

Leave of Absence

Monday, June 16, 2003

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, June 16, 2003

The House met at 1.30 p.m.

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, I have received correspondence for leave of absence from today's sitting of the House from the Member for St. Augustine (Mr. Winston Dookeran).

I have also received communication requesting leave of absence from today's sitting from the Member for Caroni East (Mr. Ganga Singh) and the Member for Pointe-a-Pierre (Miss Gillian Lucky). I may mention that the Member for Pointe-a-Pierre may join us later on.

PAPER LAID

Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on a Special Audit of the Transport Division of the Ministry of Works and Transport. [*The Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley)*]

To be referred to the Public Accounts Committee.

**FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT
(SECOND)**

Presentation

The Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley): Mr. Speaker, I beg to present the Second Report (2002/2003 Session) of the Finance Committee of the House of Representatives of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, on proposals for the Supplementation and Variation of the 2003 Appropriation.

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

**Enterprise South
(Paving of Roads)**

134. Mr. Manohar Ramsaran (*Chaguanas*) asked the hon. Minister of Local Government:

Would the Minister inform this House:

- (i) whether the Mayor and the Chief Executive Officer of the Chaguanas Borough Corporation were consulted in the paving of roads in the Enterprise South electoral district during the period January to March 2003;
- (ii) if the answer to (i) is in the negative, why were they not consulted?

The Minister of Local Government (Hon. Jarrette Narine): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Ministry of Local Government did not undertake any paving of roads in the Chaguanas Borough Corporation for the period January to March 2003. However, consultations with the Ministry of Works and Transport reveal that they undertook paving of roads in the Enterprise South electoral district in the January to March 2003 period.

The roads paved were: Amethyst Street, Branch Street, Construction Avenue, Emerald Avenue, François Street, Enterprise Street, Ramallie Street, Endeavour Hindu Mandir—the road and car park—Freedom Street and Extension, La Monte Street and Extension, Diamond Terrace, Savannah Drive and Joseph Lane.

It is instructive to note that these roads were paved under the Programme for the Upgrading of Road Efficiency (PURE), which is geared towards responding to the numerous complaints and requests for the improvement of the road infrastructure made by the public.

Under the PURE programme, once a complaint is lodged, an inspection of the road is conducted in order to evaluate its condition and to determine what work is required. Stage “A” estimates are prepared and the selected road is prioritized on the programme’s listing.

The following criteria determine the priority rating of a selected road:

- The condition rating of the road;
- The Average Daily Traffic (ADT) on the road;
- The importance of the road in linking communities/accessing industries/institutions;
- Whether the road provides access from farm to market;
- The existence of alternative routes, factoring in their condition and length.

While it is customary for all relevant authorities to be consulted whenever roads are being paved, the Minister is unable to indicate categorically whether the

Mayor and the Chief Executive Officer of the Chaguanas Borough Corporation were consulted in this instance.

The reply at part (i) of this question negates a reply to part (ii) of the question.

Mr. Ramsaran: Is the Minister aware that these roads are under the purview of the Minister of Local Government?

Hon. J. Narine: I am aware that they are under the purview of the Minister of Local Government, but they were paved under the PURE programme, which normally goes into areas with problems.

**World Bank Loan
(HIV/AIDS Prevention and Control)**

140. Mr. Chandresh Sharma (*Fyzabad*) asked the hon. Minister of Planning and Development:

Would the Minister inform this House of the following:

- (a) the expenditure to date from the US \$20 million loan obtained from the World Bank for the HIV/AIDS Prevention and Control Project;
- (b) the names of staff trained for prevention and clinical management under this project?

The Minister of Planning and Development (Hon. Dr. Keith Rowley): Mr. Speaker, negotiations for a World Bank loan of US \$ 20 million for the HIV/AIDS Prevention and Control Project was successfully concluded in Washington D.C. over the period May 28 to 30, 2003. The project appraisal document is currently being finalized for submission to the Board of Executive Directors of the World Bank on June 27, 2003 for approval, hence a loan agreement has not yet been signed between the Government of Trinidad and Tobago and the World Bank. Consequently, there has been no expenditure under this project.

This project will form part of a comprehensive and expanded national response to the HIV problem where ongoing efforts are strengthened, new partners mobilized and all activities coordinated and prioritized. This expanded response is informed by a five-year national HIV/AIDS Strategic Plan, which was completed in November 2002. The plan was done through a consultancy undertaken on behalf of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago by the Health Economics Unit of the University of the West Indies.

The five-year National HIV/AIDS Strategic Plan has two overarching goals:

1. To reduce the incidence of HIV infections in Trinidad and Tobago; and

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2. To mitigate the negative impact of HIV/AIDS on persons affected and infected in Trinidad and Tobago.

The proposed World Bank HIV/AIDS Prevention and Control Project will contribute to the achievement of the strategic goals of the five-year National HIV/AIDS Strategic Plan by focusing on the priority areas of strategic response which are: prevention, treatment and care, support, advocacy and human rights, surveillance, research and management.

The objective of this project is to assist Trinidad and Tobago in controlling the spread of the HIV/AIDS epidemic through:

- (a) the scaling up of programmes for the prevention, care and control of the epidemic, targeted in particular to HIV/AIDS high-risk groups;
- (b) the heightening of the awareness with respect to HIV/AIDS infection and prevention amongst the population of Trinidad and Tobago; and
- (c) the strengthening of the institutional capacity of the related agencies and civil society organizations to ensure the effectiveness and the sustainability of the project.

The main components of the project are:

- (1) The prevention of the spread of HIV/AIDS through the promotion of behaviour change via education awareness heightening, addressing high-risk groups and mother-to-child transmissions, among other initiatives;
- (2) The provision of treatment, care and support for HIV/AIDS patients to reduce the morbidity and mortality attributed to HIV/AIDS. This will be carried out through an appropriate health network of both public and private health facilities. This includes financing the installation capacity for HIV testing in selected health centres, enhanced health centres and district health facilities; the installation of lab equipment at various hospitals and the construction of a new building for the National Public Health Laboratory.
- (3) Advocacy and human rights to increase the quality of life of people living with AIDS, which involves the drafting of legislation in relation to discrimination against persons living with AIDS in the work place.
- (4) Surveillance and research, which would support the implementation of standardized protocols for behavioural and biological surveillance, with the assistance of CAREC, Medical Research Foundation and other partners.

- (5) Programme management, coordination and evaluation which would support the establishment and initial operation of a sustainable institutional structure and a management team that would allow the country to effectively control and prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS, and care for persons living with AIDS over the long term.

With respect to the staff in training, in view of the fact that the loan agreement has not yet been signed, there has been no implementation of any component of the programme. In this regard, no staff has been trained in prevention and clinical management under this particular project. The areas for training identified for funding under this project are HIV/AIDS Surveillance and Information Technology. Persons to be trained are to be identified from the Ministry of Health and the Regional Health Authorities.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Sharma: Mr. Speaker, the Minister has made the point that this is an urgent matter. In view of that, I have two short questions. What short-term funding is available and when do you expect the first drawdown?

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: I should have pointed out that this matter of the World Bank and its business with the Government of Trinidad and Tobago does not form part of the portfolio of the Minister of Planning and Development. However, I have tried to assist the Minister. Questions of that nature ought to be directed to the line Ministers responsible.

**Solid Waste Management Company Limited
(Communications Manager)**

161. Dr. Adesh Nanan (*Tabaquite*) asked the hon. Minister of Public Utilities and the Environment:

- (a) Could the Minister provide this House with:
- (i) the name of the current Communications Manager of the Solid Waste Management Company Limited?
 - (ii) a detailed listing of the monthly compensation package, including basic salary, subsistence, travelling, entertainment and any other allowances of the current Communications Manager of the Solid Waste Management Company Limited?
- (b) Would the Minister indicate if the said position of Communications Manager was publicly advertised?

- (c) If the answer to (b) is in the affirmative, would the Minister state the total number of unsuccessful applicants who responded to the advertisements?

The Minister of Public Utilities and the Environment (Sen. The Hon. Rennie Dumas): Mr. Speaker, at the present time the Solid Waste Management Company Limited (SWMCOL) does not have in its employ a person or position entitled “Communications Manager”. A position entitled “Communications Manager” is not part of SWMCOL’s present organizational structure.

Based on the foregoing, the provision of details and the compensation packaging, including basic salary, subsistence, travelling, entertainment and other allowances are not applicable. However, information relevant to SWMCOL’s corporate communications is as follows.

SWMCOL’s organizational structure, effective July 2002, provides for a corporate communications officer reporting to the Manager, Corporate Services. This position was advertised in the daily press in August 2002. Thirty-six (36) applications were received, however no formal interviews were conducted with any of the applicants based on a reassessment of the then and current corporate communications needs of SWMCOL. The advertised position of Corporate Communications Officer was never filled. The position remains vacant.

The corporate communications plans and activities of SWMCOL are coordinated and managed by the Manager, Corporate Services. The Manager, Corporate Services is supported by the department’s administrative staff and external communications specialists.

The Community-based Environmental Protection and Enhancement Programme (CEPEP) communications plans and activities are coordinated and managed by the CEPEP Programme Manager. The Programme Manager is supported by the department’s administrative staff and external communications specialists.

Among those communications specialists used have been Media Consultants, Maska Limited, Integrated Communications Consultants, Real Company Limited, Video Professionals and Digital Video Studios.

The various communications specialists are contracted to provide advice, press events management and promotional advertising services to the company. The services are provided on a contract-for-services basis and SWMCOL is subsequently invoiced for services provided.

The contracted communications specialists liaise with the press media, advertising agents, printers etc. required and instructed by the management of SWMCOL.

Payment for services to communications specialists contracted by the company are expenses and accounted for as fees for professional services or advertising and promotions expense.

**T&TEC
(Consumer Information)**

162. Dr. Adesh Nanan asked the hon. Minister of Public Utilities and the Environment:

Could the Minister state:

- (a) what percentage of the power acquired by the Trinidad and Tobago Electricity Commission (T&TEC) reaches regularly metered consumers?
- (b) what percentage of metered consumers are considered delinquent consumers in respect of the percentage volume of energy not paid for?
- (c) what percentage of power acquired by T&TEC is unlawfully appropriated by consumers?

The Minister of Public Utilities and the Environment (Sen. The Hon. Rennie Dumas): Mr. Speaker, during the process of transmitting and distributing electricity across an electric system, energy is lost through turmoil and other factors. This lost energy is referred to as technical losses.

In addition to these technical losses, an electric utility also experiences non-technical losses represented by electricity purchased for which no revenue is received due to current theft and/or administrative and other metering/billing errors. Total energy purchased and/or generated therefore comprises energy sold plus technical losses and non-technical losses.

T&TEC has advised that over the period April 2002 to March 2003, 93.7 per cent of the total energy purchased by T&TEC from two generating companies in Trinidad and generated by T&TEC power station in Scarborough, Tobago were accounted for in sales to regularly metered customers. System losses therefore represented 6.3 per cent of energy purchased or generated by T&TEC. This level of system loss is consistent with international standards for a well-run utility. In fact, system losses of 15 to 30 per cent are not uncommon for many utilities.

The number of accounts that fall within the category of delinquency represents less than 2 per cent of the total account base of approximately 340,000 users. Any debt not collected through the disconnection process is passed to debt collectors and pursued through the legal process.

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Of the total system losses of 6.3 per cent over the 12 months to March 2003, T&TEC advised that the technical losses would have contributed about 4 per cent and non-technical losses the remaining 2.3 per cent.

As already explained, non-technical losses comprise theft and administrative errors associated with the metering or billing function. Non-technical losses are kept to a minimum through a number of systemic measures including the sealing of meters, the removal of meters and secondary wiring from delinquent locations. Recovering of the cost of stolen electricity and prosecution wait is warranted.

The past few years have seen a comprehensive audit of the installations of industrial customers in further efforts at minimizing administrative errors in the billing or metering process. It is therefore difficult to separate the individual contribution of these sources.

As already indicated, together they accounted for approximately 2.3 per cent of the energy acquired by T&TEC over the 12-month period ending March 2003. The percentage related to theft that is unlawfully appropriated by customers is guesstimated to be of the order of less than one person.

Dr. Nanan: Can the Minister quantify the dollar value of the losses due to electricity unlawfully appropriated by consumers?

Sen. The Hon. R. Dumas: Not at this point in time.

Dr. Nanan: What action will be taken to eradicate the technical losses due to the unlawful appropriation of electrical energy?

Sen. The Hon. R. Dumas: The review of the processes and the meters have already identified what can be done in such a case.

Dr. Nanan: Could the Minister identify the main geographic or electoral areas where the non-technical losses take place?

Sen. The Hon. R. Dumas: No such analysis was done.

Mr. Ramnath: Coming to question No. 157, the Member for Barataria/San Juan had asked to be excused from the early part of this sitting. I have authorised the Member for Chaguanas to ask his question at this time.

**Dead Animal Retrieval Team
(Carcasses collected)**

157. Mr. Manohar Ramsaran (*Chaguanas*) on behalf of Dr. Fuad Khan (*Barataria/San Juan*) asked the Minister of Public Utilities and the Environment:

Could the Minister indicate the number, the date and the exact location of the dead dogs that were retrieved by the Dead Animal Retrieval Team (DART) of CEPEP?

The Minister of Public Utilities and the Environment (Sen. The Hon. Rennie Dumas): Mr. Speaker, SWMCOL has advised that over the period December 16, 2002 to May 13, 2003 a total of 433 carcasses were collected by the Dead Animal Retrieval Team, comprising 195 dogs and 238 cats. Details of the dates and location of the carcasses collected have been lodged with the Clerk of the House.

It is to be noted that apart from those carcasses collected by DART, numerous others have been collected by CEPEP. An exact tabulation of these were however, not done, but an attempt will be made to do so in the future.

Vide end of sitting for written part of answer.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

CEPEP

(Suppliers of Goods and Services, 2002)

73. Mr. Chandresh Sharma asked the hon. Minister of Public Utilities and the Environment:

Could the Minister provide a list of the names of all suppliers of goods and services to CEPEP in 2002, detailing monies paid to each supplier and the criteria employed in awarding these contracts?

Vide end of sitting for written answer.

CEPEP

(Legal Team)

97. Mr. Chandresh Sharma asked the hon. Minister of Public Utilities and the Environment:

- (a) Would the Minister identify the legal team at CEPEP?
- (b) Would the Minister further:
 - (i) list the companies that obtained assistance with VAT registration and incorporation of their companies from the CEPEP legal team;
 - (ii) list the names of the panel members and the criteria used for selecting contractors and awarding contracts;

- (iii) list all contractors with names of their principals and addresses who applied for but were not awarded contracts for CEPEP?

Vide end of sitting for written answer.

**Road Improvement Fund
(Contractors Hired)**

142. Mr. Chandresh Sharma asked the hon. Minister of Works and Transport:

Would the Minister please provide this House with a list of all contractors who obtained work and the amounts of monies paid to each contractor under the Road Improvement Fund for the period January to April 2003?

Vide end of sitting for written answer.

Social Programmes

156. Mr. Subhas Panday (*Princes Town*) asked the hon. Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister (Social Services Delivery):

- (a) Could the Minister identify how many social programmes are being run by the Ministry and list each programme?
- (b) Could the Minister state the procedure to be used to access each programme?

Vide end of sitting for written answer.

ARRANGEMENT OF BUSINESS

The Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley): Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that the statement to be made by the hon. Prime Minister be stood down for 4.00 p.m.

Assent indicated.

FINANCE (SUPPLEMENTATION AND VARIATION OF APPROPRIATION) BILL

Bill to supplement and vary the appropriation of the sum the issue of which was authorized by the Appropriation Act [*The Minister 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
(SECOND)****Adoption**

The Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley): Mr. Speaker, I beg to move,

That this House adopt the Finance Committee Report which was laid on the Table at an earlier stage of the proceedings.

Mr. Speaker, perhaps I should move at this time also that we debate simultaneously this report and the Bill, which will come after. The voting will be separate. I did not consult with the acting Chief Whip, but it is the norm in the House.

Mr. Ramnath: [*Inaudible*]

Hon. K. Valley: Thank you very much. Obviously, we are not going to have any problem with the Member for Couva South today in his new exalted position. I congratulate the Member most sincerely on making this advance. As he will note, he is merely one chair away. [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. K. Valley: Mr. Speaker, the Finance Committee met on June 06 and approved certain proposals, the subject of which I propose to report today. Basically, the Finance Committee considered a supplementary appropriation in the amount of \$742,651,500 and a variation of appropriation of \$50,384,000.

The Ministry of Finance undertook a mid-year review of the out-turn of the budget and, based on that review, the original budget deficit, which was \$618.9 million, representing 1 per cent of GDP, was converted to a budget surplus of \$191.7 million. In other words, if things were to continue as normal, rather than experiencing a budget deficit of \$618.9 million, there would be a budget surplus of \$191.7 million.

Mainly accounting for that is that the revenue projection increased by some 2.4 per cent, moving from an original estimate of \$15,725.3 million to \$16,095,700 million. That is as a result of an increase in property income, while capital receipts declined by 19 per cent.

Expenditure also declined by 2.7 per cent so that where there was an increase in projected revenues of 2.4 per cent there was a decrease in projected total expenditure of 2.7 per cent. The original deficit of \$618.9 million would have placed the budget in surplus were it not for new expenditure that the Government

plans to undertake to fund new programmes and to meet expenditure areas where implementation is proceeding at a faster pace than anticipated.

An example of these areas is arrears of increments and salaries—\$184.6 million. Here we are talking about arrears of increment for teachers, increases in Health for doctors and nurses, arrears to postal workers of TTPost; then there are outstanding obligations of \$271.6 million, the most significant item there being the Ministry of the Attorney General's funding for the Caribbean Court of Justice—\$199,080,000.

I will say a few words on this item as this is an issue that some Members of the Opposition took up—I think it was the Member for Siparia. I know that we had presented Members with answers to their queries and although it is not answering 100 per cent of their queries, I hope that they would agree that it has gone quite a long way. To the extent that responses are not here, the Member is free to file a question on the issue.

With respect to the Caribbean Court of Justice, it is known that this has been in the work for quite some time. As a matter of fact, way back in 1999, the decision was taken to fund the start-up cost as an initial subscriber to the court. The previous government took that decision in 1999. So, in 2000 as well as 2001, contributions were made for the funding of the start-up cost.

The funding here, in concept, is to establish the fund. Caricom has decided to set up a one-off fund of US \$100 million. The operations of the court would be via the interest earnings of the fund. The concept here is that one has to ensure the independence of the court and its sustainability so that the governments have agreed to set up this fund to be managed by the Caribbean Development Bank. The interest earnings on the fund will meet operating expenditure, so conceptually it will be a fund in perpetuity.

Trinidad and Tobago is being asked to contribute 31.6 per cent of this fund; Jamaica, 28.7; Barbados, 13.5; Guyana, 8.8; Dominica, 2.2; St. Kitts and Nevis, 2.2; St. Vincent 2.2—all the OECS, 2; Montserrat, 0.5. I think that the principle that is at work here is—if I can borrow some French—*noblesse obligé*. Trinidad and Tobago is the major beneficiary; the best economy in the Caribbean is contributing the most to the fund, but Members should note that Jamaica is making a significant contribution. That is the major expense there. Other than that, there is \$10 million in arrears of contribution to the University of the West Indies, a further \$18,266,000 for the Tobago House of Assembly—the rolling three-year tourism plan. The Government has committed some \$305 million to this three-year plan.

There are \$20 million in reduction of airfare on domestic air bridge—the annual subsidy to BWIA to replace revenue foregone. That is the question that was raised and the response is included in the package. In March of this year the Government agreed, in keeping with its manifesto promise, to reduce the airfare to \$200 and to subsidize that to reduce the fare as long as the Civil Aviation Authority approved it. Those are the significant items.

There are additional expenses with respect to social programmes. I am sure Members on the other side will welcome this given the criticism of what is happening in crime. They will know that this is the real answer to the crime issue—ensuring that there are social programmes and other healthy alternatives for young people; that we take care of those who are least able to take care of themselves. There are \$52,437,000 in additional expenditure contemplated there.

The largest item is the additional funding for the On-the-Job Training Programme where there is additional expenditure of some \$26,376,000 foreseen. There is a further \$8,600,000 for YTEPP, and funds needed for maintenance of stadia, \$5.3 million—significant expenditure in this regard. Then, of course, there are other expenditure of some \$119.4 million and significant here is our commitment to LIAT of TT \$30 million; \$40 million for the purchase of additional equity in PLIPDECO to maintain our percentage shareholding in that company. They come out with the rights issue. There is \$16.9 million for our initiative air links into Latin America. Again that is dealt with quite well here. I do not think I need to say anything further. The Government has agreed to buy seats from BWIA with respect to getting the initiative off the ground. In our quest to integrate the Trinidad and Tobago economy in Latin America, an air link is extremely important and on the first phase we would target Costa Rica, Cuba and the Dominican Republic and \$16.3 million is the estimated expenditure for that to the end of this fiscal year.

Perhaps this is a good time to inform the national community that the inaugural flight to Cuba would take place on June 24. There are still seats available. To the extent that we can sell all the seats, there would be fewer that Government will have to buy. I invite the Member for Siparia to come with us. She can get a ticket at a discount of 40 per cent. I can tell her, having visited Cuba about 1½ months ago, that it is a wonderful place, quite different from what you may have read in the newspapers. I invite the Member to join us on that visit.

There is an increase in the development programme by \$142 million across Ministries in our quest to increase capital expenditure. The increase in revenue comes mainly from petroleum profit taxes and supplemental petroleum tax, where Government expects a projected increase of \$155.4 million. We expect a further

\$194.2 million from royalties on oil and \$23.4 million from unemployment levy, making a total increase of \$373 million.

Moreover, due to the higher than anticipated prices of petroleum products, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago anticipates an increased out-turn in the area of corporation taxes. This is expected to be offset by lower than anticipated revenues mainly in value-added tax. The value-added tax will be off by some \$275 million as projected from the original budget because of the level of refunds.

We have taken a decision to correct a fault of prior years. The government of the day attempted to use the manufacturers to finance its cash flow by keeping the VAT refunds of manufacturers exceedingly long. These are the same manufacturers they were pushing into new markets. They were keeping their cash flows for long periods thus forcing the manufacturers to face the banks at very high interest rates. We have decided to correct that, so that by the end of April 2003, VAT refunds had totalled some \$1,527,473,503. That was \$275 million more than originally budgeted. We have given the manufacturers the undertaking that we will be current with them with respect to their VAT refund. We will not use the subterfuge of telling them that we want to audit their books—another way of keeping their money—that occurred under the previous administration.

Mr. Speaker, the increase in the supplementary provision of \$742.7 million is broken down by some \$600,592,500 in recurrent expenditure and \$142,000 in the development programme. Members are also asked to note that arising out of the implementation of the recommendation of the 67th Report of the Salaries Review Commission, there is an increase in the direct charges on the Consolidated Fund of \$17,451,510. This sum represents the enhancement in the terms and conditions of employment of individuals whose salaries and allowances are excluded from the Appropriation Act in accordance with section 113(2) of the Constitution of Trinidad and Tobago. So, the Supplementary Appropriation Act that is currently being sought, together with the increase in direct charges, represent the total increase of \$760,103,010 in Government expenditure.

To summarize, the major areas are:

The establishment of the Caribbean Court of Justice	\$199.1 million
Settlement of arrears of increments due to public officers and implementation of the report of the Salaries Review Commission	\$184.6 million

Increased appropriation of the Tobago House of Assembly with respect to the rolling three-year plan for tourism	\$18.3 million
Annual subsidy to BWIA to replace revenue foregone as a result of the reduction of the airfare for the domestic air bridge	\$20 million
Increase in the Public Sector Investment Programme	\$142.1 million

The net effect of this supplementary expenditure and projected surplus of \$191.7 million on the current budget would be a revised projected deficit of \$568,353,928 or .89 per cent of GDP. Whereas originally the budget envisaged a deficit of 1 per cent of GDP or \$618 million, with this supplementation, the budget deficit is now projected to be reduced to .89 per cent of GDP or \$568.4 million.

This is what is before us with respect to the transfers. The Finance Committee considered the transfer from certain heads to those that needed more funding and the total amount is \$50.3 million. One would note—and this is to let Members know—that the amount which is coming from the Ministry of National Security and Rehabilitation is \$1,400,000 and that was an appropriation with respect to a particular fire station in Sangre Grande as explained in the notes. The reality is that the Ministry of National Security and Rehabilitation obtained the most significant increase for the year—\$352 million—simply because of Government's commitment with respect to the fight against crime, but even so it is proven that the Ministry will not be using all the funds and this amount is being transferred to an area where it can be used.

This is the report of the Finance Committee. I beg to move.

Question proposed.

Mr. Gerald Yetming (*St. Joseph*): Mr. Speaker, I want to try to recap how these numbers came about because the Minister, in explaining the various contributors to give a final figure was not as clear as I would have liked him to be and maybe he can clarify when he is closing the debate.

We started with a budget deficit of \$680 million and the Minister said that because of increases in revenue, under normal circumstances we would have ended with a \$200 million surplus. This means that there was a difference of \$800

million additional revenue: a deficit of \$600 million to a surplus of \$200 million is an increase in revenue of \$800 million.

Mr. Valley: Mr. Speaker, it is an increase in revenue of \$2.4 million and a decrease in expenditure of \$2.7 million. It is an increase in revenue of 2.4 per cent and a decrease in expenditure of 2.7 per cent. It is not simply an increase in revenue. There is also the other side of the equation—a decrease in expenditure.

Mr. G. Yetming: On the one hand, the Minister speaks in percentage; on the other hand, he speaks in absolute dollar terms and all of that is meant to confuse. However, he is saying that he has increased the revenue on one hand and he is also saying that there is some money in reduced expenditure on the other. It might be useful in the course of the day for him to explain to us where he is achieving those savings in expenses. He has outlined in some cases where he expects to get increases in revenue. At the end of day he is going to end up with a saving. Additional revenue, saving on expenditure, a difference of \$800 million and if, as the Minister said, there is going to be a shortfall in VAT intake of about \$270 million, then he is saying that there will be a net difference in excess of \$1 billion. That is the way I understand it.

I have no fundamental problem with the whole question of supplementals and variations because budgeting is not an exact science and we are going to fall short in our projections. I think that the majority of the supplementals, the \$740 million, that the Government has come here for today ought to have been known prior to the presentation of the last budget. Therefore, one wonders why these things were not presented to us the last time around. It could be that they want to ensure that they end the year in a particular kind of way and they came with a budget deficit of \$600 million, which is 1 per cent of GDP, which is acceptable. But now that they have achieved certain savings in expenditure and increases in revenue, they have decided that rather than end the year with a surplus, to spend it as they save it, so that they will end the year with a deficit of \$600 million, which is pretty close to the original deficit. We are going to end the year in the same way we started at the presentation of the budget.

The Minister spoke about the \$200 million or \$300 million in VAT refunds and he has put the blame on the previous administration for having utilized manufacturers' money by delaying VAT refunds. As I recall it, the government of the United National Congress attempted to refund businessmen as quickly as the refunds became due and the government boasted for the year 2001/2002, that whereas in the budget they inherited there was a shortfall of \$1.5 billion in revenue, which was due to the lower revenue streams because of the post

September 11 price of oil—and we may have averaged in that year less than \$22 a barrel—but also one oil company in particular had made an unexpected claim for investment in exploration and therefore the revenue tax intake was substantially less than budgeted. The Government came to the House and boasted about ending with a balanced budget on the one hand, while on the other hand we protested the fact that one of the mechanisms used to arrive at a balanced budget was that the VAT refunds owed to companies increased to in excess of \$1 billion as a result of their action.

I think it is a little dishonest for the Member to say that his administration is attempting to repay VAT refunds on a faster basis and work down the accumulation that had been built up by the previous administration when in fact the substantial accumulation in VAT refunds in excess of \$1 billion happened in 2001/2002 when, in an effort to show a balanced budget, one of the mechanisms they used was to delay paying back the manufacturers refund.

One of the amounts raised that is included in the supplemental is \$30 million allocated to LIAT and in the explanation that we sought from the Minister, we were told that this \$30 million would have been an interest-free loan to shareholder governments. That was the extent of the explanation provided by the Government for this \$30 million allocation to LIAT.

Which governments were intended to be lent this \$30 million? The explanation said “loans to shareholder governments of LIAT”. How much would each government be liable for? What are the terms of the loans? When will those loans be repaid and why interest free? There is vagueness with respect to governments. There is no quantifying by Government. It is interest free because this \$30 million is going to turn out to be a grant. However, the Government will not say that. In fact, in response to a question filed in this House, we have been told that in November 2002 the Government issued a Letter of Comfort for a loan of EC \$4.4 million to LIAT and in March 2003, the Government issued another Letter of Comfort for a loan of US \$1.6 million to LIAT for a total loan of \$20.5 billion guaranteed by the Government through this Letter of Comfort.

What is unclear to me is: What is all this money to LIAT to do? The sum of \$30 million now, prior to this \$20 million and we have mentioned in this House before the very quick response by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago to concerns of LIAT on the shortfall in funding. LIAT is a basket case. If they have through the years been losing money without this support they would have folded. We have not heard about conditionalities imposed on LIAT before they get the money. We have not heard about whether there should not be a cut in expenditure, changes in management and what have you.

In spite of this history of losses by LIAT, Government's readiness to rush to help LIAT and, at the same time, respond in a rather cavalier and uncaring fashion to BWIA—

2.30 p.m.

Mr. Manning: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. Member for St. Joseph for giving way. Just so that he would not labour on any misconception, there indeed were conditionalities on the financing for LIAT. In fact, it arose out of a meeting that was held in Barbados for an entire day—well it was two days really—where certain heads of Government got together to discuss this matter. So that, indeed, there are conditionalities. Indeed, there are performance targets that have been set for LIAT, and BWIA and LIAT have been treated really in the same way.

Mr. G. Yetming: The point I am really making, Mr. Speaker, is that there appears to have been a rush to facilitate LIAT and not the same degree of concern shown to BWIA. That's the point I am making. [*Desk thumping*] We are now exposed to the extent, to the tune, apart from our shareholding in LIAT, of about \$50 million when we add this \$30 million in to LIAT which we are not likely ever to get repaid.

Then we are told about a subsidy of \$37 million to BWIA, \$20 million for the year, which is fine, but \$17 million for the development of these markets: Costa Rica, Cuba and Santo Domingo. My question is, and I know that manufacturers have been making attempts at getting into those markets, but I also know that manufacturers of those markets have been trying to get into this market, and there is again no problem with that. Trade and reciprocity in trade is fine, but if we are going to provide subsidies to the tune of \$17 million to BWIA to buy seats, was there any consideration given to having those on the other side share in that subsidy? If so, why are we not told about it?

We are being asked to approve \$17 million for this purpose. Give us the reasons, and even when we ask the question at committee stage, and if they had provided the answer, then we would not be raising this thing in the House here now. The question also is, did TIDCO and BWIA do a study for that market? It is not just a question of deciding, well \$17 million a year to subsidize the market. Is there a market, and how soon would we expect that market—how long will it take for that market to develop to the point where the subsidy from the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, moneys from the taxpayers of Trinidad and Tobago would not have to be pumped into this thing for it to develop?

Surely if they do a study, if they tell me that “In 12 months we expect that by virtue of certain strategies both for the development of tourism and the

development of trade, and whatever it is, this is likely to happen". They must tell us these things. And then, of course, we are dealing to the end of the year with 4,000 seats to these three markets, and what does TIDCO, or what does Government intend to do with those seats? I suggest that how those seats are used by TIDCO will come under scrutiny by this Parliament, and one would expect that when we ask those questions we will be provided with the answers.

The further concern, Mr. Speaker, is that the Minister made no reference to something that we have raised in this House on many occasions, that is the Revenue Stabilization Fund. The Minister called a number. I believe he might have said somewhere to the tune of about \$350 million to \$400 million as the amount of additional revenue he is expecting to get from oil.

In 2001, Mr. Speaker, when the average price of oil was \$28 a barrel versus the budgeted price of \$22 a barrel, we had surplus revenues of \$1 billion. Six hundred million dollars went into the Revenue Stabilization Fund and we used 20 per cent to go into the Consolidated Fund and 20 per cent to go into the Dollar-For-Dollar Programme. This year, we expect the average price of oil to be in the vicinity of \$29 to \$30 a barrel.

If at \$28 a barrel we were able to achieve revenues in excess of \$1 billion over budget, why is it we are now only projecting about \$300 million to \$400 million in revenues with the price of oil hovering around \$30? Maybe there is an explanation, but the greater explanation that we are looking for is what does Government intend to do about the Revenue Stabilization Fund. In the PNM's manifesto, and in the PNM's budget presentation this year, they said in both documents that they are going to come to this House with the legislation to formalize the Revenue Stabilization Fund.

In addition, apart from their position on the Revenue Stabilization Fund, which is relatively clear from the manifesto and from their budget statement, on one hand, the manifesto says they are coming with the legislation, in the budget it says "We are coming with it this year", but when they get up to speak, they argue against it, as if to suggest, well you know, the Revenue Stabilization Fund is not beneficial and they will talk about when they borrow, they do not borrow, and what have you.

I want, and I think the country would expect the Government's position on its surplus oil revenues, in particular, to be absolutely clear. And furthermore, not only should their policy position be clear, but it must be supported if required, and it is required that they come to the House with the legislation.

When they speak of the Revenue Stabilization Fund they say, “You know, it is no use having a fund where you are putting aside money and at the same time you are borrowing”, and one is borrowing, in their view, excessively, and under normal circumstances, that is fine. Their position on the issue is acceptable, except that what they never said is that while we borrow, the government at the time, the UNC government at the time had stated its policy position on its borrowings, and it said that at 60 per cent GDP it was high. The Government in 2001 had put a cap on further borrowings, further unbudgeted borrowings, and had stated that its position was that within five years the borrowings of the Government should be reduced to 50 per cent of GDP.

So if one takes the policy position on the borrowings reducing in five years to 50 per cent of GDP, in the context of the surplus revenues going into the Revenue Stabilization Fund, that combined makes sense. On one hand they do not want to say what they intend to do with the Revenue Stabilization Fund. It appears as if no surplus revenues from the oil revenues will go into the Revenue Stabilization Fund this year, because based on what we are hearing, all the surplus revenues are due to be spent, and in spite of it all being spent, we will end up with a deficit of \$550,000,000, or whatever it is.

I want to remind, and we touched on this in this House before, a Moodies Investor Services document produced after a due diligent visit to Trinidad and Tobago projected Government's borrowing to be at 77 per cent of GDP based on the information they may have received when they came to do the due diligence.

Mr. Speaker, in September 2002, which would have taken in part of the year of the UNC and a substantial part of the PNM that year, at the end of September 2002, the percentage of Government debt to GDP was 60 per cent when we exclude open market operations. And what I would like to find out from the Government is where would they expect the debt stock of this country to be by the end of this year? They are not putting moneys into the Revenue Stabilization Fund. They are talking about a budget deficit of pretty close to 1 per cent at \$600 million, and it will be instructive to know what the position of the debt stock will be at the end of the year.

At the same time, we are dealing with some wild and excessive nonproductive spending. So it is all well and good to talk about a budget deficit, and at 1 per cent it is acceptable, but the chickens are going to come home to roost, because we are now hearing about the public servants asking for a 45 per cent increase in salary. What the PSA is clearly trying to capitalize on is the weakness of this Government. It is the very way that every individual who could get his hands on a

gun can take advantage of the weakness of the Government, which is why we have this spiraling crime in this country.

The average individual, the bandits, the known criminals, and what have you, know they are dealing with a very weak administration. The PSA, understandably so maybe, is seeing the weakness in the administration and has come for 45 per cent increase in salary. One would sit back with interest to see what the Government will do when the PSA begins to parade around the streets of Port of Spain. If the Government should only capitulate, what we would be heading for in this country in a very, very short space of time, will be a substantial increase in inflation; we are going to have devaluation and we are going to have unprecedented unemployment.

I am warning this country, Mr. Speaker, that looming on the horizon, based on the weakness of the Government in dealing with issues, critical issues that face us, is going to be an unprecedented amount of pressure from the labour front, and the PSA is only but a start. You see, Mr. Speaker, bad example is what would create this problem. When the Government agrees to meet with what they call community leaders, known criminals, and when the Government in 2001 took the salary increase that they refused to agree with the Government of the day, to have the Government of the day give that increase, a couple years ago, in 2001 they came into office and they granted the increase that should have been approved three years before.

