal year, it was Members on that side. They must take it as a warning now that this money that they spent willy-nilly across Trinidad and Tobago, for example, in community centres—community centres were approved and the total budget was \$1.2 million and we have two community centres in the Prime Minister's constituency costing \$6 million.

10.45 p.m.

Where did that money come from, Mr. Deputy Speaker? Was it approved in this House? How did it happen? How were these people given the authority to spend government money like that? On whose authority? Who signed a warrant? Even with the old age pensions, two months—and I said it before, I said it early, that with the increase in pensions to a thousand dollars, pension money will run out at the end of July because of the fact that X amount of dollars, \$600 million,

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were voted for old age pensions and if you increase it—they said, “No, we’ll find the money.” When you read here, warrants and Treasury bills were encashed on the Central Bank. On whose authority? The Minister will tell us. Is this illegal? Is it against the Exchequer and Audit Account? I do not know. I am asking the hon. Minister, who is the expert in these matters, to tell us and, when you tell us and we are satisfied we will accept it, but do not come to this honourable House and say that we wasted a day dealing with a trivial matter.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this has been entrusted to us. We are the keepers of the country’s purse and we must not treat with our money like this. When we hear the arrogance coming across, “Is my Ministry. I will deal with it. I will deal with the doctors. I will deal with Caroni”, as said by the Member this evening. He will deal with Caroni. He will make Caroni another party group. You heard it. What arrogance is this? WASA, you say, is a party group and they are proud of it, but the country must understand we are not in the 1960s as they are quickly learning. What they did five, six years ago they cannot do today because we have 16 radio stations, we have television stations, we have six or seven newspapers, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It is a country that is alert to what is happening and even the terrorist threat.

Imagine coming to an honourable House like this one and having to read the front page of your *Express* that—we despise it from time to time. We will not say no. We had problems with the *Express*, we had problems with the *Newsday*, we had problems with every newspaper; but suddenly when you see in the headlines, “Terrorist Threat”, the hon. Member for Diego Martin East, “A bunch ah UNC fellas in the *Express*”.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, once you have people against you, [*Interruption*] you suddenly hate them. [*Interruption*] I want to tell this honourable House once more and we have—contrary to what the Member would like to believe—Diego Martin Central—Members on this side showed how money was spent or misspent over the last year and I want to repeat it unless you rule me out of order, that no money that is paid to public officers, whether it is on state boards, state agencies—the Minister himself said it—the Cabinet did not approve Mr. Grimes’ salary. I want to find out who approved Mr. Grimes’ salary. Tell the honourable House. Where would the buck stop, Mr. Deputy Speaker? We want to know.

This is government’s money we are talking about. This is the people of Trinidad and Tobago—peoples’ money. They must ask questions. They must not be ruled out of order. They must not be told to sit. We must have the answers to these questions, Mr. Deputy Speaker. When we go about the country and we

have, you know—and we treat it, you know—when we talk about nepotism and cronyism, people from the other side scoff at us, but we must understand “what do so eh like, he must be careful of doing it himself” because we cannot have nepotism and cronyism practised and when we talk about it from the Opposition they scoff at it. “So what?”; they say “So what?”

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this a dangerous—if you read all the history books, history will tell you, one of the surest ways to destroy your country is through nepotism and we must warn against that. You cannot hire somebody who is not even qualified for a job, give them a fat salary and then you come here and you crow about it and then you say, “Well, do something about it”? This is indeed betraying a sacred trust.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when we take the oath of office, what do we say? You remember your oath? We swear to keeping, to obeying whatever rules we have, without fear or favour. Mr. Deputy Speaker I want to tell you that I take this job seriously. Sixteen thousand people voted for me in a constituency.

Dr. Moonilal: How much?

Mr. M. Ramsaran: Three hundred thousand people voted for the UNC. [*Desk thumping*] Some voted for them, Mr. Deputy Speaker. They have us here to ask questions about especially—that is why I am sure, in the wisdom of the Westminster system, in the wisdom of this honourable Chamber, they say you could talk about anything under a money bill. The framers of our Constitution knew what they were talking about and I am not challenging your ruling at all, but we will come back another day to find out when we read the newspapers and it is not denied, as far as I am concerned it is accepted and you must pay the price.

They told us that when we were in government something appeared in some newspaper, we did not deny it they said, “That is your responsibility; you should have denied it.” So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we must understand that, and I want to again, before I take my seat, warn the Members opposite. As happened earlier today, this is not a Chamber for the Government. This is a Chamber for the elected Members of Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago. As a matter of fact, just to add to the insult and injury this evening when we said, maybe half jokingly, half seriously, we will continue the debate on the bill, the Member for Arouca South shouted, “What dey go say now?” Mr. Deputy Speaker, we were elected here by people to talk on their behalf and we will talk on their behalf. [*Desk thumping*] We will not allow ourselves to be bullied in this House, because, if we do that, we will be abdicating our responsibilities as Members of Parliament.

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So I would, before I take my seat, remind our friends opposite. I want to make sure that they obey the Constitution and the law. *[Interruption]* I remember I quoted from the Constitution of Trinidad and Tobago *[Interruption]* because we must understand that this country is ruled lawfully and we want it to be that way. We have heard so much about elections being stolen, of moneys being spent and we have the evidence here, you know. It is just that, maybe because of respecting parliamentary time that we might not want to touch it, but I would just go quickly to maybe a couple things more before I sit, because apparently time is very, very valuable here this evening.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, \$17 million was saved—no sitting of Parliament for the period January—September 2002. According to my friend here, when you look around and see this building, and to know that we saved \$17 million a year sitting here in this Parliament, why are we paid that amount? Why is so much money voted for the upkeep of Parliament? It is again, to make my point, that we need to be the most important law-making agency in the land. We are treated properly, maybe not salary wise but according to the budget, \$17 million, and we must come here and do our work. *[Interruption]*

As I start to wind up to take my seat, I would like to—*[Interruption]* you know—now, I will not attempt to blame anybody, but when we look at item number three on page 5, “Amendments for grants of approval for authority to write off losses”, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for far too long in this country we have seen small things being stolen, things being lost. I would ask my good friend, the Member for Diego Martin Central, to have Cabinet look at this question of losses and not come to Parliament with a thick document like this of losses in different ministries but for Cabinet to have the authority to write off losses in various ministries, let us say, to the tune of \$100,000 and then come and lay it in Parliament rather than coming here to seek approval.

For example, we have \$15,000 written off as overpayment of salary to Ms. Melinda Roberts, former Administration Officer V of the Ministry of Trade and Industry and Consumer Affairs as a result of incorrect adjustment of incremental date. Mr. Deputy Speaker, with due respect to the hon. Member for Diego Martin Central, I think they could go to Cabinet and allow these overpayments, these mistakes in calculation of one’s salary and so on, to be approved by the Cabinet and when we do that we could save some of the Parliament’s time. Maybe this is a way to hoodwink the Opposition. *[Interruption]* You know, you bring a big document like this to write off. As another example, overpayment to Mr. Kenneth Rawlins, electrical foreman, during the period ’79—’97 due to incorrect adjustment

of the officer's salary on promotion. This man is now dead, but they come here for approval to deal with that. [*Interruption*]

I think that something should be done about it. Yes, I am not saying that Parliament should not. I will be contradicting myself if I say otherwise, but I think this should be approved and just be laid in Parliament. However, I saw something very interesting. I hope I could find it here. The question I would like to ask here too, is, for example, if there is a mistake in computing one's salary, we have no problem in allowing that, but I saw here failure to pay a loan. I want to suggest that, with something like that, failure to pay a loan, money should be recovered and not written off because we all could do that, take loans and not pay. We know that people have done it in the past and I think to have it written off is not a very good practice at all. I am referring here to various ministries and departments—\$66,911—and the details—accountable advances outstanding as at September 30, 2001 in respect of officer who has died. That is not the one, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Outstanding amounts in the records of the Treasury Division in respect of motor vehicle loans. For those Members who came in late, again I would like to put it on the record [*Interruption*] and I am sure you will forgive me—this is how I feel this evening. We have been here for a long time. We had a majority when we were in government. Yes, sometimes we were tired, in the heat of the moment or whatever, 2.00 a.m., you know, we went to 5.00 a.m., Mr. Deputy Speaker, you were part of that debate. Some of us were very frustrated and we had Members on the opposite side who, as they get up, they said, “75 minutes” and we said, “Okay, we will take it,” but we never once voted against the extension of time. I want to put it on the record.

What happened this evening here is against all conventions of Parliaments across the world. Here it was the Opposition being, what is the word, snuffed or whatever, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I think that this muzzling that took place, I know my friend, the Member for Diego Martin West, would not at all have voted in favour of that motion. I am sure that he would not and I am sure that he would make sure that this is discussed in the general council or the caucus of the ruling party because here we have the democracy of this country—simple as it may sound at 10.30 p.m., simple as it may sound, this could have a far-reaching effect on the democracy of this country.

I am sure the framers of our Constitution, the framers of the Westminster system, would be frowning, because tonight has been a dark night in the history of this country. All I was trying to do is to let the people know, let the Government

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know, that we are the people who are entrusted with the money of this country and we should be very careful of how we spend it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think that I have enjoyed making this contribution tonight. I think that the country will now understand what has happened today in this Parliament. Just to end as I started, the Constitution of this country allows for—any money that is to be spent in this country must have the approval of Parliament. Without that, despite what reasons might be put forward to this honourable House, they acted illegally and ultra vires the Constitution over the last 12 months.

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

Dr. Fuad Khan (*Barataria/San Juan*): [*Desk thumping*] Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I rise to make a very short and brief intervention. As you know, I am a man of few words.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, you know, as I stand here tonight, I feel a certain sense of nostalgia.

Mr. Sharma: Yes man!

Dr. F. Khan: In the last six years when I used to be on that chair, [*Laughter*] and you used to be here, Mr. Deputy Speaker, [*Laughter*] you always gave me such—when I used to feel sleepy, Mr. Deputy Speaker, sometimes at these late hours, you would rise and make such beautiful and lengthy debates that kept me going at these hours. [*Interruption*] You know, what I would like to see—like myself you do not have any deputy when you sit in the chair, you know, so I— [*Interruption*] We had no Deputy Speaker. [*Desk thumping*] [*Laughter*] So I understand that tonight this sense of nostalgia—and thanks to the Member for Diego Martin Central, I want to thank you, my friend, for giving us the opportunity to be here at a later date.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Bill before us is quite a short bill with various transfers to and from, but in it contains certain monetary transfers that resulted in a, believe it or not, 20/16 decision in October. I will proceed to tell you why. On December 24, 2001 when we obtained our 18/18 decision and the United National Congress [*Interruption*] then got 285,000 votes and the PNM got, I think, 265,000 and certain things took place, [*Interruption*] we ended up with the President choosing the PNM as the next interim government. In doing so, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they were fortunate that we had already passed one of our budgets, our good budgets, and the different monetary movements that were supposed to take place went in a different direction.

Here we have in this document, variations, movements and transfers to and from. [*Interruption*] The most telling one is that of the transfer to the Ministry of Education and also the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs and the Ministry of Community Development and Gender Affairs. You see, Mr. Deputy Speaker, being from the marginal seat of Barataria/San Juan—[*Interruption*]—I saw various activities taking place over the last nine months that I questioned. What I question more—not so much that the people were getting their just due and the jobs and whatever, because they are entitled to that—what I saw, though, was a blatant disregard for a certain amount of movement and equality, being the Member of Parliament. When I look at these figures here, I understand why. I will go first to the blue outfit programme, the one where people are just in “blue outfit” at the side of the road.

This blue outfit programme, Mr. Deputy Speaker, with one gentleman “who pulling the shots” and the others, you know, some cleaning drains, hoeing the ground, digging the ground and whatever, it is a programme, I understand, that was the brainchild when the hon. Prime Minister, the Member for San Fernando East, walked the country after '95, sat down and came up with this brilliant programme of CEPEP. Together with that, as they say, concurrently, there was the YAPA, there was the On-the-Job Training and many other programmes to get the URP, et cetera. When you look at it, I remember when we were in government the thrust was for a model, as the Member for Oropouche said, that will determine a certain level of educational movement for whatever level of student you had.

The model was this. We were going to train—I remember we started with the Common Entrance where there were numerous subjects and then we moved it to the Secondary Entrance Assessment. We started off with a situation where we had close to about a couple thousand and people said 10,000 children did not have school places, we ended up with an SEA Programme where everybody was placed in schools. The reason behind that was that the Singaporean-type model was our watch point in our movement. The Singaporean model with Lee Kuan Yew, he was able to carry Singapore from the same stage of development we were in the 1960s to one of the top per capita income areas and countries in the world today, utilizing one basic factor, educating the population no matter what level. We took that decision and this is why certain moneys were appropriated in certain directions.

After that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, what took place, we were able to put computers in schools and we carried out a movement of higher technology learning. You will be aware of it because you were in that ministry for a while and I quite remember you said that you do not know much about the Internet but

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you will learn and you figure it was a good thing. I remember you said that when you first went in and I quite agree with you, because children of today, Mr. Deputy Speaker, due to that thrust and the computer movement, bringing down the cost—when we brought down the cost of the computer by taking off the VAT, taking off the duties, et cetera, we were able to get a computer literate generation with a computer in every house. [*Desk thumping*] Doing that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the thrust was—what I am moving at—the thrust was an educational movement so that we would be able to get skilled people with skilled jobs. What has replaced that over the last—[*Interruption*] What has replaced that, Mr. Deputy Speaker?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Would hon. Members please allow the Member to make his contribution?

Dr. F. Khan: What has replaced that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is a programme that is like Unemployment Relief Programme with different names. It is unfortunate that when I drove to work every morning for the last nine months I had been seeing young people constantly in these blue outfits digging drains, cleaning the side of the road and continuing to do it all the time, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and at the end—because you are creating a system where young people are just going out to clean things and after they get that money they do not go forward and do anything with it. [*Interruption*] But I know that. [*Interruption*] I do it from my constituency. [*Interruption*] I see them. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Let the hon. Member deal with what is—please, let him make his contribution.

Dr. F. Khan: Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is nothing wrong with such a programme. The only thing wrong with a programme like this is if it has continuity and the young people in that programme get extremely lazy.

Now, I am going to something, Mr. Deputy Speaker. When we were in government, I remember talking to people in the URP programme. I asked them, “How long have you been in this programme?” This was in the early days. I was told that some of them have been in this programme for 30 and 40 years. So I asked them, “Why is it have you been in this programme for so long?” I mean, I was hoping that I would take the programme and get the young people some form of money over a period of time so they can buy their books, buy their tools, buy something and they could go to a higher level of discipline training.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, these people or my constituents who were there, told me, “Doc, when you are in the programme from young”—some of them, they

continued on a nine-month, two-week basis and it continued and it took over their life and it kept going like that and they never looked forward to anything else. Come September—*[Interruption]*—come September, they went into sick leave and they went back into the programme afterwards and this is the fostering of the dependency that happened in the last nine months. Whoever does not want to believe it and scoff at it and laugh at it, that is their demise. As a result, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is unfortunate that our country has now gone backwards into that kind of programme and movement because the NHA Programme, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the CEPEP Programme, the OJT Programme and we go to the NEDCO programme; and my friend, the Member for Nariva, delineated it quite nicely.

What happened was, there were people getting money in the marginal areas from this NEDCO Programme where you had to produce a supplier. You had to get an invoice from the supplier. With the invoice from the supplier you would go to the NEDCO people and they would pay the supplier. A lot of false invoicing went on and people boasted to me how they got \$30,000 and \$40,000 of free money which they would not have to spend. This is before the election. So when you had that together with the CEPEP, together with the URP, together with the YAPA—*[Interruption]* *[Laughter]*—and they could laugh all they want—the only thing that is going to suffer, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that our country is going to go down the tubes while they still laugh. *[Interruption]*

They keep laughing, they keep personalizing everything, they keep hitting personal statements at us and they cannot understand what we are about and we are trying to show. You try to show a different direction of teaching, a different direction of movement and what will they do? *[Interruption]* Personalize it, trivialize it and they would laugh *[Interruption]* because, while Rome burnt Nero was fiddling, playing his violin. Rome was burning. He was mad. *[Interruption]* He could not see it. The Senators, et cetera, in Rome, were trying to tell Mr. Nero that it was burning and he did not take it on because he was mad. Rome burnt. Rome was destroyed.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when we look at the programmes continuing like that, I go on more to the election and this variation of appropriation is payment and payback for certain things that happened before October 07 in the last nine months. The Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs, my good friend, the Member for Toco/Manzanilla, had variations for non-profit institutions for one million plus or more money. I remember quite vividly in the early part of last year, the Member of Parliament for Toco/Manzanilla—and he will bear me on this—was giving a lot of money in small cheques to different organizations. I remember one

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instance where a fellow had—he said, the Minister is giving so much money he wants to go to Barbados on a rabbit racing programme and he is going to get money, “he come for rabbit racing”, Mr. Deputy Speaker—money for rabbit racing. The only rabbit I know racing is you know what. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker, that goes to show you the level of where the money was going. That is what the money was going to do. “It was not going to develop nothing.” We still “doh” have our interchange. Daily people are cursing left, right and centre on the Uriah Butler Highway and the Churchill/Roosevelt Highway. There is no interchange. There is no hope of an interchange. Money was budgeted for an interchange, no interchange. “What they say? We not going to build Humphrey arch. Dey go lick up de arch.” You said that, right? Diego Martin East said “he go lick up de arch”.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, what has happened is that there are lines of traffic of foreign used cars, together with new cars, from both directions, going back and forth, people are sweltering in the hot sun. By the time they turn right, by the time the lanes—what they have done is just put six lanes and more floods. Now we ended up with a six-lane flooded highway, flooded posterior to St. Joseph. This is what they are doing. They took the money that was dedicated to build an interchange, to alleviate flooding, to alleviate movement, to make people go back and forth, communication between north and south, east and west fast and what happened? They took it to start building houses in marginal seats.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, now I am not sorry but glad in a way that the people of Trinidad and Tobago were able to see in the last six years a government that was able to perform to such a level that is a higher level. Now they are going to have something to compare. Prior to '95 they had nothing to compare. It was the same old thing all the time. Now “I do not mean no disrespect”, but what I believe is that one should understand, like the American system, where performance lies and what is best for the country itself. [*Interruption*] Scoff and laugh as much as you want. We have a doctors' crisis. We have a crime crisis. We have “all kind ah crises”, Mr. Deputy Speaker—unemployment crisis. What do we do?

We have a Minister of National Security who, money is taken away from him, moved from National Security when you need DNA testing, implementation of forensic medicine, forensic movement to trap criminals. If you look at The Discovery Channel you see, I think, “The New Detectives”—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Hinds: No, no, no, no, no.

Dr. F. Khan:—you will see the kind of forensic work that is necessary to trap one criminal, one person. At the end of the day, the Member for Laventille

East/Morvant says no, but he might have made a better national security minister. I really believe that. You would have. You have parliamentary training and my good friend told me that you are one of the best police trainers.

Dr. Moonilal: “Your good friend lie.”

Dr. F. Khan: He would have made a better National Security Minister because he has been there and he knows it. I do not blame you, Member for Laventille East/Morvant, for moving away when they gave you the junior ministry.

So moneys moved from national security could have done, as I said, the DNA testing, which is important. There are many people in the United States of America convicted of rape, murder, all kinds of things, who have spent about 14 or more years in prison, death row, and who have been freed because of DNA analysis. A simple rape case in this country, when you take the semen and the blood, there is no DNA analysis that you could do. How do you expect our forensic people to work? So when you move money from National Security, you move that.

Another thing too, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the guns that the criminals are using are so high-tech that one person told me that the guy who got shot in south, the bullet was so large you could have put your two fingers through it—that large. “Police doh have dem kind ah guns”, and I may say something now if the junior Minister is listening. Policemen, when they are on duty, they have a firearm. They go, they arrest, they do what they have to do. When they are going home, they lodge that firearm in the station and go home without a firearm. Do you know what the criminals “could do them” while they are on their way from that police station to their house and vice-versa? That should be looked at because they are unprotected completely, yet they are supposed to be on the job 24 hours.