In 2002 they got a current report from the Salaries Review Commission (SRC), and 12 months later, they gave themselves another big increase. The day after they got the increase, Petrotrin, people in Petrotrin, or was it after they read about Malcolm Jones, they started to parade, looking for the same thing—understandably so, Mr. Speaker. So, a very bad example.

That is not to say, Mr. Speaker, that the justification for the salaries as recommended by the SRC was not there, but because of the politics they played in not agreeing with the Government of the day three years ago, they came, they took it in 2001, set a bad example, and then came back and took the new increase in 2002. So they will pay the price because the PSA is now asking for 45 per cent, and one will wait with interest to see how the Government will treat with that, and if they show the same level of resolve and backbone, and strength, then the consequences of inflation in this country, devaluation and unemployment—[*Interruption*]

You will treat with that when you respond, and normally when you respond all you do is insult. You never deal with issues, but you will pay the price.

One would have expected also, Mr. Speaker, that the Minister in coming for this substantial figure of \$750 million would also have told us a bit about the tax reform that is taking place in Inland Revenue. One of the reasons for the tax reform that had been started a number of years ago with the assistance of the IRS was not only to make the tax system a little more user friendly, but also to try to increase and maximize the Government's intake on tax.

One of the areas for that was the whole question of the very Value Added Tax (VAT) the Minister spoke about. I think that it has been said over and over, and I think acknowledged by them, that there is a considerable leakage of VAT in the system, and it would have been interesting in the context of this \$600 million deficit that the Government could have come and said something about the reform and the success of the reform and the projections of the success of the reform to tell us where we could have avoided this \$600 million deficit.

In any event, maximizing VAT by stopping some of the leakage would also have created an opportunity that we have put forward in this House before for consideration for the reduction of the rate of VAT. VAT was introduced more than 10 years ago. The intake from VAT has never reached the potential that had been expected and projected because of the perceived leakage.

One would have expected that considerable effort would have been channeled to trying to maximize the VAT intake, one, as a mechanism for maximizing revenues, and two as a mechanism for consideration for a reduction in the rate of VAT. I had suggested before now that Government give serious consideration to limiting its reduction on personal taxation and instead consider a reduction in the rate of VAT. A reduction in personal taxation would help a few; the reduction in VAT would help all.

The other area that I would have expected the Minister to have made some comment on is at least to provide an update with respect to the review of the taxation, the fiscal regime for oil and gas. In the 2001/2002 Budget we had mentioned that we were going to set up a team to do it. It was further repeated by the Minister of Finance in his budget. That review was supposed to have been concluded a long time ago and, in fact, in his budget speech, the Prime Minister said on the last occasion that:

“work is nearing completion...”

Quoting him,

“...for the implementation of a new fiscal regime for gas as well as adjusting the fiscal regime for oil to reflect the new realities.”

He went on to say that:

“The fiscal regime for the energy sector has not been revised since 1992. The revision for the tax regime will aim at increasing the Government’s tax intake while maintaining the incentives for increased investment.”

So the work was nearing completion way back then. One would have expected that he is coming with some supplementals and notwithstanding the fact that they are going to end up with a similar deficit to when he presented the budget, one would have thought that the opportunity would have been taken to come and tell us where this has reached.

Mr. Speaker, this budget, this supplemental coming after the presentation of the budget of several months ago, when this budget was presented it was with a lot of promise. We are nearing the end of the year. We are a couple months away from the end of the year, so to a large extent the fiscal year is substantially gone, and when one reviews the budget promises—because I think now is an appropriate time to do it—one cannot but get the impression that what was perpetrated on this country in the presentation of this budget was something of a fraud. I will touch on some of the things, Mr. Speaker.

In the budget statement, reference was made to the NIS pension in relation to the old age pension. In the budget statement it says:

“It is anticipated that the new pensions to be paid by the NIB would parallel payments made under the old age pension scheme.”

When that statement was made in the budget presentation there was a lot of desk thumping, that the pension payable by the NIB would parallel payments made by the old age pension scheme.

Now one understands that there was the actuarial study being done by the NIB. One would expect that study has been done, but one does not make a promise like this, and one understands that it is not an easy thing to harmonize the NIB payment with old age pension because it would be dealing with a substantial amount of money. Although people who are receiving the NIB pensions have been clamouring for there to be some parity with the old age pension figure, this is affecting thousands of people, Mr. Speaker, but we are hearing nothing from the Government about it.

I made reference to legislation, to the Revenue Stabilization Fund legislation. The Government made a statement in its budget that legislation would be coming to the House. There were nine cases of legislation. Nine cases were promised in

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the budget to come to this House this year. We have seen none of them as yet, Mr. Speaker. We have complained here over and over about the lack of a legislative agenda.

They spoke about the need to review the Tourism Development Act of 2000 which they claimed in their language to be critical for tourism development. They have come here for additional funding of \$20 million for that purpose, but we have seen nothing about the review of the Tourism Development Act. They spoke in their budget about the integration of the Supervision Insurance and Pension Funds with the banking system under the Central Bank, about legislation for the Financial Services Ombudsman, about Unit Trust vesting, about the Terrorism Prevention Bill, about amendments to the corruption legislation to substantially increase penalties, about reintroduction of lapsed environmental legislation and legislation concerning industrial pollution and recycling of waste. Nine cases. Nothing!

They spoke about creating in the immediate term, 30,000 new jobs, but instead we are hearing about the unemployment rate having gone up from the 10.7 per cent which was accomplished at the end of 2001.

The point, Mr. Speaker, is that in everything that they came to this House with in their budget presentation, little is coming to pass. There has been no significant improvement in our infrastructure, apart from the continuation of some programme started under the UNC. No significant improvement in infrastructure. In fact, we are hearing now about electricity outages. There has been no improvement in the distribution of water. We are hearing about minimal work. Apart from some of the moneys that they have come for with respect to road improvement, very little is happening in infrastructure. In fact, the major element of infrastructure for investment and other purposes which is our air links to the rest of the world, they are almost prepared to let that fold up and collapse.

If they could only tell us where over the past year and a half that they have been in Government there has been any even marginal increase in our infrastructure, we would be happy to hear that. There is nothing new happening in the economy, Mr. Speaker. There is a document which suggests that if one wants to reach developed status by the year 2020, one ought to grow by a minimum of 8 per cent per annum GDP growth.

If we do nothing, we will grow by the normal two and a half, 3 per cent, 4 per cent—if we do nothing new. If it is that we want to achieve developed status by the year 2020 and we want to grow by 8 per cent, 10 per cent, to be able to do that, one would have to do a number of things.

Apart from Train 4 of LNG which we have heard no announcement on, and in any event, the question of Train 4 of the LNG is something that had been in discussion now for quite some time, nothing new is happening. We spoke of gas to liquids, we spoke of aluminum, we spoke of ethylene. They spoke about that. In the last budget speech, all of those things were mentioned as part of the process of the development of Trinidad and Tobago. In a year and a half, we have heard nothing about those three projects.

There has been nothing done by the Government, this Government, to facilitate the diversification of the economy from oil and gas. So that apart from the fact that very little is happening in the oil and gas sector that has not started years ago, there is little that is taking place to facilitate the diversification of the economy of Trinidad and Tobago from oil and gas. When they respond they will tell us about Wallerfield. We can tell them about Wallerfield too.

Apart from shutting down of Caroni, absolutely nothing is happening in agriculture. Shutting down of Caroni and a YAPA programme, and that is expected to do something about agriculture. Nothing is happening in the economy and they do not have to wait to hear me say that. They speak to business people. Business people are complaining. Apart from the problems of the spiraling crime in this country, which is going to be a serious deterrent to investment, and which, in fact, has started to cause a brain and dollar drain in this country, nothing is happening.

In fact, when they reduce the rate of tax, both corporate and personal, their expectation is that they reduce the rate of tax by 5 per cent, what they in fact did was put about \$500 million into the system. Between corporation tax and personal tax, between four and five hundred million dollars were put back into the system, and the expectation is that when they reduce the rate of tax there will be new investment so that the Government at the end of the day will not be a net loser of revenue. On the one hand they reduce the rate of tax, on the other hand they do nothing to encourage investment. In fact, they are discouraging investment by their inability to deal with crime. So we are not getting the payback, Mr. Speaker.

In the budget statement a lot was said, Mr. Speaker, where the Prime Minister spoke about Trinidad and Tobago being the ultimate democracy. I think if all of us would only reflect on some of these statements that were made then, all of us would reflect, including Members on the other side, we would recognize what a big joke and the fraud that has been perpetrated on this country. Ultimate democracy. Ultimate democracy when we have the newspapers talking about the Government utilizing the resources of the state to terrorize people. I made reference to the headline in the *Guardian*:

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“State terror on farmers”

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

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

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. G. Yetming: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. For the purposes of this debate, it will be necessary to repeat some of the things said in this House before. They tell us about ultimate democracy, yet we are seeing situations where the Government is utilizing the resources of the state to terrorize people, and I made reference to the *Guardian* headline about “State terror on farmers,” I made reference to the excessive use of force against Peake's Marine by the Chaguaramas Development Authority.

We have seen recently where the army and the police are reputed to have gone into an area in the San Juan/Barataria constituency and brutalized some residents. This is not the ultimate democracy, Mr. Speaker. So we are having now gay abandon, whether it be criminals, “bad Johns” and now we are being told—and I hope it is not so, and one would expect that the results of the investigation would be made public—about the possibility of members of the army and members of the security services of this country brutalizing people.

They are taking example from the Government. If they know they can do these things and get away with them, they will do them. It is the very way that the PSA has come for 45 per cent, and they talk about ultimate democracy, and they talk about advancing the human dignity of every individual. That is a quote from this budget speech, and they go and try to brutalize some disabled people outside the National Flour Mills, and they go to brutalize some vagrants in Tamarind Square.

That is not to say that we must not find a solution to the vagrants. I think they had adopted in their budget a measure that we had put in our budget which is to allocate some land—I believe it was in Laventille—for the purposes of treating these vagrants in a particular kind of way, outside of the car park at Riverside. We know that they need to be moved and we know they do not belong in the heart of Port of Spain, but there is a humane way to deal with this. So one should not talk in the budget speech about advancing the human dignity of every individual, and in one's language one speaks like that and outside one does the total opposite.

A most ridiculous statement here now. If any one of us, all of us would only reflect on it, they talk about Trinidad and Tobago. This is early o'clock in the

budget speech, Mr. Speaker. Minds were fresh when they were writing this thing. Their intent was no doubt honourable and clear:

“Trinidad and Tobago will be a preferred place to live, to raise children, to do business, to work and to go to school.”

I do not know, Mr. Speaker, if anyone of us wants to be honest with ourselves. Forget political affiliation. Trinidad and Tobago is not a preferred place to live now. Neither is it a good place to raise children. They themselves are sending their children abroad. We have self-imposed curfew. Businesses being robbed every day. People packing up and wanting to leave this place. Not even schools are secure anymore.

Then they go on, Mr. Speaker, to say all citizens will be given equal opportunity. All citizens will be given an equal opportunity. They speak here with one language, but yet, when one reads about CEPEP, I read from an article by a newspaper editor about the only crop being grown by CEPEP is the balisier. This is not UNC speaking. It is widespread public belief and perception. If it is wrong, they have a responsibility to correct it.

So whether it be CEPEP, whether it is the report on the women's URP where in every UNC constituency there is half the number of gangs, and then they talk about equal opportunity, and we are going to hear sooner rather than later about the allocation of the NHA houses. We are going to soon hear about it.

So, when they talk about the country's resources are employed efficiently for the benefit and welfare of all citizens, and in all the windfall that we heard about today—because we are having a bit of a windfall—with all the windfall that we are going to get this year, but I am not too sure about subsequent years. In fact, in a newspaper editorial today in the *Newsday* newspaper, they cautioned the PSA, and I would ask the editor not to caution the PSA, but they have to caution the Government. [*Desk thumping*]

The PSA has a right to make the demand if they feel they can get away with it, and I do not know that the President of the PSA will exercise any social conscience or will be concerned about whether the price of oil will go down next year because of what is happening in Iraq, and what have you. The President of the PSA is concerned about the welfare of her members, which is her responsibility.

The newspaper editorial should not have cautioned the PSA. They should caution the Government. They are the ones who have to act responsibly, and whether they would recognize all the reasons why they need to be careful, a lot of them brought out in the editorial, Mr. Speaker, but the unfortunate thing is that we

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are going to go through this period, however short, of buoyant and surplus revenues, we are going to go through it just like we did in the very early 80s with nothing to show at the end of it, because they do not believe in the Revenue Stabilization Fund. They do not intend to put any money into the fund, they are not saving for the rainy day and they are just spending.

In spite of the fact they are in Government now for almost two years, they continue to go into electioneering spending. In fact, Mr. Speaker, I will end by saying that the name, this budget theme was “Vision 2020, People Our Priority”, and all they have demonstrated, Mr. Speaker, is that this budget was intended to be “Vision 2020, PNM People Our Priority”. [*Desk thumping*]

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mrs. Kamla Persad-Bissessar (*Siparia*): Mr. Speaker, in January of this year, the Government brought a Variation of Appropriation Bill which was the first after the election, and in that variation, one of the most startling items had to do with a decrease of over \$126 million taken out of the Ministry of National Security and Rehabilitation. We are here today with their second variation and now Supplemental Appropriation Bill, and once again, they are decreasing the vote of the Ministry of National Security and Rehabilitation.

Mr. Speaker, every single newspaper in this country for the past six months from January to now, and we can go back to the reports from January when we dealt with that variation and the removal of moneys from National Security, and six months later, the situation is even worse with respect to crime, yet it is they come to increase their budget by \$750 million, but they are taking money away from National Security and Rehabilitation. And the question really begs itself, what are the priorities of this Government?

My colleague has pointed out that nothing, absolutely nothing has been done during their tenure in office, and I endorse his statements fully. Yet, given a budget last year about six or seven months ago, \$20 billion was allocated. Six to seven months later they have squandered the \$20 billion and they want an additional \$750 million. To do what? What is it for?

One of the main concerns of every citizen in this country now has to do with security of persons, security of your life, of your limbs, of your property and of children. What do you do seeking an increase in moneys? You decrease the vote to the Ministry of National Security and Rehabilitation. It can only stem from the attitude of the Member for San Fernando East, because the Member for San Fernando East is of the view that the crime situation in this country has nothing to

do with the work of his Government or nonwork and nonperformance of this Government, but has to do with Chavez and Venezuela. That the average citizen is not in any way affected by crime, but if you are affected, it is purely collateral damage.

Well, Mr. Speaker, we saw very clearly over the last couple days, the collateral damage that he so callously spoke about when a baby was among eight in Laventille, "Basketball Court Crossfire". I am looking at the *Guardian* headline which is so relevant and totally true. This is *Sunday Guardian*, yesterday, collateral damage when a baby and eight others on a basketball court were caught in crossfire.

So that is not your average citizen. The children of this country are not your average citizens. The men and women of this nation are not your average citizens. They could get lick up any day, any time by collateral damage and the Prime Minister says that is none. It is nothing to worry about. All the rest of the crime has to do with outsiders. Nothing to do with what is happening in terms of governance, in terms of performance, in terms of looking at what is happening in this country.

Then we pick up today's paper, and today's paper talks about:

"Gunned down in front of his father"

We celebrated Father's Day in this country. Here it is another child gunned down in front of his father. Is that collateral damage, Mr. Speaker? Is that the collateral damage that the hon. Prime Minister is speaking about when we see our citizens endangered?

"Chin Lee under fire for revenge killing"

Mr. Speaker, we are looking, as I say, at that decrease in the vote for National Security, but we are seeing an increase in the vote to go for the establishment of a Caribbean Court of Justice of \$199 million at this time. What is our priority? What is the point that you have a courthouse when you "done" dead? What do you want a courthouse for when your citizens are being gunned down? The banditry is continuing. The kidnapping is continuing.

I got this when I came into the Parliament today. Somebody sent this for me. It is *Crime in the Caribbean*. It is written by a Sir Ronald Saunders. He is the Chief Foreign Affairs Representative with Ministerial Rank of Antigua and Barbuda, High Commissioner to the United Kingdom and Deputy Chairman of the Caribbean Financial Action Task Force. This was part of a keynote address that he gave on crime in the Caribbean, and I just want to quote from page 13 of this. It says:

“Kidnapping, a growing industry.

Kidnapping in Guyana and Trinidad and Tobago is now part and parcel of the crime scene with deleterious effects for investment and economic and social development in these countries. Although the Governments of the two countries are yet to calculate the effect of these kidnappings on domestic and foreign investment, they have become so bad that one Caribbean criminologist has described them as an industry—the kidnapping industry.

Evidence suggests that investment and tourism have been badly affected and social life curtailed. People are shunning restaurants and public places for fear of being kidnapped.

Up to the 20th of April, Guyana with a population of approximately 700,000 had experienced 20 kidnappings for the first four months of 2003. Trinidad and Tobago with a population of 1.5 million as at April 20th, for the first four months of year had 65 abductions.

According to the Police Commissioner in Trinidad, more than US \$3.3 million has been demanded in ransoms and just over US \$1 million paid out. This was as at April 20th.”

Kidnapping in the English speaking Caribbean, Mr. Speaker. We are talking about Guyana and Trinidad. Totally out of hand. Is that collateral damage too? That the average citizen has nothing to fear, when kidnappings documented continue unabated in this country. The Prime Minister tells us collateral damage, but again, I want to quote from the *Guardian* opinion.

We had brought, as you will recall, Mr. Speaker, a Private Member's motion in this Parliament calling for the immediate removal of the Minister of National Security and Rehabilitation. Yes, that was the UNC. This is the opinion from the *Guardian* at page 24. This is also today's *Guardian*, Monday June 16th.

“This must be the last straw.

Prime Minister Patrick Manning finds the need to publicly call on National Security Minister Howard Chin Lee to investigate allegations of some of the most scandalous abuses by members of the security forces.

Mr. Manning's demand for findings of the investigation to reach him today no doubt leads to public satisfaction, and relief, that the head of Government is finally 'calling shot' on the slackers and incompetents in his administration.

Mr. Chin Lee has long occupied pride of place among the latter. He is now effectively the recipient of a stern public rebuke by the Prime Minister for failure even to imagine how a National Security Minister should respond.

Mr. Chin Lee had done nothing in the two days since reports arose that members of the Defence Force had rampaged in El Socorro like a gang of masked thugs.

From reports on that incident, only two conclusions can be entertained. One is that the Defence Force has been infiltrated by bandit elements who wear masks, obscure vehicle licence plates, and randomly brutalise and terrorise people who happen to be on the streets.

The other is that true-true criminals are now impersonating members of the armed forces, and behaving atrociously in their name by inflicting violence on civilians.

Since nobody in authority has suggested that police and soldiers were on a crime-fighting operation in the area, it cannot be supposed that the reports of beating, gun-butting and verbal abuse might somehow, though still unacceptably, be attributed to excesses of zeal in law enforcement.

To the contrary, residents said the assault had followed the burglary in the home of a soldier living in the area.

In other words, this El Socorro operation might have been driven by motives of personal settling of scores and intimidation—far removed from upholding democracy and the rule of law, which is the reason for being of police and soldiers.

On receiving such reports, any National Security Minister should immediately, and publicly, have signalled concern, and demanded explanations from the chiefs of Defence Force and the Police Service.

Here, again, Mr. Chin Lee was pathetically found wanting. That he had to be publicly pushed by the Prime Minister into conducting an investigation is the ultimate indictment.

It is coming from the Prime Minister who, having installed and ill-advisedly maintained him in the portfolio, must now be tiring of counting the cost.

Regardless of the level of crime, no National Security Minister can be seen to preside over an abandonment of disciplined order. No Prime Minister can sit idly by at the transformation of the protective services into an army of occupation accountable only to themselves.

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The El Socorro episode on Thursday could hardly be considered isolated. Reports have surfaced before of heavy-handed treatment by police and soldiers riding roughshod over requirements for professional adherence to law and procedure—not to mention common courtesy.

The El Socorro area suffered a second violent visitation on Friday night. Masked men, claiming to be police, kicked down doors, beat people and ransacked homes, without showing warrants, residents said.”

The editorial concludes:

“The Prime Minister must be commended for assuming leadership in a matter to which his Minister of National Security has been simply irrelevant.

Mr. Manning should know what else he now has to do.”

Mr. Speaker, I am calling upon the hon. Prime Minister to heed the cries of the citizenry of this country with respect to their security of person, of property, of life, of limb, and I trust that the statement that he has deferred to read at some later point in the sitting will be to inform the national community that he has fired his Minister of National Security and Rehabilitation and that he has also fired his hon. Attorney General. [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Members: Liar. Liar!

Mr. Speaker: Order!

Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar: The hon. Prime Minister is presiding over an administration that is just collapsing upon itself each day, and with its collapse it is destroying this country.

Here we had the spectacle, the Chief Law Officer, we have talked about the Minister of National Security and Rehabilitation, totally wasteless, useless, incompetent, said not only by the UNC but by every right-thinking citizen in this country, that the Minister of National Security and Rehabilitation has to go, yet for some reason the Prime Minister is holding on to him. Why? What is there that keeps him above the rest? What is there that makes him a sacred cow that he cannot touch him? What is it about the Minister of National Security and Rehabilitation that the hon. Prime Minister seems afraid to do what he must do?

As the editorial says, he must act now. He must act now before it is too late. What is it? Any reasonable person looking at the series of events, looking at the cumulation of events to where we reached today where we see the baby is gunned down with all the others on the basketball court, child gunned down in front of his father. The murder rate has reached to what is it—109, 110?

The only explanation I can speculate on is that in some way the Minister of National Security and Rehabilitation is holding basket for the Prime Minister. [Laughter] Some kind of basket, I do not know what. I do not know if it is fish in basket or otherwise down at Pier 1. I do not know. So we have seen, as I say, national security in total shambles, and then we see now, the Chief Law Advisor to the Cabinet, and therefore, to the Government and to the people of this nation making statements that were designed to compromise her office, to score cheap political points.

This is an election period. I do not know if again the Prime Minister has set up the Attorney General, but I do not think so, you know. Because this is one in a series of events. It is a series of events where we have seen the hon. Attorney General as Chief Law Advisor to the Government mislead the public. Not only mislead the public, lie to the public! This is not the first time. This is not the first time!

Mr. Speaker: Please, hon. Member. You cannot accuse the hon. Attorney General of lying. Find the appropriate words to convey that.

Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar: Hon. Speaker, I am guided. I cannot say that the hon. Attorney General has lied, but there are many others in the public who are seeing that the hon. Attorney General has lied. How dare, John Public! That is what is being said. I cannot say it, if the hon. Attorney General can prove otherwise. She has the House, she has the Senate and she has every other media. I cannot say it. But the evidence presented thus far by the hon. Attorney General proved that she has been less than with respect to the matter of evidence.

3.30 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, if we look at the first report on the front page of the *Guardian* newspaper dated Friday, June 13, 2003, the headline says: "UNC oil bribe US \$100m at stake in bungled Trinmar deal". This is the first report that we had of this FW oil matter. The article says:

"Texas firm fingers ex-minister

Texas-based oil company, FW Oil Interests Inc, has accused a former government minister and executives at State-owned Petrotrin of requesting bribes while it was bidding for an oil exploration contract.

The company is seeking US\$100 million in damages from the State...

FW (Frank Wade) Oil was the preferred bidder for Trinmar's South West Soldado fields...

That bid was the subject of a probe conducted two years ago by UK-based Integrated Security Services which was hired by Petrotrin...

Morean would neither identify the former minister nor any of the accused Petrotrin officials or the amount of money they allegedly requested for the favoured treatment from FW Oil.

However, she disclosed that Cabinet yesterday decided to engage a private firm to investigate the allegations as advised by the State's London-based attorneys.

Morean also said the police are conducting investigations into 'allegations of improper conduct on the part of certain officials, past officials,'

Morean said FW Oil initiated arbitration proceedings against Trinidad and Tobago through the International Centre for the Settlement of Investment Disputes (ICSID) in October, 2002."

And this was carried in the *Guardian* newspaper on page three in direct quotation marks; which are the exact words of the hon. Attorney General.

Hon. Morean: May I just make a correction? Okay, I will deal with the matter later on in the debate.

Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar: And the report continues:

"The claim of FW Oil is for approximately US\$100 million against Trinidad and Tobago which they are claiming represents damages for the wrongful termination of the bidding process,' she said.

They are also putting forward as a reason for the termination of that process, that they made certain allegations that they were approached by certain persons in the Petrotrin organisation, and in addition, by a former government minister for an improper consideration,"

On the very said day June 13, 2003, the firm in question released the following document which was carried in the *Saturday Express* newspaper headlined: "FW Oil: Glenda wrong". Perhaps the hon. Attorney General will answer to that as well and say whether she was right, the document says:

"Port of Spain, June 13, 2003

Following a December 1999 public invitation to bid involving international and Trinidad and Tobago companies, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, through the state-owned oil company, declared F-W Oil

Interests, Inc. (F-W Oil) the successful bidder for the reactivation and development of the West and Southwest Soldado Fields.

F-W Oil was officially awarded the contract in September 2000.

F-W oil has reviewed the statements made by the Attorney General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on June 12, 2003. Some of these statements are unfortunately, inaccurate. F-W Oil's claim is based on the termination of the tender contract, which was wrongful under the terms of the contract, the law of Trinidad and Tobago, international law and the bilateral investment treaty between Trinidad and Tobago and the United States. The claim is not based on any allegation regarding a request for 'improper consideration' by a former Minister.

I repeat this from F-W Oil:

"The claim is not based on any allegation regarding a request for 'improper consideration' by a former Minister."

And the report continues:

"F-W Oil notes that it did not allege that a former Minister of the Government requested any payment; the basis of its claim is the unlawful termination of the tender contract by the state companies Petrotrin and Trinmar."

Mr. Speaker, I must repeat that:

"F-W Oil notes that it did not allege that a former Minister of the Government requested any payment; the basis of its claim is the unlawful termination of the tender contract by the state companies Petrotrin and Trinmar."

This is in total contradiction to the statements as reported in the *Trinidad Guardian* newspaper of Friday, June 13, 2003.

Mr. Speaker, I now come to the third report with respect to this matter, and the third report was carried in the *Sunday Express* newspaper dated June 15, 2003, after F-W Oil released its statement, which really gave the lie to the statements that were reported to have been said by the hon. Attorney General and it says:

"Attorney General Glenda Morean yesterday responded to American Oil Company Frank Wade Oil (FWO) saying that its criticisms of her were 'unfortunate' but she did not provide any specific evidence to show that a former minister requested a bribe from FWO."

And here I think this is very instructive:

“FWO on Friday stated that Morean was wrong to say that the company had been approached for a bribe by a former government minister during its contract bid for work to re-develop the Southwest and West Soldado oil and gas fields.

But although the AG released some excerpts of FWO’s Summary of Dispute in the matter and an affidavit yesterday, there were no instances where FWO made reference to a former government minister asking for a bribe.”

Mr. Speaker, so what do we make of all of this? Here is the chief law adviser to the Government and, therefore, to the people of Trinidad and Tobago making a statement that implicates a former minister—and many of us who are sitting here were ministers of government in the former administration—without naming, of course, so it could be anyone of us—and tarnishing with a brush every UNC minister, but is unable to provide any evidence whatsoever. I am calling upon the hon. Attorney General to go, if she cannot provide the evidence. How could we believe any future statement that the Attorney General may make, when it is stated here clearly that there has been no evidence whatsoever to implicate UNC ministers?

I want to make it very clear that not a single UNC Member sitting on these benches requested any bribe or any improper consideration from anyone. [*Desk thumping*] Not one of us! If the Attorney General has the evidence then she must be—Well, they say “man enough”—honourable enough to provide that evidence, and if the Attorney General does not have it then she must pack up and go. [*Desk thumping*] So the Attorney General must provide the evidence or go!

I cannot see why we must rely upon the advice that was given by any Attorney General, the Government and the people of Trinidad and Tobago. The public is out there saying that the Attorney General is lying. I have received calls, not only from Trinidad and Tobago, but also from outside Trinidad and Tobago saying that the Attorney General is being less than honest and the issue goes much deeper than that.

Mr. Speaker, what the hon. Attorney General has now done is to also implicate a foreign multi-national company, in saying that FW Oil stated somewhere in its documents that improper consideration was being asked from a former minister of government. FW Oil has categorically stated that was nowhere in its documents, and nothing of the sort happened. What the hon. Attorney General has now done is to create liability on the part of the State with respect to the statements that she made against FW Oil.

Mr. Speaker, this is one of the matters that reminds me of the serious actions and words of the hon. Attorney General in the Waterfarm issue. This is a similar type of contamination of the process. When it is that in the Waterfarm issue, Mr. Lindquist is investigating the matter, the hon. Attorney General again—I do not know if it is “foot and mouth disease”—goes into that matter which should have been an independent investigation and should not be contaminated in any way or interfered with in any way by the Office of the Attorney General and talks about the Waterfarm issue saying that the Member for Caroni East has not provided any new evidence or new documents and that an investigator reported to her office, it is the same thing again. Here it is there is a whole dispute going on, this is a pending matter that is before the arbitration. The matter is going on, but the hon. Attorney General goes into the files and appears—because there is no evidence—to allegedly fabricate this statement and comes to the country and says that FW Oil has brought this matter to gain compensation, because a former minister sought an improper consideration. I have a very serious problem with that because it is not simply the tarnishing of those of us on this side, but it is now implicating this foreign company.

Mr. Speaker, there are other investment companies in the country and, therefore, if the Attorney General has no evidence—[*Interruption*] Mr. Speaker, through you, the Member for Diego Martin West should be the last Member to speak here in this House, when his campaign manager is running the whole Community-based Environmental Enhancement and Protection Programme (CEPEP). How much out of that is for the Member? How much of it! [*Desk thumping*] [*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: Order please.

Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar: Mr. Speaker, in the last administration, on every single occasion, this is the Member who would sit with the Member for Diego Martin East and talk about corruption and “who thief”, and his campaign manager is sitting there, despite everything here the Member has not answered once to this House or to the public to say what is the arrangement and how it is working. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: Order please.

Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar: When the Members on the other side do not like what we are saying they say that we are stupid. That is a personal attack. What the Member needs to do is not to attack me personally, since that is not going to help him. You do not kill the messenger but you should stand and say, “That is not so, I have nothing to do with it and she is not my campaign manager.” The Member

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has never once denied it, and in every statement in this House the Member talks about corruption. Well, I have never seen in this country, an administration that is corrupted as those on that side, and the Members come washing their hands blaming us. [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Member: They are going to church.

Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar: Mr. Speaker, but do you know what it is? It is a distraction to take peoples' minds off the real issues in this country. So the real issues have to do with what the Member for St. Joseph talked about and what people living on the streets know about; the issues also have to do with bread and butter; feeling safe in your homes; feeling safe that your children are in schools; and feeling safe that the economy is growing and the infrastructure is being developed. Those are the real issues. Mr. Speaker, so what is the Government doing? The Government is taking peoples' minds away from the issues and comes with a big headline: "UNC oil bribe US\$100m."

Two weeks ago there was a big story about a \$21 million InnCogen deal. Again, the Government is taking away the real issues that are confronting the people of this country and not dealing with them, but it is throwing these red herrings in the hope that they could fool the people, but they are not fooling anyone out there. Mr. Speaker, through you, I want to tell the Government that this local government election that they are promising to drop licks in Central, South and so forth, they would have to take the licks themselves. [*Desk thumping*] People in this country are fed up! We have been out on the streets amongst the people in the field and the people are so fed up of the incompetence and non-performance of the Government.

On the other hand, whilst there is no performance, the Government comes to this Parliament and says that it wants another \$750 million. The Government has spent \$20 billion and that was the amount that was originally allocated and they want another \$750 million. Well, before the Government does that the Government needs to tell us what it did with the \$20 billion. What has the \$20 billion delivered for the citizenry of this country? Where has it been delivered? Has it gone to pay Mr. Grimes in the Water and Sewerage Authority (WASA)? Has it gone to pay Mr. Jones in Petrotrin? Has it gone to pay the most bloated Cabinet in the Westminster system, a Cabinet made up of 28 to 30 ministers with two pay increases? Where has the \$20 billion gone? Tell us! The Government should tell us where the \$20 billion has gone before it could get an additional \$750 million. The Government should also tell the country what it has delivered. Let us look at schools and education; what has the Government delivered in education? Did the Government

build any schools? The Member for St. Joseph made the point that whether it is a school, hospital or any other facility, those projects were just continued by this administration.

Mr. Speaker, I started off talking about the Ministry of National Security and Rehabilitation and the decrease in funds for that Ministry. When we got the explanation as to why the Government was taking the money away from the Ministry of National Security and Rehabilitation they stated that it had to do with delays due to the late award of the subcontract in respect of the construction of the Sangre Grande Fire Station.

Mr. Speaker, I picked up the newspaper this morning and I saw that the fire service is in uproar. The fire service is saying that when the hon. Prime Minister was the Leader of the Opposition he visited them and promised to assist them and so forth. They went to him and now absolutely nothing is being done. There is almost a two-page spread setting out the problems with respect to the fire service and the Prime Minister could not award a subcontract for the construction of the Sangre Grande Fire Station, but it is not just that fire station alone. Where are all the construction works with respect to the other fire stations in the country; with respect to the police station; and with respect to the health facilities that the Government promised us? Again, I am asking: Where has the \$20 billion of taxpayers' money gone?

With respect to the increase in allocation to the Office of the Prime Minister in the sum of \$1.5 million, we asked the question in the Finance Committee what was the additional moneys for and the reply that was given was that this sum was for disbursement to the Office of the Prime Minister to meet ex gratia payment to the chairmen and members of the Commission of Enquiry into the Piarco Airport Project. And the costing was detailed as follows: The increase of \$400,000 is to go to the Chairman of that commission; \$300,000 is to go to each of the four commissioners thus making up the \$1.6 million. We were also told in the explanation that the difference of \$100,000 would be met from funds already allocated to the Office of the Prime Minister.

Mr. Speaker, through you, I would like to ask: Is this increase of \$1.6 million to pay for work already done by the commissioners? Is it to pay for work that is to be continued by the commissioners this year or next year? The rate that the Commission of Enquiry into the Piarco Airport Project is going it may be sitting next year. What is this \$1.6 million for? Has the Government paid any other payments or is this an additional payment with respect to the Commission of Enquiry into the Piarco Airport Project? The Member for Diego Martin Central,

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through you, Mr. Speaker, I do not think that this gives us any explanation. It does not tell us whether this money is for past work, present work or for continued future works. I will be happy to have the Member's response on that matter.

Mr. Speaker, the other major item has to do with the Caribbean Court of Justice. We note in the Appropriation Bill that almost \$200 million is to go towards the establishment of the Caribbean Court of Justice. In the Finance Committee I had asked the question: What was the total size of the fund? What was the share contribution of the other governments involved and whether any other government had adopted the Caribbean Court of Justice into their domestic law, and the reasons for Trinidad and Tobago's contribution, when this Caribbean Court of Justice is not part of our domestic law. The responses given—and I will refer to them in a moment—tell us that the total size of the fund is \$100 million, and this is a one-off payment.

When a country enters into an agreement with other countries—this is an international agreement—there are agreements that we have entered into with several other governments that are sitting around. Some of these agreements have been brought into our Parliament and made part of our domestic law, and some of those agreements are still sitting idly by and were never brought within the last government's time and within the time before that. Before any such international agreement could have binding and legal consequences upon any member country which signs that agreement, that agreement must be made part of the domestic law of the contracting government. It cannot be that a government goes off and signs an agreement with the United States or the United Kingdom and, in this case, with other Caribbean countries; that agreement becomes binding upon the people of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. It does not happen like that; in international law that has to be made part of the domestic law of the country. Thus far, we have had nothing coming to this Parliament to take the proposals and the agreements contained within the treaty signed with the Caribbean nations with respect to the Caribbean Court of Justice to become part of our domestic law.