So removing money from National Security and moving it across to God knows where to produce the CEPEP, to produce both things, all well and good. It is all well and good to take your money and buy your votes if the other systems are good. You do not take it from good systems and throw it across to systems just to win an election. An election should be fair and square and I always believe that because, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I believe the people of this country are not foolish. If you perform, they are happy and if they “doh like how you perform dey not going to vote for you” and that is how it works. This is the voting pattern of people.

Now, in Barataria/San Juan—I want to go back to that a bit, Mr. Deputy Speaker—with the last election, the last day when the Member for Chaguanas walked out of this Chamber, I went with him based on certain things. However, in

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my absence, and I have the *Hansard*, the Minister who was piloting the Motion, I think it is Social Development, he stood and said that the Member of Parliament for Barataria/San Juan brutalized one of his patients and he is called a terrorist and you stopped him. I saw it. What I would say to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, not being here to defend myself when he did that, I have to respond in a way and say that, a known terrorist, Bilal Abdullah—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Member, do not do that. You may be able to do it in another place. You may be able to do it at another time with another motion. You noticed that I stopped him. Had I—[*Interruption*]

Dr. F. Khan: It was recorded.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Well, it is still the prerogative of the Speaker to move it. Let us leave that there. Do not do that.

Dr. F. Khan: Okay, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Go ahead.

Dr. F. Khan: Mr. Deputy Speaker, when we started the debate, the Member of Parliament for Diego Martin Central went ahead and named a couple schools to which the appropriations were going. One of those schools is the El Socorro South Government School and I would like to read a letter. El Socorro South Government School has been on the cards for the last couple years. There were problems with the plans and we got it through, whatever. It was supposed to be built a year ago but it is starting now and I am grateful for it. I want to read a letter into the record that was given to me two days ago.

“Dr. Fuad Khan
M.P. San Juan/Barataria
San Juan Terminal Mall
Dear Sir,”

This is on El Socorro South Government, “eh”.

“We wish to bring to your immediate attention a serious and possibly corrupt issue regarding the award of tender for the construction of the El Socorro South Government Primary School by the National Maintenance Training and Security Company Limited (MTS).

An evaluation committee was set up comprising the following individuals:

- Noel Gayle (Divisional Manager Agribusiness)—Chairman; Mr. Gayle is Patrick Manning’s Brother-in-law.

- Cleve Pyle—Architect
- Sherwin Gosine—Accountant.

Their job was to select the best bid. They did so and selected the lowest bidder W.E. Whiteman & Company 1997 Limited of 1—3 King Street Siparia at a price of...”

Seven million X dollars.

“However the job was awarded to Uniform Building Contractor directed by Emmanuel Romain. His firm was the next highest bidder. When the tender and contract was awarded it was done so at another and different price, marginally smaller than what Uniform actually bid. Did Mr. Wayne Lewis the company’s Financial Controller and Secretary of the tender’s committee corrupt or usurp the process.

We are calling for an immediate investigation by the Auditor General in the same vein that was recently undertaken by Ms. Jennifer Frederick and Mr. Desmond Noel whose reports on MTS was recently published in the media that led to the dismissal of...Mr. Terrence Kalloo.”

Mr. Deputy Speaker, what I am saying, is that—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: We need to know who signed that and whether we could get a copy.

Dr. F. Khan: This was signed, Mr. Deputy Speaker—I could show it to you—it says “Very concerned constituents!”. [*Interruption*] [*Laughter*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: No, well then, you see—but you—[*Interruption*]

Dr. F. Khan: I read it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: No, but we need—[*Interruption*]

Dr. F. Khan: You want it?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Yes.

Dr. F. Khan: Okay. I will give the copy to the am—[*Interruption*] I did not write that. “I doh type no petty thing like that.” [*Interruption*] “I doh do what you does do, you know.” [*Interruption*]

Yes, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the reason I mentioned this, is that, when we sit on this side or we sat on that side, during our debates we were subjected, and I would think this is a fault of the Westminster system of Parliament, that we have side

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crosstalk, et cetera, and the Member of Parliament for Laventille East/Morvant is very vocal when he shouts “Thief” and “Corruption” and you know these types of negative words that are thrown out in this Parliament that keep the level of debate at the level to which it goes. It is time that the level of debate “is risen” in this House—[*Interruption*—is risen. When we start that trend and you have—you see, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when the Member of Parliament for Oropouche said you point one finger forward, three are pointing back at you, it is true. So I am not pointing this. I brought it today to give it to the Member of Parliament for San Fernando East because he has vowed to clean up the corruption around the place and if it is one of his members “he gon deal with it”. He told me; so I brought it for him so I will give it to the Member for Diego Martin Central.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, what is extremely disgusting is that a Minister of Public Utilities was given a question in the Upper House; he had to stand in the Upper House; he had to take the flack in the Upper House; he was saved by the President of the Senate, only for us to find out that the reason he was taking that flack is because there was a gentleman, a CEO, God knows where he came from, who was getting a million dollars per year with “a set a perks” while he, Minister Dumas, had to be contented with a small salary and small perks and he is his boss. It is time that we take an issue in this Parliament that we who are able, and we are the directors of Trinidad and Tobago incorporated, should not be placed in such a position of defending those conduits of people who are—it happens in both parties, Mr. Deputy Speaker, not just one party.

So what I say to the Members across there, we must be aware of the fact that things can happen on both sides. At the end of the day, having a Minister defend people with salaries like—I think it was not even okayed by that Cabinet—the Cabinet is the highest thing in the land, not even okayed by a Cabinet—and when you see these variations of appropriation moving back and forth, I remember something and the Member of Parliament for Diego Martin East could take note of this.

When I was junior minister, we were given a list of items that were going to be purchased for the hospital. Do you know what happened, Mr. Deputy Speaker? You had the item number here, you had a crossbar with the cost of the item, with VAT and whatever, you had a list going down here and what they did, on this list, some of these numbers were correct below here but when you had one, let us say one urethroscope, normal cost US \$1,000; you had US \$10,000 but you put here two for US \$20,000 and you went across like that, and when we go down this way, this number, the total number was correct but the side numbers is where the

corruption was taking place. I was able to find it out because I knew the costing of the items, being in that business.

What I say is, when you see these kinds of appropriations, we are not financial experts. I am not one so I hardly ever understand these things, but when you look at it you have to look at it closely and look at the figures and the numbers and a lot of irrelevant things are usually put in to send your mind and your eyes elsewhere. So the job of Opposition is to have its say and with the Westminster system, the Opposition is here as the watchdog of the people's purses—money. That is what we are. The most we could do is talk. The most we could do is bring things to the ears and eyes of the members of Government. It is up to them to act or not and vice versa.

So Mr. Deputy Speaker, when I look at it and I look at these appropriations and I see shifting, you see crime, you see health care loss, et cetera, you start asking yourself, are we really serious when we do these appropriations or are we just listening to the technocrats and just say “Approved, approved, approved” or do the Ministers really look at it? Is it there only to win an election? Is it there just to suppress a certain number of other supporters and it is there to give other supporters? It is time we move away from this, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because I want to just finish my contribution by saying something. [*Desk thumping*] I just want to read a couple things.

When we did our appropriation in the last five years, the United National Congress in its term in office was able to drop the average inflation rate to 4 per cent, economic growth was about 5.2, unemployment dropped to 10.1. We instituted minimum wage and I continue, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the police service development, the E-999 with 22 new police stations, et cetera, new secondary schools, 25 secondary schools; water for over 85 per cent of the population, over 5,000 kilometres of new roads built and we also built a new desalination plant which was thrown as corruption at us but now it is being touted as the Mecca that would now give water to the whole population, as we predicted. Once the desalination plant works the industries will take that level of water and free up everything else for the inside.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it was a pleasure to be able to make this contribution in this House today and I thank the hon. Member for Diego Martin Central for piloting this Bill. I just want to make mention of one more thing. Never before in the history of, am—and I think you made history today, Mr. Deputy Speaker, by taking a division on somebody's extension. That should not occur.

Thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: May I correct you? I did not have the ability to stop it. Once a division is requested, it has to go through.

Dr. F. Khan: No, I did not say you did it. I said you made history today.

Mr. Chandresh Sharma (Fyzabad): Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am not sure if my good friend, the Member for Laventille East/Morvant, wanted to talk and I would give way if he wants to. The Member was saying that he does not get his talk in—or he does not go—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I was at the moment going to call on him.

Mr. C. Sharma: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Let me also join in the congratulations extended to you. It is always a good feeling when one of our own Members reaches the high chair you have reached. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am often saddened when we have to sometimes pay respects to those who have left and when one of our own Members gets ill we sometimes put off wishing them well. I understand the Member for Arima is not enjoying very good health and on behalf of all the Members here I want to wish her a quick recovery, [*Desk thumping*] and if I may, through you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, ask the Clerk to communicate in writing our feelings, that would be greatly appreciated. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker, over the last two or three days all of us have come to admire your conduct in this House and I could not help but measure the degree of frustration when you said that you felt like suspending the House if the behaviour continued. Can you imagine the hundreds of thousands of people who want to suspend the PNM government? [*Desk thumping*] It must be frightening.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think what has come out of today's debate is very clear that it appears as if there is state sponsored terrorism in this country along with racism and a very high level of not treating with people, discriminating. If you look at how the moneys are being spent, it is crystal clear. That is without a doubt. In fact, having said that, I should really take my seat. One Member agrees with the discrimination and racism. She is perhaps a subject of it, a victim of it. Mr. Deputy Speaker, let me qualify why I say this.

We have seen in a newspaper article the CEO of a state-owned organization being paid close to one million dollars; but let us look at how that CEO came into being. That CEO replaced another CEO who was paid less than half that sum of money. What was the fault of that then CEO? He is an island scholar, master's degree—[*Interruption*] They are saying he is a “skull man”. They know better.

The point is, what was his fault? There was only one fault and we all know it. Let us all say it together—[*Laughter*—only one fault; his birth, absolutely nothing else. He is “Trini” like you and I, but he does not belong, he does not identify, perhaps, with the party in power, and that is the pattern right through.