Mr. Speaker, more than that, absolutely nothing has been put out in the public domain for the citizenry of this country to understand and to know what this Caribbean Court of Justice is about. How would it operate? What are the conditionalities within it and the moneys involved in it? It was only recently that I saw several newspaper clippings on the part of this Government to the effect that the Caribbean Court of Justice would come on stream in November; the Caribbean Court of Justice will be set up; and the Caribbean Court of Justice will be established whether we like it or not, and yet there has been nothing in terms of

public education, and in terms of public consultation with respect to the Caribbean Court of Justice.

Mr. Speaker, section 109 of our Constitution deeply entrenched—by entrenched I mean that this is not a provision that we could change by signing a treaty with Caricom or by paying \$199 million into a fund or by promising that we would carry through the obligations of that treaty. Section 109 of the Constitution is very clear that the final appellate court for our jurisdiction is the Privy Council. Unlike other entrenched provisions, section 109 is so deeply entrenched that it does not require a two-thirds majority as do some other provisions for a change; it requires a three-fourths majority before that change could be made. I would like to read that provision and it says:

“(1) An appeal shall lie from decisions of the Court of Appeal to the Judicial Committee as of right in the following cases:

- (a) final decisions in civil proceedings where the matter in dispute on the appeal to the Judicial Committee is of the value of fifteen hundred dollars or upwards or where the appeal involves directly or indirectly a claim to or question respecting property or a right of the value of fifteen hundred dollars or upwards;
- (b) final decisions in proceedings for dissolution or nullity of marriage;
- (c) final decisions in any civil, criminal or other proceedings which involve a question as to the interpretation of this Constitution; and
- (d) except in cases falling under section 108(d), any case referred to in that section;
- (e) final decisions in disciplinary matters under section 81(3) to (5) of the Supreme Court of Judicature Act and under the Solicitors Act;
- (f) such other cases as may be prescribed.

(2) An appeal shall lie from decisions of the Court of Appeal to the Judicial Committee with the leave of the Court of Appeal in the following cases:

- (a) decisions in any civil proceedings; where in the opinion of the Court of Appeal the question involved in the appeal is one that, by reason of its great general or public importance or otherwise, ought to be submitted to the Judicial Committee; and
- (b) such other cases as may be prescribed.

(3) An appeal shall lie to the Judicial Committee with the special leave of the Judicial Committee from decisions of the Court of Appeal in any civil or criminal matter in any case in which, immediately before the date on which Trinidad and Tobago became a Republic, an appeal could have been brought with the special leave of Her Majesty to Her Majesty in Council from such decisions.

(5) Subject to this section, provision may be made by or under any Act regulating the procedure to be adopted by the Court of Appeal with respect to any appeal to the Judicial Committee under this section...

(6) Any decision given by the Judicial Committee in any appeal under this section shall be enforced in like manner as if it were a decision of the Court of Appeal.”

Mr. Speaker, if we look at section 54 of the Constitution which deals with the entrenched provisions and provides for how changes could be made to entrenched provisions, it tells us very clearly—and I will read subsection (1) of section 54 which states:

“(1) Subject to the provisions of this section, Parliament may alter any of the provisions of this Constitution or (in so far as it Constitution forms part of the law of Trinidad and Tobago) any of the provisions of the Trinidad and Tobago Independence Act 1962.”

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the speaking time of the hon. Member has expired. Before I take the motion for the extension, the House had agreed that the Prime Minister would make a statement at about this time, and I now call upon the hon. Prime Minister. [*Desk thumping*]

ATLANTIC LNG TRAIN 4 PROJECT (AGREEMENT)

The Prime Minister and Minister of Finance (Hon. Patrick Manning): Mr. Speaker and hon. Members, I am especially pleased to make this statement to this honourable House and to the national community. On Thursday, June 12, 2003, Cabinet approved the agreement for the expansion of the Atlantic Liquefied Natural Gas Plant Train 4 project. We are quite proud of this achievement which came about after rigorous and comprehensive negotiations with our proposed partners in this venture.

This is an agreement which will bring maximum benefits to the people of Trinidad and Tobago. It is an agreement which will ensure the continuing prosperity

of this country, and provide a platform for stronger social and economic development. It will help to secure this country's future in an international environment that is very often characterized by uncertainty and volatility.

Mr. Speaker, this agreement is, in our view, far superior to all other agreements so far achieved in the natural gas sector. [*Desk thumping*] It maximizes in an unprecedented manner, the returns to the Government and citizens of Trinidad and Tobago from the exploitation of our God given natural resources.

In terms of revenue generation, Train 4 will earn greater revenue for the country than all other previous arrangements. With a processing capacity of 800 million cubic feet per day, it will be the largest single LNG train in the world and will, starting in the year 2008, earn for the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago direct revenue of \$1.02 billion a year for the duration of the contract. [*Desk thumping*] The total government take at the well-head is estimated to average \$1.07 billion a year at an estimated US gas price of \$3.50 per Million British Thermal Units (MBTU). If that gas price goes to \$4.50 then the figure goes to \$1.83 billion a year. Gas prices in the United States are now in the order of \$6 per MBTU.

Taxation: Unlike Train 1, Train 4 will not benefit from a tax holiday. All relevant taxes would be paid to the national treasury by our industrial partners, and these include the Business Levy, Green Levy, Land and Building Taxes and Corporate Taxes. Corporate taxes are projected to exceed those from Trains 2 and 3 by US \$0.10 per MBTU of LNG produced. The Train 2 revenue is US \$0.16 while the Train 4 revenue would be US \$0.26 per MBTU.

Royalty: Mr. Speaker, a most significant element of this agreement concerns the payment of royalty to the Government of Trinidad and Tobago. Based on negotiations concluded with British Petroleum, Trinidad and Tobago (bpTT), a substantial tranche of gas will be provided to the Government at no charge for 15 years between 2003 and 2017. Thereafter, the 10 per cent royalty rate comes into force. This replaces a royalty rate of US \$1.50 per MBTU which was very low. This new arrangement will have direct benefit for the ordinary citizens of the nation who will have the comfort of a stable price for electricity. It will also, very importantly, allow the Government the flexibility to provide competitive pricing for electricity intensive industries, like an aluminum smelter plant. This as hon. Members know, is a project which has been on the cards for some time, but which now becomes more feasible. Indeed, the Government at this time is considering a major proposal in this regard.

Downstream activity: A most significant dimension to this new agreement is a matter which we have been talking about for some time in this country. This is the

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generation of further downstream activity from the exploitation of our natural gas reserves. The agreement provides for the extraction of ethane. The plant will be configured to allow 80 per cent extraction of ethane for processing into ethylene. Ethylene is the basic building block for a petrochemical industry. The facility will allow, with the combined streams of ethane from the first three LNG trains, the total extraction of ethane to reach 52,000 barrels per day which could support a world scale ethylene plant of 800,000 metric tons per year, and which will provide a new platform to deepen the industrial capacity of this country into the many products that can come from the production of ethylene.

Employment generation: This of course means further revenue for the country and further generation of employment for the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago on an unprecedented scale. Of course, employment generation would start with the construction of the plant itself, with employment at peak being 2,400 persons and this should take place next year. The Parliament should also note that for the first time, the contractor will undertake engineering design work in Trinidad by establishing a local entity for this purpose.

Local value added: While the scope and the dollar value of the local value added had been increased, there exists a major difference between Atlantic LNG 4 and previous agreements. In this new arrangement, the contractor has agreed to include as an integral part of the agreement, a detailed strategy to increase the local value added to list all the activities, services, subcontractors and equipment supplies that are required for the project and to list those that are fully committed for local firms.

The National Gas Company: Mr. Speaker, the National Gas Company has 10 per cent processing rights in LNG Train 4 which amounts to a total gas supply volume of 80 million standard cubic feet per day (mscfd), assuming all shareholders exercise their rights. It is proposed that NGC purchase gas from several sources including Vermillion/Petrotrin. It is important to note that NGC's gas purchase arrangements will see the conversion of natural gas purchased from Vermillion's onshore gas fields into LNG which will be sold on international markets. This is yet another milestone that has been reached with this new agreement. The House is also asked to note that the National Gas Company will be building and operating a 56-inch natural gas pipeline in support of the Atlantic LNG project. This would be among the largest used anywhere in the world and would be at the cutting edge of technology.

Mr. Speaker, exports of LNG from Trinidad and Tobago to the United States continue to increase, also facilitated by the attractive prevailing prices in the

market. With the scheduled start-up of Train 4, we shall further cement our place as the premier LNG player in the Western Hemisphere. Under this agreement, deliveries shall be made to seven different destinations as opposed to the present two destinations under previous LNG arrangements. It should be noted that of the new destinations, two of them are Caribbean neighbours, the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico. We are also examining the possibility of arrangements in this area with Venezuela and Jamaica.

Corporate structure: A very salient feature of the new agreement is a new corporate structure for this company, and which is different from that of other LNG Trains. On this occasion, we have agreed that a new and separate company will manage and operate Atlantic LNG Train 4. The new structure allows for the full payment of taxation and the company will be “ring-fenced” allowing government to maximize its revenue from taxation. In other words, the company is not allowed to deduct expenses from other operations on this operation and, therefore, you maximize your return.

These are some of the highlights of this outstanding agreement for the further exploitation of the gas reserves of Trinidad and Tobago. My Government is proud of the fact that the emergence of natural gas as a most significant player in the nation’s economy started in 1992 when, then in Government, we took the pivotal decision to agree in principle with Cabot LNG Corporation to develop an LNG export facility to service the North Eastern United States Market.

In July 1995, the Atlantic LNG Company of Trinidad and Tobago was formed in partnership with a number of international players in the field. History has shown that we were absolutely right in making that decision in 1992. We have moved since then, virtually from scratch, to being the fifth largest producer of LNG in the world. Train 4 will take us further up the global ladder in this sector.

Mr. Speaker, I must, on this occasion, pay tribute to the negotiation team which served the nation so well with the conclusion of this agreement. In March 2002, the Cabinet agreed to the establishment of a team to begin negotiations on the project. This team was comprised as follows:

Dr. Ken Juilen, Chairman;

Mr. Frank Look Kin, President National Gas Company;

Mr. Barry Barnes, Advisor to the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries and a former Minister of Energy himself;

Mr. Leroy Mayers, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Finance;

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Mr. Andrew Jupiter, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries;

Mr. Keith Awong, Chairman National Gas Company;

Mrs. Haseena Ali, Chairman Board of Inland Revenue;

Mr. Rolly Ramadhar, Assistant Commissioner, Board of Inland Revenue

Mr. Selwyn Lashley, Chief Technical Officer, Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries;

Mr. Vernon De Silva, Director Energy Planning, Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries; and

Mr. Charles Baisden, Manager, Project Planning, National Gas Company.

As negotiations proceeded, the Cabinet then established the Natural Gas Export Task Force which comprised of the following:

Professor Ken Julien, Mr. Barry Barnes, Mr. Andrew Jupiter, Mr. Leroy Mayers, Mr. Keith Awong and Mr. Malcolm Jones, Executive Chairman of Petrotrin.

The Task Force was ably supported by a ministerial team made up of the following ministers:

Sen. The Hon. Dr. Lenny Saith, Chairman, Minister of Public Administration; Hon. Eric Williams, Minister of Energy and Energy Industries; Hon. Franklin Khan, Minister of Works and Transport; and Sen. The Hon. Conrad Enill, Minister in the Ministry of Finance. The teams operated under the direction of the Standing Cabinet Sub-committee on Energy.

In order for the country to benefit from any negotiated agreements, a high level of monitoring of the LNG shipments, production operations and market conditions are vital. When one considers the sheer volume and complexity of the present and proposed agreements governing LNG operations in the country, the need for a dedicated monitoring body has emerged as an urgent priority. This situation requires scrutiny of the LNG market dynamics including: shipping, marketing and swap arrangements on an ongoing and real-time basis. This is crucial to realizing the revenues that are expected from the projects and, importantly, will ensure that any additional revenue earned through various LNG marketing mechanisms, is captured. Such a monitoring organization must have suitable modern equipment to ensure a high level of confidence and accuracy in

the figures produced. This is an urgent matter and the Government is moving with dispatch to have such an organization established.

Finally, I also wish to advise hon. Members that all agreements would contain an anti-bribery clause which will void the contract if improper payments are ever detected. [*Desk thumping*] Our purpose is to make the future of this country as secure as possible. As Prime Minister, I did make my intentions very clear when negotiations were stalled late last year, not to accept any agreement that was less than satisfactory, and I spoke on behalf of my colleagues. Our intention is always to ensure that the greatest gains come to the people of this country from all actions we take at the level of the Cabinet of this country. I am now very pleased with what we have achieved with this agreement, and we now move with dispatch to start, in August of this year, construction of Atlantic LNG Train 4.

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

FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT (SECOND)

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

Question put and agreed to.

Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar: I listened with interest to the statement made by the hon. Member for San Fernando East and the enthusiasm with which the Member spoke with respect to the revenue that is to be generated; we welcome revenue generation. The point was made by the Member for St. Joseph with respect to the \$20 billion that the Government has spent already, and when we hear of more revenue to come, we cannot but repeat, that all of that will come to absolutely nothing, if the Government continues its wild spending, its squandermania—no savings whatsoever; and continues to provide jobs for the boys and girls whilst at the same time the Government ignores and neglects half of the population of this country. Every cent that the Government is speaking about will come to absolutely nothing whatsoever. [*Desk thumping*]

The Member for St. Joseph read the promises in the budget and the Member went through each of them to show that they were all promises that were never fulfilled. In the same way, the hon. Prime Minister is saying that his job is to make our future as secure as possible.

We talked at length in this Parliament today and on other days, and I repeat again, that no one in this country feels secure. So when the hon. Prime Minister mouths these platitudes—as the Member for St. Joseph pointed out they speak

one thing here, but their actions out there are totally contrary to the nice words that they speak—make our future as secure as possible; the greatest gains to go for the people of Trinidad and Tobago, and thus far the greatest gains have gone from the coffers of the treasury to the PNM boys and girls; blatant acts of cronyism on the part of the PNM in every programme and in every ministry.

The hon. Prime Minister speaks about a monitoring organization and that, in my respectful view, is just another way to provide jobs for the PNM boys and girls and their families. Every one of those organizations that the Government has set up, when we filed questions with respect to those contract positions in the Parliament, and the Government answers them we see that the answers are telling us that the Government has provided these jobs especially for their boys and girls and families. So all these revenues that the Government is talking about generating will not benefit the people of this country, if it continues to have the Minister of National Security and Rehabilitation, who is really the one who has created the chaos and cannot deal with the chaos together with your good self.

Mr. Speaker, when the Member for St. Joseph talked about the Member for San Fernando East meeting with the community leaders we said, well yes, the Member did that, but I am reading reports now that Abu Bakr is saying that he has met with the hon. Prime Minister as recently as last week, and the Prime Minister continues to meet with him. *[Interruption]*

Mr. Speaker: Order please.

Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar: So when the Member talked about securing our future that is not going to happen unless the Member deals with the problem in the Ministry of National Security and Rehabilitation; we cannot be secured in this country unless the Government deals with the criminals in this country. The hon. Prime Minister's words do not mean anything unless the Member could follow suit with actions.

Mr. Speaker, I am a little disappointed. I had really hoped that the hon. Prime Minister would have done the right thing and acted as the editorial in the *Guardian* newspaper has called upon the Member to do, and so many others have been calling upon the Member to do. I do know that the Member himself knows what to do; the Member has to fire the man and I am very disappointed that he did not come to tell the nation that he was going to deal with their security, and the national security in that regard. It is a hard thing to do. It might be friends and friends of the families. It is a very hard thing to do but for the country and the people of the country it has to be done.

Mr. Speaker, before the hon. Prime Minister gave his statement, I was quoting from section 54 of the Constitution. I do want to make this point on the Caribbean Court of Justice and the hon. Attorney General is here and I look forward to her comments on it. Section 54 gives the power to amend, to alter provisions in the Constitution and it says:

“a Bill for an Act under this section shall not be passed by Parliament unless it is supported at the final vote thereon—

- (i) in the House of Representatives, by the votes of not less than three-fourths of all the members of the House;”

Mr. Speaker, you will notice that section 54(ii) gives the provision to alter sections 4 to 14 which are the human rights provisions and other provisions with only a two-thirds majority, but when we are coming down to section 109 the Constitution asks for three-quarters majority and why? Why do we require a higher majority in section 109? Because this is where the provision is so deeply entrenched, and the framers of the Constitution felt that section should not be interfered with without that widespread support.

Mr. Speaker, I want to make it abundantly clear that I have no objection to a Caribbean Court of Justice, but we on this side are of the view that this is not the time for the establishment of that court. Now, the hon. Attorney General has indicated that the Government will proceed with the court and set it up in its original jurisdiction, and that the court will not interfere with the appellate jurisdiction, which is the one entrenched in the Constitution to give the Privy Council the final appellate court. Even if that was so, domestic legislation must be passed.

At the moment, the Supreme Court of Judicature—and the Constitution in section 108 provides for matters to be dealt with in the Supreme Court or in the High Court and it includes criminal, civil, family and land matters. So if it is that the Government is going to use the court in its original jurisdiction then it cannot be for any of those matters unless the Government comes and changes section 108 as well. In other words, if I am to understand it, the intention appears to be that the original jurisdiction of the court would be relevant only with respect to Caricom matters between contracting states, and if that is so—and that is my view from what I have read on it—then why are we spending all of this money at this time, when the priorities in this country are clearly not those that tell us to take \$200 million to set up a court to deal with disputes between Caricom States? How many such disputes have we ever had with respect to treaties that we have signed with other Caricom States? How many matters have come up in the international

law jurisdiction with two Caricom States in dispute? If it is that we want a commercial court to deal with Caribbean trading partners then the Government should set up such a court. Why are we setting up a court with \$200 million and this is just the start? I would really like us to know what is the real cost. The Government is saying that this is a one-time cost but it is not going to end there.

Mr. Speaker, when the court cannot sustain itself—because if it is that we are dealing with treaty obligations and disputes: How many such matters are going to this court? Does the Government have to continue maintaining this court? Where is the money going to come from to continue to maintain the court? This initial one settlement for the time in perpetuity is impossible. That is not the true cost to the people of Trinidad and Tobago. It is going to be far more than that \$200 million that we are spending now.

Indeed, if we look at the variation, there are the supplementary increases that the Government is giving and there are variations within the Appropriation Bill, and we will see that another sum of money—several million dollars are going now to fix something up at Winsure Building for this same Caribbean Court of Justice. So what are the true costs? It is not just the \$200 million; it is far more than that and the Government will continue to approve funds, and we all know what has happened with respect to other matters in Caricom. When other countries default, the headquarters will be here in Trinidad and Tobago, and Trinidad and Tobago will have to continue to pay the costs for all of them to carry it on. Do we need that at this time when our own courthouses are falling apart? If one goes to any district court in this country—except for the courts that the UNC administration repaired or built—one would see that the courts are falling apart. So the Government is taking \$200 million to look after some sort of dispute. Give us some examples of those treaty obligations! Which treaty obligation is the Government going to have disputes about? Which ones have the Government ever had disputes about?

Mr. Speaker, the UNC government was engaged in negotiations with respect to the Caribbean Court of Justice. There were two statements that were made in this Chamber—so that when they speak after me it will be as they normally do because I will not be able to respond to them—to mislead us.

Hon. Member: You signed it.

Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar: If the Member will allow me these two minutes before we take the break—I am still within my time and if they would just give me the opportunity. Mr. Speaker, when the treaty was signed and the meetings

were held, there was a statement made in this House in July 2000 by the then Attorney General, which indicated the concerns before that court could be established. I have said at the beginning of my contribution, and I will say it now again, we have no objections to the Caribbean Court of Justice in principle. We are saying that this is not the time, as a priority, for us to proceed with the Caribbean Court of Justice. There are two reasons why: The first is that if we are making such a fundamental change to our Constitution, a change that will require a three-fourths majority, then that is not something for the Government to sit and decide. That must go to the public. So before the Government does that it has to go to the public. In Jamaica they are calling for a referendum on the issue.

4.30 p.m.

In the statement that was laid and made in this honourable House by the then UNC Government, it was very clear in July 2000 that they said that a system of public education should take place. That is contained in the *Hansard* record of this honourable House. The third issue has to do with—and we would take the break if you allow us—having absolutely no confidence that there would be no political interference in the bench of the Caribbean Court of Justice from the part of that administration. [*Desk thumping*] [*Interruption*] I will not give way. The hon. Member took 15 minutes of my time to talk about revenue generation. I will not give way. We on this side have absolutely no confidence because the manner in which the judges would be appointed by the Heads of Government we would end up with a spectacle of a Deyalsingh or a Clinton Bernard in a commission of enquiry. We would not place our confidence in that administration.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the sitting is suspended and we would resume at 5.00 p.m.

4.32 p.m.: *Sitting suspended.*

5.00 p.m.: *Sitting resumed.*

Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar: Mr. Speaker, just when we took the break I started speaking about the Caribbean Court of Justice and the fact that we have absolutely no confidence whatsoever that there would not be political interference with respect to the hon. members chosen to sit on that bench. There is a group known as the Jamaicans for Justice where they put out on their website their reasons for not supporting the Caribbean Court of Justice. I would like to quote from one of the documents posted on their website. It reads:

“The Caribbean Court of Justice: A Twenty-First Century Trojan Horse

The Caribbean Court of Justice is to be imposed upon the people of the Caribbean Community by their respective political directorates wrapped up in the flag of sovereignty and national pride. The Jamaican government has decided that there is no need to consult the opinion of the citizens of Jamaica on the Caribbean Court of Justice (CCJ), because they know what is best for Jamaica is what is best for the PNP political leadership. This attitude is indeed typical of the post-independence governments of the Commonwealth Caribbean who have shown themselves to be far more concerned with the maintenance of public order and security than the protection of the fundamental rights of the citizens of these new nation-states.

The call by Jamaica for Justice, the Farquharson Institute. The Independent Jamaica Human Rights Council, Transparency International (Ja) and the Bar Association of Jamaica for a referendum to approve the introduction of the Caribbean Court of Justice is not based upon some nostalgic attachment to imperial institutions or the prejudiced belief that black people are incapable of governing themselves. It is a thoughtful and considered response to the visible threat to the fundamental human rights of Jamaicans that the Caribbean Court of Justice, in its present form, poses. Despite partly cosmetic changes introduced by the regional Heads of Government in response to public criticism, the political independence of the Caribbean Court of Justice remains highly questionable.

The President of the Court, who is also the Chairman of the regional Judicial and Legal Services Commission, the two most important positions in the new regional court system, would be appointed by the Heads of Government on a qualified two-thirds majority. The Heads of Government, through their constitutional control over appointments to the local Public Service Commissions, the local and sub-regional Judicial and Legal Services Commissions, and the Caricom secretary-general and the OECS director-general, also appoint five of the eleven members of the regional Judicial and Legal Services Commission. This is the body what will appoint judges to the regional court.

In the appointment of the President and judges of the regional court as well as the Chairman and members of the regional Judicial and Legal Services Commission, the qualified two-thirds majority should be, not at the level of the Heads of Government, but in the individual Parliaments. This is the only way to keep in constitutional check the unbridled power of the Heads of Government and the simple majority in Parliament.

The fear that many Caricom citizens feel at the thought of a Caribbean Court of Justice is fuelled by our experience of judicial injustice during the

post-independence period. A prominent legal luminary from the Eastern Caribbean has expressed concern about ‘the ready willingness in the judiciary to sanction and approve unlawful state intrusion upon the constitutional rights of citizens’. The fact is that Caribbean jurisprudence has largely continued the judicial traditions of the colonial period which were focussed on maintaining public order rather than the promotion of human rights.

The politics of the region inspires even less faith, that a politically controlled regional court will be able, or willing, to protect the fundamental rights of citizens from the intrusion of the state. It is true that we have not descended to the tyrannical excesses of a draw...experienced in Nigeria... the genocidal depths of Cambodia’s Pol Pot, or engaged extensively in the thuggish mass violence of a Robert Mugabe. However, the Caribbean region has produced the political thuggery of an Eric Gairy, a Forbes Burnham and a Francois Duvalier. We have also seen a descent into factional gun politics as a result of PNP and JLP partisanship in Jamaica. The pronounced autocratic tendencies, of the political directorate in the Caribbean do not engender faith in Caribbean citizens that they can be depended on to protect our fundamental human rights.

Even more, the stealth with which the Jamaican government has sought to pass enabling legislation for the CCJ, its failure to provide answers to vital questions such as the costs of the court to the people of Jamaica, along with its fear of consulting the population, raises serious public concerns. The government’s approach on this constitutional matter seems to demonstrate, that its motives have little to do with the promotion of the rights of Jamaican citizens and are instead aimed mainly at the execution of its own political agenda.

Those who complacently advocate the introduction of the CCJ as a question of national self-esteem do so with the false conviction that their material success and political connections will insulate them from the intrusions of the state. Jamaicans for Justice, through its work on behalf of the voiceless and powerless...who had no material wealth to protect them, realizes that the potential for compromise of all our rights begins with the compromising of a single right for a single person. We realize that no one can depend upon political connections to protect them from extra-judicial killings or other violations of their human rights, and that it is only the voice of each citizen insisting on the protection of every citizens rights (including the right to have a say in their final court of appeal) which can be depended upon to ensure democracy”.

This statement comes from a group who call themselves Jamaican for justice; the Independent Jamaica Human Rights Council for Transparency International and the Bar Association of Jamaica.

This is one of the countries in the Caricom that is to be a partner with respect to the Caribbean Court of Justice. In Jamaica, they are opposed, as we are, to the establishment of this court and the overriding reason has to do with trust and confidence in a judicial service. If that is the manner in which the judges for the bench of the Caribbean Court of Justice would be chosen from the votes of the Heads of Government then there would be a clear political directorate involved in selecting the judges. So they would set up a regional Judicial and Legal Services Commission. Again, the persons would be handpicked by the politicians.

Even here in Trinidad and Tobago, with respect to the Supreme Court we have our judges, to some extent, insulated from the political directorate. There is no such check and balance; there is no such guarantee that the judges would be chosen in a transparent manner. Given the tendencies of the present Government—and when we took the break they were asking: Why is it different when we say that we have no confidence that they would not contaminate the process; that they would not interfere in the process; that they would not handpick the person to sit on the bench? The difference is, Mr. Speaker, we have been witnessing in this country for the past year, that the State is no longer being controlled by the politicians but is, in fact, being controlled by the criminal element and, in particular, by the Jamaat-al-Muslimeen. We can have no confidence that there would not be that interference or that our rights would be protected in this country.

Given the statement, how can we in Trinidad and Tobago say that we would sit and allow other Caricom countries to select judges to sit on a bench chosen by the political directorate of those countries when in the years gone by not a single Caricom nation lifted a finger when the atrocities were taking place in Guyana, Grenada and right here in Trinidad and Tobago, when there was no winner in an election; and a winner was declared even though there was none. Not a single Caricom voice was raised to deal with that injustice that took place in Trinidad and Tobago. So why should we spend this \$200 million now? I am saying this is not a priority in Trinidad and Tobago at this time and we would not support it.

I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Attorney General (Sen. The Hon. Glenda Morean): Mr. Speaker, it was not my intention to provide this information in detail to the public on matters relating to the FW Oil interests against the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. So that on Thursday afternoon when I reported the decision of the Cabinet in relation to this matter I was extremely careful to refrain from giving the details, and I would point out that at the time the words I used were improper—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Sharma: “Yuh lie”!

Mr. Speaker: Please hon. Member, I am calling upon you to withdraw that statement.

Mr. Sharma: Withdrawal?

Mr. Speaker: You have to apologize to the acceptance of this honourable House.

Mr. Sharma: On what?

Mr. Speaker: You accused the hon. Member of lying.

Mr. Sharma: I did not accuse the hon. Member of lying.

Mr. Speaker: What did you say?

Mr. Sharma: I said the statement was not true. That is not lying.

Mr. Speaker: No, no.

Mr. Sharma: Mr. Speaker, are you saying that I said the hon. Member was lying?

Mr. Speaker: That is what I heard!

Mr. Sharma: I did not say that, but I am apologizing. I did not address a single Member of this honourable House. It is most unfortunate. Out of the goodness of my heart I did not accuse anybody of lying.

Mr. Speaker: You are apologizing.

Mr. Sharma: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Speaker: So be it.

Sen. The Hon. G. Morean: Mr. Speaker, I gave a brief background to the decision of Cabinet to appoint a firm to investigate certain allegations that had been made by FW Oil in relation to officials of the Trinidad and Tobago State Enterprise and to a former minister whom they had named. This was in relation to their claim by means of the arbitration process for over US \$100 million against Trinidad and Tobago.

It is quite clear from what has been said in this honourable House today that those on the other side have omitted totally a five-letter word from their vocabulary and that five-letter word is “S-H-A-M-E”. [*Desk thumping*] They have no shame! None whatsoever.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please! [*Interruption*]

Sen. The Hon. G. Morean: This is an administration—

Mr. Speaker: No, the word “shame” is not an unparliamentary word. [*Interruption*]

Sen. The Hon. G. Morean: Mr. Speaker, this is an administration that ignored serious allegations that had been made by this company and just carried on with business as usual. I will read and quote directly from the summary given by FW Oil, and I am quoting from the document served by their lawyers on our lawyers. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the Attorney General is speaking, please do not cross talk. Let us hear what she has to say; you can participate in the debate after.

Sen. The Hon. G. Morean: Mr. Speaker, I quote:

“FW Oil Interests’ claims in this arbitration result from corruption and other unlawful conduct by officials of Trinidad and Tobago State Enterprises. In retaliation for FW Oil’s refusal to pay US \$1.5 million bribe, in connection with an oil and gas contract, senior officials of Trinidad and Tobago state oil and gas company, engaged in wrongful conduct that caused the subsidiary to breach its contractual obligations to FW Oil and to violate rights guaranteed to FW Oil as an investor under the Bilateral Investment Treaty between Trinidad and Tobago and the United States. This conduct was part of a plan to avoid the acknowledged contractual rights of FWO.

In July 2000, acting through intermediaries, certain Trinidad and Tobago officials demanded US \$1.5 million bribe, and threatened to block FW Oil’s proposals unless the bribe was paid. FW Oil refused. They later caused a facsimile to be sent to FW Oil, listing a Cayman Island bank account and demanding that US \$200,000 be deposited into the account as the first payment on the bribe. FW Oil refused. The officials then commenced a campaign of disinformation to force the FW Oil’s removal as the successful bidder and abused their oversight positions in Petrotrin, and the Trinidad and Tobago Government, to block Trinmar from proceeding with the award. These officials ultimately caused Trinmar to withdraw the award in February 2001.

By its conduct Trinidad and Tobago has breached its agreement with FW Oil, and its obligations under Trinidad and Tobago law, the Bilateral Treaty and International Law, has caused FW Oil substantial damage and loss.

In addition to that, there was a meeting between certain persons on March 19, 2001, and Trinmar confirmed that the Soldado project had been put on

hold by Petrotrin. During this meeting FW Oil was also informed that the approved version of Trinmar's letter of February 26, 2001 did not seek to withdraw the award from FW Oil. However, acting in his own self-interest and without the Board's approval, a junior energy Minister, William Bill Chaitan inserted the final paragraph of the letter, withdrawing the award from FW Oil. Chaitan held an interest in a Canadian Energy Company that was a potential bidder for the Soldado Field's project, and that they thought Chaitan was trying to guide the project to that company."

That is not all. As a responsible Government that is committed to transparency and accountability in all its dealings, this Government, unlike the last Government, could not sit idly by and allow these allegations to remain on the record. [*Desk thumping*]

This is why on Thursday last the Government agreed with the recommendation of its lawyers that these matters ought to be investigated. In addition, FW Oil itself said that despite the fact that all these allegations had been brought to the attention of the previous administration they did nothing about it. In addition to the allegations contained in the statement of case, the Government has been undertaking certain investigations in connection, not only with this same project but also in relation to the InnCogen matter.

In these investigations, while it is true we have been at pains to deal with the matter in a certain way, we have to, in the circumstances, say that it is not just one Minister they are talking about here. I know that when these allegations were made a certain Minister got up and said that it was not he; I did not call any name. I did not use the word "bribe"; I said improper considerations as was stated here. Here you have two cheques for \$50,000 being transferred into a Minister's account, in the name of himself and his wife in a foreign bank in Jersey; and there are two cheques—this is not in this report—for \$20,000 and \$10,000 respectively, being transferred from somebody that they normally called "short pants man" into this very Minister's account. These are cheques in the possession of the Government. I will say no more because these investigations are still ongoing.

So this is not a question of lying; this is a question of a Government's ensuring that corruption is rooted out of this country. [*Desk thumping*] We are not sitting back and hiding anything. If you make an allegation against anyone in this Government, we stand and say, "yes, investigation", and when the report comes it would be laid here. We have no sacred cows. So that if any one of us is found to be involved in any impropriety we would pay the price.

So I want the hon. Member for Siparia to know, that unlike her, I am in my office every day. Despite whatever the hon. Member says, I am about the

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Government's business and I would do the Government's business. [*Desk thumping*] This Government is proactive with matters that relate to corruption and we are committed to stamping it out. I am not afraid to stand here and say that.

Mr. Speaker: Order please!

Sen. The Hon. G. Morean: Mr. Speaker, the hon. Member for Siparia made certain statements in relation to the Caribbean Court of Justice. When I said that four-letter word—[*Laughter*] five-letter word—they have no shame. Because we have the *Hansard* as to what they themselves said, in relation to this court of justice and the Member gets up here and says something quite the opposite; a total somersault. How do you want the people to take you seriously? When you are in power you say one thing and when you are not there you say something else. On Monday, October 02, 2000 this is what was said of the then government on their behalf.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Who was speaking at the time?

Sen. The Hon. G. Morean: The hon. Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs. [*Interruption*] This one did not do too much. She did not have much to do. I quote:

“The Caribbean Court of Justice would replace the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council as the final Court of Appeal for the Caribbean. Apart from the appellate jurisdiction, which the court would exercise, the court would also have an original jurisdiction in the interpretation and application of the treaty of Chaguaramas”.

This is what the hon. Member for Siparia should be quoting, not something from Jamaica; we have nothing to do with Jamaica. This is Trinidad and Tobago so quote what you said; do not quote what was said in Jamaica. You have to deal with what you have to do here. This is what was further said:

“With the creation of the Caribbean Single Market and Economy, such a court, with an original jurisdiction, is necessary. There must be a judicial body to interpret the treaty so the disputes between and amongst states must be resolved. The original jurisdiction of the court would also be invoked by national courts of contracting parties referring matters to the court. The court in its original jurisdiction would have exclusive jurisdiction to deliver advisory opinions concerning the interpretation and application of the treaty. Between 1996 and 1999 Attorneys General of Caricom in the Legal Affairs Committee were able to draft the instruments contained in the second paper entitled: *Caribbean Court of Justice, Draft Documents*. The committee was

also mandated by the Heads of Government of Caricom to develop and implement a programme of public education within the Caribbean community.”

The Second Paper entitled: *The Caribbean Court of Justice, Draft Instrument* contained a collection of the following instruments, and the agreement establishing the seat of the Caribbean Court of Justice, and the offices of the regional, Judicial and Legal Services Commission between the Government of Trinidad and Tobago and the Caribbean Community.

This was signed by them. If they did not believe in it at that time why did they sign it?

“Rules of the Caribbean Court of Justice; proposed code of judicial conduct; protocol on the Privileges and Immunities of the Caribbean Court of Justice and the regional, Judicial and Legal Services Commission”. This is the same Judicial and Legal Services Commission which the hon. Member just referred to. This is something that was agreed to; this is nothing new. The heads of Government agreed with Trinidad and Tobago that the criteria for the appointment of a judge of the court should not be based solely on professional qualifications and experience, but that persons to be appointed must have the following additional characteristics.

I believe this is why they are probably against it because here it is, these are the characteristics and you have to satisfy that: high moral character. That includes having shame. [Laughter] Intellectual and analytical ability; sound judgment, integrity and an understanding of people and society. He also said that the agreement would establish the Regional and Legal Services Commission which would be responsible for appointing judges to the court and what the Commission would comprise.