Let us look at a few state organizations. MTS; the person there is being paid close to \$48,000. Why is he being paid \$48,000 and it is a hidden matter? So a CEO again was removed. It is very clear that the Government made a concerted effort. It is for this reason many citizens of this country are aware that there is state sponsored discrimination accompanied by racism, a high level of it, because when you look at the pattern of the PNM Government using taxpayers’ money, it is crystal clear. We have seen, through a particular organization, I think an offbeat of the solid waste, \$75 million being spent and all of the money being spent on nationals of Trinidad and Tobago but not reflective of the rainbow society of ours—state-sponsored racism at work PNM style and it goes left, right and centre—very disappointing.

The Member for Diego Martin West talked about schools. It is clear under the PNM that the children of Caroni were sent only to the cane fields. Schools were not provided for them. For a large area—in fact, you were a teacher in the Couva area. You are very familiar with it. You came from Longdenville, I understand; very, very clear about it. There was one school in that area, the Chaguanas Presentation College.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Be careful. Do not bring me into it.

Mr. C. Sharma: No, well, you would say the facts are different in terms of you are a teacher—[*Interruption*] Yes, Mr. Deputy Speaker, fully agree, but as a teacher one has to experience all the children and when one finds in an entire wide catchment area of Caroni, no secondary schools under PNM but schools everywhere else, how can one describe that? Discrimination.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Member, you have brought me into it. Hon. Member for Barataria/San Juan, I suggest that you speak to him before he continues in that direction. He will tell you. He knows.

Mr. C. Sharma: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I was making the point that it is very clear from the expenditure of the PNM Government that it is very, very keen on sponsoring discrimination in the society, and I was on the point before talking about schools. When you look at the number of schools in Trinidad and Tobago, the spread of the schools is largely in PNM held constituencies. It could not be ironic, it cannot be by accident, it must be by design—elementary schools, secondary schools.

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When you look at state resources going to bodies in Trinidad, you would have heard from the Member for Laventille West sometime ago when the Member chaired a programme giving out grants, hundreds of thousands of dollars all going in the East/West Corridor—Maloney—the Member for Arouca South getting the biggest bite out of it. Again it is racism and it is discrimination at work and you can call it anything you want. [*Desk thumping*] [*Interruption*] Mr. Deputy Speaker, it has come to our attention, to my attention, that a member of Government stays at the Trinidad Hilton for long periods. [*Interruption*] A member of the present PNM Government is staying at the Hilton Hotel at state expense over long periods. How do we account for that? Where is the budget for that? I hope the Member is taking note and not jumping all over the place and not doing his job. [*Laughter*]

We have seen today where the CEO of MTS is obtaining \$32,000 per month. What is this strength? PNM supporter. What was the weakness of the other guy previous to you? What was his weakness? Master's degree, highly educated, built a number of schools. So you are seeing a concerted effort to remove people. The appointments of the PNM Government do not reflect the rainbow mix of our country. It is racism at the highest level. You can call it what you want. [*Interruption*] You can call it what you want. It is evident here and in today's world, Mr. Deputy Speaker, policy-makers and statesmen are fighting racism all over the world. Wars have been fought, lives have been lost. Right here in Trinidad in the year 2002/2003 we have seen it. It is everywhere the PNM is.

In fact, earlier today a question was raised about NEDCO. Mr. Deputy Speaker, NEDCO came into being in August of 2002. I am sure its intentions may be noble but it is striking strange that the majority of the applicants who obtained loans came from PNM controlled constituencies. It was PNM giveaway of moneys to win the election and that is happening over and over and over. In fact, when you look at all the NEDCO offices they are rented way above market value—no advertisement for rental of properties. It is all PNM friends and family. When you look at the employees in NEDCO—friend and family; purchase of equipment—friend and family. When you look at the telephone bills, “they calling Dick, Tom and Harry all over the world”; calls to New York, Grenada, Washington, “I ain’ see no call to Guyana”. It is signalling a particular message so it is an abundance, an abuse. You know those opposite will get up and say “all kind ah stories”. Let us deal with the issues.

The resources of Trinidad and Tobago under the PNM administration are going to PNM supporters left, right and centre. The Helping You to Prepare for Employment

Programme, same story. NHA properties—[*Interruption*] PEP? You will get pep. [*Laughter*] NHA properties—the most expensive apartment painting in any part of the world is under the PNM Government; an NHA apartment in the year 2002—most expensive in the world. If you know the amount of paint they buying for a particular apartment. If you know the amount of money; and when you talk about friend and family getting work, Member for Arouca South, everybody knows. [*Interruption*] Now, one can be embarrassed, which is normal, [*Interruption*] one can be embarrassed which is normal, but at the end of the day it is friend and family. If it “eh” the spouse of “is the sister of”. If it “eh de sister of is de brother-in-law of”—PNM style. This is madness! Government gone mad. [*Interruption*] Government gone mad! So PNM is bent on destroying this country. It is for this reason the attack is on Caroni. It is a perception that if the PNM could mash up Caroni it may mash up a particular support base of another party. That is all the intention is. 80 per cent of the country’s social welfare moneys goes to PNM areas, 80 per cent of it. All the majority of the hampers in this country go there. In fact, my distinguished friend, the Member for Chaguanas, raised the matter. I do not know why we sometimes fear to raise the truth. The newspaper carried a report—[*Interruption*] You know nothing about the truth, that is why your spouse is working somewhere. The newspaper carried a report 3,400 hampers given to a Member of Parliament, in this instance, the Member for Port of Spain South. [*Interruption*] Perhaps it is an error, but if it is—3,400 at \$200—where did the money come from? That is close to a million dollars. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Williams: Mr. Deputy Speaker, the newspaper carried a typo. Nowhere in Port of Spain South constituency did the Member of Parliament give out 3,000 hampers.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar: How many did he give out?

Mr. Williams: The Member of Parliament did not give out 3,000 hampers but it is not everything that you go in the paper to correct one way or the other. In any event, I wish that 10,000 hampers could have been given out in Port of Spain South [*Desk thumping*] because, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is a great need in this country and indeed, Mr. Deputy Speaker, [*Desk thumping*] this Government is doing its best to ensure that in the future there will not be the need to give out one hamper because everybody will be gainfully employed. [*Desk thumping*] Why do they begrudge the citizens of Port of Spain South? [*Interruption*] This is the same side, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when they came into government, I remember the Member for Siparia, [*Interruption*] a couple of Members saying that too much money had been spent in Port of Spain in the past and they will see that it is not so

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in the future. [*Interruption*] [*Desk thumping*] Mr. Deputy Speaker, I take serious objection. The Member of Parliament for Port of Spain South—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Ramsaran: Mr. Deputy Speaker, is the Member making a speech?

Mr. Williams:—sought to provide some hampers for his constituents, the newspaper carried—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Ramsaran: Are you making a speech, Member?

Mr. Williams:—the wrong report. I did not choose to correct it.

Mr. Ramsaran: Are you making a speech?

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Yes.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Member for Chaguanas, please take your seat.

Mr. Williams: But in any event, Members of this House should all be glad that citizens of this country happened to get food at the time when they needed it. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Ramsaran: You are the modern Robin Hood? You are the modern day Robin Hood?

Mr. C. Sharma: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I thank the Member for Port of Spain South; [*Interruption*] and the Member for Port of Spain South has raised a very fundamental concern. [*Interruption*] He is very correct, that is the Member, in saying that it is good if we can give hampers, but the perception that accompanied the hampers—because it was the same time that the Mobil matter came up where millions of dollars were written off. So what it appeared, Member for Port of Spain South, is that you were given a big gift of 3,400—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Williams: The Member is imputing improper motives; 36(5).

Mr. C. Sharma: Let me finish. I am saying the perception obtains—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Williams: The Member is imputing improper—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Do not go in that direction. I tried to stop this whole hamper thing before but you persist. So now I am telling you, and I do not want you—I want you to hear me clearly. Please, do not go in that direction.

Mr. C. Sharma: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am guided. I am guided. The Member got up, he took four and a half minutes to respond, the longest response ever

obtained, [*Laughter*] and he raised a number of things. All I am saying as his colleague, we both were elected—you came here in '95, I am six years his senior [*Laughter*—all I was saying is that the perception presented by his good self in not denying the report earlier and at the same time an oil giant being given a write-off \$20 million—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Will the Member take his seat, please? Is there any other person who wishes to speak?

Dr. Hamza Rafeeq (*Caroni Central*): [*Desk thumping*] [*Interruption*] Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. [*Interruption*] Mr. Deputy Speaker, I— [*Interruption*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Members, please be quiet. [*Interruption*]

Dr. H. Rafeeq: I only rise—[*Interruption*]—I only rise to make a brief contribution, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to this debate.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Members—[*Interruption*]—Hon. Members. Go ahead.

Dr. H. Rafeeq: Yes, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I rise only to make a brief contribution to this debate on behalf of the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago, once again to bring the plight of the poor and suffering people of Trinidad and Tobago, those who are without medical services, to the attention of the Government. Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are people out there who are in pain. There are people out there who are suffering. There are people out there who are bleeding. There are people out there who are dying. There are people who have chronic conditions which are getting worse. There are people, with diabetes, who are getting worse and their disease is getting out of control and, because of this, they are subject to developing a lot of complications from their illness.

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Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are also people whose blood pressure is getting out of control and who are subject to the complications of this disease. There are people with heart disease, acute conditions and infections of all kinds, asthma and other acute illnesses, who cannot get attention at the nation's hospitals.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Members please!

Dr. H. Rafeeq: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I stand just to make a plea tonight. Within the last few days I, myself, have had to deal with many people who had gone to the nation's hospitals and had been refused attention because there were no doctors. They are looking everywhere for some kind of relief and comfort.

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A child went to the hospital bleeding, did not get attention and came seeking some kind of temporary relief. There was another child with a fractured arm, who did not get any attention and came looking for some kind of temporary relief. Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are many cases like these and the tragedy of all this is that no one seems to care, including the Minister of Health, the Government and the Prime Minister.