This is the agreement where the Heads of Government agreed, including the UNC head of government—who is not here right now—at that time, that Trinidad and Tobago would be the seat of the court, and the court has been established for some time. There is nothing new as to the expenses of the court. The agreement requires that the expenses of the court and the Commission, including the cost of maintaining the seat of the court, the remuneration and allowances of the members of the Judiciary of the court and other payments to officials and employees of the court are to be borne by contracting parties in such proportion as agreed by the contracting parties.

The moneys required to be paid by the contracting parties would be charged on their respective Consolidated Fund. This is all part of the agreement. So that

for the hon. Member, who was twice—for a very short time—an Attorney General of Trinidad and Tobago, to come here and say that we cannot have this court at this time is really mind-boggling. They have agreed to the expenses and are now querying them. It just does not make sense.

So it is inevitable and it is just a continuation of what they themselves had put into place. When the then Prime Minister signed the agreement establishing the Caribbean Court of Justice all these matters had been borne in mind. So this is not something that the PNM is putting on the population at this time; this is something that had been agreed to by them. So that in a case like this, they are just exposing themselves more to the people of Trinidad and Tobago and they are showing the people of Trinidad and Tobago that they really do not represent an alternative to the PNM.

Thank you Mr. Speaker.

Dr. Roodal Moonilal (*Oropouche*): Mr. Speaker, I truly had no intention of speaking but during the course of the contribution by the Attorney General I sought to catch your eye and I did, but unfortunately the Attorney General, pre-occupied with the matters before her, did not see me and so did not allow me to ask a few questions for points of information concerning her contribution.

It was my intention to actually write a letter to the editor as I did before, concerning the conduct of the Attorney General as it relates to the investigation taking place on alleged matters of corruption raised by the Member for Caroni East. That letter was published as well and I intended to write another letter. This is a very serious matter and the Attorney General at the Post-Cabinet Press Conference made certain allegations against the former UNC government and made a statement as well suggesting that a former Minister of Government had sought a bribe as it related to this matter of a contract in the energy sector.

When the Attorney General made these statements at the Post-Cabinet Press Conference the Prime Minister was cheering her on; we saw on television where he interrupted that press conference by stopping her to add something on to it; and the next day there was a big headline in the newspaper to the effect of “the UNC \$100 million” or “bribe UNC figured”, and that story arose out of the presentation from the Attorney General and the Prime Minister’s intervention, her chief cheerleader on that day.

The next day there was another headline concerning this matter saying “Glenda wrong”; a statement issued by FW Oil. Mr. Speaker, this relates not only to FW Oil but also to the conduct of Government business. We are using FW Oil as

the example, but this happened before in the Parliament last week, where a Minister of Government stood, read from a report and misled this honourable House—quoting a piece here and there that was not a government document, and on that occasion I stood and corrected the hon. Minister and the exact pattern is developing.

I recalled several months ago the Member of Parliament for San Fernando East, on an occasion sought to enlighten us with matters of parliamentary conduct, and indicated, as the longest serving Member of Parliament, his view that the conduct had deteriorated, and the famous line that the Member for San Fernando East recites everywhere that politicians are seen in a bad light there are reasons to justify that because of conduct and so on. But the Member for San Fernando East, as Prime Minister, should also—*[Interruption]*

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, it is only for your guidance. I want to draw your attention to Standing Order 36(10) which talks about, among other things, “the conduct of Members of the Senate or the House of Representatives shall not be raised except upon a substantive motion moved for that purpose”. I am just telling you that for your guidance so that you would draft your contribution accordingly.

Dr. R. Moonilal: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. To return to the point I am making that the hon. Prime Minister, in guiding us, presented us with some guidelines on our conduct and behaviour so that we can lift the level of debate and the impression among the population as to the sanctity of our office, and the Prime Minister is one to speak on these matters, and it is commendable as Prime Minister that he would focus there, but it is also important that the Prime Minister take note that there are several senior Cabinet Ministers who come to this honorable House, use reports and quote conveniently to mislead the population. We got it with Caroni (1975) Limited and the FW Oil.

When the Attorney General was quoting we kept asking her if she would lay the report in Parliament and there was no response. *[Interruption]* Mr. Speaker, we were not sure if it is a report or a writ or whatever. It is very interesting that they would not lay it in Parliament, but quote convenient. In the brief presentation of the Attorney General—unless I am mistaken—I heard of someone asking for a bribe and giving a fax number to the Cayman Islands—we did not hear anything about a Government Minister there—and later flip through a few pages and recited something about the UNC being in office at the time and reached to a point where there was a reference to the former junior Minister of Energy and Energy-Based Industries.

The Attorney General was quoting one moment on sending a fax to deposit money, and the next moment—skipping about 20 pages to link the former junior

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Minister of Finance. So someone listening to that would assume that you said Minister and this is the Minister. Very skilful. Between that she would say that the UNC government was in office and they are about transparency, but this is their pattern. We are asking categorically and clearly: Would the Attorney General lay the document that she quoted from in the Parliament so that she would mislead no one. There could be no secret about it that the statement of the Attorney General led to controversy in the public domain. Because one day the population say that the UNC Minister for bribe; next day Glenda wrong; FW Oil said it was unfortunate that the Attorney General chose to make that statement. Mr. Speaker, it gets even more intriguing. FW Oil said a Minister wanted a bribe and issued another statement saying that should not have been said —[*Interruption*] No Minister said that.

Mr. Speaker, the point I am making is that there are several Ministers of this Government who would stand in the Parliament and mislead you. They do it by reading conveniently from reports. In fact, had I not asked her if she was reading something with the UNC in the report, we would have assumed that in the report there was a line that the UNC was in Government at the time.

Mr. Ramnath: Mr. Speaker, through you, would the Member give way to a question? Is the Member for Oropouche aware that at the time of this FW Oil contract negotiation, Mr. Bill Chaitan, was not a Minister of the Government, junior or otherwise?

Dr. Roodal Moonilal: Mr. Speaker, I stand corrected. At the time I have no reason to doubt the eminent Member for Couva South and an energy expert in his own right, who has now informed us that Mr. Chaitan was not even a Minister of Government. [*Desk thumping*] Mr. Speaker, I would deal with the Dead Animal Retrieval Team Programme in a while, and I hope the dead animals would stop interrupting me. This is a pattern that this Government and their senior Ministers embarked upon. They did it before and they did it again, so let me ask the Attorney General and the Prime Minister: Would you lay the document in the Parliament, yes or no? If no, why not? You already told us about junior and senior Ministers asking for bribe; you told us about the fax number to go to the Cayman Islands. Why would you not lay that document in this honourable House? Because if they lay it in this honourable House we would all discover that they are misleading the national population, the Prime Minister, and us.

There are citizens in this country who are asking questions that the Attorney General is the legal adviser to the Government and one day you see in the headline: “UNC Minister sought bribe”; next day “Glenda wrong says FW Oil”. I have the statement, and I wish to read it.

“FW Oil has reviewed the statements made by the Attorney General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on June 12, 2003. Some of these statements are unfortunately inaccurate”.

5.45 p.m.

The Government should have their fight with FW Oil to see who is lying and who is not. FW Oil's claim is based on the termination of the tender contract, which was wrongful under the terms of the contract: the Law of Trinidad and Tobago International Law and the Bilateral Investment Treaty between Trinidad and Tobago and the United States. The claim is not based on any allegations regarding a request for improper consideration by a former minister. This is unbelievable; that the Attorney General will mislead the population at a press conference and come back to the House and mislead us again. This is unbelievable! We have to look for a Commonwealth parallel where an attorney general can mislead the Prime Minister, the Cabinet and the country twice within one week.

Others may take this in a very casual and flippant way, but this is very serious. This is the Attorney General and the Government of Trinidad and Tobago that will be dealing with other international and multinational corporations. When they look at the newspaper and other publications and read that in Trinidad and Tobago, a company based in the United States or Europe could enter into negotiations with this Government and Members of the Government can lie—I am sorry, would be a stranger to the truth and seek to misrepresent for narrow, short-term, political gain. This is only happening because local government election is before us on July 14, 2003. Had there been no election, nobody would have known about FW or JW Oil. This only has to do with election. Because of that cheap and narrow approach to politicizing this matter and to painting the UNC with a corruption brush, the Government will bring the reputation of this country in the international business community down. This is an international matter; it is not a matter between Port of Spain and San Fernando. The American authorities would be interested in this. They have very sophisticated legislation that deals with offering bribes to public officials. The Government is trying to con the American authorities as well.

Last week it was Chavez in Venezuela—precipitating a near diplomatic crisis with that. As if that is not good enough, this week let us look at the American Securities and Exchange Commission. They would have an interest in this. When the Government raises an alarm that a company was offered a bribe, the American authorities are interested in this. This statement is a press release from FW Oil which is on record. The Attorney General would read, conveniently—we are

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asking again, lay that document in the House, and as they say in another place: “You either put up, or shut up.” If you cannot lay a document in the House, do not come here and quote from page 2 and then skip to page 40. The Government did it before and I had cause to quote from a Scott Drug Report to tell them the dangers of quoting from reports in that way. This is what the Government is guilty of: misleading.

If it affected us here in this House alone, we would take it as a joke as we take most of their statements, but this has ramifications. Mr. Speaker, it does not matter to the Government. This type of thing with one’s international reputation is meaningless. The Government has no interest in that. The Government just lied to paint the UNC in a bad light and look for votes. This is what the Government is about: quoting conveniently.

Then the Attorney General raised the issue of the Caribbean Court of Justice. I want to state categorically, once and for all—there is a famous line: I will say this only once—they are saying all the time, that we supported this when we were in government, we do not support it now and if we supported it then, we cannot support it now. I hope I do not have to repeat myself: when we were in government, the State was not captured by terrorists and criminal elements; there is a fundamental difference. When the UNC was in office we could have supported that, but we cannot support it now. The State is not being run by elected politicians. The business of Government is not being conducted by elected politicians. It is being conducted by criminal and terrorist interests, so we cannot support whether it is Caribbean Court of Justice or kidnapping. We just cannot support it. It is not the same situation, as it were, between 1995—2001. If they were free of criminal and terrorist elements, we might reconsider. If this Government was free of those elements, we might reconsider, but we cannot today.

Mr. Speaker, the population looks on with disgrace at the business being conducted at Richmond Street during this commission of enquiry. The Government will take the same individuals down there in disgrace. One person throws his hands up in the air and says: “I can do anything I want. I am the King here.” The Government takes persons like that and elevates them to the Caribbean Court of Justice. This is the risk we are taking.

The Attorney General went on to read from the contribution to the Parliament of a former Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs, in which the Attorney General, speaking on behalf of the UNC Government, gave support to the Caribbean Court of Justice. Again, as is the pattern, she read conveniently from a page and paragraph that will fit her conspiracy and she ignored another paragraph

on another page because it does not fit into the conspiracy properly. Mr. Speaker, it is not that the Attorney General may be lying deliberately by reading these documents. The Attorney General might be reading the lines correctly. By skipping from one paragraph to another, to build her case, she is ignoring other facts of the matter. That is very serious. It is a pattern or misleading. In the contribution of a former Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs, made on Monday October 2000, who is very familiar with the Government, the former Attorney General in the UNC administration stated that the committee was also mandated by the Heads of Government of Caricom to develop and implement a programme of public education within the Caribbean community about the court. We forget this. Let us be silent on the day. [*Interruption*]

October was two months before the general election in December, when the PNM began to destabilize the country with criminal contacts. That is what we did about it. You will see the same rate with murder. Murder went down until the Government got involved. While we were looking for the Attorney General to do something about it, he was in secret talks at “La Saliva”. When we were waiting for him to do something about this, he was in secret talks, selling out. That is what he did about it. In any event, speaking on behalf of the Government— [*Interruption*] He is not part of anything; only bad talking the Prime Minister on the golf course. The Attorney General, speaking on behalf of the then government, outlined an important point that a programme of public education was recommended. That is what we were about. There is no public education today. Is there a programme of public education? Educating who and where? When you pick up the newspaper you would see coloured photographs, the Minister of Works and Transport visits the port, another minister visits the flour mills or one visits the zoo. There is no advertisement to tell us about public education and the Caribbean Court of Justice. We have to wait for the distinguished, former Attorney General from Siparia and another former Attorney General from Ortoire/Mayaro to present themselves on television and tell us about the Caribbean Court of Justice. The Government will not find money for public education on this. This is time to find money to make companies for CEPEP and URP. This is not for public education on the Caribbean Court of Justice. If you go in the constituency of Oropouche and you ask anybody what they think about the Caribbean Court of Justice, they know nothing about that. They would think is a CEPEP contractor or a related contracting company. They are not concerned. The former Attorney General made this point: the Attorney General today completely ignores this recommendation. That is not all, while she quoted protocol and what we agreed to, another paragraph is worth quoting from the former Attorney General:

I should mention that one of the matters which has been raised by lawyers and also members of the public is that governments—although in countries which do not require to have a referendum, some countries require for there to be a referendum to give effect to this change—have been asked that even in countries where a referendum is not required, they should consider not treating this matter as a strict legal issue but should allow the people of the country to participate in showing their views.

This is very important. When we looked for him to implement this referendum business, he was at “La Saliva”. They were plotting to remove the democratically elected government, led by the Member for Couva North. “We need to remove the Member for Couva North as the Prime Minister”, that was the priority of this former Attorney General. When the Government asks what we did, that is what we did. The intention was clear: public education, a referendum. We hear nothing about that, but \$200 million is needed to satisfy some treaty requirements.

There is a grave risk that the appointments to this Caribbean Court of Justice will be done in the same way other appointments are done. It is no secret in this country how appointments are made. They will be done the same way: present yourself at Balisier House, two days after submit a curriculum vitae and you have the contract as the Judge of the Caribbean Court of Justice. You then go to the Licensing Department and you get PBP 4. Not PBO 4: that is the Cabinet Minister of National Security and Rehabilitation. This is a pattern. I do not know if by speaking here at all, it would change anything. Next week or whenever we can expect the same thing. This pattern of misleading is not healthy at all. The Attorney General spoke about shame, I go no further on that. When the Government tries to use a post-Cabinet press conference to con the nation and have the Prime Minister cheering her on, that is without shame.

Mr. Speaker, we would also want to know more about this cheque. This allegation from FW Oil is a very important allegation. Matters dealing with exposing corruption, transparency and ethics in public office are important matters, they should not be politicized in this way. At the heart of this might be a very serious issue but the Government has already politicized it, nobody believes them anymore. There might be a serious issue here. FW Oil in that document, has made certain allegations which are very serious, if what the Attorney General is reading is correct. The Government should not try to politicize it. Before the Government goes to the nation and says that the UNC ministers want \$100 million, they should have enquired and investigated and when a report is made, come to the Parliament, present the report and we can debate. Action can then be taken

against those who may have done some wrong. When the Government goes to the population to create bacchanal, this is how the standards are falling. Lennox Grant, in *The Sunday Guardian* described the Attorney General as a “corruption bacchanalist”. He said she is not a corruption buster; she is a “corruption bacchanalist”, looking for bacchanal in an election campaign. We saw it a few weeks ago in InnCogen.

Over the years, when the Government was undermining the democratically elected government, they spoke about “short pants”. The “short pants man” disappeared completely. We do not know if he put on long pants or no pants. As soon as July 14, 2003 was announced as the date for local government election, the “short pants man” returned with \$21 million. That is \$20 million more than the CEPEP contractor who is the campaign manager of a minister. The rate at which the Government is going, that campaign manager will reach \$21 million soon, I have no doubt about that. This is part of the election campaign for all the positions the person may have served in.

My advice to the hon. Member for San Fernando East is, do not cheapen and politicize allegations of corruption. [*Interruption*] He is hearing, he always listens to me, that is his way of concentrating. The advice to the Government is do not cheapen and politicize important matters such as these. Allegations of corruption are important, but when you politicize them you make them cheap and nobody believes you. The Attorney General stood today and unfortunately someone called her a liar. Of course, it was not me. We corrected that. There can be no doubt that in the national community, a large section of the population has no faith in the Attorney General. They see her as being further and further from the truth on many matters. This was the very Attorney General who began her tenure by instructing the police to chase a garbage truck leaving the EBC because it was felt that garbage truck, driven by a hapless driver, Mr. Ramgolam—the driver had to suddenly stop in the middle of Port of Spain, surrounded by armed police from the Guard and Emergency Branch, because the Attorney General felt there would have been documents from the EBC in the garbage truck. She went on with several blunders. We simply cannot name them now.

She went on blundering away and reached the WASA investigation and admitted that everyday she is in touch with an investigation that is meant to investigate members of her Government: high officials of her political party. She admitted that, there was no problem. In another government, that would have been a problem, but with this Government, that is no problem. She comes again with this FW Oil statement and uses the Parliament to mislead us. It is very interesting,

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today there is a new dimension, we did not get this last week, there is now the naming of a former junior government minister. We can expect that is part of it—you build the conspiracy—without saying that this is a document sent by FW Oil. We need to investigate who is lying. Is the Attorney General lying? I will not say she is a liar. Is it that FW Oil is lying? By a press release of June 13, FW Oil could be lying. FW Oil could be seeking to bring the honourable and truthful Attorney General into disrepute. This may be what they are seeking to do, which is an important matter for the Prime Minister. How can the company dare to bring the Attorney General into disrepute by issuing this scandalous press release, suggesting that the Attorney General was being untruthful? Who does FW Oil think they are to bring our Attorney General into disrepute? When the Attorney General is lying and FW Oil corrects her, we do not know whom to believe now. Do we believe the Attorney General or FW Oil? FW Oils says it is unfortunate that the Attorney General made the statement. The Attorney General says it is unfortunate that FW Oil made the statement. Both of them are unfortunate.

Mr. Speaker: I do not want to stop you unnecessarily, but you are beginning to repeat yourself on that point.

Dr. R. Moonilal: Mr. Speaker, that is a trap—I admit to you—you always fall into when you are dealing with this Government. If you say something once, the chances are you will recall, but they will not. This is water on duck back. Sometimes we need to repeat ourselves. I bet you, if I repeat myself 20 times next week, they will come and do the same thing. It is a punishment in a way, having to deal with this Government, that you must repeat yourself. Not just for you, Mr. Speaker, but for me as well. It is a punishment for me to have to speak to them and repeat myself 10 times.

Now that I am on my feet to respond to the Attorney General—*[Interruption]*

Hon. Member: “Yuh was on yuh head?”

Dr. R. Moonilal: I might as well raise some other matters as they relate to the Finance (Supplementation and Variation of Appropriation) Bill.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill came before us today to seek to increase the amount of money the Government is going to spend. We got the very good news about Train 4 of the Atlantic LNG Project. When the Prime Minister announced that, I took note that Members on the other side were very excited. Their eyes lit up when he was making the statement because what they would have seen was dollar signs—more money coming into the treasury. They were understandably very excited about that, because that would mean more money for CEPEP, more jobs for

relatives, husbands and wives. More campaign managers would be moving in. I want to tell the Prime Minister and Member for San Fernando East, that he must be very careful with these things. CEPEP might be undermining the UNC, while it might be undermining the PNM. It is no secret that in some quarters, Ministers of the Government are using CEPEP to promote themselves in a future leadership clash in the PNM. Hence the reason campaign managers are involved.

In announcing that the country will benefit from increased revenues, the Members on the other side need to take heed of the warning issued by the Member for St. Joseph, that as you go about planning and you increase your revenues, unless you do not spend wisely, at the end of the day, whether you had \$1 billion, \$1.7 billion, or \$1.8 billion; it will not redound to the benefit of the citizens. It is not a secret; Venezuela is oil rich, so is Nigeria. Nigeria possesses enormous mineral deposits, petroleum, et cetera. Where are those countries today when they are ranked according to the UNDP Human Development Index? They are not to be seen. The Member for Diego Martin Central will not easily understand these matters; these deal with development. This does not deal with fighting pilots in BWIA to get your friend promoted to first-class. This is a matter dealing with development.

Mr. Valley: Mr. Speaker, what is the Member saying?

Dr. R. Moonilal: Let me repeat.

Mr. Valley: Repeat it!

Dr. R. Moonilal: The matters I am dealing with have to do with development; it is not like fighting pilots to get your friends promoted to first-class. If that falls in anybody's garden, I am sorry.

Mr. Valley: Mr. Speaker, the Member said it sometime in this House and I was clear that he was not speaking about me, but now he is saying that—he better present his evidence. I do not know what he is talking about.

Dr. R. Moonilal: So you are denying that?

Mr. Valley: I have nothing to deny. I do not know what you are talking about. You have to present your evidence.

Dr. R. Moonilal: Is there any other Minister who wishes to stand and deny?

Mr. Speaker: Please, we cannot go on like this. Hon. Member, please continue.

Dr. R. Moonilal: They went to seminars on parliamentary conduct.

Mr. Speaker: That is when you stray too far from the subject; this is what happens. Please come back on track.

Dr. R. Moonilal: Mr. Speaker, the point I was making before the over sensitive Member for Diego Martin Central popped up on this matter of fighting pilots to get their friends promoted to first-class, is that a country could be endowed with enormous mineral and natural resources but unless you can manage those resources to the benefit of the people, having the resources is meaningless. That is the point I am making.

If I could take your attention away from what people do about fighting to get their friend in first class. If we have resources and we do not manage them, the country suffers. Trinidad and Tobago has had a certain development pattern where, notwithstanding being endowed with rich natural resources: oil and gas, we have had a situation in the country where over 20 per cent of citizens live below the poverty line. If you look at the employment record of Trinidad and Tobago, notwithstanding the richness of the country, the lowest unemployment figure, during the entire period, 1973 to date, would be 9.9 per cent. That is extremely high for a small island economy that is endowed with natural resources. Under the UNC, the unemployment level moved from 18.5 per cent to 10.7 per cent. Notwithstanding the wealth of this country, Trinidad and Tobago, unemployment has always been high. There are also new features of the labour market that tell us that, notwithstanding the richness of this country, there is a new class of people called the “working poor”. I am sorry to bore people by talking about poverty and unemployment, but there is a class of people called the “working poor”: people who may be working in the labour market. Not much of them would be campaign managers who get contracts. People would be labouring in the labour markets, working for a salary and still be poor.

Mr. Speaker, in May, Andrew S. Downes, Professor of Economics and University Director of the Sir Arthur Lewis Institute of Social and Economic Studies, at a meeting of Caricom in Georgetown, Guyana, presented a paper on *Employment in the Caribbean*. Incidentally, the meeting was attended by a delegation from Trinidad and Tobago, led by the very distinguished Ambassador Plenipotentiary and Extraordinaire, Jerry Narace. Professor Downes presented a paper, *Unemployment in the Caribbean*, in which he highlighted the patterns for employment in the region and noted—this is the point of interest—several conclusions with respect to the link between poverty and the labour market; meaning there is a link between poverty and where you are located in the labour market. I do not want to bore the Members on the other side by reading this sort of

technical detail of labour market and labour policy planning, which they will not understand. I would just read a few lines:

A review of poverty assessments undertaken in the Caribbean revealed the following:

- (a) the human capital base of the poor: level of education and degree of certification is low and results in employment in low-skilled paying jobs;
- (b) the poor resides in large households which are characterized by high levels of unemployment;
- (c) the poor tend to be employed in elementary occupations, rural enterprises, small scale farming, craft work and a range of informal sector activities;
- (d) labour force participation of the poor tend to be high in most countries, they derive the bulk of their resources from low paying jobs, in formal and informal labour market activities;

I would explain that in a moment.

- (e) underemployment appears to be high among the poor, since they tend to work for fewer hours;

This is a classic one; this is important. The Member for Diego Martin East should listen.

- (f) there is evidence for intergenerational transfer of poverty, since both old and young reside in the same poor households;
- (g) poverty in the region has been affected by seasonal pattern of production and structural adjustment policies.

The report notes that the minimum wage legislation has been used to alleviate poverty in some countries, notably Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago and Guyana. The co-relation between poverty and labour market status raises the issue of the quality of employment.

This is important, that is why I want to deal with it. Mr. Speaker, the quality of employment is linked to poverty. With all the wealth the Government is generating and advertising and boasting about future income and revenue—I am not surprised that nobody could make the link—let me get into more elementary detail. The link between employment and poverty, as the report states, is that as the Government promotes formal sector, elementary occupations a' la CEPEP, URP, HYPE YABBA, DABBA, et cetera, perpetuates poverty by that type of employment

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generation: low skill, low wage. The model of development of Trinidad and Tobago today is low wage, low skill. I do not want to quote anybody attending that meeting, but several members from Trinidad and Tobago took note of the fact that Professor Downes advised that public sector works programmes that are targeted to low-wage and low-skilled personnel, promote poverty and a working poor. The intergenerational transfer of poverty is precipitated by public sector works programmes. I do not know if anybody understood that.

What that means is that as the Government continues giving “10-days” jobs, what it does effectively is that it downgrades, it creates disincentives for education and training and the quality of jobs are reduced and the capacity to develop the labour market.

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

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

Question put and agreed to.

Dr. R. Moonilal: Mr. Speaker, thank you for the extension of time by both Members of the Opposition and the Government. I assure Members on the other side that it is not my intention to continue for much longer. It is not my intention to unnecessarily raise matters of corruption and CEPEP.

I thought this report dated May 2003 is timely. It is the latest report on unemployment in the Caribbean which addresses the working poor, issues relating to poverty and unemployment and put some responsibility on governments to promote high-wage, high-skill employment. I thought it was important that I make this point. In light of fact that today the Government is asking for permission to rearrange spending, spend more or spend less in light of the development programme, the Government has outlined as well where they want the money to go as opposed to where they do not want the money to go at this moment, the Bill is really about the priority of the Government. The Government has given priority to “A”, as opposed to “B”, so there is a need to come back to the Parliament and rearrange. That is the objective of the Bill.

In giving priority, I am suggesting that the Government reconsider its employment policy and spending. As we look through the Bill and supporting documents, it is evident that the Government intends to embark upon programmes, driven by the public sector, to create short-term, temporary, low-skilled and low-productivity work. It would be more visionary—there are Members of the Government who understand this very well. I give compliments to the Members

on the other side who understand this. It might be better, in the long run, to promote employment programmes with the private sector, as they have started to do and are promoting through the On-the-Job Training Programme. The advice is that is the way to go.

Whatever incentives that the private sector may need to increase the employment level in the private sector, it might be better for the country, in the long term. In public/private sector partnership the quality of that employment would be higher in the long term. When young people enter the private sector environment, you will find that more often than not they would be exposed to technology. They may go to a worksite and get a chance to play a game on the computer or use IT equipment. Also in the private sector there will be a different work ethic. For example, if you work at NGC in the state sector and you come in through the On-the-Job Training Programme, you would find that there is a different work ethic. Although you are at an entry-level position; you may work later in the evening, you may get involved in projects and teamwork where you participate on weekends. The quality of the job is higher, but also the prospects for longer term upskilling is better with the formal, public service rather than through make-work, temporary, low-wage, low-skilled employment as has been the pattern for the past year and a half. *[Interruption]* If I allow you, would you repeat the point? The Member would not understand.

Mr. Speaker, when Members on the other side respond—I want to appeal to them and the Prime Minister as well—they should respond to the issues we raised. There is another pattern, sadly—under your watch this is what is happening—when Members of the Government get up to respond to us, they begin and end with issues of personality, how we look, how we talk, nothing to do with the points we are raising in our debate. That is just the pattern. It is very sad. When we raise issues we expect that ministers will respond to them. The point is, employment policy is linked to poverty and the future spending of the Government.

Another point for the Member for Diego Martin Central and Junior Minister of Finance to ponder on is dealing with development and increase in spending would be the matter of priority. It is clear right now—we do not have to get into everything dealing with crime. On another occasion we spoke at length about crime. The Member for Pointe-a-Pierre has a Motion before the Parliament on this matter. Crime and crime fighting must be a priority for the Government. This Government believes—there is a part of their manifesto, which I did not walk with, unfortunately. The Member for Diego Martin Central gave me a copy of their manifesto sometime ago. There is a recommendation in their manifesto that

they will attempt to deal with our social problems including crime by employment creation. We do not expect the Minister of Planning and Development to take any interest in this. There is an attempt in the PNM's Manifesto to suggest that they will deal with social problems by employment creation. While that may be so—that is correct, in principle it works—if you do not create the quality of employment, you do not deal with the social problems.

I would give one simple example: the Government spent half of a billion dollars on job programmes, but yet murder and kidnapping increased. If we look at the details of crime statistics we may find that serious crime increased. Crime is on the rise as the Government spends more on social policies. What does that tell you? In the manifesto there is the idea that we will stop crime by social policy. That sounds like a contradiction. We spent half of a billion dollars to create jobs but crime does not reflect this spending. That suggests a simple point that you cannot create jobs of the nature the Government is creating and expect to deal with crime, terrorism and criminal activities.

Mr. Speaker, these are the few points I wish to make. I really stood to raise questions with the Attorney General concerning this scandal dealing with FW Oil. I want to ask the Attorney General—who I am sure would look at the *Hansard*—to clear her name and the Government's name on this FW Oil issue. The press release from FW Oil is suggesting that the Attorney General of Trinidad and Tobago is not telling the truth. She may have to direct a letter to FW Oil as well because they are making the allegations, not the UNC. She may have to admonish FW Oil.

Mr. Speaker, with these few points, I thank you.

The Minister of Health (Hon. Colm Imbert): I am glad I caught your eyes, Mr. Speaker. I am going to make a very brief intervention. Do you know what amazes me when I hear the contributions of the other side, from people who, allegedly have gone to institutes of higher education, is the rampant foolishness that comes from the other side? I took some notes and I think it is necessary to educate the Members on the other side. I understand their predicament: they find themselves on the defensive having to deal with serious allegations of corruption, for which they have little defence. I understand their problem. They have to find justification and reasons to deal with these issues.

This is a classic piece of foolishness: if there were no local government election, the country would not have heard anything about FW Oil. What arrant nonsense! What the Attorney General announced last week was the fact that arbitration proceedings were about to commence in Trinidad and Tobago, arising

out of a claim in the sum of US \$100 million made by FW Oil against Trinidad and Tobago. The Opposition is pretending they do not understand that. A foreign company has made a claim to the tune of TT \$600 million. This claim has been sent to arbitration and the arbitration is about to proceed in Tobago, in December 2003. That is not going to go away. The Opposition can wish it away, but it is not going to go away. Whether there is going to be a local government or not, this is going to happen. What Members such as the Member for Oropouche is asking us to do is to cover up the UNC's misconduct. We must not let the country know that the Attorney General has evidence, copies of deposits made in foreign bank accounts and payments made to former government officials. They want us to cover that up. Local government election or not, these are facts. The Attorney General indicated today, that they have traced some money that left a certain individual called the "short pants man". The money has left his account and arrived in the bank account of a former government official. The Attorney General has indicated that copies of the actual deposits are available and that she has seen them. The UNC wants us to cover it up.

The other thing that Members are keen to do—they would like us to do—is that they are pretending to not be aware that the statements made by the Attorney General last week and in Parliament today, are simply extracts. The Member for Siparia would know what I am talking about. When you have an arbitration, both parties submit a statement of claim. It is a preliminary document. Each side, depending on whether there is a claim and counterclaim, will submit a statement of claim in which they outline the facts as they know them to be, they make allegations or statements which they intend to prove during the arbitration. What the Attorney General did was simply quote verbatim from the extracts of the statement of claim submitted to the arbitration by FW Oil. *[Interruption]* That is irrelevant. The fact of the matter is that these are the allegations made by FW Oil.

The UNC could pretend and hide as much as they want. They could hope that the country will not understand, but these are documents that have already been laid before an arbitrator. FW Oil has stated categorically that their contract was terminated because of the actions and conduct of certain high-ranking state officials. They said they had the contract and it was terminated because they did not comply with the officials demands. They made it very clear. They said they were supposed to get the contract. At one point in time they had the contract, but certain demands were made on them, by high-ranking state officials. They did not obey. They did not agree to those payments and, as a consequence, lost the contract. That is what they have said. This is not rocket science. The Opposition

could hide as much as they wish. They could run, but these are the allegations that have been made by FW Oil.

They would prefer that the Government of Trinidad and Tobago not defend this. They want us to concede it: pay FW Oil \$600 million. What are we supposed to do? We must investigate the allegations to determine whether the allegations are accurate or not. How else would the Government of Trinidad and Tobago put in a defence to this arbitration? I would like the Member for Couva South to tell this honourable House how else would the Government of Trinidad and Tobago defend itself against a claim for \$600 million unless it investigates the allegations and determines whether the allegations are true or false? What the Member for Oropouche would want us to do is just ignore it, do no investigation, check nothing, concede and pay FW Oil \$600 million. That is what they want us to do. They do not want these things to come out into the light, because they are uncomfortable with them.

When I heard the Member for Oropouche talking about tarnishing the country's reputation, what arrant nonsense. What could tarnish a country's reputation more than a claim made by a foreign company that government officials asked for a bribe in order to obtain a contract? What could tarnish a country's reputation more than that? [*Desk thumping*] The Attorney General is simply indicating that there is a claim against the country to the tune of \$600 million but she is tarnishing the country's reputation? What utter nonsense! [*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker, I am not trying to bait anybody. Further, the Attorney General has read another extract from the claim made by FW Oil today. She read into the record that it was said that a former minister—the Attorney General named the minister—changed/interfered with contract documents, causing FW Oil to lose the contract. They have alleged that he did that because he had an interest in a rival company. These are the allegations made: a former minister tampered with contract documents, to cause the loss of the contract to a foreign company because he had an interest in a rival company. This took place in 2001. The allegations' date is March 2001. The October 2000 date is in the Caribbean Court of Appeal. The Members opposite are looking for a way out. They do not want to deal with the issues. Look at the paradox and irony of this thing—the UNC accused of corruption with a \$600 million claim against the country; the PNM Government now comes in and has to file a defence to save the honour, integrity and good name of Trinidad and Tobago and the country from having to pay out \$600 million. I am perplexed. We on this side have to put in a defence against

allegations of corruption against them on that side. It is our duty to defend the Government of Trinidad and Tobago against these allegations.

Mr. Speaker, they do not want the country to know what is going on. The Member for Oropouche talks about a report. It is not a report; it is a legal document, similar to an affidavit, that has been laid in arbitral proceedings. I could only assume that the Member just does not know what is going on. It is a statement of claim. The Member for Oropouche spoke about the country's reputation being tarnished. What could tarnish the country's reputation more than three senior ministers of government resigning—the Attorney General and two other senior members of government—from a sitting government, alleging corruption in their own government, causing a collapse of that government and forcing elections? [*Desk thumping*] What could tarnish a country's reputation more than members of a Cabinet resigning, causing the collapse of a government, forcing general election and alleging corruption? [*Interruption*] Nonsense!

Mr. Speaker, I know that the Member for Oropouche is not a very brilliant and bright person; that is why he occupies the cellar position. If the Member wants to know what the cellar position is, it is the lowest rung on the ladder. If you check the seat here you go around to the end and you will find his position. That is why the Member for Oropouche occupies the cellar position, for good reason, because he just does not know and does not understand. I hope he knows now that all these issues that he is so afraid of, cannot deal with and is getting jumpy about are contained in official documents laid before an arbitration, which is going to begin in Tobago in December and will go to its conclusion.

The Member is also avoiding the fact about the disclosure about cheques. The Member for Couva South wants us to name the person who got the cheques. He wants to know who got the money. All of that will come out in good time. I am satisfied if my Attorney General tells me that she has evidence of cheque payments into bank accounts of former UNC government officials. That is good enough for me. If my Attorney General tells me that they have traced a trail of money in the InnCogen matter from one individual into the account of a former government official of the UNC, that is good enough for me. She has indicated that she has the evidence and she has seen the cheques. That is good enough for me. It will all come out in due course.

Mr. Speaker, the other issue that I find—I realize what is going on, the Member for Couva South is only hoping that the name on those cheques is the Member for Caroni East. The Member for Couva South wants to be in that position on a permanent basis. I understand what is going on.

As for the dissertation of the Member for Siparia on the Caribbean Court of Justice, I have never heard such foolishness. It was the UNC government and the Member for Couva North, as the leader of that government, who sat in a Caricom Heads of Government meeting and agreed to the establishment of the Caribbean Court of Justice in Trinidad and Tobago. They agreed to the payment of money by Trinidad and Tobago for the establishment of that court, in accordance with an agreed formula. It is just like FW Oil. They did it and we have to deal with it. The UNC are the ones who signed the agreement to have the Caribbean Court of Justice in Trinidad and Tobago. The UNC are the ones who signed the agreement that Trinidad and Tobago would contribute to the trust fund for the functioning of that court in accordance with a formula. The UNC signed the agreement as a government. Their Prime Minister and political leader and their Attorney General signed it. The UNC have bound the sovereign state of Trinidad and Tobago to meet these obligations to the Caribbean Court of Justice. They are now telling us that we must renege on an agreement made by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago. Absolute nonsense!

6.45 p.m.

The UNC government carried on for three years about the Caribbean Court; one set of noise and “tra la la”: “It would be a new day for justice in the region”—for three years. They went to the Caricom Heads of Government; signed agreements; come back here; held press conference; all kinds of statement in Parliament; one set of noise; established the building; made the sign; put the sign on the building; paint the sign in gold: “Caribbean Court of Justice”, and then comes and tells us we must renege on that. I have never heard such nonsense! And they are talking about the reputation of the country? What would be the reputation of Trinidad and Tobago if after all that “tra la la”, with the signature of the Member for Couva North in his position as Prime Minister and the signature of the Attorney General of Trinidad and Tobago on all those documents and the establishment of the building here, when a new government comes in, you say, “oh, that was an old government; we are not honouring that; we are renegeing on that; we have no interest in that; Government is not continuous in Trinidad and Tobago; it has been interrupted and we are pelting away all these agreements”—what kind of effect would that have on the reputation of the sovereign state of Trinidad and Tobago? It would be a scandal!

Let me tell you something, Mr. Speaker, if we adopted that immature and irresponsible position that they want us to, the first people who would be screaming blue murder about how we have tarnished the country’s reputation by

renewing on a Government-to-Government agreement would be them. So we do not have them to worry about. I understand their discomfiture. They are worried. They heard that somebody alleged a bribe by a UNC official; now they are hearing about a cheque in a UNC minister's account; they are getting the heebie-jeebies; they are getting worried. I understand their problem. That is why the Member for Oropouche had to ramble on and on about employment practices, when his signal contribution to employment in this country and his signal contribution to poor people in this country was to access the money that was allocated for employing poor people in the hospital and take it for himself while being employed at the Prime Minister's office at the same time.

Dr. Moonilal: Mr. Speaker, Standing Order 36 (5)—would you allow that Member to bring a Member into disrepute? I just want to know if it would be allowed. That is all.

Mr. Speaker: It says: “No Member shall impute improper motives to any other Member of either Chamber.” Maybe you need to move on from that.

Dr. Moonilal: He is a senior Cabinet Minister. He should know better. Apologize.

Hon. C. Imbert: Mr. Speaker, I had the misfortune in 2001 to listen to the former UNC Attorney General accuse that hon. Member in a public place of being employed in the Prime Minister's office on a full-time basis and also being employed at the North West Regional Health Authority, and the former Attorney General said that was improper and that he should be charged; that it was fraud and that he should pay back the money, and he could not respond. That is why I am saying the only contribution of the hon. Member of Oropouche to employment was to access funds allocated for poor people in the hospitals of Trinidad and Tobago and to get employed while he had a full-time job in the Prime Minister's office. That is a fact and that is a truth and that is his only contribution to employment. He ensured that he had two jobs at the same time. That was his contribution to employment and the poor.

It was not just he. That was a pattern on their side. There was another Member of the UNC who likes to make a set of noise all over the place. He, too, was employed at the North West Regional Health Authority. I say “employed at”; I have to use it euphemistically. There is no evidence he ever did any work. But it was a habit of the UNC to use state corporations and ministries to create these fictitious positions and put their party officials in them—ghost workers. That is what they were; high-priced ghost workers! And they come in the Parliament and

want to talk about poor people and poor people's money? They have no shame, as the Attorney General said. They have no five-letter words in their vocabulary.

Mr. Speaker, I hope that the Member for Oropouche now understands that the matters raised by the Attorney General are not frivolous. These are actual allegations made by FW Oil. They require a defence from the Government of Trinidad and Tobago. These allegations are real. People could say all kinds of things but it is there in black and white. Again, the inexperience of the hon. Member is showing. People say all kinds of things, but the written word, you cannot take it back. You could take back the spoken word but you cannot take back the written word. People could say whatever they want and deny whatever they want and issue statements and counter-statements and all kinds of things, and say things are unfortunate, and so on, but it does not take away from the facts. The written documents lodged by these people are what the Attorney General was quoting from, and he comes here and calls the Attorney General all sorts of unparliamentary names.

So I hope as the revelations of that Soldado scandal are unravelled in the public domain, the Member for Oropouche, who is only guilty of minor infractions, would become chastened as more and more cheques start to surface and as the quantum of the cheques gets larger and larger, and a direct line is drawn between beneficiaries and State officials. I hope he would become chastened and he would realize the extent of the malfeasance and the misconduct that took place under the former administration of which he was a part and he would repent and recant and promise and humble himself before this House.

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

Mr. Manohar Ramsaran (*Chaguanas*): Mr. Speaker, let me remind this House that we are debating the Finance (Supplementation and Variation of Appropriation) Bill, 2003. Before I go into some of the financial "ratch" in that Bill, let me reply to the Member for Diego Martin East with regard to the Soldado scandal.

Mr. Speaker, as a layman not understanding too much of what is happening in this case especially, and I am guided by the members of the media, I want to say something this evening. When we read the newspapers; look at the news on television; listen to the radio, this is what would give rise to public debate; it would create public opinion; it would really decide where the country moves and what the country would believe. This afternoon I was very disappointed in the media. I want to put it on record. As soon as the Attorney General was finished

with her contribution—and maybe now I should not have given way—they left. So what kind of reporting are we going to see in the newspapers tomorrow? We want to know why. Were the members of the media intimidated to leave the Parliament? What encouraged them to leave this Parliament and not listen to the reply of the Member for Oropouche?

This brings me to the *Guardian* dated Friday, June 13, 2003 which states, “UNC oil bribe US \$100m at stake”, where the first allegations were made. Of course we had on page 3 the sub-headline: “Texas firm fingers ex-minister”. The Attorney General was reported as saying:

“The company is seeking US \$100 million...in damages from the State, Attorney General Glenda Morean told journalists at yesterday’s post-Cabinet news conference.

FW (Frank Wade) Oil was the preferred bidder for Trinmar’s South West Soldado fields,”

We know about that. The point I want to make is, the *Express* of June 14 says: “Glenda wrong”. This was the headline. Much was said about it today from both sides, but the point I want to make is, here we have the newspaper reporters in the gallery and rather than wait to hear both sides, after the Attorney General was finished with her contribution, which was already said to us in the country, they left the Parliament.

I want to continue on that trend to let this country know of the allegations and counter-allegations. The truth must be told. I would like your intervention on this, Mr. Speaker. We were told this evening by the hon. Attorney General that the arbitration dealing with the Soldado scandal as described by my friend from Diego Martin East, is set for December in Tobago. I want to ask you if what is being told in the newspapers would prejudice that case. I am asking for your guidance, Mr. Speaker. The fact is, that would be held in December 2003 and when that time comes I hope it would get the attention it is receiving in the newspapers today, because I am a bit worried about what is being fed to the public of this country. I am saying that in the context of the reactions. When we behave in this manner and we do not hold our tongues and the people outside there who see us as leaders—unfortunately they see some of us as leaders—[*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members on the Government Benches, the Member is on his feet and he is speaking. Let us listen to him in silence, please.

Mr. M. Ramsaran: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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So we have the people out there forming their opinions, understanding what is happening and they are being fed with garbage. I want to put on record—as I said, I do not want to talk too much on this matter, but just to put on record what was alluded to by Members on this side. But I want to put the entire document on record and maybe to lay it in Parliament, if you wish. I want this to be listened to carefully. This statement was written by FW Oil, and the telephone number would be read to Members. This was dated June 13, 2003:

“Following a December 1999 public invitation to bid involving international and Trinidad and Tobago companies, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, through the state-owned oil company, declared F-W Oil Interests Inc. (F-W Oil) the successful bidder for the reactivation and development of the West and Southwest Soldado Fields.

F-W Oil was officially awarded the contract in September 2000.

F-W Oil has reviewed the statements made by the Attorney General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on June 12, 2003. Some of these statements are, unfortunately, inaccurate. F-W Oil’s claim is based on the termination of the tender contract, which was wrongful under the terms of the contract, the law of Trinidad and Tobago, international law and the bilateral investment treaty between Trinidad and Tobago and the United States. The claim is not based on any allegation regarding a request for ‘improper consideration’ by a former Minister. F-W Oil notes that it did not allege that a former Minister of the Government requested any payment; the basis of its claim is the unlawful termination of the tender contract by the state companies Petrotrin and Trinmar.”

So, Mr. Speaker, do you understand the misrepresentation of views to the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago? I continue:

“In this project, F-W Oil committed to invest an estimated US \$272 million in the local economy. This would have resulted in maintaining hundreds of local jobs and estimated revenues in the first twelve year period to the people of Trinidad and Tobago of more than US \$825 million without any financial risk to the Government. The initial tender had specifically demanded that the project proceed on a fast-track basis.

In February 2001, however, the contract was terminated by Petrotrin without lawful cause and in violation of the terms of the contract, the law of Trinidad and Tobago, international law and the bilateral investment treaty.

Since February 2001, F-W Oil has tried almost continuously to resolve this problem through constructive negotiations with the Government, but it was

unable to start a meaningful dialogue. As a result, F-W Oil was forced to seek international arbitration at the World Bank to protect its interest, which it filed on September 28, 2001.

It has always been F-W Oil's desire to resolve the situation amicably and to commence work on this important project. F-W Oil remains committed to bring the Soldado Fields back on-line as soon as possible. Only last week, the company again wrote to the Solicitor General offering to meet in Trinidad as early as next week with officials of the Government and those Ministers with authority to resolve such claims in yet another effort to resolve the dispute and commence work.

F-W Oil notes that the Government has spent very substantial sums on lawyers and investigators. The Government is now bringing in yet another team of investigators..."

Money down the drain, relevant to this budget before us:

"...following the insolvency of the original investigators, the London-based ISS, whose inaccurate reports were leaked to the press in December 2000.

At the time of this release, a team of experts from F-W Oil is awaiting instructions to return to Trinidad and Tobago to resolve this problem and commence work on the reactivation of the Soldado Fields, which should have started in late 2000.

F-W Oil, an independent energy company founded by Frank Wade and based in Houston, Texas is engaged in the exploration, development and production of crude oil and natural gas. Mr. Wade has over 30 years of experience in the oil and gas and offshore construction industries. During the mid-1980s, Mr. Wade pioneered the practice of salvaging, refurbishing and reinstalling used platforms and production facilities. This practice enabled oil and gas producers to accelerate their development and production schedules, thereby enabling them to achieve higher rates of return on their investment.

For further information contact F-W Oil by telephone (713) 461-7221 or facsimile (713) 461-9231."

Mr. Speaker, I hope that this would put to rest this Soldado scandal for the time being until the arbitration begins. I want you to investigate whether all this public exposure would in any way interfere with the arbitration process, because I feel that not only are there allegations of any wrongdoings but the country of Trinidad and Tobago is under the microscope.

Two speakers spoke on that side, the hon. Attorney General and the Member for Diego Martin East, and went straight into attacking allegations of corruption and they did not even look at the Bill. This is what is making the country of Trinidad and Tobago a laughing stock. When people come to debate, they would not even refer to the Bill. This Government is coming to the Parliament after having an \$18 billion budget passed a couple of months ago, to increase by \$742,761,500 and varying the original appropriation by some \$540 million.

I thought we would have heard the Members getting up and justifying what has happened in the different ministries, justifying, for example—or maybe they do not know what is happening in this document—why the funding was increased and, more importantly, those ministries that lost money, why was the money taken from them.

I know the Minister of Planning and Development is the person in charge of preparing the budget. He has to say where the money would and would not be spent. I thought he would have taken to his legs, not only to shout across the floor about corruption, but to justify an increase in the budget of Trinidad and Tobago. This is what Parliament is about, not bacchanal and more bacchanal. I think that they should really appreciate what is happening, and we have the document before us.

We asked questions on the Finance Bill and some were answered, some were not. I thought the opportunity this evening was wasted by the Government to let the country know—because I want to tell you, people outside there are wondering; \$18 billion gone down the drain; a further \$20 billion the year before, no amount of transparency, nothing, and yet you come for an increase of \$742 million. Where is the money going to be spent? In paying for the Office of the Prime Minister; paying for commissions of enquiry, to the Ministry of Finance at \$106 million? We would like to know what the Ministry of Finance would be doing with that money; justify it.

You must understand that this Schedule to the Finance (Supplementation and Variation of Appropriation) Bill, was discussed in private. Neither the public nor the media was invited to that meeting, so the country is not aware of the explanations given on that side. I would read some of the explanations so the public would know what is happening. We asked questions. For example, the first question, just to put on record—not to the Parliament—so the media could report on it or anybody could read the *Hansard*.

“The Member for Siparia requested specific particulars to be produced to support the proposed disbursement to Chairmen and Members of Commissions of Enquiry for 2003.”

Mr. Speaker, you know what I am talking about; the commission of enquiry elsewhere.

“The Member for Fyzabad wanted to know whether other persons engaged in the said enquiries were paid from another source.”

Of course, the answer was—and to put it on record—the chairman’s proposed payment was \$400,000 and each commissioner to receive \$300,000.

It is here. This was debated in the finance committee, but no Minister or anybody on that side would get up and justify the people’s expenditure, money that belongs to the people of Trinidad and Tobago, and I have a problem with that. I thought that every Minister would use this opportunity to talk. For example, we had Ministers losing millions of dollars. When you look at the importance of the areas in which the money was removed—I remember \$200,000 was removed from something that we all talked about in Trinidad and Tobago.

I remember the Member for Tunapuna coming to this House and raising a matter on the adjournment, asking about the children who leave the St. Mary’s Home in Tacarigua. He appealed to me as the then Minister: “Minister, these people are creating havoc in my constituency; they are doing this; they are doing that.” I think you were in this honourable House at that time, Mr. Speaker. I got up and promised him that we were going to build institutions for these children. The sum of \$200,000 was voted to start construction of that building, and would you believe the entire \$200,000 was removed? At least they should come to the House and say, “Well, we do not care about children anymore; we do not care about the young people who commit crimes.” Explain to us.

The Member for Arima came into this House, again, on a Motion on the Adjournment, and asked questions of me, the then Minister, about an indoor sporting facility in Arima. I promised her that it would be put in the budget of that year. It was done in the budget of 2001, and today \$500,000 was put in the project and every cent was removed. This is what I am worried about. This is what I want answered, the performance of the Government. Why did they come to again vary their appropriation for 2003?

If you go through the document you would see what I am talking about. I am glad the Member for Arima is here, because here we have before us the indoor sporting arena that she asked about two or three years ago, and I answered her in the affirmative. Today we are seeing here that all the money put in there for the sports arena has been removed from the budget. What are we doing? When you look at the decreases—I am interested in decreases—you see: Construction of

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Indoor Sports Hall, Arima, \$150,000 was put in there. When I was there \$2 million was put in. Of course, it was not spent. Would you believe the entire \$150,000 was removed?

The development of turf pitches in Trinidad and Tobago—\$200,000 voted—removed; Construction of swimming pools, \$400,000 removed; Upgrading of the Mahaica Oval—and I want to say something about that. This is a “PNM till I die” constituency; strong support; they came to me in the year 1999 and we planned the refurbishment of Mahaica Oval—which I know the people opposite who talk about football and give it all the lip service they could—produced some of the best footballers in the 1970s and 1980s; and there was total destruction there. We put money there and today we see that of the \$1 million proposed on the estimates, \$500,000 removed. I want to ask: Was the other \$500,000 used? Could somebody get up and say what happened to the \$500,000? Or is it at the end of the day they would come in October and see no money was spent on Mahaica Oval?

This is the performance I am talking about. Come and tell us! When you go to your father, your mother, your wife or husband and ask for money, you would have to justify that. But they come here highhanded, talking about Soldado, FW Oil, and talking about shame.

Mr. Hinds: Would the Member give way?

Mr. M. Ramsaran: In a while. I am making my point here. Then you talk about a national tennis centre. My friend from Tunapuna would know that one of the best facilities in the Caribbean is in Tacarigua. Yes, the court was laid; things were in place, we wanted to put seating arrangements, and so on; \$400,000 voted, \$200,000 decreased. Was the \$200,000 spent? Did the work start? We do not know.

We go on: Upgrading of public recreation grounds. They talk about a national sports policy. We laid that in Parliament where we said that we had the Ministry of Local Government and the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs working together to upgrade grounds in the country. A measly \$200,000 was provided and that was entirely removed from the budget.

Then we have Refurbishment of Youth Training Facilities, another Motion on the Adjournment raised by the Member for Tunapuna, crying for the youth of this nation. “What is happening to my youths?” Those youth development apprenticeship centres have not yet been opened since the PNM came into office. What are they telling us? Here we have \$250,000 taken away from the refurbishment of these training facilities; \$.5 million original estimates, \$250,000 removed.

This is paper work, you know, because at the end of the year they might say they are going to remove the entire \$500,000 because of their lazy and inept attitude towards a PSIP and the development projects in this country.

We could go on. I remember those days, you know, because I listened to the Opposition; my friend from Tunapuna always with this passion for the youth. We said, okay, we are going to save the youth in marginal societies and he claimed it as one of his ideas. No problem. Today we are trying to fix that; \$500,000 voted, \$250,000 removed.

Mr. Valley: Just for my own guidance, please, Member, because, honestly, I think you are the only Member on that side speaking on the Bill. Just tell me if I am wrong. You are speaking about the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs under Head 46 and I am noting that that Head is increased by some \$15,962,500.

Mr. M. Ramsaran: That is true. At least he has studied part of the Bill. But the fact is that you remove from important parts, in my opinion, and you increase elsewhere. So I am going through the entire scenario to show that not only one big facility in Mayaro will suffice. Of course, I congratulate the Member for Ortoire/Mayaro. If he is that powerful to remove the money from everywhere else and put it in his constituency, I applaud the Member for Ortoire/Mayaro.

Mr. Valley: I am saying that the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs is not one of the heads that has decreased. So if it is anything, it is merely internal transfers you are talking about. The head is being increased by \$15,962,500.

Mr. M. Ramsaran: I would come to that point and tell you where it has increased. What I am doing now is to show you that money was taken and added, so maybe in overall, \$20 million was given but you minus \$4 million or \$5 million within the Ministry itself to make it \$16 million.

Mr. Speaker, I am happy that I had the Minister of Finance get up and defend that. The policy of removing the money, the Minister of Planning and Development is responsible for that. I asked him what does he have against sport in this country. We have to ask that question because we hear people talking about sport and paying lip service.

Again, there was another Motion on the Adjournment during your term, Mr. Speaker, where the question was raised of a halfway house for children leaving institutions. They actually begged for that. I said I would do it for them. Today, \$200,000 was voted; \$200,000 was removed under the Ministry of Social Development.

This is what I expected, and I am happy the Minister of Finance has finally awakened from his slumber. He should have led his team to come here and justify

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the budget for us. What I am saying is not to criticize the line Ministers, but I would have loved to have sat here and listened to the Minister of Social Development, the Minister of Community Development and Gender Affairs talk to us about \$8 million going to that ministry and explain to us what is happening, because what I am seeing in these documents, we cannot understand the details. Yes, we have broad headlines, but when you look at the big chunks of money, for example: Ministry of Works and Transport, \$95 million.

I would have loved to listen to the Member for Ortoire/Mayaro who I know is attempting to do some work in the country. I appreciate his performance so far. This morning I asked a question of the Minister responsible for Local Government and the Minister of Works and Transport answered it. I want to thank the Member for doing the work in the constituency of Chaguanas. But the fact is that they were local government roads.

This is the anomaly. I filed a question in this Parliament about six months ago asking about Moore Trace and Rangoo Trace in my constituency in the village of Bejucal. The Minister got up and said that it was referred to the wrong minister. Today you have the reverse happening where you had the Minister of Works and Transport coming to the constituency and doing the work. I am a bit confused and maybe they could get together and talk so that when we ask a question, whoever answers is not important. But up to now those roads are not repaired.

As politicians, sometimes we must have that personal touch for assisting poor people, as was alluded to by my friend from Oropouche. We hear only lip service on that side. There are over 500 people on each of these roads. What is worse, they were prepared for paving; the hard crust was removed and these roads are there for the last 18 months and not yet paved. That is a low-lying area and now we have people living in mud traces once more because of the performance of that Government.

As I move on, I would just touch again on the Finance (Supplementation and Variation of Appropriation) Bill. I am always one who believes that when money has been allocated in a particular ministry, there should be justification for that. The line Ministers and their permanent secretaries and so on, would justify why money is needed in a particular ministry, and when, after six months you have money being removed from one vote to another, we would like the justification.

What happened, when that budget was presented, they came here and argued—of course, they have the majority and they would win—but the fact is that money was allocated to each ministry and then when money is being taken away, we should be told why. Not, we on this side, but the population should be told why, because they pay taxes.

My good friend from Diego Martin East got up and raised his voice in this cocky way and as he started, he attacked the Member for Oropouche on some nonsense. Then he spoke about arbitration. I have dealt with that. He spoke about election in July. I have passed that. Then he mentioned the preliminary submissions. I talked about that also. But I would just want him to know that sometimes when you are casting stones you must not live in glass houses, or more importantly, do not drink in glasses. There was a case, Emile versus Imbert—what has happened to that case? You have to come here and not play rabbit. I want him to investigate the following matters for me as quickly as possible because the country is asking questions and I want to ask these questions.

Question number one: We have been hearing; we have been reading; we have been listening to Abu Bakr's intervention in the Ministry of National Security and the Government of Trinidad and Tobago. I would like to ask the Member for Diego Martin East to have that matter of Abu Bakr investigated and be made public to the people of Trinidad and Tobago. What is his involvement in the Government of the PNM under the hon. Member for San Fernando East?

Mr. Imbert: I have to do that?

Mr. M. Ramsaran: You are the big investigator. As my good friend from Diego Martin West, the corruption buster, the last five years; the most corrupt on that side, having a member, his campaign manager, dealing with the contracts and giving contracts.

Dr. Rowley: Mr. Speaker, I seek your protection from the wiles of the Member on the other side.

Mr. Speaker: I do not think he is straying. Go ahead.

Mr. M. Ramsaran: I was talking about your campaign manager. Maybe you are talking secrets with your longtime friend. But let me go on. I want the question of Abu Bakr's intervention in the politics of Trinidad and Tobago as an advisor to the PNM answered. Investigate that!

I want an investigation into a high government official who operates an import/export business somewhere in the west. I want that investigated. We have good investigators in this country, you know. I do not want to call people's names under the privilege of Parliament.

Investigate the campaign manager of our corruption buster, Jacqui Lazarus, who is a member of Market Space and who issues contracts to herself, amongst others. In natural justice that is not permitted. Do it with your own funds but not with Government funding. You cannot give contracts to yourself. I want that investigated.

Another one that is making the news and I am asking for an investigation on—I am not saying these things are true, but you are the big investigator.

Mr. Imbert: Me?

Mr. M. Ramsaran: You said that. Investigate the claims that a senior Government Minister demands first-class seats in hapless BWIA for his friends and relatives. Investigate that!

Investigate the 15 per cent Minister who bleeds contractors of their hard-earned money. Investigate that! Investigate the misbehaviour of a Member of Parliament on that side who bludgeoned the Mayor of Chaguanas. Investigate that! Investigate the Minister who walked into a police station and freed Peter Marine who is in charge of a CEPEP contract.

Look at the puzzled look on his face. If he investigates it he would not have that look. He would either get up and say it is true or not true.

My friend reminded me of another one, a Flagstaff incident where I heard that a woman was thrown across the room. Anyway, that might not be so true, but investigate that too. I heard the hon. Attorney General utter a statement this evening. She reported a decision of Cabinet. To whom do you report a decision of Cabinet? She said, “I reported the decision of Cabinet”. To whom and when?

Then another frightening one was the hon. Prime Minister and his statement this evening. He said when they were negotiating Train 4 he intervened and spoke on behalf of his colleagues. That sentence is confusing. Would the hon. Prime Minister explain what he meant by “I spoke on behalf of our colleagues”?

Mr. Manning: Mr. Speaker, when I had indicated that the Government was not prepared to accept any arrangement that did not give a fair return to Trinidad and Tobago, I was talking not just on my own behalf but on behalf of the Government that I have the pleasure of leading at this time.

Mr. M. Ramsaran: Corruption has been in the air the whole afternoon so when I heard him speak on behalf of his colleagues I thought he was trying to—well I asked for an explanation and I thank him for giving me the explanation.

When a government is in office, that government should maintain law and order, provide education for all its citizens, deal with the poor in the country, ensure that there is equity, that when we get the \$1 billion a year from Train 4 in addition to the billions received, we should see fairness in our society. We should look at the social development of our country; at the sporting development; creating avenues for our disabled; having our people employed and fixing the country.

I heard somebody whisper that 45 per cent increase for public servants is too much. I am not making a plug for the Public Services Association but I feel we should negotiate. Because when you look at the figures in Trinidad and Tobago and you look at the public service and their earnings, you would notice that they have been left out of all the increases that took place in Trinidad and Tobago over time. I joined the public service, as well as others, a long time ago, and when you look at the increases in comparison with others; Government Ministers, for example, increased over time.

Mr. Imbert: Not enough.

Mr. M. Ramsaran: Imagine that, not enough. You are saying it yourself, but you have these people who work 25/30 years in the public service and their take-home salary sometimes is \$3,000 per month. They work diligently. We have those in Parliament who are here working late hours, who are dedicated to their jobs; also the members from the Ministry of Finance who have to deal with billions of dollars and when their own salaries are looked at, I do not know what they think.

So when you are talking about Soldado and Train 4, I am calling on behalf of the people of Trinidad and Tobago, our public servants, our farmers, our doctors who are treated so badly by the Member for Diego Martin East—all this bluff about bringing foreign doctors, putting pressure on these people, where are the foreign doctors? What is happening? People today are suffering; they are being blackmailed by this Member for Diego Martin East. We have to treat these people with dignity and when you come to this Parliament and ask for money, I expect to see money not only being spent on promotions of a particular party or to campaign for the local government election or general elections. We expect to see the improvement of the quality of life of the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

This was not shown in this budget debate. Ten years ago \$742 million was the total budget of this country, and they come here and treat it as nobody's business. I want to ask, through you, Mr. Speaker, that we treat our people with dignity; our public servants, farmers, doctors, tradesmen.

When you look at this country and the crime statistics, you would understand that all this would come from people who are not treated properly. We have asked questions about different companies and how they give out their contracts. You would see the imbalance that is taking place. I do not want to repeat all these questions. The National Lotteries Control Board (NLCB) is making news these days. That is why, when I introduced my topic this evening, I talked about the role of the media. The NLCB is a state company that oversees the money of the people of Trinidad and Tobago. This is something that we seem to forget; that these

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things are not the personal property of anybody. This is Government's money; this is taxpayers' money; this is the gamblers' money.

We asked questions and this is what we see. We see Exodus Steel Orchestra—you know, if we do some research, you would find these same names receiving money from the National Carnival Commission (NCC), the Ministry of Community Development and Petrotrin. We have the figures here. These people know how to milk the State. I am asking the Government to look at this carefully. These orchestras are also sponsored, but yet \$125,000 from the NLCB is given to Fonclaire twice a month. You look at this and you see the discrimination.

One that is of particular interest to me is the Customs and Excise Cultural Organization. They have one of the biggest fetes in Trinidad and Tobago at the PSA recreational ground. My friend from Diego Martin Central knows this—Pan and Brass Carnival Wednesday night. Their revenue is hundreds of thousands of dollars. I know that. They applied and received \$30,000 from the NLCB. To do what? It is a private organization, running a private fete. I am calling on the Minister of Finance to cause an investigation to be held into the revenue and the expenditure of that fete which received \$30,000 of Government's money. If it were their own private thing, no problem. I knew the early promoter of that fete, a former customs officer who has gone to the great beyond, who my friend from Diego Martin Central would know, was the founder of that fete. The Member for Tunapuna would know him. In the first few years they lost money from that fete, and today they are making money. When you go to that fete you have to be there at 5 o'clock the night before to book your tickets. Today they are receiving \$30,000 of the NLCB's money.

I am calling on the Minister of Finance and the Prime Minister to investigate this. I have no problem with a crime prevention youth club receiving a small pittance, but when we have these private groups and organizations taking Government funds, I have a problem with that. That should be investigated.

As I said before, you have a murder a day and Government is responsible. When we look at our budget again, money was removed from the Ministry of National Security. Maybe there is a good cause. Maybe the Minister of Planning—the only time we get his attention is when we say “Jacqui”, other than that he does not listen at all. “Jacqui”. He still is not listening.

The fact is the Minister of Planning and Development is supposed to tell us why was money removed from the Ministry of National Security and Rehabilitation. If we go to today's paper, I think it is, they talk about what is

happening in the Piarco airport area, where they cannot guarantee—something about the fire station is in trouble. I understand they spoke to the hon. Prime Minister asking him to assist them and he has betrayed their trust.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, you have about two minutes of your speaking time left, but a matter has been brought to my attention referring to the point of order raised by the Member for Diego Martin West, and I am reliably informed that earlier on in your contribution you said words to the effect that—referring to the Member for Diego Martin West as a corruption buster and now he has become the most corrupt Member on that side. Now I can check the *Hansard* but I am reliably informed that is what you said.

If you can recall saying that I would ask you now to apologize to the Member and to the House. If it is that you do not recall saying that, I would have to check the *Hansard*.

Mr. M. Ramsaran: I am so guided, Mr. Speaker. Let me apologize if I said that, but what I intended to say, the idea in my head was, we had this corruption buster who might now go down in history as being one of the most corrupt of Ministers.

Mr. Speaker: Are you apologizing to the Member and to the House?

Mr. M. Ramsaran: Yes.

Mr. Speaker: Okay.

Mr. M. Ramsaran: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I want to put on record that the Minister of Planning and Development should come to this Parliament and talk to us about what is happening in the Ministry of National Security, because here we have in the variation of appropriation, money taken away from that ministry. I want to put on record an article in the *Sunday Guardian* of June 15, 2003 by Desmond Jutla from Maraval, which is headlined:

“Average citizen’s luck and chance”

Mr. Speaker, someone spoke to me recently and said that what we should do in this country if you are below or above average, you write “average citizen” and walk around so you might be safe. I continue to quote:

“On Saturday my wife, my daughter and I visited a shopping area we have come to quite enjoy at Valpark Shopping Plaza.

Walking through the lanes at about 3.15 pm we were struck by a sort of hushed, shocked quality—people standing around in small groups staring; a

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shop we often sauntered through with its doors closed. As we stopped to buy a plant we found out why. Not half an hour earlier, right where we stood, bandits with guns had run through. A chilling scenario went through my mind: that we'd got there half an hour earlier and encountered these two running men with guns; that we were in the way of escape; that a gun had gone off; that my wife or my daughter had been shot; that my world had ended. Not with a whimper, but a bang. It can be that simple."

Mr. Speaker: The speaking time of the hon. Member for Chaguanas has expired. Before you move the motion, hon. Member, I would just like to pause a minute for the technicians at the audio department to correct an error. They would not be too long.

[Short pause]

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

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. M. Ramsaran: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would continue reading this into the record.

"I could not pull myself out of this dark reverie for hours. And, the day after, I read in the paper where my Prime Minister said 'the incident at Movie Towne did not affect the average citizen'.

Now I am in a constant manic inner dialogue—if I drive faster to where I'm going will that save my family? Or do I drive slower. What is the safe time to be anywhere? Perhaps at lunch today in a mall somewhere I shall be at the correct spot where a bullet cuts through air—not aimed specifically at me, of course. And if it were to pass through me at just the right junction I would personally have no more problems but suppose the unspeakable happened?

Suppose it happened to my wife as she shops in a grocery or my daughter in her classroom.

Mr. Prime Minister, nothing is impossible. For one quiet moment try to find that facility which most humans enjoy—it's called imagination. Suppose for one moment of blinding illumination that not you, but your dear wife or your beloved sons were accidentally eliminated by random violence; close your eyes and make it happen—that's how 'the average citizen' feels. And the unspeakable happens all the time in our country. We are all living by luck and chance.

Please, Mr. Prime Minister, no more fancy political white washes, no more sidestepping the issue. The ‘average citizen’ wants to see something positive happening that will make us feel safe or at least, safer. It need have no stylish name. I do not want to believe, as I do now, that metaphysically, a hot piece of metal is already flying through the air awaiting the right day or night to pass through delicate tissue that I love.”

Mr. Speaker, for somebody to put pen to paper and write this article, what is this country coming to? Just above that, as I mentioned earlier, you have the headline: “Police inaction on Abu Bakr”. This article—I do not want to read it again—asked for something to happen. There was a radio programme, as we all know—of course, it is circumstantial evidence, but the writer here is asking why no investigation was made to those remarks made by the driver of PBP 4.

Then again the Prime Minister’s utterances would have led to this headline on the front page of the *Sunday Guardian* of June 15, 2003 which states: “Collateral damage”. Do you remember that famous statement that our Prime Minister made after those murders at Movie Towne?

Another headline on the same front page reads: “Baby among 8 in Laventille basketball court crossfire”—collateral damage. This is what is happening in our country. On page 3 of the same newspaper it states: “Another day, another murder”, then another headline, “13 murders in 14 days”. If you check today I think it was 15 in 16 days yesterday.

On page 3 of the *Sunday Guardian* of June 15 an editorial thinks that the Prime Minister was on the right track when he said he was going to probe the El Socorro beatings. It states:

“PM to probe El Socorro beatings

Terror visited residents of El Socorro for a second time after a group of men claiming to be police stormed the community, raining blows on villagers on Friday night.

Prime Minister Patrick Manning has asked the Minister of National Security Howard Chin Lee to investigate and report his findings by today.

MP Dr. Fuad Khan is now calling for more police patrols in the area.”

7.45 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, this is what is happening. Our country is living in fear. My friend from Caroni Central said it the other day and this has really remained in my

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mind. I want to put it on the *Hansard*. He was speaking at a meeting when he said that Trinidadians are becoming numb to these headlines:

“Another day, another murder”

I would like to put those things on the record, not that I want to take any credit for this but this is something that I really want to do. I am glad the hon. Prime Minister is here.

“As of yesterday, there have been 13 murders for the first 14 days of June, averaging one murder per day.

On Friday night...”

And this record is outdated.

“...the overall murder rate moved to 108 with the shooting death of labourer Mark Granger.”

PROCEDURAL MOTION

The Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley): Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this House continue to sit until the conclusion of the debate on the current Bill before the House.

Question put and agreed to.

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Mr. M. Ramsaran: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

“June 2: Jerryl Wiltshire - shot while sleeping at his Nelson Street Apartment.

June 3: Demanie Him Stoute, 18 - shot dead while sleeping at Laventille home.”

Where are the Members of Parliament for Laventille?

“June 4: Jillian Bowen, 31 - shot dead at Movie Towne”

Unfortunately this is not a movie.

“June 7: PC Derrick Nelson - shot five times by bandits who robbed him.”

I am a bit concerned about the silence on this one. Mr. Speaker, a police constable protecting a judge, an employee of the Government, and nothing was said about that. PC Derrick Nelson shot five times and bandits robbed him.

“June 8: Daniel Paul, 19 - shot dead while liming at Nelson Street. June 9: Clarence Brizan, 23 - dies at hospital after being ambushed and beaten by a gang of men.

June 9: Isaac Joseph, two - cuffed to death at his Cocorite home. ”

Mr. Speaker, are you noticing the ages, 23, 31, 19, 23, 18 and 2? Is this something to laugh at, Member for Diego Martin Central?

“June 10: Dane Mitchell, 18, Dayon Reyes, 18 - both fatally shot while walking in Maloney Gardens.

June 11: Anslem Regis, 43 - shot in head while plying taxi for hire along Pinto Road, Arima.

June 12: Joseph Matthew, 49 - stabbed in neck following an argument with man.

June 12: Don George, 27 - shot seven times at Picton Road, Laventille.

June 13: Mark Granger, 21 - shot while watching basketball game.”