Yesterday I read an article where the Minister of Health said that he was drawing a line in the sand. I wonder if he really understands the suffering of the people out there. I will just like to read a couple paragraphs from today's editorial in the *Trinidad Guardian* of Monday January 27:

“Time for talks to heal medical row

By a process of elimination, all the proffered causes of and solutions to the critical state of the big public hospitals have been relentlessly exposed as invalid.

Just one week ago, the news pages and TV screens were dominated by the gloating images of Prime Minister Patrick Manning, Health Minister Colm Imbert and Labour Minister Larry Achong.

In obtaining the Industrial Court injunction ordering doctors back to work, they had played their trump. Game!

They invited the public to share their sense of triumph in having hanged the jack of the doctors. All would thereafter be well, the Ministers more than implied.” [*Interruption*]

This is the editorial of the *Trinidad Guardian*.

“Such assurances proved false. The rebellion escalated and expanded.

Specialists, consultants, leaders in the various ‘firms’ of medical practice, who were not personally involved in the original dispute, dispatched resignation letters en masse.

On Thursday, Mr. Manning gave glib, and hollow, assurances that young doctors were ready and waiting to be slotted into positions vacated by their advanced and experienced professional seniors.

Did he really expect the public to believe the departure of accomplished and distinguished medical practitioners is no big thing?

No longer is it a question of the absence of contracts or the insufficiency of the contract terms, or MPATT's premature ambition for recognition.

These are elements in the mix that, over the last three weeks, were stirred up into the nasty mess of today.

Mr. Imbert talks about drawing a line in the sand. The Government has been shopping for doctors in Cuba and in Venezuela, he says.

After the injunction, the Government's plan B is to hang tough. It hopes that the revolting doctors will be cowed or shamed into returning to work on conditions they evidently detest. Or they will be replaced by foreign physicians, maybe working through interpreters.

Little has occurred to encourage belief that this hope is well-founded, or that the last state of the health system will be less bad than the first.

Nor can the public ignore the question: did it have to come to this? Under whose management, or lack of management, has discontent become so widespread, and attitudes so radicalised, that established medical professionals would even think of giving up long-held hospital positions? That young doctors would leave jobs at home, which would allow them to pay study debts, raise families, and earn invaluable experience? Who needs this?

Undoubtedly, some doctors, young and old, have abused privileges and disappointed service expectations. But is this Government prepared to write off the investment that created the entire medical establishment in the public hospitals?

Instead of calling upon adult professionals to talk things through, to remove distrust, and to assert the public interest, Mr. Imbert is playing for an unconditional surrender on his own terms.

In the meantime, public medical care is being devastated."

Things have really got out of control in the health sector and as I said in beginning my contribution, I stand here tonight to make a plea to the Government and the Minister on behalf of all those people who are suffering out there.

There is another article I would like to quote, because, to me, these two articles sum up what is happening in the health sector today. I know that this article will evoke some reaction from the opposite side. It is written by Dr. Phillip Ayong Chee, neurological surgeon at the San Fernando General Hospital.

"Seriously, is it wrong to ask for a contract to be negotiated? Since December 2001, the Minister has stopped the negotiating process for the RHA doctors. The puppet RHAs have to follow the purse strings of their new micro manager.

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Presently, doctors are still working under 1998 conditions even though their remuneration package reflects that of 2002. How therefore can the Ministry of Health appeal for good sense to prevail? Almost all of the RHA doctors have written to their respective RHAs asking that they meet with and deal with MPATT as their individual agent. MPATT in turn has asked that the RHAs meet and negotiate the contracts collectively. The micro manager, the Minister of Health, stated that the RHA must only meet with PSA, so we now must clarify the point. If MPATT cannot be a collective bargaining agent, why have the micro manager Minister of Health and the RHA insisted that they would only meet with the PSA to negotiate contracts? Is this not a contradiction?

So there appears to be a problem with the word 'collective'. A simple solution would be for the RHAs to meet with each individual doctor who will be accompanied by their respective agent. The process may be long and tedious. It was a stupid and insensible move for MPATT to ask for one negotiation procedure rather than over 300 individual negotiations. Therefore, let there be over 300 negotiations.

Concern must also be expressed at the present process of the Minister who is releasing personal information to the press."

I will skip a bit and read the last two paragraphs. This is the part that I really wanted to read.

"To this date, no doctor of the RHA has received back pay. No doctor of the RHA has received back pay for the period January 2001—April 2002, as stated by the Minister. To this date, no doctor in the public service has received back pay for the period 2001—July 2002, as stated by the Minister. To this date, the Minister has indulged in cheap politics and publicity stunts that appeal to the ignorant, with his paucity of facts."

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this letter was written by Dr. Phillip Ayoung Chee who is a consultant neurological surgeon at the San Fernando General Hospital and he is the past President of San Fernando Hospital Doctors' Association.

An interministerial committee was set up by Cabinet to deal with this issue. This committee met some time ago with the Trinidad and Tobago Medical Association. At that meeting, the Medical Association suggested to the interministerial committee that they or the minister should meet with the doctors, not to negotiate but, at least, to have a discussion with them. They were told that the interministerial committee would get back to them; that is my information. Two days later, the Minister of Health and the Minister of Labour and Small and

Micro Enterprise Development got an injunction against the doctors. Because of this, the Medical Association has lost all faith and confidence in the interministerial committee and the Minister of Health.

Subsequent to that, some doctors resigned. The junior doctors and a couple of the senior doctors resigned. When the junior doctors resigned, the response of the Prime Minister was that if some of the senior doctors resigned, that is no big thing, because it creates opportunities for the junior doctors to fill their positions. The Prime Minister, of course, is only displaying his ignorance in these matters.

Junior doctors cannot fill the shoes of senior doctors just like that. Senior doctors are specialists and consultants in different fields. Unless a junior doctor has a post graduate degree in the particular field, or he has gone through the period of training or he has the experience, he cannot be a consultant just like that, to fill that vacancy. So the notion that a junior doctor can fill the position of a senior doctor—it is not only because of seniority, but also because of the training and experience he has—just cannot work. [*Crosstalk*]

When you have a situation in the hospital where you have no junior doctors, where the junior doctors have not signed their contracts, they are not working, they are not taking calls and so on, then it is extremely difficult, close to impossible for the senior doctors to function. The junior doctors are the ones who really run the ward. They are the ones who attend to the patients who come to the ward, who do everything, put up the drips, take blood and examine the patients. The next morning when the consultant arrives, he makes the ward rounds, gives his input and assists in the management of the patient. But it is the junior doctors who are there on spot 24 hours a day to attend to the patients when they come on the wards.

If you do not have junior doctors on the ward, no matter how many consultants you have, or how many senior doctors or specialists you have, it is impossible to run the ward effectively. If it is felt by the authorities that if the junior doctors resign and the senior doctors are on the ward, you can run an efficient health service, it just does not work like that.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the other issue the letter by Dr. Ayoung Chee mentioned is that the Minister is micro managing. I do not know if that is true, but I will tell you something. Some years ago in 1994, the decentralization process in the health sector took place with the establishment of the Regional Health Authorities. With that change, the RHAs were given their own responsibilities and the Ministry of Health retained certain responsibilities. The responsibility of the Ministry of

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Health, of course, was policy making, monitoring and so on. The responsibility of the Regional Health Authorities was the delivery of health care. The Regional Health Authorities were the delivery arm of the Ministry of Health.

You cannot centralize and decentralize at the same time. If you decentralize and you give authority to the Regional Health Authorities, then you must allow them to exercise that authority, of course with some kind of accountability, but you must allow them to exercise that authority and not micro manage the system. You cannot decentralize and centralize at the same time.

A couple days ago, the Regional Health Authorities invited the doctors to a meeting. My understanding is that the doctors did not turn up, because they said that they would not negotiate with an injunction over their heads. They would not negotiate under duress, but once the injunction is lifted, they will be willing to speak and negotiate.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, many people have already suffered. I feel that quite a few of them have died as a result of this. I am, again, making a plea to the Minister, on behalf of all the suffering patients in this country, on behalf of all the suffering people in this country, especially the poor people, to get back to the negotiating table immediately. I said it before and I am saying it again, that there is nothing in this impasse which could not have been resolved through negotiation and discussion.

I reiterate my plea that the Minister should instruct the RHAs and if it is necessary to remove the injunction so there can be discussions and negotiations, so that the people of Trinidad can get the quality of care that they deserve, then I think that should be done immediately, because people are suffering. [*Crosstalk*] We had an injunction and it was discharged in three days.

Bringing foreign doctors here is not the answer. Bringing foreign doctors would not solve the problems. If you get the correct doctors who are able to satisfy the requirements of the Medical Board, then they can assist in alleviating the situation to a certain extent, but that is certainly not the answer to the problem. This problem will continue for a very, very long time if both sides do not sit and talk to iron out their differences and come to some kind of agreement.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will take my seat very shortly, but I just want to say to the Minister that the situation with the shortage of doctors is not the only problem that is plaguing the health sector at this point in time; there are many other problems. I would just mention this one, because it is one which I really do not understand. In many of the health institutions in this country, the health centres

particularly and the hospitals to a certain extent, there is an acute shortage of many drugs. I do not understand why this is happening.

There are basic medications that I know are on the hospital formulary that have been purchased by the Government, but, somehow, they are not finding themselves in the dispensaries of health centres. This is a very tragic thing, because as I said earlier, when you have patients going to the health centres who do not get their medication for diabetes, for instance, their diabetes gets out of control. When that happens, they get complications of diabetes and you have to attend to these complications at the hospital. This is not a situation that we want and this is why we have been stressing the importance of primary health care. I want the Minister to look into this, as to why medications purchased by the Government are not finding themselves into the Government institutions so that poor people who have chronic illnesses, particularly diabetes, high blood pressure and heart disease, cannot get their medication.

Finally, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I just want to ask—and this has nothing to do with the health sector, maybe the Junior Minister of Finance can respond when he is winding up—whether there is, in fact, a recent report of the Salaries Review Commission which has been considered by Cabinet. I want to find out whether in this report, the salary of the Prime Minister is being raised from \$25,000 to \$32,000 a month. I also want to find out whether the salary of ministers is being raised from \$18,000 to \$22,000 a month. [*Crosstalk*] I do not know if the salary of the Deputy Speaker is being raised as well.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I thought you would ask how much?