Mr. Speaker, what is instructive in reading this is that those people were not shot in gang warfare; they were not shot in fight for turf: shot while sleeping; after a movie; Derrick Nelson was shot and robbed, shot dead while liming; beating by a gang of men—well, maybe this one—ambushed; cuffed to death.

Mr. Speaker, when we come to this Parliament and we see under Schedule II, Part II, First Column, Head 22, Ministry of National Security and Rehabilitation reduced by \$1.49 million, we ask ourselves the question: Is it that the Minister cannot ask for that money to remain in his ministry? Is it that he cannot fight for the money to remain in his ministry—as my good friend the Member for Ortoire/Mayaro said—to have things done, to fix the fire stations; to fix the police service; to fix the police stations? I put this fairly and squarely on the back of the hon. Prime Minister. You cannot have one person holding the country to ransom. To be a good minister—and we all know by now, even the newcomers would understand that—you have to fight your colleagues. You have to talk to the Minister of Planning and Development—if he listens to you—depending on which side he is on. You have to get resources on your side to effect what you want to probe. But what we are seeing in this country is that the Minister of National Security and Rehabilitation is not in charge of his ministry. I think the Prime Minister should be culpable.

I have been getting some phone calls from my friends in Port of Spain who have been telling me that vagrancy is once more on the increase. Vagrants have now stormed back into Tamarind Square. We heard of Adam Smith Square last week. [*Interruption*] On today's newspaper:

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“Homeless back at Tamarind Square”

I remember my good friend from Laventille East/Morvant accused me of doing something that was not too legal with vagrants that is why they were less in numbers on the streets. What is happening today? Maybe I should advise the Minister of Social Development what to do to get rid of the vagrants.

[MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker, on another issue—and I am asking the hon. Prime Minister to let us govern Trinidad and Tobago for a change; let us forget the mamaguy thing; let us forget this politicizing; let us forget: “We go beat them in Central; we go beat them in East;” let us try to focus on the job at hand.

“Child abuse takes control of Trinidad and Tobago”

[*Interruption*] Another headline. Good morning, Member for Port of Spain North/St Ann’s West. Have you had a good sleep? Mr. Speaker:

“Child abuse taking control of T&T”

This is what we have to put in place. When we were in government on that side we set up Citizens in Action to Restore the Environment (CARE) but nothing has happened since then. The laws are there. [*Interruption*] We could not do everything in six years. I am asking the Prime Minister to please look at these social problems. We could deal with them. Trinidad is just a small country—and I listened to your statement this evening; one point something billion per year. Think about the homeless! Think about the children!

Another issue that I want to talk about is the Ministry of Housing. Mr. Deputy Speaker, what indicators would you use to place housing projects in different areas? You would do a survey. In my opinion you do not just put houses for votes. You would look at the indicators! You would look at if there is an infrastructure around that would deal with employment! You would look at how our young people would fare when they go to live in those areas. We do not want to create more Maloneys and La Horquettas—not that I am against those people. The fact is that they have been put there without any infrastructure: no sports grounds, no employment. If you call URP employment, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are in trouble. I have nothing against the people. [*Interruption*] Member for Arouca South, please; this is not the time for that. [*Interruption*]

[*Mr. Deputy Speaker pounds the gavel*]

This is the time to look at our development holistically. You know you are going to put some houses in St. Joseph, but when you look at the whole question of marginal seats—

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Mr. Deputy Speaker, would the Member give way please? He is misleading the House.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Minister, the Member has not given way.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: He is not giving way. He is giving incorrect information.

Mr. M. Ramsaran: Correct me “nah”, I would accept. I am big enough to accept. Write it for me. We have people in St. Joseph, Curepe, when you put 5,000 people there to live what are you creating? Those are the things that we have to look at. I have a problem with that. Look at the areas in which they want to have those housing schemes; and there could not be a better word—scheme. They are looking at San Fernando where it is already populated to the hilt. They are looking for a little narrow strip of land to build on. Today I read in the newspapers again where somebody in San Fernando is protesting against that.

When we come with a budget—and this is a budget, it might be a variation—we should justify what we are doing and when we do that we could applaud the budget. We could leave here happy. Nobody on that side got up to justify or not justify what happened in their ministry. How could we run a Government like that? Is that all the Member for Diego Martin Central wants to do, to go home early? Probably he would ask Members on that side not to speak; I do not know.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when we come to do this type of debate—we on this side do not have the state resources as they would have, we do not have the office at this time to deal with problems—we want to hear what is happening in the ministries. When we ask questions we have to get the answers. Today the Minister of Social Development told us what is happening in that ministry and we appreciate that. But had we not asked questions we would not have known, and sometimes we do not get the truth. Mr. Deputy Speaker, we really have to put our country on course to recovery.

I have a problem with our children's future right now; there are homeless children; children being murdered; children being out there aimlessly and children not being trained. I was looking for some answers from the Ministers in this budget to see what we could really do to improve the quality of life of our people. Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have statements being made inside this Parliament and statements being made outside but what I have noticed, over the last couple of months, what is happening in Trinidad and Tobago, as far as the media is concerned, everything is bacchanal and everything is negative in this society. The issues raised on this side would not be in the newspaper. If someone wants to make the newspaper that person has to rant and rave, otherwise nothing would happen.

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Mr. Deputy Speaker, just as I wind up, there is an article written by John Verity—

“The next coup”

Imagine an article headlined “The next coup”. I would not read the entire article; it is a bit long. I would just quote part. It is from Saturday’s *Guardian*, dated June 14, 2003. The article says:

“After six years of national peace, prosperity and stability which saw much dilapidated Police infrastructure renovated or replaced, there occurred, on December 24, 2001 an announcement, the consequences of which still reverberate throughout the nation. The same PNM, which the Police had preserved with neither recognition nor gratitude in 1970 and a surrogate, under which they endured loss of life and property in 1990, had been returned to office by that same surrogate.

Significantly, in the preceding deadlocked election the PNM did not enjoy the majority support. In desperation to justify purloined power, therefore, they subjected, and continue to subject, the nation to an expensive obscenity of vilification, persecution and racial polarization against the incumbent government they usurped.

The Police Service, initially, appeared willing tools in this process. One can but speculate on the level of that support, 18 months later! Not only did the Manning PNM indulge in the aforementioned orgy of vilification but embraced the unrepentant and unpunished terrorists of 1990. As a result of the latter combination, the PNM, in a less than transparent election in October 2002, were able to ‘legitimize’, by a slim margin, their status as legally...elected administration.”

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this sums up what is happening in Trinidad and Tobago today. I mentioned on another occasion and at another place that when we sow the seeds of discord; when we sow the seeds of discrimination; when we sow the seeds of racial disharmony and when we sow the seeds of violence, we would but reap that. I want to put on record this evening that it is not too late to stop this nonsense. If the Prime Minister could get up one morning and—as somebody said a brainwave hit him or more than just that a steel wave—say to the nation enough is enough; we know the criminals—because he has admitted that he knows them. He said that an average citizen must not be worried; that there is something going on among certain people and that we are okay. He probably knows that the average citizen is safe. Could he get up and say: “I am going to deal with those

gang leaders and community leaders and I am going to make our country safe?" If he does that maybe we on this side would vote for him.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, at this time we are living in fear. I know what the Member for Arouca South was going to say because she has said it before. This place has no slums. I disagree with ghettos in Trinidad and Tobago. When I was Minister I denied that, and I would deny it today. We do not have ghettos in Trinidad and Tobago. We have pockets of poverty and we could fight this poverty if we put our minds, our thoughts together and our moneys in the right place and forgot the electioneering. Let us build this country. Let us not say who would start the Caribbean Court of Justice.

Mr. Manning: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I thank the hon. Member for Chaguanas for giving way. I asked for the floor because I was very impressed by what he said and perhaps I would like to ask him to answer a question. We agree with you. Are you now prepared to support the very essential legislation that is before the Parliament to improve the management and operation of the police service?

Mr. M. Ramsaran: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I like the craft of the hon. Prime Minister. I could answer you in a variety of ways and try to be smart with foolishness, as you would say, but when you look at this country—and I am talking about social problems, child abuse—this is my view, not of my Members. Nobody passed laws as the UNC did. I do not believe in laws alone without having the infrastructure in place. We must make a holistic arrangement. We must work with the different ministries. As the Prime Minister you are in the best position to do that.

When we make statements about national insurance, older people are waiting on that and the whole country is in an expectant mode, looking to develop our nation. So, Mr. Speaker, I would like to answer the Prime Minister in this way, once I can see in my mind—for example, let us talk about crime for a minute. You believe that passing legislation would stop crime. I believe that it must be holistic. We look at the Ministry of National Security and Rehabilitation. We look at a Minister, of course, who is capable. We look at the enforcement tools.

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Mr. Manning: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. Member for giving way again. I think that he is misunderstanding me. I was making specific reference to legislation that was developed over a three and a half year period in collaboration with Government and Opposition, both parties had already agreed to it. It is a system that the legislation seeks to put in place to do precisely what he is talking about. I wonder if we could count on his support.

Mr. M. Ramsaran: Sure, I am always willing to speak with you. I could meet with you privately and we could have a discussion. [*Interruption*] You see, we are still being political. Let us see how we could do something holistically. You could have stood up and said: “Okay, we are going to make our police officers—” I have an article from one of the newspapers talking about the bad elements in the police service. We have to face the reality and to do this, yes, I agree with you, both parties must come together because one cannot do it alone. We have the perception out there that we would do something for that portion of the people and something else for the other portion. So if parties could really have serious dialogue, I have no problem with that, but it must be a holistic plan not only legislation as a means by itself but all together, and I am using crime as an example.

We have the Attorney General's office, which is responsible for drafting the legislation and we have the Ministry of National Security and Rehabilitation, which must be beefed up and given the tools and wherewithal. We also have the social development side starting with our children. I know it would not happen overnight, but the signals, for example Trinidad and Tobago signed the UNICEF Declaration on the Rights of the Child. Since we demitted office, I do not know what has happened because we have not had the Minister of Social Development tell us what is happening. Where are we going? How are we developing all the strategies? What are the follow-ups? If we do not do this, with deference to what the Prime Minister said, we would not go anywhere.

We have to come here and discuss it because it is no good coming here this evening talking—the Member for Diego Martin East got up and attacked my colleague from Oropouche and talked about arbitration and who is corrupt and who is not corrupt; and who is hiding what. Then the Attorney General came here and made a statement, which I feel was unfortunate. You come to Parliament to debate something; then do that. Do not just come here and make a statement about something and then walk out of the Parliament. [*Interruption*] You see, it is response, response and then response, that is how the Parliament is because the Member speaking first would not have all the facts; the Attorney General would reply and then another Member would try to get certain things clarified.

The hon. Prime Minister has called for dignity in Parliament. Mr. Speaker, today the Government has wasted an opportunity to have the Ministers talk about their performances for the past year; they could have told us how the \$18 billion was spent or is being spent; the justification for the \$742 million increase; the justification for varying the appropriation, so we on this side and the public would not only have the headline tomorrow “FW Oil versus the AG”, it would be much

more than that. The local government election is in the air and had the Member for Diego Martin Central had his thinking cap on he would have been making a contribution this evening; maybe campaigning for the local government election. He is the Minister responsible. We are not seeing this.

The Parliament is the highest lawmaker in the land and we are the ones to really carry this country forward, so I was disappointed today. When we were in Government we did that. We responded one to one. We talked about what we were doing. We responded to our critics on the other side. When the shadow ministers asked questions, we answered but today that is not happening and I feel very disappointed. We have come to the Parliament to debate an Appropriation (Amdt.) Bill and as we all know—I am supposing now—that had it not been a constitutional requirement maybe it would not have happened because of the lackadaisical attitude by the Government.

The Minister tried to outline the introduction of the Bill but I thought we would have heard much more. I would like to hear the Minister of Works and Transport talk about the increase of nineteen-something million dollars and what he is going to do with it. We would have liked to ask whether he would be spending some in Chaguanas but unfortunately we did not get that opportunity.

Mr. Speaker, as my contribution comes to an end, I would like to see that—and I always criticize money bills because when money bills come to the Parliament we behave, sometimes, as if the money belongs to us. Let us throw that out the window. This is Government funding we are talking about. This is the money of the taxpayers of this country. I would like to see when the *Hansard* is read later on that people feel justified. This country is the only one in the world that would debate a money bill like this—a budgetary allocation of \$742 million; taxpayers' money.

If the Minister had his way we would have been out of here long ago, I am sure you would agree with me, but we have to carry it on. Maybe it is not too late; we could continue until about 2 o'clock tomorrow morning to hear what the Minister has to say. I have been a minister for a couple of years and I know without funding we cannot do much more. If I were in the shoes of the Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs, I would have been disappointed. Also the Members for Arima and Tunapuna, with children leaving institutions and the myriad of problems—

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, I would allow you one minute to wind up.

Mr. M. Ramsaran: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, that one minute would be used once more in saying that we had no justification for the adjustment

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[MR. RAMSARAN]

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to our budget. There were reasons put forward. And if I may speak for Members on this side, we would not be supporting the Bill because of that.

Thank you very much.

Dr. Adesh Nanan (*Tabaquite*): Mr. Speaker, I enter this debate on this Finance (Supplementation and Variation of Appropriation) Bill to deal with a few issues. This Bill shows, for the National Solid Waste Company Limited, an increase of \$11.9 million.

Mr. Speaker, \$11.9 million to the Solid Waste Management Company Limited—[*Interruption*] No it has nothing to do with Community-based Environmental Protection and Enhancement Programme (CEPEP), it has gone beyond that. In the budget debate we heard about a national solid waste management system; a policy document which was circulated had that particular proposal. What has happened? As somebody said, we are six months into the financial year and we are seeing a deterioration of the environment. I want the hon. Prime Minister, Member for San Fernando East, to take note. I do not want to speak about CEPEP but I would mention it in passing because CEPEP is damaging the environment. While we are not against the programme in terms of providing job opportunities, we have to understand that the environment is very important—I am glad the Member for Arima is here—for tourism. We have heard in this debate about the situation with crime.

The Prime Minister said that if you are an average citizen you should not be worried. I want to inform him, however, that when we are dealing with this particular appropriation—Member for Diego Martin Central—we would see that the Minister of Public Utilities and the Environment, Sen. The Hon. Rennie Dumas, who comes to this Parliament to answer questions, is not doing his job. He is not paying attention in his Ministry. He does not know what is going on in the environment. We have to take that Minister to task. He comes to Parliament and tells untruths. He came to this Parliament when a question was asked on a supplemental response and said that thousands of dogs have been picked up; thousands of dead animals. Today he comes in this Parliament and says that CEPEP picks up the additional. We cannot take that from Ministers! Ministers must come here with facts! We cannot treat this Parliament with this kind of discontent! [*Desk thumping*] We would not take that from Ministers because they have the information! The Permanent Secretaries could provide the information to Ministers.

Mr. Speaker, in fact, I have 11 written questions on this Order Paper almost two to three months now and they cannot come up with a policy in terms of

answering written questions. This is what this Parliament is being reduced to. I want the Prime Minister to understand that the environment is of great importance.

He spoke about LIAT. In the Ministry of Finance we see that EC \$12.5 million is estimated for LIAT. I want to ask the Prime Minister here now, is this a surreptitious plan to scuttle BWIA? Is it a plan by the PNM Government to scuttle BWIA to give LIAT this kind of subvention so that they would be able to house-pad with the Minister of Housing for regional integration? The Prime Minister must answer that question! *[Interruption]* Mr. Speaker, that is why this debate is of importance. Is regional integration not a smokescreen for house padding in the country? We will not stand for that! I do not want to get sidetracked with regional integration because I want to deal with the environment.

What we are seeing in this country is a total deterioration of the environment. I came to this Parliament and I asked, as a matter on the adjournment, about the Forres Park Landfill and the Member for Arouca North, in November last year, gave a reply stating that they would deal with the issue. Today the issue is totally out of his hands. I do not know if he has given up that ministry in terms of dealing with the matter at the Forres Park Landfill. Mr. Speaker, you have to understand that you cannot have a country—

[Minister Narine rises]

I am not giving way right now. *[Interruption]* Mr. Speaker, you cannot have a country that—The Prime Minister spoke about Train 4 but I want to ask him a question with respect to his statement this afternoon—I am not debating the statement I just want to ask him—*[Interruption]* I know you would answer me. I know the hon. Prime Minister spoke about Prof. Ken Julien and Sen. The Hon. Dr. Lenny Saith being two of the people; one heading the inter-ministerial and the other one was the technical team. They also have business in the energy sector and I hope that they have declared their interests. I do not want to go into the statement, but another issue the Prime Minister spoke about was the local contribution and segregating for local contributors. I hope that is not for the energy business sector interest of Sen. The Hon. Dr. Lenny Saith and Prof. Ken Julien. I have just said that to you in passing, Mr. Speaker.

I want to deal with Forres Park Landfill and the entire mismanagement of the solid waste system in this country. The Minister of Local Government and the Minister of Public Utilities and the Environment, I do not know what they are doing in their ministries. Are they only on tour throughout the country? You must take notice, Mr. Prime Minister. You must understand that the people in this country

elected your Government. You have said that you have the majority. I must say that we have seen, over the last six months, a total deterioration of all the services.

I asked a question today with respect to T&TEC, the Minister came here and told me that it was 93.7 per cent in terms of efficiency. I know that is not true! The Minister should check his facts! I asked him about electoral districts and geographical areas where there is loss taking place and where there is theft of electricity, he said he does not have that information, that the percentage is just about 1.7 per cent. That is absolutely untrue! The Minister must check his information before he comes to Parliament.

The issue of local government is an issue that would come up in this election. The Forres Park Landfill, the Beetham Landfill and the Gunapo Landfill—the one that you closed—those are not supposed to be existing today as they are. [Interruption] Mr. Speaker, could you protect me from that Member over there? [Laughter]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Minister of Local Government, the Member for Tabaquite is desirous of protection; although I do not find that you are irritating him, he has asked for protection, so perhaps you could lend an ear.

Dr. A. Nanan: Mr. Speaker, the Forres Park Landfill was supposed to be managed in a certain way and we saw, over the last few months in the dry season, a complete mismanagement of that landfill and the Beetham Landfill. That was why there were so many fires and all that smoke in Port of Spain. Every time one comes to Port of Spain one is engulfed in smoke. What are you doing? There is this massive amount of smoke in the city; you also have smoke emanating from the Forres Park Landfill damaging the health of individuals on the other side of the highway. Thousands of people are being affected and nothing is being done. They would come in Parliament and respond and say: We had a meeting where we discussed this, that and the other. Mr. Speaker, the situation has gotten worse.

That is because the Government is not paying attention. The Minister of Public Utilities and the Environmental is not doing his job. His job is to work together with the Environment Management Authority to ensure the environment is taken care of. It is a simple exercise. The United National Congress government put the laws in place; there is an Environmental Management Act, and we have put the other rules and regulations. The Attorney General came to this Parliament this evening; she did not produce a legislative agenda; they had almost a year and a half in Government but the Water Pollution Rules are still with the Attorney General. She is the head of the Legislative Review Committee. Mr. Speaker, the Water Pollution Rules are still with the Attorney General.

The Prime Minister, in the budget statement, flippantly passed through the Beverage Container Bill—he did not even know what he was speaking about. That Beverage Container Bill is still before the Attorney General! And we saw recently when rain fell, the whole of Chaguaramas had bottles all over the place. That was supposed to be taken care of by the Beverage Container Bill. They have to put a simple tax on bottles and set up a system of refund. But the Attorney General keeps the Bill in her office and would not bring it to Parliament. Why, I do not know. Is there some other interest? Tell us, Mr. Prime Minister. If you do not know ask the Attorney General. This Beverage Container Bill should be law by now.

The Water Pollution Rules; the Air Pollution Rules, they are still holding that. I want the Prime Minister to know that the Kyoto Protocol that deals with the emission gases, the hydrocarbons and the greenhouse gases, the United States of America is now moving towards signing that Kyoto Protocol and we have to be concerned. When we talk about Train 4 and the kinds of emission that is going to come from that industrial site at Point Lisas—I produced a question to you, Mr. Speaker, but for some reason you ruled it out of order. I want to tell you, however, that there is a US \$10.95 million programme that is taking place. It is part of a World Bank project. It is to deal with global warming. When I asked that question here it was ruled out of order. The citizens of this country must know what the Trinidad and Tobago Government is doing about global warming and about getting some of this funding. The Global Environment Facility gives a grant for the Caricom. The Caricom Secretariat is managing this grant, a total of \$10.95 million. The actual body that is doing the managing is sited in Belize. We want to know how you are going to deal with global warming.

Mr. Ramnath: Member, could you give way? I just want to inform my colleague that I serve on the Caribbean Community Advisory Council that developed all the proposals for the Caribbean Community [*Inaudible*] Centre in Belize and we are about to draft a representative name from Trinidad and Tobago on that body. So I could talk to you a bit about the details of that some time. [*Laughter*]

Dr. A. Nanan: Thank you, Member for Couva South. The reason I raised that here, Mr. Speaker, is because it was a question that I posed and they did not want to answer. I spoke about the Global Environment Facility and that grant funding.

Mr. Speaker, the national solid waste management system is not rocket science, we left it on the table of the Minister of Public Utilities and the Environment. It is nothing political! The management of the environment has nothing to do with politics. If you are looking for a 2020 vision, tourism and the

environment go hand-in-hand, whether it is UNC, NAR or the PNM. The environment must be considered as part of your tourism thrust. Whether you have LIAT, whether it is BWIA, whatever you are using as your carrier, you must have that as a part of your environmental outlook.

The Global Environmental Facility grant funding, the particular programme is a five-year programme. When I looked here it burned my heart to see, the Member for Diego Martin Central—I do not know if it was you or the Member for Diego Martin West—removing \$1 million out of a two million-dollar allocation for setting up the National Parks, Wildlife and Conservation Authority. I know the Member for Toco/Manzanilla—I do not know if he does not make proper representation when he goes to the Ministry of Finance, or the Ministry of Public Utilities and the Environment. The Environment Minister he is not performing, especially in terms of setting up the Authority. Now the National Parks, Wildlife and Conservation Authority was supposed to be part of legislation to come to this Parliament.

Now, Mr. Prime Minister, Member for San Fernando East, when you came and you said you could water-down the Bill and pass it—you can do the same thing with this National Parks, Wildlife and Conservation Authority Bill. You do not have to wait for legislation to set up any kind of structure in the Ministry of Public Utilities and the Environment in the Forestry Division. You could have that unit which could manage the park system in this country. I do not know if the Attorney General does not want to use that kind of avenue to manage parks because the National Parks, Wildlife and Conservation Authority would be to put your friends and family; because the National Parks, Wildlife and Conservation Authority would be people coming in from the outside whereas the unit in the Ministry of Public Utilities and the Environment, in the Forestry Division, would be part of the public service. Whatever it is, whether you set up that unit or you set up an authority, you would still have to manage the parks. I know the Member for Toco/Manzanilla in terms of Matura—

I want to give some history to this Parliament in terms of the area we are dealing with. It is not irrelevant because it is part of the adjusted allocation in the Ministry of Public Utilities and the Environment. We identified—and we did not do it by guess—Matura, Maracas and Main Ridge in Tobago as three national parks of interest. I want to give you the history because it is important to know what facilitated this particular selection. There was a study conducted by the Caribbean Forest Conservation Association of Matura, Maracas and Main Ridge—*[Interruption]* Do not try to distract me, Mr. Minister. The criteria included for those national parks are ecological and conservation factors and

socio-economic values. Matura, Maracas and Main Ridge in Tobago, in terms of employment in those areas—we see CEPEP coming through the Solid Waste Management Company Limited but those are the areas that could benefit from a properly organized national parks structure.

I know the Member for Toco/Manzanilla would agree with me in terms of Matura. For two years the allocation was there and nothing has been done. We see here again there is \$1 million to identify sites. We know that at the end of this financial year the Member for Diego Martin Central would come to this Parliament and report that no money was used from that reduced allocation. *[Interruption]* I am not attacking the Member for Diego Martin Central but that is what would happen when he looks at the allocation and then he would have to come with an explanation, say probably rainfall was high at that particular time and they could not build anything.

Mr. Speaker, Main Ridge in Tobago came first because of its high ecological and socio-economic values. The northern range in Trinidad was second; although it has lower accessibility and economic viability, it has high ecological value. Matura and Maracas Forest Reserves; Matura is 8,200 hectares and Maracas is 8,000 hectares. Those two areas represent the last remaining intact forest in the northern range.

Mr. Speaker, we heard them speak about crime in the debate. Part of the designated Maracas national park would be trails throughout the park where people could walk and observe the diversity of species in this particular park. The Member for San Fernando East, in terms of the crime situation in this country, tourism, environment and crime—We cannot have a country where people are afraid to come out of their homes. How could we invite people to come to our country and ask them to go on those trails and participate in our eco-tourism plan when we are afraid to come out of our homes? We have to take cognizance of the fact that we have to deal with crime, whether you have to move the Minister of National Security and Rehabilitation and put a new Minister despite a local government election. You have to bite the bullet, Mr. Prime Minister. You must do something with respect to the Ministry or the Minister of National Security and Rehabilitation. We cannot have sporadic shootings taking place in different parts of the country as if we are in a situation like Guyana, or as the Prime Minister said, somewhere in New York.

Mr. Ramnath: They have to remove the Prime Minister.

Dr. A. Nanan: Well, I am not going to say that, the population would determine that.

Mr. Speaker, we are one of the competitors in the Western Hemisphere in terms of the Atlantic Train 4. We are going to be number one in terms of LNG. [Interruption] I know that he is having delusions of that. Mr. Speaker, I want to tell the Prime Minister that—they were manufacturing semi-conductors in Costa Rica and the Member for Diego Martin Central would be aware of that—political stability of a country is very important and he knows that. They could pull out any time. If there is any threat to an installation they could move. We are not the only people producing natural gas. So around this entire investment portfolio, you have to manage crime; you have to manage the environment and you have to manage tourism. [*Desk thumping*]

The Member for Diego Martin Central would say that tourism is 2 per cent of the economy—3 per cent for the most—but it is the ripple effect of tourism and he knows that, in terms of the hospitality industry. It is almost 40 to 50 per cent in terms of the business sector. So when you are attracting investments into your country, you must position your country so that when you go abroad you have to tell people—you cannot lie!

The Minister of Foreign Affairs went on a trip; he came back and the advisory intensified although something different was read here. Those large countries do not care! It is the competition that is taking place in the Caribbean and internationally. Malaysia, Singapore—you have the Asian side fighting for the same tourism market, all over, so you know that. You have the Seychelles, where have positioned their entire country; they have turned around their entire country in terms of tourism. They have changed the whole market and that is why I asked the Member for Diego Martin Central, in terms of the contributions that we are seeing in the tourism marketing plan—I want him to know that he could put how much money he wants in that tourism market if we do not improve the product we cannot go forward and he would see that. When I speak of the product I speak of the infrastructure. That is why when they took the million dollars out of that ministry—the Minister of Public Utilities and the Environment was not even aware—I do not know if he even read about this national park plan. History is important.

Mr. Speaker, let us go back to those three parks, although you might say it is an irrelevant part of the debate it is important in terms of the environment and tourism thrust. Those three areas were agriculture based, and you know that, in terms of the estate composition, cocoa, coffee and citrus. What we have seen from a survey taken of Maracas and Matura is that there are private landowners, freehold lands, leasehold lands and State lands. There is the situation in those parks where people are squatting, so there must be some management plan to deal

with these things. It does not just happen like that; you have to plan. That is why I asked about the grant from the World Bank for the Global Environment Facility (GEF), and whether it was going to be tapped. The response, however, was that they were not able to get the GEF funding.

Mr. Speaker, it does not happen like that, you have to make representations. The Member for Diego Martin Central is aware that you have to produce a document and that takes a long time. The advantage that the Minister of Public Utilities and the Environment has—and I would tell you because it is for the country to go forward—is that there was a draft proposal document done by the World Bank because there was supposed to be, before this, a loan for that same National Parks and Wildlife Authority. It is there and it is very easy to access this Global Environment Facility grant funding to help with the management of national parks. You need that kind of input in terms of the investment in that sector. I cannot see why they are not moving ahead. The legislation, yes, is a problem but you could work around that. You could identify those parks.

The Certificate of Environmental Clearance Rules—as I speak about that I just want to find something out from the Member for Diego Martin West but he is not here. I have asked a question about the Certificate of Environmental Clearance Rules and, of course, the Minister came here and said that everything that I had asked was in the National Register. I do not have time to go and look in the National Register, but what came up here—and I would ask the Member, because if I remember correctly in the Certificate of Environmental Clearance Orders there is a whole listing of areas that require that certificate—in 2003, CC No. 425, the applicant; Sharon Rowley, Activity; residential in Tobago. I just want to know. For one to apply for a Certificate of Environmental Clearance it would not be for a simple house; it has to be clearance of hectares of land. So, I do not know. I have to speculate. [*Interruption*] Sharon Rowley; what is the connection? There may not be any but I just want to know! Surprisingly it came up like that. I did not have to go and check the register. This is what the Certificate of Environmental Clearance Rules does. I see that group having a problem with the same Train 4 in terms of that certificate and making a big issue about it.

Mr. Speaker, the environment is important. I was speaking about those three parks, I do not know how many of you all know; I am sure the Member for Tunapuna is aware, because he knows about Tobago, and that Main Ridge Park in Tobago is the oldest— The Main Ridge National Park is the oldest legal forested documented area in the world. You have that kind of reserve in Tobago and you

have those people in the Ministry of Public Utilities and the Environment sitting there and doing nothing about that. You have an attraction; you have that kind of magnetism and that is documented.

There is the Convention on Biological Diversity in terms of 365 different species in this country. That is the kind of magnetism we have people coming to see in this country. We have people leaving all over the world to come to the Asa Wright Centre to see our birds. We have the ecological niches in this country that we need to make use of. I know the Minister of Culture and Tourism, will say 9/11 has caused the decline, but you have to use your creative ideas. It is not plagiarism if you go to another country to see how they are setting up their tourism product. You could do the same here. It does not take rocket science. They are developing turtle farms now and I am sure that is nothing new, but that is something that we could utilize. We could protect our leather back turtles and we could have turtles for the market if we want to eat turtles as part of our menu. There are creative ways to do it. You do not have to spend millions of dollars. That is why when I saw this three hundred and something million-dollar plan for tourism, I had to ask the Member for Diego Martin Central the question, what is that money for?

What we have seen over the years in terms of tourism is a lot of travel to London, to Germany, in terms of getting people to identify the product and to market the destination. The Member for Arouca North spoke about lifeguards and made a small contribution to the lifeguards. In terms of our beaches—that is why when I saw \$44 million going to CEPEP—why could you not finance the upgrade of the lifeguard booths in this country? Not the Minister of Local Government trying to put a few planks to build a step.

Mr. Speaker, do you know that in Australia there are volunteer lifeguards and what they do is that every year, they have a party, they host all these people and give them that kind of fillip and they also build small houses on the beaches where they could all come together. [*Interruption*] All right, a certain size on the beach. They have restrictions; one cannot even drink on beaches in Australia. What I am showing you is that in terms of the protection of the coastline, what we have seen, we have seen fish gills throughout the country. The IMA is still testing the waters; they have not come up with anything. They have done research; I think their 25th anniversary was celebrated recently—I am not knocking the IMA; they have done a lot of good work in terms of the research around the island, but the follow-up—doing the research is one thing but the Ministry is supposed to follow up with those people to see how they could benefit.

When I spoke about the Australian example; you should see the kind of miles of expansive beaches on the coast in Australia. There are lifeguards on those beaches so the people feel safe when they go there. [*Interruption*] That is quite true. And somebody there would have told me about the Tabaquite campsites but at least they did not throw me off today.

Mr. Speaker, we have the ambassadors. We have an ambassador who comes from Australia to this country and tells us about those things; how they operate in Australia, so it is nothing new. In fact, we have ambassadors plenipotentiary and extraordinaire all over the world now so we have enough resources. We must use those people to assist our Ministers and ministries. Ministers go on conferences and you have no follow-ups taking place. I do not know how many Ministries keep track of those various projects.

Mr. Speaker, I want to get back to the three national parks because it is a situation that we could quickly address and the Member for Diego Martin Central could go back to the Ministry of Public Utilities and the Environment and tell them look, we would give you back one million dollars; move forward; we just took it because you did not use it. Take it back and see what you could do with it. You have three prime areas there that you could utilize for your tourism product: Main Ridge in Tobago, Matura and Maracas. What is the livelihood of those people, Mr. Speaker? You have hunting in the open season; you have people catching fish in certain areas, so in terms of employment there is not much employment generation in the area. So this particular situation would improve the employment in the three areas and help the tourism product.

The other area I want to deal with besides Matura, Maracas and Main Ridge, is the Solid Waste Management Plan. I dealt with the landfills, but why can we not have recycling in this country? What is so difficult? In Germany, in the United Kingdom, in the United States of America, in Canada; they are recycling. Why must we have that kind of fiasco at the Beetham and at the Forres Park Landfills—people scavenging? Why must we have that? Why can we not manage the situation in such a way that those landfills would be a part of the whole process?

As I said before, the Minister has it on his desk. It is not political. What the UNC government decided to do, because of the poor management of the Solid Waste Management Company, was to go out for tender for those landfills to be managed privately. You might have to consider that. If you take a drive to Forres Park and you see the situation existing there—they even filmed Trinidad and that is what they showed in terms of a guide to tourism. The Betham landfill, we cannot have that! We are trying to market the destination and spending millions for the tourism products and we have satellite dumps all over the country.

8.45 p.m.

Why can they not spend some money in that area and deal with this problem holistically instead of coming with a piecemeal \$11.9 million for the Solid Waste Management Company to manage landfills. Put some more money in that area. We heard of the windfall coming in from the Atlantic LNG. Deal with the problem holistically.

We are seeing it in all different areas. We saw the Tidy T&T Project to build communities, not a prize-giving function. We want to know how many communities benefited and what plans were coming forward. We do not know.

The Member for Diego Martin West was not here when I made reference to Sharon Rowley. I hope they will tell him about that. We just wanted to find out if that is a tourism project in Tobago. Anyway, that is a matter for the Member to deal with. *[Interruption]* It is here on the Certificate of Environmental Clearance.

Dr. Rowley: You stay far from my wife.

Dr. A. Nanan: I did not call your wife's name. I am just telling you.

Dr. Rowley: *[Inaudible]*

Dr. A. Nanan: Let me tell you something, Member for Diego Martin West. You can say it once or twice. You can tell the people to pull down their billboards, but when you are a government minister, your words have no meaning unless you take action. When you talk about pulling down billboards, more are going up throughout this country and you have to take cognizance of that fact.

What is your handicap? I see you are playing golf. I am very proud of you. Member for San Fernando East, take cognizance of your Ministers. They were appointed to help the people in this country and they are not doing their job.

Mr. Speaker, I am getting back to the Bill. I came to deal with three issues—environment tourism and— *[Interruption]* Actually that is a good tourism project to market. I understand that you want to make there a 32-hole golf course. That is a good idea; anything to help tourism.

I was speaking about the areas of environment tourism with respect to this particular appropriation and the Member for Diego Martin Central in terms of the reduced allocation. When I asked the question on the radar station in Brasso Venado, the Minister of Public Utilities and the Environment came here and said that they have \$100,000 to fence the area and that the project was stalled. The project was not stalled. The project was in that ministry and they did nothing for a year and a half. When they allocate, they must utilize the money.

I was asking earlier why we cannot have recycling in this country. If we recycle that will be a fillip for the environment. We left the entire tender procedure document when we left office. The Minister of Public Utilities and the Environment must start working.

The Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West talked about rebuilding the cocoa industry. Cocoa, coffee and citrus were the main crops utilized in those three parks in the 1960s. I do not know if they know that, Mr. Speaker. It is the lack of agricultural access roads in those three areas.

I have asked many questions in Parliament and many of the answers were: we will fix it. I raised this matter of Bacchus Bridge, Tabaquite, which was washed out, with the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West. This is a bridge that was utilized by farmers to get to the other side where they plant their crops. Since last year November it was washed out. The farmers' equipment remained on the other side. Do you know what they did, Mr. Speaker? They built a walkway across the river and not a single plank has been laid on that bridge. *[Interruption]* I take the word of the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West. He had people come. They viewed the bridge, but nothing has happened and we are coming again to the rainy season and we will have the same problem occurring.

I raised the question with the Member for Arouca North on the bridge at Hausa Trace. He told me that it is in the development programme. Nothing has happened. We are seeing a lack of action by the Government. The Government is not performing its function in terms of providing the services to the population in all areas, not only local government.

In the health sector, there are big advertisements about getting drugs and when you go to the health centres you cannot get anything after waiting all day. The Minister of Health must be aware.

I asked the Member for Ortoire/Mayaro about the Gran Couva Main Road and the Guaracara/Tabaquite Main Road and he told me that the road would start in March this year. I spoke to him again. He told me that they were having a problem with the Solicitor General in terms of signing the contract. We are into the rainy season and nothing. If he cannot do it, he should say so and get out of the job and let somebody else do it.

We are seeing a lack of activity and the Member for Diego Martin Central comes to this Parliament with an appropriation. To do what? Why are they coming for more money when they have done nothing with the money that was budgeted before? The Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West came in this

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Parliament and said that MPs were not responding to him. I was the one who surveyed my constituency—not only because of his request; we had done that before—and made the identification. Someone from the Ministry of the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West called me last week and read the letter I sent to him. I thought the person had called to ask me where the land is. Instead he was reading the letter to say I was right and the Minister was wrong. I do not want to embarrass the Minister in the Parliament. This is a private matter, but if it has to be so, that is the way it will be. I will embarrass every single one of them to get the work done.

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

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

Question put and agreed to.

Dr. A. Nanan: Mr. Speaker, in terms of parliamentary proceedings, we have created history, this Opposition has asked over 163 questions historically. We must also put on the record how many of those questions have been answered. We have asked fundamental questions dealing with the population. Your Minister came in this Parliament and told an untruth and we are going to haul him before the Privileges Committee because he cannot come to this House and do that. He is a guest. I do not understand how Senators can come in this House and behave like they are Members of this House.

I have asked the questions and I am not getting any responses because the Ministers are not aware of what is happening in their ministries. They are relying on public servants to provide answers. They must understand that when public servants provide answers, they cannot come here and read them *carte blanche*. They must verify the information before they come here.

I asked the Member for Diego Martin Central what about the Tobago House of Assembly allocation and the cruise ship expansion in Tobago. We are not against the cruise ship port expansion. I asked for the scope of works, I got nothing. I do not know if there was a time constraint. I had asked for it because that would have given us an idea of the projected tourism thrust in Tobago. They are going to build a cruise ship port—we do not know the size; how many cruise ships would be accommodated—to bring in these people, but what is their product?

Your beaches are part of the tourism magnetism. In fact, one of our beaches in Tobago was ranked sixth in terms of beaches in the world. There was a survey of

beaches. [*Interruption*] Englishman's Bay. [*Interruption*] Do not make me go to Tobago. He would not like me to go to Tobago. I do not want to go to Tobago. [*Interruption*] This is not an exposé. You see what is happening with all those 14 year-olds right now? I do not want to go there, so do not send me there.

Englishman's Bay was ranked as one of the best beaches in the world, so we have that product. I told him about the Main Ridge in Tobago, so the product is there; it is just the development. We have to get the right approach to marketing the destination. That is why when I asked about the scope of works for the jetty, I wanted to know how many cruise ships would be coming in. It is important. They are building larger cruise ships, so you must structure the jetty to suit the market they are targeting.

We have not heard anything in terms of what they are doing for cruise shipping in the Trinidad scenario, but our local beach, Maracas, is another famous beach. Part of the employment generation is on the local beaches. There are all those snack shops—the bake and shark outlets—providing employment. So, we cannot have an industry that is going to collapse because of a lack of attention by the various ministers. They have to understand that they are running a government and that the country depends on them. It is all well and good to come to this Parliament and say that in the year 2008 we will be getting revenue from the Atlantic Train. What happens between now and 2008? What happens with the population? What happens with the unemployment figures? We know, from the Member for Oropouche, that the unemployment figures are going up. When we were in government the unemployment figures were coming down. So, we have to understand that although they try to prop up the figures with CEPEP, that make-work programme, the unemployment figures are still showing a problem in the country.

The Member for Chaguanas spoke about poverty alleviation. All that is part of the improvement in the country. The infrastructure is important, whether it is in a PNM constituency or a UNC constituency, it does not matter, it has to do with improvement of the infrastructure.

In terms of the water distribution, the Minister of Public Utilities and the Environment came here when I asked the question on improved water supply in Brasso Venado, he gave me a whole dissertation of what they are going to do and then said, "if funds are available". That is why the Member for Chaguanas, in dealing with the appropriation, had the approach which I have in dealing in terms of the appropriation and results. Why are they taking money from ministries? Why are ministers not coming here? I know that the Minister of Public Utilities and the Environment cannot come here and defend the \$1 million, because he does not know that they are taking \$1 million from his Ministry.

The fundamental issue here is the lack of spending. The Public Sector Investment Programme is now running, I am sure, below 50 per cent. Probably the Member for Ortoire/Mayaro, as the Minister of Works and Transport, may be just 50 per cent. If they take a survey in all those ministries, they would see that the Public Sector Investor Programme is under 50 per cent. It is under-performing because the ministers are not taking interest in the Public Sector Investment Programme. This Programme is utilized for the development of the country. It is not about salaries; it is about development.

The cruise ship port in Tobago, which is going to be expanded, will generate a certain amount of revenue in terms of more people coming into the country. I am dealing with revenue, product and market destination. What are we doing in terms of industrial waste in this country? What is the Environmental Management Authority (EMA) doing? We have the EMA, which was set up by an Act of Parliament, but what is Dr. McIntosh, the Chief Executive Officer, doing? People are complaining throughout the country and there is no response from the EMA. The EMA cannot function on a one-to-one basis, but they are supposed to be able to coordinate the other bodies to deal with the problems of the environment.

I have dealt with certain issues—I did not expect to be that long. I was dealing with burning issues because it really bothers me, as a Member of Parliament, to see the state of my constituency because of the lack of services that are supposed to be available from the Government. We have seen the total deterioration of the roads in certain areas. The Member for Ortoire/Mayaro needs to put a maintenance programme in place to deal with the roads that have been paved. He cannot wait until every time there is a local government election or a general election to repave the same road. He has to maintain them. He cannot be spending money like that because there are loan programmes. We have to pay back these loans.

Member for Diego Martin Central, as I speak about loans, I do not know if you are aware, but it is part of the variation of appropriation—the World Bank loan in education comes to an end on June 30, 2003. The Minister of Planning and Development must come to this Parliament and say what is the performance on that loan over the last two years, during his term. Part of that loan was to build early childhood care and education centres. We have not seen a single centre. Is that the reason they are not answering the question on the Order Paper: How many early childhood care centres have you built over the last two years? Where are the other parts of that loan? It includes certain key areas in the Ministry of Education. Have they done anything? Are they going to ask for an extension? Are we going to pay more interest on that loan? That will happen if they do not draw

down on it—they will have to pay interest on the principal and they will not get anything for their returns. I asked that question here and it was never answered.

The Member for Diego Martin Central, as the Junior Minister of Finance and the aspiring Minister of Finance, has to take cognizance and deal with the Member for Diego Martin West if he does not want to comply. As Minister of Planning and Development, with a 2020 vision for the country, he is supposed to be able to prioritize. He is supposed to be able to track those loans. If he cannot, put a co-ordinating committee in place. Do not rely on your ministers because they have demonstrated incompetence. The Minister of Finance is dealing with revenue and the more money he has to pay in interest on these principals, the less money will be utilized on other projects. That is simple accounting.

I did not really want to get into that area, but when I saw on the Net today that the World Bank loan for education comes to an end on June 30, 2003, I felt that it had to be an important issue. There are other loans that I am sure are not performing and the Minister of Planning and Development must account to this Parliament in terms of their performance under these other sector loans.

My contribution was really to deal with tourism, the environment and the situation with crime that is causing the entire population to be afraid. I did so. With those few words, I thank you.

[Mr. Valley stands]

Mr. Speaker: Are you going to wind up the debate?

Mr. Valley: Mr. Speaker, that was five hours ago. The Acting Chief Whip told me that we were winding up about five hours ago.

Mr. Speaker: It appears that whatever agreement you may have had is not holding at this time.

Mr. Ramnath: There was no agreement; we were negotiating an agreement.

Mr. Speaker: Okay.

Mr. Nizam Baksh (*Naparima*): Mr. Speaker, as we started, so shall I end. We started with the Finance (Supplementation and Variation of Appropriation) Bill, 2003. I know that it is normal during a financial year to have transfers for various reasons, but we must take into cognizance that the Government had brought, earlier in this financial year, a \$20 billion budget. It is the highest in the history of this country.

Coming at the end of this financial year they are now asking for an additional \$.75 billion. I was looking at the various heads under which this \$.75 billion will

be spent and I have found that over 90 per cent of this whopping amount is dedicated to conspicuous consumption and we can hardly see anything under capital projects. We are aware that any businessman, once he spends money that would bring in returns, would see profits and growth. Unlike this situation, we are experiencing a position where over \$.75 billion, in addition to the \$20 billion that were already expended, is going into spending that will bring very little return. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker: Members, one minute, please. The Hansard reporter is appealing to me so that Members closer to her would hold their voices down. [*Interruption*] Be that as it may, you cannot interrupt the Hansard reporter.

Mr. N. Baksh: I will take the opportunity to make my contribution here tonight in the context of the Government's 2020 vision. I will raise some issues and at the end of it we will decide whether the Government is achieving that 2020 vision or whether we are going off-track. I must admit that it is a laudable vision and I hope that we can all get there within that period.

I want to look very quickly at some of the headings under which we are asking for this additional \$.75 billion. If we look at Head 13, Office of Prime Minister, \$1.5 billion, to meet the payment of remuneration to chairmen and members of commissions of enquiry for fiscal year 2003; Head 18, Ministry of Finance, almost \$107 million:

- (1) to pay annual subsidy to BWIA to replace revenue foregone resulting from a reduction of airfare on the domestic air bridge;
- (2) to meet the cost of strategy for the development of air links to Central and South America.

Head 26, Ministry of Education, \$115 million, to meet the shortfall in provision for the payment of arrears of increments to teachers for the period 1987—1995.

Head 28, Ministry of Health, \$85,630,000 to meet the following:

- (a) a shortfall in the provision for the payment of arrears of increment to public servants and medical personnel;
- (b) the continued payment of incentive allowance to nursing personnel and special incentive and additional special incentive allowance.

Head 30, Ministry of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development, \$671,000. This will be used to pay additional funds to meet the cost relating to the filling of contract positions. I am hearing a lot about jobs for the boys.

Head 31, Ministry of Public Administration and Information, \$900,000 to meet the administrative cost of the Special Communications Unit of the Information Division of the ministry.

Head 39, Ministry of Public Utilities and the Environment, \$21,900,000, to settle arrears of increments owed to former Trinidad and Tobago postal workers and to meet a shortfall in the funding for Solid Waste Management Company Limited for 2003.

Head 42, Ministry of Local Government, \$13,540,000 to meet the following payments:

- (1) arrears due to increased remuneration to council members of boroughs, city and regional corporations;
- (2) arrears of increment due to staff of the boroughs of Arima and Point Fortin;
- (3) increase in scavenging cost;
- (4) cost of additional security and legal fees at the Arima Borough Corporation.

Head 46, Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs, \$15,962,500 for the provision of security and maintenance of four new stadia, to meet the cost of preparation of a revised national sport policy for Trinidad and Tobago and to seek to meet the cost of the expansion of the Youth Training and Employment Partnership Programme (YTEPP) for 2003.

Head 48, Ministry of Trade and Industry, \$2,550,000 to meet expenses of essential travel to attend crucial meetings.

Head 54, \$42,727,000 to meet the cost of expansion of the On-the-Job Training Programme for the fiscal year 2003.

Head 55, Ministry of Community Development and Gender Affairs, \$8,641,000 for employment, on contract, of staff to facilitate an integrated approach to the delivery system of social services in Trinidad and Tobago and the expansion of the Transformation and Development Centres Programme formerly Relief Centres Programme.

I raise these as essential issues that we are spending money that is bringing in very little returns. Millions of dollars of taxpayers' money are being spent, in the majority, for the payment of fees and remuneration for contract workers. This tells us that the Government's macro planning is lopsided. We are seeing money going

out and there is nothing to build the revenue of the country. We are going to suffer the consequences in the long run.

When we talk in terms of the 2020 vision, we are going to see difficulty in taking this country from point A, where we are now, to point B, where the Government wants to take us. We see also lack of a legislative agenda in the Parliament. We come from week to week, not having anything tangible to debate. We are also looking at the situation where the Government is trying to micro-manage the ministries and the state companies. We are hearing about political interference. We look at Petrotrin, WASA, National Petroleum (NP), National Gas Company (NGC), Trinmar, Maintenance, Training and Security Company Limited (MTS), Solid Waste Management Company Limited (SWMCOL) and Tourism and Industrial Development Corporation (TIDCO).

Let me read to confirm what I am saying here. I am reading from the *Express Business* of June 11, page 11. I am talking about the political interference in these state organizations. The Prime Minister was delivering a feature address at the annual exporter of the year awards function. The reporter, Andy Johnson, quoted the Prime Minister talking about the restructuring of TIDCO. This is what the CEO of TIDCO had to say with regard to the issues raised by the Prime Minister on that restructuring.

"But it is quite another to wonder whether in the end any restructuring of TIDCO would render the organisation free of the fetters of the kind of political manipulation which now is sapping dry the energy and the enthusiasm of almost every single member of staff, from top to bottom.

This is what is sickening. To Brian Harry, and to other senior members of his staff, to those former senior staffers and executives who have left in frustration, and to members of the current board in equal measure. A story in the *Express* of May 21 edition of the *Express Business* had chronicled some of the frustrations of current and former TIDCO staffers over what they saw as too much political interference and how that had been steering the organisation off its track."

I am sure that a number of others that I called before may not want to speak out as Mr. Brian Harry. There are other reasons why others may not want to speak out.

Mr. Speaker, where does the additional funding that they have requested, this \$.75 billion, come from? When we look at the crime situation as well, we are not sure what the Government is doing. As an ordinary citizen, I have fears in moving around. In fact, as we leave here tonight and we have to travel the roads, we have

a kind of fear. We are not sure whether we will reach home. This is why my friend, the Member for Tabaquite, is using the latest technology to keep in touch. This country is sitting on a time bomb, which is ticking away very fast.

At the last sitting, the Member for Oropouche had given the record as 100 murders. Today it is 110 and moving quickly. It is not something we want to boast about, but it is creating fear among the citizens of this country.

I spoke about the spending the Government is embarking upon. We know that inflation will go up; nothing is being done to keep it down at the moment. When most of the money is going out for payments, we are guaranteed that inflation will rise.

I have other things to read, but in view of the time I will keep down some of them. I would just read some of the headings. We are talking about funding and the way the money is being spent. We have a number of roads that are not being patched any more in the southern districts. We were fortunate, when the UNC was in power and the roads were repaired, it used to take us 20 minutes to travel a 10-mile distance from Barrackpore to San Fernando. That has now been extended because the roads are deteriorating.

I was making the point that the money is being spent in paying the boys. People are using the terms "jobs for the boys", "commissions" and "kickbacks". I look at a headline from page 3 of *The Probe* of Sunday, May 25, "Who got \$13 million loan fees?" I will read one paragraph of this:

"More than \$13 million were paid out by the Manning Administration between January 3, 2002 and April 17, 2003 in what is listed simply as 'arrangement' fees for securing loans for State companies at local banks."

This is something that is as frightening as the crime. It carries a parallel.

"The hefty figure is the total sum handed over to unnamed companies to help secure 26 loans for various State agencies."

I ask the question whether we have to secure loans for the \$.75 million being asked for additional funding. This is the question I am raising here. Are we going to have people getting commissions for obtaining these loans for us?

If we look at Head 23, Ministry of Attorney General, where we are committing \$199 million to the Caribbean Court of Justice. My comment here is that the average citizen will be concerned and worried about the political interference and manipulation that we are seeing taking place here. We are wondering whether we will get impartial judges as we see happening in the local courts.

I suggest that while we are focusing on this we should use some of the money to set up the Equal Opportunity Commission so that the citizens of this country will feel protected against discrimination. While we are looking at the Caribbean Court of Justice, let us look at the Equal Opportunity Commission, which will assist the citizens of this country.

I look at Head 30, Ministry of Labour, Small and Micro Enterprise Development where we need to spend \$671,000 for contract positions. There are many queries these days about the transparency of these jobs. I reiterate and reinforce that we do things in a manner that we would not have to question them and that the public—and we represent the public here—will agree with the manner in which these jobs are being taken on board. If you look at the positions, you would ask the question how they would be filled.

I am also looking at where we are decreasing funds to the service commissions. They are asking for money to take on contract workers on the one hand where these jobs can be taken on board through the public service. We are decreasing the funding for the service commissions by \$300,000. Is this a way of circumventing the procedure in the public service? I am sure that the established public servant could perform all these functions. Why a personal secretary and special advisor when the Minister already has an executive secretary and advisor? We see duplication here and it gives one the feeling that it is really "jobs for the boys". You are assisting those people.

Mr. Valley: Could you repeat what you are asking?

Mr. N. Baksh: My question here is: The Personal Secretary and Advisor to the Minister—

Mr. Valley: Who brought that in? You set that up.

Mr. N. Baksh: But you continued it, so I am asking you the question now. You are in government. We are entitled to ask you the question now. You are taking on more. You are expanding the programme. I am asking the question: If we are decreasing the membership of the Public Services Association, what is the membership of the PSA doing now about that?

Under Head 31, Public Administration, \$900,000, for a communication unit to do what? Is it another creation of "jobs for the boys"? I understand it is to strengthen the PNM propaganda machinery. There are consultancy services, \$150,000, and the production of programmes, \$440,000. I assume here that this could very well go out as contracts as well. I understand too that we already have

a communication unit in that Ministry. This is to communicate with the other communication officers.

Head 39, Public Utilities, \$11.9 million, to meet the shortfall in Solid Waste Management Company Limited. Is it designed to increase the allocation for the Community-Based Environmental and Protection Enhancement Programme (CEPEP) or to provide more contract workers for PNM supporters? I know that CEPEP is the focus these days in a lot of debates. Is the quality of work we are getting from CEPEP the quality of work needed for the beautification and upliftment of this country? Very soon, as the rains come heavier, we will see the kind of erosion and landslips that those jobs will create. That is not what we really do in environmental work. We need to leave the greenery; we need to plant.

CEPEP continues to reflect the same handout that the PNM has been accustomed to over the last 40 years. What they are actually doing is hurting their own supporters because they will never be better off in the long run. We are talking about a training component and we are not seeing that happening. The only training we are seeing is that these people are good at breaking huge stones into small ones and painting them in different colours. If that is a skill, I am not too sure how far that will take them. It looks colourful as we travel the highway and the Priority Bus Route, but with the rainy season and the rate at which the grass will grow, I am not sure they will cope with cutting that grass. *[Interruption]* So, when they cut the grass, they will throw away the stones as well?

I was just browsing through Head 42, Ministry of Local Government, and I looked at the vast differences in the scavenging costs in the boroughs and regional corporations. Let me read one or two.

Diego Martin Regional Corporation—\$4,330, \$4,158, \$3,995, \$4,200, \$4,500, \$3,084. Those are only a few for compactors and open tray transport garbage collection.

Tunapuna/Piarco Regional Corporation—\$3,195, \$4,990, \$3,500, \$3,700; Couva/Tabaquite/Talparo Regional Corporation—\$850, \$810, \$794, \$760, \$840, \$780; Mayaro/Rio Claro Regional Corporation—\$723, \$797, \$675, \$695, \$609; Mayaro Regional Corporation—\$569, \$439, \$720; Siparia Regional Corporation—\$820, \$840, \$784, \$645, \$690, \$550; Penal/Debe Regional Corporation—\$797, \$849, \$899, \$920.

Mr. Speaker, I just read these figures to ask whether there was a mafia operating in this scavenging contract. *[Interruption]* It matters. How does she know they are UNC? I am making the point that there is a big disparity and asking

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whether there is some way we could look at it. Mr. Speaker, I am seeking the interest of the Government. We can look at issues and ways we can have them coordinated and brought nearer to one another. We need to review the tenders law.

I will read a quotation from a Special Report, BizTech 2002 the *New Executive Times*, January 2003, page 57, where it says, "Contractors call for review of tender laws".

"Advancing technology, a growing backlog of government tenders awaiting approval and concerns about transparency in the awarding of public contracts have fuelled calls for a review of tendering laws across the region.

Public tendering for contracts is the only way governments can ensure transparency and value for their investment in public works, but legislation must be updated to take advantage of new technology and the increasing number of requests being made on these agencies, says regional construction experts.

Paty said local Tenders Boards should take on the role of regulators or an agency with the power to oversee and enforce best tendering practices within their territory. The Tenders Board should establish the guidelines for tendering for government projects, rather than be the agency actively accepting tenders for all state projects.

With the growing backlog of tenders to be handled by these Boards, many projects continue to be unnecessarily delayed. Over the years, this has caused many regional governments valuable time, money and lost opportunities."

This is the point. We need to review these tender laws.

Mr. Speaker, I look at the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs. We are looking for an additional \$15,962,000. This is one for the provision of security for the four stadia. These stadia have been built for some time. What security system has been in place since their commission?

I look at where we talk about training for YTEPP and other areas. To support my argument that very little is being done to guide our youths and with all the funding we are putting into YTEPP and the various programmes, we are not really solving the problems. We are looking here at crime by youths. We have here that \$15 million is being added to YTEPP. I want to make the point that this programme promotes training that is grossly duplicated and in some cases irrelevant. We have a number of training agencies doing the same type of training. We have the National Energy Skills Centre (NESC). We have the National Training Agency

(NTA), the National Technology Training Centre (NTC). We have the National Institute for Higher Education, Research, Science and Technology (NIHERST), UWI School of Continuing Studies, National Youth Camps, which this Government brought back on board, the trade centres, continuation classes at comprehensive schools and technical institutes.

I just want to read from *The Probe* of Sunday, May 25, 2003 "Electronic Crime: Internet cafes, video arcades blamed for youth violence"

"The frightening rise in crime among our young people may be traced to the proliferation of Internet cafes, video arcades, video machines and the greater accessibility of computers.

According to several international studies, there may be a connection between the violence in video and computer games and the violence among youth.

Military psychologist, David Grossman, in his book, *On Killing*, claims that violence in computer games trains children in the same way that military training teaches soldiers to overcome their inborn resistance to killing...

Grossman claims that, in a similar fashion, violent games teach children 'the skill and the will to kill'.

Rick Dyer, of Virtual Image Productions of the United States, says: 'These are not just games anymore.

'These are learning machines.

'We're teaching kids in the most incredible manner what it's like to pull the trigger.

'What they're not learning are the real life consequences...

According to *Newsweek* Magazine, the recent best selling video was *Grand Theft Auto 3*.

Newsweek states that the object of the game is to advance in a criminal organization by taking part in various crimes, such as prostitution and murder. It knows that each of your actions has consequences...

In the article, 'Computer Violence: Are Your Kids At Risk?' writer Stephen Barr gives an example of a computer game situation:

'The 12-year-old boy cornered an unarmed opponent and held the gun to his head at point-blank range.

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‘You can't get away!’ the boy said, with a maniacal sneer, taunting the character on the screen.

‘You're mine! The boy pushed the button and shot the character in the face.

‘Blood splattered the lab coat of the character as he whirled and fell.

‘You're down!’ the boy said laughing.”

Mr. Speaker, this is exactly what we are seeing today in this country. The majority of those who are committing crime are young people under 20 years and the style exactly as we see here. This is what we see in the movies and these video games. It goes on.

"According to research from the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, video and computer game violence may be even more dangerous than violence shown on television or films. In the video or computer game, the player identifies himself with the characters carrying out the violence.

‘Television makes us spectators of violence. Computers make us feel like participants.’

David Walsh, President of the National Institute on Media and the Family, pointing out the ‘dark side’ of these games, stated: 'A segment of the games feature anti-social themes of violence, sex and crude language.

‘Unfortunately, it's a segment that seems particularly popular with kids ages 8 to 15.’...

There has been some 3,000 different studies on the question of simulated violence, and many have suggested that there is a connection between violence in games and increased aggressiveness in the players.

‘Incidents of violence among youth are often seen as evidence of a connection,’ a report said.”

Mr. Speaker, it says here that violence is committed most by the young people who get their ideas from these video games. Look at where these centres are located. They are in the malls that these young people frequent. The other venue is the outskirts of the schools. As you come out of the school compounds in a number of areas, you can find these.

9.45 p.m.

Mr. Breaux: Will the Member please give way for just a second? I think you have left out one other place—at home.

Mr. N. Baksh: Yes, I agree with you, but I will just give the facts from the report here.

Mr. Speaker, I look finally at Head 55, Ministry of Community Development and Gender Affairs, \$8.6 million. Again, the majority of funding here is for contract employees and the relief centres. We are talking here about the relief centres. We already have three relief centres in Cocorite, Laventille and George Street, and the Government intends to establish 17 more additional centres. These centres, from my own experience, have a revolving door policy where the beneficiaries can just walk in and walk out, so I find it difficult to see how we are going to put a training component to those people when they are just walking in and walking out.

In fact, I know for a fact that in the Laventille and George Street centres, those people who have been beneficiaries will walk to one venue and if they do not like the menu there, they walk down the road to the other centre, and if it is different, they participate in it. So I ask the question, how will we contain them to train them? I want to also advance the need for additional centres. They have given the venues as Mayaro, Sixth Company, Taroub Trace, New Grant, Basse Terre, La Brea, Sangre Grande, Tunapuna, Carolina, San Juan, St. Joseph, Maracas Bay, Ste. Madeline, San Fernando, Barataria, North Manzanilla, Arima and Aripo.

Mr. Speaker, with Caroni going, going and gone, we have created 60,000 plus new poor, and I am advancing reasons that we should have additional centres. These are being placed in areas like Barrackpore, Cunjal, Lengua, Lodians, Malgretoute, Bronte and Fifth Company, if we are thinking about assisting those people.

When I look at the list for the staff to facilitate an integrated approach to the delivery system of social services in Trinidad and Tobago, there are 47 positions being created: One National Sector Programme Coordinator, seven regional coordinators and 39 community development officers.

Mr. Speaker, I worked in that division before, and I know of a time when the same Government brought in a number of people as community development aides. These are people brought in to assist in the districts, and so on. They did not have the required qualification for entry in the public service, and after working for a number of years, Cabinet brought notes so that these people were actually entertained into the public service on a permanent basis. I am asking whether these 39 people that we are bringing in here are going to get the same treatment in time to come?

I understand too that when the résumés for these people were given, they were accompanied by a photocopy of their party card. So I am asking whether this was a back door entry to the public service as was done with the community development aides.

My own experience is that the competence of these people when they were promoted at the higher level to Community Development Officers I and Community Development Officers II, and in some instances supervisors, while it was appropriate as community development aides, when they were promoted at the higher level they were not able to perform and deliver. If these are the people who are going to assist in the social delivery service for this Government to achieve its 2020 vision, I am seeing that we are going to have some constraints and difficulty, and perhaps we are going to take a longer timeframe to get there than you are saying.

I want to conclude here by just reading from the *Business Today* of Saturday June 07, business section of the *Guardian*, and the headline is:

“Rowley: T&T could block its own vision”

I must admit the Minister cut a handsome picture there, but I just want to read his words:

“The success of Government's 2020 Vision plan can be thwarted by the attitude of Trinbagonians.

Planning Minister Dr. Keith Rowley made this statement yesterday in response to concerns about Government's true commitment to the Vision.

Rowley reiterated his earlier statements about Government's commitment but admitted ‘the greatest threat to our ambition to becoming a developed country by 2020 is not money, nor the number of people or even trade barriers, it’s the attitude of the people of Trinidad and Tobago,’”

I want to agree with him. He continued further:

“I would either be successful in this exercise or I would fail if I am not able to...get the people into believing it is possible, and resulting from that, a change in attitude.’”

Mr. Speaker, for him he has to sell this idea to the people. He has to sell it to the national population, national community and ensure that if we are able to do this, people would want to see a change, they would want to see this country move forward, but at its present state with the way we are going, with all the

crime and negatives and so, all I can say to conclude is that the PNM Government is like a treadmill. Moving very fast but getting nowhere.

[Dr. Khan, Mr. Valley, Mr. Bereaux and Mr. Speaker all on their feet]

Mr. Valley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Um—

Mr. Bereaux: If it is that, we cannot let the two of you—

Mr. Valley: No, no.

Dr. Khan: Are you going to wind up?

Mr. Speaker: Members, please. The Member for Diego Martin Central did rise before you, but if you could come to some arrangement.

Dr. Khan: Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Bereaux: I want to speak too. It is one on each side.

Dr. Khan: I did not realize you were going to speak.

Mr. Bereaux: Yes. I will speak here.

Dr. Rowley: I “ent” talk yet!

Dr. Khan: I thought he was going to wind down the debate.

Mr. Hedwige Bereaux (La Brea): Mr. Speaker, I did not intend to join this debate. However, I listened with some degree of interest to what went on here today, and particularly to the hon. Member for Princes Town when he was conducting his review of the newspapers.

For some time now, because of my peculiar position in this honourable House, I have refrained from dealing with a number of matters. I have refrained from dealing with these matters because I believe that I did not want to take the position of really attacking statements made on the other side, and I sat here from time to time and listened to grave injustice. However, there is a time when we decide that enough is enough.

I have listened today and a number of times to a number of Members on the other side, and they come with their discrimination and their victimization and the CEPEP. Well, as the Member of Parliament for La Brea, I want to put a few things on record here today that showed the grave discrimination and injustice that was done to my constituency over the period of six years that this country had the misfortune to be governed by the people on the other side, the UNC.

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You see, Mr. Speaker, in the constituency of La Brea, there were numerous projects which had been started over the period between 1992—1995. You have, for instance, the Dalley Village Community Centre. It was started in 1995. The walls were up, and remained up and nothing at all was done. No attempt was ever made to complete that community centre until this Government came into power, and then you hear the Member for Fyzabad talking about discrimination

Since I am dealing with him, or his comments, I want again to deal with the Los Bajos Community Centre and basketball court. The Member for Fyzabad came into my constituency, encouraged people and said, “If you form a little group in Los Bajos, I will put up the hoops for the basketball court”. They are not up. We had to wait until the PNM Government came into power to get those hoops up. They left the community centre in Los Bajos with the walls up.

Another place, in Quarry. I raised it on a number of occasions in this honourable House when I spoke about the Quarry Recreation Ground and basketball court. Nothing at all was done. Then in La Brea, in the same area where Gus Logie came from, where Philbert Jones came from, where Rougier came from; nothing.

The only time they sought to do the basketball court which we had started was when somebody fooled them and told them that if they did one or two things in the La Brea constituency, they would be able to win the seat. And they are so crooked among themselves, even the million dollars that they took away from elsewhere to give them to fight the elections, it was used to buy A4 and A6 for their campaign managers. They cannot even be honest when they are trying to win a seat if that is the way they want to win.

So, Ladies and Gentlemen, Mr. Speaker—[*Laughter*] I am getting ready for that time. Mr. Speaker, that is the nature of the behaviour of that side. Take, for instance, in Rittoville, again, the Member for Fyzabad came into Rittoville and told them, “You all have a PNM group here. If you will close it down, I will put water in Rittoville.” And they, silly, poor, misguided people, they listened to him and had to wait six years for the PNM to come back into power to put pipe borne water.

Those were the problems that we have faced from time to time. So when I hear them speak about discrimination, I could recall hearing the hon. Member for Fyzabad and our Minister of Local Government speaking on the television and he was trying—the Member for Fyzabad—to show about discrimination in various areas by the PNM, and the point was made that the PNM deals with every community in Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] Every constituency got proper consideration; maybe it is because the PNM has something better for them from time to time.

And you hear the hon. Member for Princes Town. He started again. He spoke about contract for services. As soon as he spoke about that, he immediately assumed that something wrong was likely to go on with these contracts for services. But it is like my mother says, “‘Tief’ do not like to see people with bag”, so because that is the misbehaviour to which they are accustomed, the minute they see that the PNM is trying to give contracts, they assume that there is something improper in it, but that is not the way.

On each occasion, they come here and talk about equal opportunities. Well in fact, it was the government, their government, that passed the Equal Opportunities Bill with our assistance, but all along before, they did not want it and it was flawed. We told them parts of it were flawed. They did not listen, but now they are asking about the Equal Opportunities Act. Did they consider equal opportunities when they were discriminating against people?

As a Member of Parliament, I was subject to discrimination and mistreatment under the UNC Government when I was working at Petrotrin. I was working there and they sent a miscreant, put him on the board and tried to get rid of me, but I was smarter than them. [*Laughter*] I was smarter than that. So I made them believe that I wanted to stay.

Mr. Imbert: Who was that person?

Mr. H. Breaux: I would not call his name just yet. Anand Ramlogan. They sent Anand Ramlogan who at one time was an apprentice in the legal department of Petrotrin. He came there and the next thing we heard was he and the other gentleman, the other man whose name the Member for Couva South called, they got themselves into trouble. But let me just say they sent a miscreant to try to get rid of me, and what I did was simply made them believe I wanted to stay. I had been advised already by the hon. Member for Diego Martin Central that they were coming for me, so I made them believe I wanted to stay and the next thing, I was handsomely rewarded to leave. [*Laughter*] I told him when I was leaving that no 24 year-old crook could outsmart a man who is honest and 57 years.

Dr. Khan: An older crook.

Mr. H. Breaux: I am not going to listen to the hon. Member for Chaguanas, and I will tell you why. I remember when we all went to the College of St. Philip and St. James. He went to Presentation, Chaguanas and he was in class, I think, with my brother, but they had a special name to call him which I would not use. Something head. I would not use those words in this Parliament because I am too respectful of the hon. Speaker and this honourable House.

Mr. Speaker: Let me warn you that if it is a four-letter word you cannot use it. [*Laughter*]

Mr. H. Breaux: Four, five, or other, I will not use it. [*Laughter*] I know words that are not permitted to be used. But one cannot blame them. When one sees his performance here in this honourable House, one will realize that it was descriptive of his behaviour. So, you see, they put this miscreant in Petrotrin to try to get rid of me, but I told him when I was leaving, “You and the other one will leave shortly after me.” What happened? They caught all of them trying to take bribes from an insurance broker and they had to leave.

Mr. Ramsaran: Who is Max Murphy?

Mr. H. Breaux: Father Max E. Murphy. Canon Max E. Murphy. Go ahead. He is a priest who formed the Catholic College of St. Philip and St. James. Yes, I called him father. That's true. Then he became a cannon. He helped a number of persons—and you benefited from it. You come here talking discrimination when you benefited from good Catholic education. But, be that as it may, as I keep saying—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Ramsaran: Do not throw stones when you live in glass houses.

Mr. H. Breaux: You have done a very good job of throwing stones for yourself. You do it even with members of your family. You peep and dodge behind them wherever they go. So that's the point. Do not tell me about throwing stones at all. I am from Chaguanas too, you know, from that area. I will get on to something else.

You see, Ladies and Gentlemen—[*Laughter*] You see, Mr. Speaker, every time they rise in this honourable House, they speak about CEPEP, and they complain because CEPEP is doing a good job. It is an effort to bring people who have not been involved in contracting or in business before to give them an opportunity to get into business. Any time the PNM makes an effort to give those persons who are disadvantaged an opportunity to get into business, we find it criticized.

If it is that supporters of the UNC are not among the CEPEP contractors, they have nobody else to blame but their distinguished leader, the Member for Couva North, who told this whole country, and especially his supporters, that they should not apply for anything the PNM Government was giving. As a result of that, I was looking through the list of persons who applied and did not get through, and I realized that, none of them applied. Very few people applied, and the reason was the man—their leader—whom some call the silver fox and whom I call the silver fool, because of his behaviour—

Mr. Speaker: No, no. You will have to withdraw that.

Mr. H. Bereaux: I will withdraw it.

Mr. Speaker: And apologize.