Dr. H. Rafeeq: I do not know by how much the salary of the Deputy Speaker is being raised; maybe when the Minister speaks he can inform us. I want to find out whether the Cabinet is giving consideration to implementing the Salaries Reviews Commission report.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I thank you.

The Minister of Health (Hon. Colm Imbert): Thank you. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will be extremely brief, because much of what the Member for Caroni Central said is completely untrue. In fact, he is a stranger to the truth and he has selective amnesia. I will deal with some of the untruths that he put into the record.

The hon. Member said that the interministerial committee on the health sector met with the Trinidad and Tobago Medical Association and agreed to dialogue; that is according to him. Then, according to the hon. Member, two days later the

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Government took out an injunction against the doctors. That is the lie that hon. Member has put into the record, untruth. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The Member for Caroni Central delivered his contribution.

Hon. C. Imbert: And I said nothing.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Let us keep it that way, please. As I am on my feet, hon. Member for Nariva, please. You had your time and you spoke. Do not, if you would, interrupt. We are going to be here for a long time tonight, so let us keep it very calm.

Hon. C. Imbert: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. When the hon. Member for Caroni Central was speaking, I did not say a word, but he cannot handle the truth. [*Crosstalk*] Let us deal with the truth. [*Crosstalk*] I will make sure you are put out; you shut up! [*Crosstalk*] What is this cacophony? [*Crosstalk*] It is a cacophony, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Could you speak to them for me please?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Members, please. I have already spoken to the Member for Nariva more than once for tonight. Please continue Member for Diego Martin East. [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. C. Imbert: The reality is that the interministerial committee on the health sector met with the Trinidad and Tobago Medical Association on Tuesday of this week and the injunction was taken out on Sunday, so we met two days after the injunction was taken out. That is the falsehood, fabrication and untruth that the Member for Caroni Central has put into the system, that we met with them and then took out an injunction. It was the opposite way around.

It is typical of the Member for Caroni Central. When he was speaking, I kept quiet. I am talking now and he is bleating and yapping, because he cannot deal with reality. [*Crosstalk*] Oh, be quiet! [*Crosstalk*] He read from an editorial in the today's *Trinidad Guardian*, which is as absurd as the *Sunday Express* story of yesterday, absurd, all sorts of unadulterated rubbish in this editorial. He read from an article by some Dr. Ayoung Chee, his friend and UNC crony, [*Crosstalk*] but I will read—[*Interruption*] Mr. Deputy Speaker, will you get them to keep quiet please? I did not disturb them when they were speaking.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Just for the edification of Members; Standing Order 43(5) dealing with order in the House, says:

“If a Member shows disregard for the authority of the Chair, or abuses the rules of the House by persistently and wilfully obstructing the business of the

House or otherwise, the Speaker shall direct the attention of the House thereto, mentioning by name the Member concerned. The Speaker shall then call upon a Minister to move ‘That Mr.... be suspended from the service of the House’, and the Speaker shall forthwith put the question, no seconder being required and no amendment, adjournment or debate being allowed.”

I have read this so that Members would know. It appears to me that some people would like to leave early and they do not want to get up and leave. Member for Nariva, Member for Fyzabad and Member for Oropouche, please, be quiet!

Hon. C. Imbert: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. They cannot handle the truth. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Just get to the facts.

Hon. C. Imbert: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will now read into the record the *Guardian* editorial of last week Monday; not the editorial from the *Guardian* of this Monday, written by some friend of the Member for Caroni Central. [*Crosstalk*] An editorial from the *Guardian*. Are you deaf?

Mr. Sharma: Written by whom?

Hon. C. Imbert: The article reads:

“Towards an end to the doctors row

It is regrettable that it took an industrial court injunction to force protesting junior doctors to go back to work yesterday. Seeing doctors in accident and emergency and on the wards must have brought a sigh of relief to long-suffering patients and even other health care workers who must have been carrying quite a burden in recent weeks caring for patients as best they could. Doctors could not say though, that they did not see the Government’s show of legal force coming. From very early on, Minister of Health Colm Imbert stated that if forced, the Government would not be afraid of taking more deliberate and effective action, not just by bringing Cuban doctors to address the protest action. Last Friday, the Minister called on doctors to stop all industrial action as the negotiation process for new contracts had begun with the South West Regional Health Authority.”

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Member for Nariva is continuing a monologue in the corner. [*Crosstalk*]

The article continues:

“Now that the South West Regional Health Authority has commenced discussion with individual doctors...” [*Crosstalk*]

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Mr. Deputy Speaker, what is going on here?

“Now that the South West Regional Health Authority has commenced discussion with individual doctors regarding their new contracts, there is absolutely no justification for the continuation of industrial action. That was not an unreasonable request...”

Is me “dey” talking about.

“...since, in a sense, the doctors have gotten what they wanted, input in the negotiations of their contracts. It was at an early stage, but it had begun. The doctors through the Medical Professional Association of Trinidad and Tobago refused saying, effectively, because the process had only begun for one doctor, other junior doctors could not be asked to return to duty. MPATT unfortunately demonstrated with that position, that it could be just as stubborn as it alleged the Health Minister had been during the height of the impasse. Here was an attempt...”

This was an attempt by the Minister.

“...to begin some kind of healing, to bring and end to the impasse, and MPATT missed the boat. Presumably, once MPATT is finally recognized by the Recognition, Registration and Certification Board and it is negotiating on behalf of junior doctors in the future, both sides ought to be willing to come to some sort of middle ground. An Industrial Court injunction is not that, but the Government will likely respond, “It had no choice, after all, people's life were at risk.””

So one week ago, the *Guardian* editorial recognized that discussions had begun, that the healing process had begun, that negotiations had begun, that dialogue had begun, that the entire process of communication and consultation had begun one week ago, but today, the same *Guardian* newspaper says—listen to this piece of unadulterated garbage:

“Instead of calling upon adult professionals to talk things through, Mr. Imbert is playing for an unconditional surrender on his own terms.”

Who wrote the editorial last week and who wrote the editorial this week? The editorial this week was written by a UNC activist. [*Laughter*] [*Crosstalk*] Yes, I will say that.

Hon. Members: Who wrote it last week?

Hon. C. Imbert: Mr. Deputy Speaker, let me deal now with the reality as opposed to the myth outside there. At the Port of Spain General Hospital today,

all ward rounds were conducted. Three surgery lists presented: Dr. Ramjanack in gynaecology; Dr. Toby in orthopedics; Dr. Fung Kee Fung in general surgery; Accident and Emergency was at full functionality; medical clinics were active and surgical clinics were conducted. Yes, at the Port of Spain General Hospital. There was a similar situation at the Eric Williams Medical Sciences Complex, Mount Hope, Chaguanas, Arima, St. George West and Central. [Crosstalk] Tobago is fully functional; the entire eastern region is fully functional. [Crosstalk]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Member for Barataria/San Juan, you had your chance. Member for Chaguanas, you had your chance; let him speak now. We want a debate, let us have it.

Hon. C. Imbert: In San Fernando, Mr. Deputy Speaker, all clinics were conducted, except for obstetrics and gynaecology. And who is in charge of obstetrics and gynaecology? One Dr. Jehan Ali; I think he is very friendly with the Member for Caroni Central. All patients were seen on all wards in San Fernando.

So we have a situation here where the Member for Caroni came into this Parliament, put untruths on the record, continues the attempt at hysteria, scandal and panic that we saw in the *Sunday Express* yesterday and the nonsense that we saw in the editorial today, and continue this rubbish, while the reality is that there are committed people in the hospitals they are maintaining a service. There are still some people outside there who care about the sick, notwithstanding what is going on; notwithstanding what the Member for Caroni Central is trying to do and notwithstanding what all his friends are trying to do.

Before I take my seat, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if there are any pharmaceuticals missing from the hospitals or health centres, I would refer the hon. Member to the words of the former Attorney General, Mr. Ramesh Lawrence Maharaj, [Words expunged] [Crosstalk] [Interruption] I am not finished. [Words expunged] [Crosstalk] [Interruption]

Dr. Rafeeq: Mr. Deputy Speaker, on a point of order.

Hon. C. Imbert: I am not saying that I believe that. [Crosstalk] [Interruption]

Dr. Rafeeq: Mr. Deputy Speaker, on a point of order.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Let him make his point of order.

Dr. Rafeeq: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do not know exactly what the Standing Orders say, but that is a deliberate lie. [Crosstalk]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I will tell you what is the Standing Order.

Dr. Rafeeq: Just a minute.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I will tell you what is the Standing Order. Standing Order 36(5). *[Interruption]* The Member was saying what the Attorney General, at that time, indicated in this House. *[Crosstalk]*

Dr. Rafeeq: Mr. Deputy Speaker, may I? *[Crosstalk]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Tell me what you want to say.

Dr. Rafeeq: Mr. Deputy Speaker, the ex-Attorney General never said that. He said a member of the government; he never said the Member for Caroni Central. *[Crosstalk]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Have a seat. *[Crosstalk]* Hon. Member for Diego Martin East, the Member for Caroni Central is saying that he was not identified and, therefore, it would be wise if you do not identify him. *[Crosstalk]*

Hon. C. Imbert: I have no problem with that, Mr. Deputy Speaker. *[Crosstalk]*

Dr. Rafeeq: Mr. Speaker, I will like that expunged from the records because he said—*[Crosstalk]*

Hon. C. Imbert: Sit down! I am talking!

Dr. Rafeeq: I will like that expunged from the record, because my name has gone on record. *[Crosstalk]*

Hon. C. Imbert: Sit down!

Mr. Deputy Speaker: No, please. *[Crosstalk]*

Dr. Rafeeq: Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is not true and I will like it expunged from the record. *[Crosstalk]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Expunge it from the record. *[Desk thumping]*

Dr. Rafeeq: Thank you.

Hon. C. Imbert: Two people cannot be standing at the same time. He had his turn to speak.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: You are able to say what the former Attorney General would have said, which is not what you are saying.

Hon. C. Imbert: Yes, Mr. Deputy Speaker. My recollection of events is different, but let me help the Member for Caroni Central since he cannot remember everything that was said. *[Crosstalk]* *[Words Expunged]* *[Crosstalk]*

Dr. Rafeeq: Mr. Deputy Speaker, on a point of order.