Mr. H. Bereaux: And I apologize. Whom I call—well he is not here but I still apologize to him. I call him a man who is no longer silver and fox, but rather silver and unwise. I will tell you why. When I hear people on their side talk—especially the hon. Member for Chaguanas—about coming together and getting both sides of this honourable House to come together, I say that we had a brilliant opportunity in 2001, and all through 2002, where we would have been able to come together.

The people of Trinidad and Tobago gave us that opportunity, but you know what happened? Even in his more sober moments when he decided—when I say he, I mean the hon. Member for Couva North—that he would work together with the PNM in order for us to bring a government, as he always called it, of national unity, you never knew what could have happened.

I could recall on the first occasion when the hon. Prime Minister spoke about having some rapprochement and some agreement with the hon. Member for Couva North, I was one of those persons who said no, he would not keep it. Then I was convinced afterwards, because the hon. Prime Minister then indicated that he had never entered into an agreement where he had given his word and not kept it.

I notice the Member for Chaguanas. He knows what I am going to say. I blame him for the failure of that agreement, because he was the one who got up afterwards, after the Member for Couva North had agreed, and went into Felicity and elsewhere and started holding meetings against his leader in order to stop what was a coming together of both sides of this honourable House regardless of who would have been Prime Minister or who would not have been.

Now he comes here crying crocodile tears, but you see, today, the axe has been laid to the tree—[*Interruption*] Because he did it, and if any time anybody in this honourable House or anywhere in Trinidad and Tobago asks who was the cause of the breakdown of that agreement, he has to say, *mea culpa, mea culpa, mea maxima culpa*. He may not understand it, so I will translate: Through my fault, through my fault, through my most grievous fault. That is what he did.

When people come here in this honourable House and cry crocodile tears, claiming to be interested in Trinidad and Tobago and asking for opportunities, no, no. That is not what it is. They want an opportunity to control the purse so they

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could put it elsewhere! When the hon. Attorney General spoke today about the Channel Islands “cheque and the Channel Islands” bank account, I knew of that a long time through connections I have in external banks where I worked years before. I have no evidence. I must congratulate the hon. Attorney General for getting the evidence. [*Desk thumping*]

As I come to that, I read the statement made by the Member for Siparia you know, I am disappointed when lawyers try to twist things around. The hon. Member for Oropouche, he is not a lawyer, so I excuse him for trying to make it appear as though the hon. Attorney General was not speaking the truth. All that happened was that the hon. Attorney General was being more principled, behaving properly and because she was speaking and trying to be very much a good lawyer, she did not want to overstate her case.

What has happened, FW Oil put their statement of case which would be going into arbitration, and they said that the case depended on the fact that Trinmar, through Petrotrin, terminated their contract improperly and they are basing their case on wrongful termination of contract. But it is not what you base your case on alone. That is the claim. The claim is for improper termination, but in the process of proving their claim or stating the case, when they say improper termination, they point to the fact that a Minister of Government and a person who was in a high position in the same enterprise sought to obtain an improper consideration from them. They wanted a bribe, plain and simple! We know that. The name of the Minister was called here today. If they have any time and doubt it at all, it will be proved, because the name was called.

Mr. Ramnath: What name was called?

Mr. H. Beraux: What did you say?

Mr. Ramnath: That the Minister took a bribe.

Mr. H. Beraux: Nobody took a bribe. He asked for a bribe. The allegation is that he requested one.

Mr. Ramnath: The allegation?

Mr. H. Beraux: Yes, of course. Hon. Member for Couva South, you are a person whom I like. I respect you greatly. Look how you conduct the matters in this honourable House when the substantive Whip is not here. Look how you do that. From what I know, you will be there shortly and for a long time! You may even occupy the seat number 34 for a while.

Mr. Ramnath: Flattery will get you nowhere.

Mr. H. Bereaux: I am not flattering you. I want you to be there because you will provide an effective opposition, which is about all you could do. I want you to be there. I am not flattering you.

You see, sometimes we get mixed signals coming from the other side. The hon. Member for Oropouche likes to tell us that his government, the UNC, said a computer in each house, and we say a wacker in each house. Well, I will let him say what he wants to say. Then, on the one hand you have him saying that and a number of people got computers. Even I got one, not one, but two: one I bought myself and one I got as a result of claiming, getting the provisions arranged for me through Parliament.

Mr. Ramnath: Two wackers?

Mr. H. Bereaux: My land is big, so I have about four. You understand? I need about four to take care of places that I own—that's it; not two but four.

I will not get into that. The point I am making is, the Member said a computer in each home and I think that was very nice, but maybe they are mixing their signals, because the hon. Member for Princes Town complained about violence, violent games and whatnot, and said there are Internet cafes—it is Naparima, but I keep seeing Princes Town. He spoke about the violent games in the arcades and a number of places, and I tried to remind him subtly, but he did not take the hint, that the violent games we are talking about can also be played on one's computer at home.

Dr. Moonilal: Because they need parental supervision.

Mr. H. Bereaux: You did not get the PhD just so. You do have some common sense after all. If they would put you in the right place—which is closer to the Leader of Opposition.

In fact, I was trying to say that all that he was trying to say about these violent games and conducting his reading from the newspapers and giving us a course in how well he could read, in fact, what we had to look at was not so much the violent games, but at how we were going to get parental supervision and parental coaching and a number of things in order to get the parents to ensure that the young people had a certain quality of interest, a certain type of interest so that they would not get into that.

You see, it seems as though they do not have caucuses or when they caucus they only caucus on CEPEP and trying to find out who did this and that. You know, they watch who is working. But everybody must work. If their leader had behaved

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better, we would have seen the application. I was looking through the applications, those that did not get, to see the number of persons whom they say might be UNC, or persons of Indian origin who by their names only were refused. I will tell you. I do not believe in that, and I believe that one needs to give everybody an opportunity, because what happens, when one gives them all an opportunity, their very industry, by osmosis almost, rubs off on other people.

As a result of that—[*Interruption*] I grew up in the County of Caroni in Montrose, Chaguanas and my relatives span the entire ethnic purview of Trinidad and Tobago. If you see my stepfather, he is one—a number of us are different races, have different names, and as a result of that, I believe that when one has people together and one gives them an opportunity, do not worry. Cream will float. As Stokely Carmichael said, “If you want to keep people down in the gutter, you have to go down there and stay with them.” I do not believe in that. We let them float.

A number of persons from their party who were formerly members of their party, the first comment they make when they come over to our party, in many cases, is how different they feel; free to talk—the democracy. As a result of that, you, the Member for Fyzabad, I have a shock for you—not one, about three shocks.

Mr. Sharma: I am feeling it!

Mr. H. Béréaux: As I was saying, we have some shocks for them. They are “playing mas and they 'fraïd powder”. They are going to get it. I now start to talk.

Mr. Speaker, I want to deal with some matters that are more germane to this debate. I was responding a lot to the things they had said. I noted that there was a question on the on-the-job training. Again, maybe it seems that today is the day for me to compliment the Member for Oropouche, and I notice nobody spoke on it except him.

The on-the-job training is a programme designed to assist young people who find themselves in an unfortunate situation whereby they are young, they have gone to secondary schools, some of them have even gone to University, and they have all the qualifications but they do not have any job experience. Most employers, as soon as you apply, say “What is your experience?” If one has never worked before, just leaving school, one's parents have no business or anything like that, one does not know anybody to just pull one in, one is in a situation where one does not have any experience and they tell one that in order to get a job, one needs to have experience, how will one get experience?

A programme like that is designed so that for six months, they send one to work, work at a minimum wage, but the wage is not the important thing. What is important is the opportunity to go to work; the opportunity to observe people working and get that work ethic. In fact, I could recall that one of my children worked on the on-the-job training and I heard her complaining. A day she said, "He is taking all his work and giving it to me." Talking about one of her bosses or one of the colleagues on the job who was a permanent worker. I quickly asked her, "When do you do this work that he gives to you? Do you do it on afternoons? Do you bring it home or do you have to go there before seven in the morning to work?" She said "No, I do it in the ordinary time," and I said, "Well then, that is training."

About a year after, they still kept bringing her on and off and she was working pretty regularly. I asked, "How do you manage that?" She said, "Because I can do two people's work." She learned to work hard and conscientiously; to be on the job, and that is what is important.

Mr. Ramnath: Still at Petrotrin?

Mr. H. Bereaux: Yes. She was there doing the work of two persons. It did not matter to me. You know why it did not matter to me, and I was glad that I did it? Because today she holds a very large position, very top position, not with Petrotrin or anybody here, but with a multinational. *[Interruption]* Not there, but somewhere else.

The important thing is that is a serious programme. As I praised the hon. Member for Oropouche, I could remember when I was Minister of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education, the first thing they did as soon as the programme came out, they started to throw politics at it, although one of their supporters, one of their main people in Couva, good man, good worker, is, I think, still today one of the placement officers. It had nothing to do with the party that he was from, it had to do with the fact that the people of Central had to get hired and he showed himself, and I did not conduct any interviews. The report showed that he was one of the better persons who was interviewed and he was hired, and he is still working there.

There is another one too who is still working there. The reason being, the way that programme was put forward was in order to get the people, the young people of Trinidad and Tobago, to give them an opportunity. Do you know—and if you do not know it because you were not on that side when they were in government unfortunately—they might still have been in government if they were led by a man of your calibre.

Dr. Moonilal: Do not take basket from him.

Mr. H. Bereaux: He does not need to take basket from me. The only difference with me is that I could earn more than you at any time as a Minister or otherwise working one day or two days a week, because I am that good. [Laughter] I keep telling you, ask Fuad Khan. He will tell you how good I am. I am that good. Honest work!

Dr. Moonilal: Subhas said you work very hard!

Mr. H. Bereaux: Not very hard; very skilfully. There is a difference between those who run about and appear to work and those who think and work. You see, I am wrong to have picked the Member out, but I have children whom the Member needs to fight with; not me in terms of work. I am a consultant. I am a quiet, cool, calm operating man.

The point is, all of us have a position which we can hold, you see, some people do not know when it is time for them to relax. They do not know when it is time for them to move on. That is the nature of things, and when they stay on in a job and in a position too long, they tend to make a mess of it the way the Member did with his ministry. [Laughter] So, I was saying that we have a situation in terms of the on-the-job training.

Mr. Ramsaran: But I lasted more than six months.

Mr. H. Bereaux: You did, but your performance, the effect of what you did, did not last four months.

As I was saying, the on-the-job training is one of those institutions, I have to call it, put forward by this Government, not in this term but in a previous term which, when the UNC came into power, what did they do? They immediately stopped it.

Mr. Ramsaran: Stopped what?

Mr. H. Bereaux: The on-the-job training. They stopped it, as they did many good programmes; as they did the Civilian Conservation Corps and a number of others. It took this Government to come back into power to deal with the on-the-job training, and I see that a number of young people are still benefiting from it. It seems that the Member really does not understand much about training anyhow.

Dr. Moonilal: I think you have earned your dinner. [Laughter]

Mr. H. Bereaux: I am the man who said I did not know much about technology, but I said that I am a good learner. What you do not know though is

that I had more advice on technology from within my very close relatives than any of them across there would ever be able to grasp in a year of Sundays.

Dr. Moonilal: You do not know my family.

Mr. H. Bereaux: Well they could not be very bright, since they are related to you. The heredity thing could not shift that far. I am saying that.

Dr. Moonilal: All of our families cannot be bright?

Mr. H. Bereaux: I did not say that. Yours. Do not try to pull them along with you. The hon. Member for Naparima spoke about training and NESC and NTA and listed all the training and made some disparaging comments about them. But you know, he forgot. Apparently, he forgot that some of those very institutions that do the training were started under his government. It was started with them. Notwithstanding that, we had the good sense to deal with the whole training situation in this state in a very rationale manner.

For instance, the University of Technology of Trinidad and Tobago, which is a university which will be set up in order to carry the country forward. The economy of Trinidad and Tobago is different from the economy of some of the other Caribbean countries, but we are all put together, or should I say lumped together in UWI. The focus of UWI cannot be the focus of a university which will serve Trinidad and Tobago, simply because our thrust has got to be different. We recognize that if we are—*[Interruption]* I am speaking about education, you really should leave me alone.

Mr. Sharma: It is almost like an address to the nation.

Mr. H. Bereaux: You really should leave me alone.

Mr. Speaker: Order!

Mr. H. Bereaux: I am speaking about education, so give me a chance please. The point I am making is that a university to serve Trinidad and Tobago has got to be focused differently. If we decide that we have got to move to developed status, as we have decided by the year 2020, then there are a number of things which must be done. We are a small country, but we have to operate like a small animal in the jungle. We may not be the largest, we may not be the strongest, but we definitely have got to be the most cunning and the swiftest. The only way we are going to be able to do that is to tailor our education system in order to—*[Interruption]* I am not on the backbench, I am being chosen to understudy the hon. Speaker. *[Laughter]*

We have got to be prepared to so train our nation in order to move where we are going, and no government that has that as its programme can choose to discriminate against anybody. I will tell you why. They have got the ability, as the psychologists will tell them. There are a certain number of persons who are exceptional, then there are a few down at the bottom whom one is going to have some difficulty to deal with, but the point is, that big curve in the centre, the challenge for any community, for any society, is how well they will deal with that approximately 66 per cent in the centre.

It cannot be a 66 per cent of Indian and African and mix up. It has to be of the entire society and, as a result of that, we are looking first to put to train as many people in that group in order to move forward. The importance is, for every person one trains, one trains those persons because they, by their ability, would be able to hire other people or to participate in activities which would bring others forward.

That is why I hear many of them on the other side from time to time have spoken about Singapore and Hong Kong and these places, but the key to those places—look at Korea and a number of places, one can see the percentage of persons who are participating in tertiary education and one will realize right away that the ability and that training is what have assisted in moving those countries forward, and that is why in the context of Trinidad and Tobago, we need a University of Technology. We have, I think, somewhere between 16 and 21 plants in Point Lisas—

Mr. Speaker: Perhaps hon. Member, this is a good time to inform you that your speaking time has expired and at this time we will break for dinner and we shall resume at quarter past eleven.

10.38 p.m.: *Sitting suspended.*

11.15 p.m.: *Sitting resumed*

Hon. H. Béréaux: Mr. Speaker, before we took the break I was talking about the University of Technology of Trinidad and Tobago. I was indicating that there is need for such a university, because our country has its own goals and aspirations and that the University of the West Indies—notwithstanding its good reputation—does not dovetail with the kind of development, which we need for Trinidad and Tobago. I was about to use the example of us having in the Point Lisas area—I think somewhere between 15 and 21 plants—but as far as I know, I do not know of any citizen of Trinidad and Tobago who has been a resident in Trinidad and Tobago and who has the technology to create, design and build one

of those plants. Every time we need to build a plant we have to go abroad, and part of the reason is that in the engineering degree syllabus of the University of the West Indies there is no serious design component.

Mr. Speaker, if it is that we are talking about transfer of technology, it does not only come by persons being taught by someone, but we have to train our people, as it were, to be able to steal the Promethean flame. Many people would tell you that if you look at the Japanese, for example, wherever they go—in any motor mart or anywhere else—they are always taking photographs and they have been doing that for more than 25 to 30 years, and it is believed that those photographs formed the basis of Japan being able to do all the designing that they are doing today, because the Japanese copied it from elsewhere. It makes no sense trying to reinvent the wheel when, in fact, it is there already. So I am saying to this honourable House today that we need a University of Technology for Trinidad and Tobago, and we need to have the entire nation behind this programme.

I know that the Members on the opposite side believe that a system of civil disobedience will assist in where they are going, or they think that would cause the present Government to relent, or to be less able to carry out its policies, but that is not what is going to happen. What is going to happen is that notwithstanding what Members on the other side are doing, we may not be able to do all the things that we want to do in a certain time frame, but these things would be done, and the only casualty in this particular impasse, or attempted impasse, will be Trinidad and Tobago.

As I said before, no country would want to move forward at the rate at which we want to move forward, and leave back anyone; it is not possible. We need the combined energies, intelligence and industry of the entire country, but from time to time, the utterances on the other side seem to suggest that we are in a war, and that what has happened—and what they have talked about is something that most of us have never experienced—was that when they were on this side and we were on the opposite side they were fair to us. That is not the truth, and we see the example here today. The hon. Member for Naparima got up and talked about personal secretaries and Ministers' advisors, and the Member should have known that those positions were brought into being by his own government.

We saw again, where the Caribbean Court of Justice, the provisions of that court were signed by the other side when they were in government—*[Interruption]* You were not there, but if you say so I will take your word for it but, nonetheless, now they are moving to stop it and, in my opinion, to give Trinidad and Tobago the name of a country where, when one government agrees

with you, if the process is not completed during the lifetime of that government, the Caricom partners cannot look forward to having the decisions taken by that previous government carried through, and it does not augur well for Trinidad and Tobago. We are not dealing with today, we are dealing with Trinidad and Tobago for today and for the future. It cannot be that a competent government, having taken a decision, the very next time another party comes into power, that party has a change of position, and in most cases, mainly for change in itself.

We have seen a number of proposals which the previous government had initiated, brought here and they have refused to support them. I understand that might be a political strategy, and if that is the strategy, fine, but do not practise that strategy and then come and blame the Government, particularly in instances where persons have listened to their strategies and are now left out on a limb simply because they have listened to Members on the opposite side.

Mr. Speaker, within the past three months, I have gone from time to time to a number of hardware stores in the Chaguanas area and also in my area, and what I have found was that a number of hardware dealers were not buying anything, and now that building has started they have been left out, because they have listened to the preaching of disobedience—some of them not willingly, but out of fear and I do not mean fear that anyone would do them harm, but fear that what their political leaders may have said to them might be correct—and now that they are seeing activities going on they have been left behind. A number of businessmen have told me that they want to start restocking, because they are seeing activities going on in Trinidad and Tobago. All the complaints that hon. Members on the opposite side made, many are detrimental to their own constituents.

For instance, the hon. Member for Caroni Central came here sometime ago and talked about crime—the hon. Member for Caroni East not the Member occupying the seat now but the actual Member for Caroni East—such as kidnapping and a number of other crimes in the area of Caroni Central. When one hears the statements made by persons on the other side, particularly with respect to crime, one asks oneself if these are the same persons who are objecting, or should I say resisting, maybe in a subtle way, and coming out blatantly and saying that they are not going to support the Police Service Bills and other Bills. The Member is saying that on one hand, and then he is complaining and saying that his constituents are being targeted—and I am not saying that they may not be—by people who are prone to criminal activities like stealing and doing these kinds of things.

Firstly, the Members behave as though they are the only ones who are being targeted. I know a number of UNC supporters and their constituents have worked

hard and they have money and, as a result of that you are not going to pelt a tree that does not have any fruit on it, and the criminals move to attack them. If that is happening, all persons who are of like mind, in terms of seeing the law upheld, need to come together to deal with that kind of misbehaviour, but when these persons receive the unwitting support of persons who are not of like mind, but just believe that in order to see things go badly, or not to help the Government—they are not supporting the Government—then we have a problem.

I am sorry to have to say this in the absence of the hon. Member for Couva North. I want all the Members on the other side to think carefully, and to see whether, in fact—I do not believe in encouraging misbehaviour or leaving a party line but if the Member is prone to going down a certain way maybe he needs to look at it again.

Mr. Ramnath: Would you do that with the PNM?

Hon. H. Bereaux: I will try if it needs to be done. I have phrased my statement in a way to encourage Members to actually seek dialogue with the Member, because it cannot be—[*Interruption*] Hon. Member for Fyzabad, Mr. Speaker, through you, we sought earlier to bring closure to this debate, but the Member did not want that because the Member wanted to speak, so I am here now speaking, but I understand the Member. The Member has a problem and that problem is not with me; the problem is the Member having to eat meat when he does not chew it; so that is the problem, but it is not my fault.

Mr. Speaker, we are faced with a situation in this country, and I know the hon. Member for Couva North is a winner and he likes to win, but even all of us who are champions understand that there are times when one has to take second place, and this is the Member's second place. The Member has done many things, and I think the Member has a place in the history of this country, and if the Member wants to have a further place and a place of distinction, and leave some place for other young and brilliant people, maybe the time has come where Members need to speak to him and point that out. [*Interruption*] I did not speak to the hon. Member for Nariva. If the Member for Nariva had taken the advice that he is now giving me, Mr. Dhanraj Singh would not have been where he is today, because the Member actually caused the problem with him when he complained to him about that other person.

Mr. Speaker, notwithstanding the ranting and raving of the Member for Nariva, I thank you for the opportunity. [*Desk thumping*]

The Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley): Mr. Speaker, I was just getting ready to spend the night here. I want to thank my colleague, the Member for La Brea, for bringing sense to those on the other side. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, let me start by congratulating my colleagues on this side who spoke on this Bill, and I want to single out the Member for Tabaquite, the Member for Chaguanas and the Member for St. Joseph for speaking on the Bill. Quite frankly, I think the other Members—notably the Member for Oropouche was on a frolic of his own.

However, for the record, although the Member for St. Joseph is not here, I think I need to respond to a few of the concerns raised by him. Before doing that, I want to put on record, once more, the attempt by the Government to supply responses to Members on the other side for their queries raised at the Finance Committee stage and, of course, it was impossible to supply all responses given the time period. As a matter of fact, this debate was supposed to have taken place last Wednesday, and it was deferred until this Monday to give the officials some more time to gather the responses.

Having said that, I note that with respect to Head 46—Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs, when that Head was discussed at the Finance Committee, the Member for Chaguanas did not raise any queries. I say that because in the Member's contribution today, the Member was making the point that he wanted answers and he thought that Members on this side should have contributed to the debate and so forth, but the Member did not have any questions at Finance Committee stage. When one considers the fact that under Head 46, there is an increase of some \$21,562,500, I really could not for the life of me understand what the Member was referring to.

When I checked my officers, they pointed out the fact that there were some small allocations made under 13 sub-heads, which were transferred to project No. 100, the Sports and Youth Multi-Purpose Facility. The provisional estimate for this facility was \$2 million and it has been increased to \$8 million, which is an increase of \$6 million. I do not think it takes very long for one to understand why this was done. At least, let us get one good project off, and that was obviously the idea with this.

The Member for St. Joseph had certain concerns, for example, the Member wanted to know why the Government was so easy on LIAT; why is the Government providing a total sum of \$50 million to LIAT at this time; and why is

the Government so stringent with BWIA. First of all, the \$12.5 million funding for LIAT was first in the nature of a guarantee by the Government. The Government was mindful of the benefits accruing from Caricom, and we have said that before and we will say it again. The Government was also mindful of the importance of LIAT to the Caribbean but, at the same time, we know our obligation to our own airline BWIA, and we have never shirked from that obligation. More importantly, the shares held in LIAT are held by BWIA. The Government owns about 1 per cent of LIAT; it is BWIA that owns about 25 per cent of LIAT. So that when the Government helps LIAT the Government is, in fact, taking care of BWIA's subsidiary.

Now, at this time, the Government has given and committed funds of close to \$200 million to BWIA, so that is four times the commitment to LIAT. As I said, the \$12.5 million was first of all in the nature of a guarantee to the shareholder governments, because the Government was saying: "Listen, we are merely a 1 per cent shareholder of LIAT and we are not getting involved however, we would not mind guaranteeing a loan to a shareholder government." They came back and said that is not going to help since they did not have a difficulty with a guarantee, but what they needed was cash and the Government said, "Well, okay, no problem, we were prepared to give you a guarantee; we will give you a loan." So we are not giving a loan to LIAT; we are providing a loan of up to \$12.5 million to shareholder governments; and we are taking the credits of Antigua, Bermuda, St. Kitts, St. Lucia and so forth.

Mr. Speaker, I could tell you that in the last incarnation of this Government, 1991—1995, we were able to recover all the previous loans granted to these islands other than Guyana. The Government got back its money from St. Vincent, Dominica, Antigua, Bermuda and so forth. So the Government had no difficulty in providing financing to the shareholder governments. So the same thing the Government was saying to LIAT's shareholders was the same thing that the Government said to the BWIA's shareholders.

Mr. Speaker, in the case of BWIA, the Government is a 33.5 per cent shareholder, and the Government was saying that it was willing to meet its obligation as a shareholder. The Government was even willing to meet the obligations of workers as shareholders, because the workers owned 15.5 per cent of the company, but what about the other shareholders? If the other shareholders do not want to play their part, should there not be some dilution? And those were the issues. When we got to the point where the other shareholders were saying okay, fine, they do not mind dilution; the Government said, okay, it would work with BWIA because, as I said before, BWIA for us is more than its bottom line.

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We are presently working on the Latin American initiative that is important for us, and the Government prefers to have BWIA to work with. Well, obviously, if the Government does not have BWIA it would have to look for air links otherwise, or the Government may have to postpone the achievement of that objective, but that is what it is. The Government has informed BWIA about this and it has made funds available to BWIA under certain conditions and they have satisfied certain conditions and they are yet to satisfy others. As a matter of fact, BWIA has 20 minutes, as it were, in a given deadline, and we would know hopefully, tomorrow, what is the situation. The reality is that the airline is in a terrible position; the Government is willing to help if the other stakeholders are also willing to help. The Government has a vision for a single airline in the Caribbean by bringing LIAT and BWIA together, but that could only materialize if all stakeholders see that vision and want to share in that vision. We cannot be taken for a patsy and that is where we are on that BWIA issue.

The Member talked about the \$16.9 million that was allocated for road development, and the Member wanted to know whether or not any study was done. Let me state quickly what has happened here. Sometime last year, Cabinet approved the setting up of a committee to look at road development of air and sea links. What the Government was saying is that it makes no sense signing trade agreements with the Dominican Republic, Costa Rica and Cuba and so forth if it does not have the means to get to and from the place, or if there are not adequate sea links to these countries, because it would mean that it is just merely pie in the sky. What had happened long ago is that governments would sign agreements and put them in a cupboard and that would be the end of it; there was no activation; no clear action plan to make sure that the agreement worked. So basically that is what the Government wants to do.

The Government is saying that the medium term objective for Trinidad and Tobago is obviously the integration of our economy with that of Latin America; that is the positioning. When the Member for St. Joseph made the other point that the Government is not doing anything to diversify the economy, I had to say to myself that the Member is really simply out of it and he does not know what is happening, because not only are we signing these trade agreements; not only are we part of the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) negotiations, but we are putting the infrastructure in place so as to benefit from it, and that is why we are busy setting up links to Costa Rica and so forth.

So the Government had established this committee to look at what was required. The committee reported and we accepted the recommendations of the

committee using TIDCO as the implementing machinery, and TIDCO working with BWIA started a new initiative. The Member asked that question at Finance Committee and on page 4 of the responses—it is too late in the evening really to go through all of it—Members would see a little blurb there with respect to road development and exactly what is involved. I cannot spend any more time on that matter.

Mr. Speaker, let me deal quickly with some other issues like the Revenue Stabilization Fund and the position with respect to surplus oil revenues. First of all, the Member was making the point that in his day at the wicket, the price of oil was \$28 and he had over \$1 billion in extra oil revenues. The Member wants to know how it is that oil revenues are at present averaging \$29 and there is a projected surplus of only \$300 million. But before the Member made that point he was saying that in one year the oil income was down, because bpTT wrote off more of its capital investment so the Member obviously knew the answer. Do you understand? The Member knows that it is not simply a question of price, but it is also a function of the write-offs in the particular year, a simple thing. *[Interruption]* That is the case at present; that is what is happening.

Mr. Speaker, with respect to the Revenue Stabilization Fund, quite frankly, there is a debate going on at present at the Ministry of Finance. I also want to make it clear that the Government intends to come to the Parliament to legislate the establishment of the fund, but what does it say? When we speak about a Revenue Stabilization Fund what it means is that to the extent that there is excess oil revenue, part of it must go into the fund. The idea behind that is really to limit expenditure. The concept is that the Government was not planning for that excess revenue and, therefore, it should be set aside. In a situation in which the Government would say, “Well, listen, there are burning issues and things that the Government needs to do,” there is the argument that it makes little sense setting aside funds in a Revenue Stabilization Fund, and then going out to borrow to finance its increased expenditure, because the borrowing cost is always higher.

Mr. Speaker, if one takes the money and does the obverse and finance productive investments, that is perhaps even better than saving in a Revenue Stabilization Fund, because it is productive investment and it is going to give a return in years to come, and that is what we are looking for. So that is the big issue. The Government is committed to the Revenue Stabilization Fund and the Government is saying—*[Interruption]*

Mr. Sharma: It is time to stop talking.

Hon. K. Valley: I understand Members, and we could have done this much earlier, but we have to be always mindful that there might be researchers who

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may want to look and see what really happened in the Parliament. Members, I shall not be much longer but I think the record ought to indicate certain matters. Let me just finish the point with respect to the Revenue Stabilization Fund. The Government is committed to it, but it is not an end all and be all. It is one way of setting moneys aside and productive investment is another way.

The Public Services Association (PSA): Well this was a joke. We had the Member for St. Joseph arguing a case saying that the PSA is asking for 45 per cent and the Government must not buck and the Member for Chaguanas gets up and says, "Listen, you better be sympathetic to the case of public servants, because they have been hard pressed—a lecturer would tell me that the truth is neither white nor black; it is grey, somewhere in the middle—and that is what it is. Obviously, the Members are not comparing notes and they ought to get their issues correct. The Member for St. Joseph talked about the Government's weaknesses, and he said that is why these things are happening, and at the same time, the Member is saying how the Government seems to be showing some strength in dealing with BWIA, and the Member is blaming or castigating the Government, claiming that it is weak; you are either "A" or not "A", you cannot be both.

With respect to the reduction in the rate of value added tax (VAT) the Member argued the case that rather than the reduction of income tax the Government should reduce VAT. Obviously, that is not the Government's policy. The Government's policy is to move the marginal tax rate from 35 per cent to 30 per cent—which it had already done—to a lower level with the aim of getting the tax down to a rate of 20 per cent, because we believe that is going to spur investment in Trinidad and Tobago. When the Government does that then it could look at VAT and decide whether it is going to move it from the 15 per cent rate down to 10 per cent or perhaps even lower. The quest right now is to position Trinidad and Tobago as an investment hub in this part of the world and that is our major initiative.

National Insurance Pension: I would just inform my colleagues on the other side that a note is now before a Cabinet sub-committee and very soon we would be having word with respect to that matter and, yes, the note talks about recommending the \$1,000 pension promised by the Government in addition to some other benefits.

Mr. Speaker, I want the Member for Tabaquite to know that the Water Pollution Rules came to Parliament last year, but it required a 40-day period for the negative resolution; it lapsed and it will be coming back to the Parliament shortly and, this matter is now before the Cabinet. But bearing in mind that we

expect to go on recess by July 15, 2003, it makes no sense bringing it now because it is going to lapse again, so the consideration is to bring it early in the new term.

The last note I have here—I shall not go there, Mr. Speaker—simply says Dr. Harry's interview; that is the Member for Naparima. I do not think that I really want to go there. Mr. Speaker, therefore, with these few words, I beg to move.
[*Desk thumping*]

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved:

That this House adopt the Second Report (2002/2003 Session) of the Finance Committee of the House of Representatives of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, on proposals for the Supplementation and Variation of the 2003 appropriation.

FINANCE (SUPPLEMENTATION AND VARIATION OF APPROPRIATION) BILL

The Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley): Mr. Speaker, I beg to move,

That a Bill to supplement and vary the appropriation of the sum the issue of which was authorized by the Appropriation Act, 2003 be now read a second time.

Question proposed.

Mr. Chandresh Sharma (Fyzabad): Mr. Speaker, on the last occasion when we met on similar matters, Members on this side raised the matter concerning moneys owing to Members of Parliament who had served in the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago during the period 2002. Considering that in a few days we would be paying tribute to the labour movement, it is only fair that those Members who have served during that period should be paid.

Mr. Speaker, more than that, one of the weak arguments presented by Members on the other side is that some Members did not take their oath. As I understand it and following the British Westminster system, when an election is held under the system that we follow, an invitation has to be extended to Members of Parliament on both sides to come to the Parliament, on the day so appointed, to take the oath of office. The authority did not present any opportunity for Members of Parliament on this side to come to Parliament and take their oath. In addition, Members of Parliament were called to serve in this very Parliament and these Members were addressed as Members of Parliament for that period, and

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the officers who are paid for by the State continue to obtain that assistance in addition to the staff.

On numerous occasions, the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service delivered correspondence at the homes or offices of Members of Parliament and, as a result, these pieces of correspondence had to be treated with. The short point is that Members of Parliament have served for the period for which they were elected, and to this date Members of Parliament have not been paid.

On a previous occasion, the Minister of Finance, who happens to be the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, when asked about payments, he attempted to offer a Christian answer saying, “The milk of kindness shall obtain.” Well, I do not think that we are looking for milk; we are much too big for milk. [*Laughter*] I think that the Members of Parliament who have served on both sides during that period ought to be paid. I am very pleased to note that the Member for Diego Martin West agrees with me. It is not often that Members on both sides agree on common grounds.

I have also noticed that large sums of money were approved in the budget for Parliament, and these funds are not yet utilized, so there is not the question of the availability of funds to pay Members of Parliament. In addition, during the office of a Member of Parliament, a Member is entitled to certain rights and, perhaps privileges; for instance, in the purchase of a motor car and similar other benefits, and Members of Parliament have had access to those benefits, which means that Members of Parliament have qualified to obtain what is due to them.

I think in the observation of Labour Day which is a public holiday, a commitment from the Government to pay Members of Parliament on both sides—one would appreciate that Members of Parliament have responsibilities and I think it would be a good sign that the Government is interested in maintaining what should go to Members of Parliament but, more than that, the Government should also indicate to the national community that matter was due to no fault of Members not having taken the oath of office.

As a Member of the CPP, I have obtained on an informal basis, the advice of the customs of a number of parliaments which we follow, and they are very surprised that Members of Parliament have not been paid. In fact, to be a Minister of Government, you are either a nominated Member or a Member of Parliament. I want to repeat that: To be a Minister of Government you are either a nominated Member, as in the case of the Senate, or an elected Member. My colleagues opposite are all elected Members of Parliament and many of them are Ministers of

Government. The short point is that in their particular situation, to be a Minister, they have to be a Member of Parliament, so it means to say that on both sides of this House we are Members of Parliament, as we were last year, last month and the year 2002 as well.

I would like the Minister in his response to give an intelligent answer—I do not mean any discourtesy, because I do not wish to be paid from “the kindness of milk”, I wish to be paid from the funds made available by the State and that is the moneys that I have worked very hard for, and as for my constituents, 50,000 having voted for me in the last five general elections.

Hon. Member: It is you who caused that.

Mr. C. Sharma: So the short point is that we are seeing money being used and wasted. I do not want to get into the gutter of the argument; \$400 million in the Community-Based Environmental Protection and Enhancement Programme (CEPEP); and \$130 million in the Unemployment Relief Programme (URP).

Mr. Speaker, thank you, I think I have made my point. [*Desk thumping*]

The Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley): Mr. Speaker, I am aware that this is an issue that is very close to the hearts and pockets of Members on the other side. I must admit that I empathize with my colleagues on the other side. As you know, this is due solely to their making, and the Government really cannot do anything since our hands are tied. As a matter of fact, not one Member on this side got his or her stipend from the date of the election in 2001 until we were appointed Ministers in January 2002. So we are in a similar position as our colleagues on the other side, but they are for a longer period. If the Members were on this side and they were appointed as Ministers, they would have received their salaries from that point.

Again, I want to make the point that we have to remember that there are three branches of the State: The Executive, which is the Government, the Parliament and the Judiciary; this is solely a Parliament matter. During Finance Committee, I undertook to discuss this matter with the Clerk of the House. Members would know that I was away and I did not have the chance to speak with the Clerk of the House. On a previous occasion, the Clerk of the House informed me that legislation may be required given the Standing Orders.

Mr. Speaker, the Government is desirous of bringing legislation, but the Government is saying that if legislation is required, the legislation would be introduced into the House the day after the Police Bills are passed in the House of Parliament.

Mr. Speaker, I beg to move.

Mr. Ramnath: Since the Member could be so arrogant I am leaving.

Hon. K. Valley: Arrogant?

[Other Opposition Members leave the Chamber.]

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. Speaker, I beg to move that this House do now adjourn to Friday, June 27, 2003 at 1.30 p.m and that day is Private Members' Day.

Question put and agreed to.

House adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 12.06 a.m.