Hon. C. Imbert: Sit down! [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. S. Panday: He is breaching the Standing Orders.

Hon. C. Imbert: What is the point of order? [*Crosstalk*]

Dr. Rafeeq: That is not what the then Attorney General said.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I have heard you; please have a seat. Continue Member for Diego Martin East. Do not go there anymore.

Hon. C. Imbert: I do not know why they have problems with the truth. I think the Member for Caroni Central should investigate these former ministers who were doctors and the missing medication. Go and investigate, if you are worried about what is going on. [*Crosstalk*]

The fact is that the former Minister of Health endorsed the call of the Member for Couva North. When the nurses were protesting, the Member for Couva North said, “Who want to go could go,” and “No work, no pay.” And the Member for Caroni Central endorsed that. He said, “I have to support my Prime Minister,” like the groveller that he was.

I understand that the Member for Barataria/San Juan had a different view. [*Crosstalk*]

Dr. Rowley: And he was called some kind of animal; the thing with the two long ears.

Hon. C. Imbert: Yes, some kind of animal. [*Laughter*] [*Crosstalk*]

What I found intriguing about that whole scenario was that, you had thousands of nurses on strike, protesting for better wages and it is this PNM administration that gave them the better wages. Instead of sympathizing with the health care professionals that he bleeds for today—he bleeds for the doctors; he cries for them; he weeps for them; he shares their grief; he shares their pain, but when thousands of nurses were making a legitimate protest, they said, “Who want to go could go and no work no pay.” Why do you not tell your doctor friends, “No work, no pay and who want to go could go”? It is the hypocrisy! He did not care about 3,000 nurses in the system, but he cares about this little radical group, this little cabal, and he knows all about it.

When the Member for Barataria/San Juan tried to stamp out the corruption, indiscipline and abuse in the system; when the Member for Barataria/San Juan

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was going through the northwest and other RHAS, trying to deal with this situation of abuse, where people collected their salary every month and some of them did not ever turn up in the hospital. There are medical practitioners who have been at home for years—all caused by the Member for Caroni Central—collecting a salary and not coming to the hospital. When the Member for Barataria/San Juan tried to deal with that, he was called a jackass and that sort of call was endorsed by the Member for Caroni Central. He was ostracized. He was put under manners. He was rudely reminded that he was just a junior minister and the Member for Caroni Central was the boss and told to “Shut up and keep your tail quiet.” That is what went on under that administration.

When the Member for Barataria/San Juan was trying to root out the corruption, trying to make doctors give us a fair day’s work, for a fair day’s pay, he was put under manners and brutalized. He is victimized under the UNC. He tried to get employment at the Eric Williams Medical Sciences Complex, but because of instructions coming down from the Member for Caroni, he was unable to get a senior position there. That is a fact. [*Crosstalk*] [*Interruption*]

Dr. Rafeeq: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Hon. C. Imbert: I am on my feet, sit down!

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar: You really think you are running this Parliament.

Dr. Rafeeq: On a point of order; Standing Order 36.

Hon. C. Imbert: Of course I am. [*Laughter*]

Dr. Rafeeq: The Member for San Juan/Barataria was a junior minister during the time that I was a minister, so he could not have applied for a job at that time. Standing Order 36(5). [*Crosstalk*] That is a lie.

Hon. C. Imbert: He is taking up my time. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: No, he is not. I will give you injury time. The Member for San Juan/Barataria was not always a junior minister when you were minister, if I recall properly, and I think I do.

Dr. Rafeeq: He said because—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Please, allow me to run this Parliament.

Dr. Rafeeq: Mr. Deputy Speaker, the sequence of events according to the Member is that the Member for Barataria/San Juan was minister and then because he did certain things as a minister, he was victimized, but that could not have been

so, because during the period that he was minister he could not have applied for a job, that is a lie. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: As I recall [*Crosstalk*] please. Hon. Member, that could not have happened. So maybe if you have said it, please correct the sequence of events.

Hon. C. Imbert: The Member for Caroni Central has a defective memory. What I said is that when the Member for Barataria/San Juan was junior minister, he was trying to stamp out the corruption in that ministry which was occurring under the watch of the Member for Caroni Central and he was put under manners. [*Crosstalk*] I said that another time he was victimized and denied employment at the Eric Williams Medical Sciences Complex. [*Crosstalk*]

The Member for Barataria/San Juan was Deputy Speaker in this House for a number of years and during that period he was victimized because he did not toe the line. Eventually, in an effort [*Crosstalk*] to pacify him, he was elevated to the position of junior minister, but because he had some integrity, he went inside those RHAs, tried to deal with the situation and they stamped on him. That is the reality. [*Crosstalk*] He would not deny it; he knows it is true.

When I look at all the files in the ministry and I see everything that the Member for Barataria/San Juan was trying to do: trying to get doctors to come to work on time; trying to get them to work eight hours a day; trying to get the consultants to give us, at least, four hours a day; trying to get registrars to come to work. These are all the things that the PMM administration is now going to do. [*Crosstalk*] These were the things that the Member for Barataria/San Juan tried to do.

You see, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because he was not a member of the club—they have this little cabal, a little club, and they always gang up and protect each other—because the Member was interested in getting something productive done in the system, they mashed him; they stamped the hon. Member. And all this took place under the watch of the Member for Caroni Central; the bleeding heart; the one that came to the Parliament and pretended that he cared about the health sector.

For six years he was in that ministry; all the things that could have been done to deal with the problems that exist now, the quality legislation, the registration of private hospitals, the imposition of standards in the system. The Member for Caroni Central deliberately delayed the enactment of that legislation. He was in that Ministry for six years and in year one, just like yours truly, we will enact this legislation in year one, not in year six. He had this legislation that would have imposed standards—[*Interruption*]

Dr. Nanan: Standing Order 36(5), Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. C. Imbert: What is going on here? “Yuh” just wake up? [*Crosstalk*]

Dr. Nanan: He said that the Member for Caroni Central—

Dr. Rowley: But the Member is here.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Let him finish.

Dr. Nanan: He said that the Member for Caroni Central deliberately prevented legislation from coming to the Parliament.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I hear you; please continue. [*Crosstalk*] [*Laughter*]

Hon. C. Imbert: If you have legislation drafted for four years and it sits on your desk gathering dust and that legislation could result in performance from our medical profession, what other conclusion could anybody draw, except that your actions were deliberate? If you have standards and codes of conduct for medical professionals gathering dust on your desk for five years and you do not come to the Parliament with it, what other inference could be drawn except that your actions are deliberate? [*Crosstalk*]

You see the difference between this administration and that one, is that we would take the necessary actions to improve the system, to make sure that poor people get the standard of care they require and that a little cabal, a little gang, does not hold the poor people of this country to ransom. They are the ones who cannot afford to go to the private nursing homes and private hospitals which are all owned and operated by friends of the Member for Caroni Central. It is all self-serving.

When I came into that Ministry—[*Interruption*] They had their chance to speak; they cannot deal with reality, that is their problem. When I came into that Ministry the consensus was that under the UNC, under the tenure of the Member for Caroni Central, a systematic downgrading of the public health system was done. [*Crosstalk*] They systemically ran the hospitals down to the ground and during that period there was a mushrooming, flourishing, growth and explosion of private hospitals and nursing homes. [*Crosstalk*] When you look at their actions, the only conclusion that one could reasonably draw, is that the Member for Caroni Central presided over the destruction of the public health sector to allow the growth and explosion of private hospitals—[*Interruption*]

Dr. Rafeeq: Mr. Deputy Speaker, on a point of order.

Hon. C. Imbert: —owned and controlled by his friends. [*Desk thumping*]

Dr. Rafeeq: Mr. Deputy Speaker, on a point of order, Standing Order 36(5), he is imputing improper motives.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Member, I am not letting him get away, but let me be quite frank. There is a certain amount of political latitude allowed in here and when the Members for Nariva and Fyzabad were talking about racism and what not and the inclusions, I allowed it. All the Member said was that was the conclusion he came to. It is a conclusion; it is not a fact and he is not saying that it is a fact, because nobody knows it is a fact.

Dr. Rafeeq: When the other Members spoke, they said “the Government of the day”; he particularly named the Member for Caroni Central as deliberately running down the public health system. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The point is taken. Do not direct it strictly to him. If you are talking about the government or the administration that is a different thing.

Hon. C. Imbert: Mr. Deputy Speaker, when Ramesh Lawrence Maharaj was talking, [*Words expunged*]—[*Crosstalk*]

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar: No, no, no. Expunge!

Dr. Rafeeq: Mr. Deputy Speaker—[*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Expunge it from the record.

Hon. C. Imbert: I will send “yuh” home, you know. I now start, “yuh” know. [*Crosstalk*] “Yuh cyar” take pressure. [*Crosstalk*] They want to give but, “dey cyar” take. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Sharma: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I was treated differently five minutes ago. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Take your seat. Hon. Member for Diego Martin East, would you please continue with the debate without causing this disruption. And to you Member for Fyzabad, I have been talking to you all night and I recorded every time I spoke to you; you did not realize that. So do not say you were treated differently; you were treated very leniently.

Mr. Sharma: With all respect, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I was not aware that you were speaking to me all night.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I called your name several times.

Mr. Sharma: Well you cannot make statements like that.

Hon. Member: Are you calling the Deputy Speaker a liar?

Mr. Sharma: Yes, yes.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I called your name several times. [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. C. Imbert: It was under the former UNC administration. When the Member for Caroni Central was speaking, he did not say the PNM Government; he said the Member for Diego Martin East; he said the Minister of Health; he spoke about me. But when I speak about that hon. Member and his portfolio— [*Interruption*] Who else am I to speak about?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: His former portfolio.

Mr. C. Imbert: His former portfolio. That hon. Member formerly held the portfolio of health, so who else am I to speak about but him? It was under the watch of the hon. Member for Caroni Central that equipment walked out of the public hospital and ended up in private hospitals and nursing homes, some of which are owned by his friends and supporters. [*Crosstalk*] This happened.

Dr. Rafeeq: Mr. Deputy Speaker, again—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: That does not imply anything, have a seat.

Dr. Rafeeq: I have no friends who own nursing homes; the gentlemen is lying.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: You have no friends?

Dr. Rafeeq: Who own nursing homes. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The Member has no friends who own private hospitals. Have a seat. [*Crosstalk*]

Dr. Rafeeq: I have no friends who own nursing homes. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I have already dealt with it.

Dr. Rafeeq: What is your ruling?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I said that the Member has no friends in private—

Dr. Rafeeq: I said I have no friends who own nursing homes.

Hon. C. Imbert: What!

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The Member has indicated that he has no friends who own nursing homes, so continue. [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. C. Imbert: So the owners of Gulf View Medical, Southern Medical, Surgimed, St. Joseph's Medical Associates and St. Clair Medical Centre, none of

those are his friends? [*Crosstalk*] You are telling me that I must believe that nonsense from him? Utter, unadulterated rubbish! Those are not his friends? [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Member, please continue and do not take that direction. You are being confrontational; do not do that.

Hon. C. Imbert: Okay, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will concede. Although it is unbelievable, I will concede that the former Minister of Health has no friends in the medical sector. But I notice that the hon. former minister did not contest the fact that equipment walked out of the public hospitals and walked into somebody's private office under his watch. I notice he did not contest that fact. The same way that medication walked out of the government stores and walked into somebody's private pharmacy. I notice he did not contest that, although none of those people are his friends.

What a friendless medical doctor we have! What a lonely medical doctor we have inhabiting that honourable seat for Caroni Central; poor man.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: My heart bleeds for him.

Hon. C. Imbert: Do not bleed for him. [*Laughter*] The fact of the matter is, under the watch of the former UNC administration and the former Minister of Health, despite the best efforts of the Member for Barataria/San Juan, who was trying, the public health system went down. If you look at it in 1995 and 2000, they spent no money on the hospitals. They closed the sterilization department in Port of Spain General Hospital and left it closed for years. That was their approach to health sector reform. Not fix it; not put in new equipment, not rehabilitate it, not reform it, close it down.

Close the kitchen here; close the laundry there; close the CSSD there; that was the way the former administration and the former Minister of Health dealt with the health sector. Just close everything, mash up everything in the public hospitals. And, of course, when you do that, people have to find their way into private nursing homes. That is his legacy.

All this industrial unrest, they are not fooling anyone. I know that many of the main protagonists, the front liners in this whole issue may not be his friends, since he is such a lonely man, but he knows them well. He knows them well. He can protest his innocence as long as he wants. I am being prompted here to say that some of them would not be around for long and some of them may run into some "misfortunae". [*Laughter*]

My point, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that I find it hypocritical when the Member for Caroni Central comes in here and piously pontificates about the poor,

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suffering people, when he has been responsible for what is happening now. That hon. Member for Caroni Central was responsible for an illegal agreement that was entered into three days before the general elections in 2001, which could not be enforced in the Industrial Court; an agreement that was void in law. The hon. Member for Caroni Central imposed that agreement on the RHAs.

12.45 a.m.

There was no budgetary allocation for it, that agreement has cost this country in excess of \$100 million in just one year. Do you know what is in that budgetary allocation, Mr. Deputy Speaker? When the medical practitioners are on vacation they get on-call allowance. Do you know what that is? That is an allowance that is paid when you are at home and you are called to the hospital. If you are in the Bahamas or Miami how will they get you?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, would you believe that precedence was established by the former UNC administration where on-call allowances are paid to medical practitioners while they are on vacation? It is absolutely incredible putting that kind of pollution into the system, that kind of situation where medical practitioners who were close to the Member for Caroni Central—and he has denied that he has any familial relationship either by blood or marriage to any member of MPATT. We will see about that.

The fact is, this ridiculous agreement into which they have entered was negotiated by his—I cannot say friends, because he has none—associates in the medical profession who were given the unprecedented privilege of being allowed to address the Finance Subcommittee of Cabinet. That was the kind of craziness that was encouraged by the former minister and administration. I have never heard of such thing; that groups of workers in this country outside of collective bargaining and the Industrial Relations Act could approach a subcommittee of the Cabinet and negotiate terms and conditions.

It is little wonder now that those same people are demanding that outside the Industrial Relations Act and outside the laws of this country that they should negotiate with Cabinet Ministers. Do you know why? Because the hon. Member for Caroni Central gave them the bad habit. He started this nonsense and it is like any system that has begun to decay and deteriorate, it is going to get worse before it gets better, but we are going to put it back on an even track.

There were medical doctors who were more powerful within the UNC than the Member for Caroni Central. As I said in this Parliament before, there was an infamous chairman of a regional health authority who would sit in implementation

steering committee meetings at the ministry on Duncan Street, and the Member knows exactly what I am talking about. When the Member made a decision in his capacity as Chairman of that committee as the former Minister of Health, the infamous chairman would watch him in front of all the public servants and say: "We will see about that. I am going to talk to the Prime Minister about you". He would talk to the then Prime Minister and overturn the authority of the hon. Member for Caroni Central.

This is the indiscipline, the chaos and the madness that polluted the Ministry of Health under the stewardship of the hon. Member for Caroni Central. So he can come here and bleat, and yap, and piously pontificate, but the records are there. He was a weak and ineffective Minister, subservient to powerful members of the UNC who were his boss and he could not do anything without getting instructions and permission from his political masters. That is why the health sector is in the condition in which it is now. But there is a new Government, a new administration, a new Cabinet and we are determined to stop the rot, to reverse the bad habits, to end the indiscipline and institute the very honourable, far-reaching and forward-thinking measures that the Member for Barataria/San Juan was trying to put in place.

In my private discussions with him, many of the things I am thinking of, he had already thought of and it is in the records of the ministry, but he was prevented from instituting these reforms because the Member for Caroni Central did not want the system to improve. Those are the facts, and the reality, not his pious nonsense.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I was just about to take my third nap for the evening. We have had a few firsts here for quite some time. Members commented on the fact that it is the first time that we had a division on the speaking time of a Member. I think it is obvious if there is an abuse of a process, one ought to take action.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, you have been in this House for quite some time, I think since 1991, and you would remember that this is the first occasion on which the Report coming from a Finance Committee and the attached Finance Bill were not debated together. That is the precedent established in this House. So I was amazed twice today when we started the debate all over on the Finance Bill. I think the Acting Chief Whip knows that. So we can either come to the House with clean hands and expect the norm, or abuse the process and then take what you get.

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Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have been in this House since 1987. I have acted as Leader of the House, and as Opposition Chief Whip and not on one occasion can the Opposition Chief Whip or Leader of the House say that I gave my word on any matter and failed to live up to it. That is the reality of the situation.

I want to return to the Bill because the Member for Chaguanas in his contribution went back to some things I thought I had previously answered. I thought my colleague, the Member for Diego Martin West, had dealt with it. Let me try once more.

When one comes with the budget, what one seeks are approval levels. In other words, when you approve an expenditure budget all you are really doing is getting the authority to spend up to a particular figure. As my colleague said, the revenue figures are estimates of revenue, and as one can see quite clearly, while for the year 2002 the Minister of Finance estimated that he would have received \$15,801.5 billion the actual out-turn was some \$1.5 billion lower. It was \$14,265.2 billion, so you have to start from that basic fact.

The fact that the actual revenues were \$14,265.2 billion did not change the fact that the Government had certain spending approval, but the fact that the income was lower meant that we had to cut our suit to the cloth we had. So that while we budgeted to spend \$15,798.5 billion, the actual expenditure turned out to be \$14,196.3 billion. That is the fact. We still had approval levels to spend up to \$15,798 billion, but we spent only \$14,196 billion, \$1.6 billion lower.

In some cases, we spent more than what we got approval for under the particular heading. So that while overall, the expenditure was \$1.6 billion lower, in some cases in some heads we exceeded what was appropriated and all the closing of accounts would do is simply say, I have approval under this head I am going to use it, I am going to transfer that approval.

I am not transferring funds; I am transferring the approval I have under this head where expenditure is lower to this head where my expenditure is higher. That is all we are doing. All we are saying is you gave me permission to spend here, I did not spend it here, please let me use that permission to spend it here. *[Interruption]* We did not have the money.

I am saying that because the funds we got, the actual revenues were lower, we had to cut from somewhere. In the case of national revenue—somebody spoke about DNA or something of the sort, but that was not even budgeted. When you look at it, it was for salaries and for some contracts, which would be paid for in 2003. The DNA was not budgeted, and it was not the PNM who did the budget, you

did it and if, therefore, DNA was important it ought to have been included. That is all we are saying.

I think it is important that we understand that. If in fact we had the revenues and we went up to the budget with expenditure, but in some cases we underspent, then your point would have been valid, but we did not have the income the Minister thought we would have had. That, I think is the most significant point that I need to make at this time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I said earlier today, the fact that the former Minister of Finance did not participate in this debate tells a story. All he is saying is that there is really nothing to say; everything is in order. The Members had to “gallery” and they did it for quite a long time. I would defend to the hilt a Member’s right to speak.

With respect to my colleague, the Member for Naparima, I felt offended because one always looked upon him as someone—perhaps it is the way he carries himself—whose word would be his bond.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar: Would the Member please give way on that issue? I spoke with the Member for Naparima and he was not aware of the arrangement that had been made. That is what he indicated to us.

Hon. K. Valley: I hear you. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I spoke to the Member before and he said he would just be about 10—15 minutes and I found it quite strange when he came so prepared. There is no problem if the Member wants to take 75 minutes, that is no problem, but why, on a simple matter like that he would want to deceive someone? I feel badly about that, but I have no hard feelings against him. I have a difficulty in keeping anybody in mind for longer than two minutes. [*Crosstalk*].

So Mr. Deputy Speaker, with these few words and given the lateness of the hour, it is now 1.00 a.m., I beg to move.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a second time.

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

Bill accordingly read the third time and passed.

ADJOURNMENT

The Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I beg to move that this

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House do now adjourn to Friday, February 07, 2003 at 1.30 p.m. and to inform the House that we would be guided by the Order Paper. We would do the Bills sequentially.

Question put and agreed to.

House accordingly adjourned.

Adjourned at 1.05 a.m.