

*Papers Laid**Thursday, October 14, 2004***HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES***Thursday, October 14, 2004*

The House met at 1.30 p.m.

PRAYERS[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]**PAPERS LAID**

1. The Provisional Collection of Taxes Order, 2004. [*The Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley)*]
2. The Value Added Tax Order, 2004. [*Hon. K. Valley*]
3. Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the financial statements of the Legal Aid and Advisory Authority for the year ended December 31, 2000. [*Hon. K. Valley*]
To be referred to the Public Accounts Committee.
4. Annual audited financial statements of the Trinidad and Tobago Mortgage Finance Company Limited for the year ended December 31, 2002. [*Hon. K. Valley*]
5. Annual audited financial statements of the National Gas Company of Trinidad and Tobago Limited for the year ended December 31, 2003. [*Hon. K. Valley*]

*Papers 4 and 5 to be referred to the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee***APPROPRIATION BILL
(BUDGET)**

[THIRD DAY]

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on question [October 08, 2004]:

That the Bill be now read a second time.

Question again proposed.

The Minister of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education (Hon. Colm Imbert): Mr. Speaker, we are now entering the third day of the budget debate. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Ramsaran: The second day.

Hon. C. Imbert: This is the third day; the first day was the presentation of the budget, yesterday was the response to the presentation, the second day, and now we are in the third day.

Mr. Speaker, I have listened very attentively to the contribution of the Leader of the Opposition and one thing that struck me is that the hon. Member for Couva North in his long contribution—I believe he went over the time that is normally allotted him—did not at any time deal with any of the budget measures. Since he did not, I think it is necessary for me to do so, because I get the impression that the hon. Members opposite: the Member for Chaguanas, the Member for St. Joseph, the Member for Couva North and others who made contributions yesterday would want the population to forget the fiscal measures for 2005, so I would like to repeat them.

It is significant that in this year, the Government of which I am proud to be a part has increased old age pension by 15 per cent from \$1,000 per month to \$1,150 per month. We have also increased the public assistance payments by \$150 per month, more than 15 per cent in this particular case and this has gone up to \$800. We have also increased the disability assistance grant by \$150, to \$800 per month, more than 20 per cent in this particular case.

So that the pension is now \$1,150; public assistance grant is now \$800 and, if my calculations are correct, the disability assistance is now \$800. These are significant enhancements in these welfare payments to the disadvantaged sections of our population. As I said, the minimum increase has been an increase of 15 per cent.

We have also increased the distribution of hampers to the disadvantaged through our SHARE programme by 5,000—from 15,000 to 20,000. Again, a very significant percentage increase of 33 per cent in terms of quantum and the value of the hamper has gone up from \$200 to \$250 per month.

I know the hon. Members opposite would want to play these things down, but they are significant benefits to those who receive them, and I think it is necessary to repeat and reinforce the fiscal measures in this budget because there was no debate from the other side on these measures at all.

We have also dealt with the problem of Government pensioners, public servants who retired many years ago; we have gone back 20 years, as far as 1984, to help public servants who retired on very small fixed pensions. These persons get a payment of \$400 per month; those who retired between 1985 and 1994 will receive an ex gratia payment of \$300 per month; and those who retired between 1995 and 1999 will receive a payment of \$150 per month; and widows will also receive an ex gratia payment of \$150 per month.

The benefits I have just described are costing the Treasury in excess of some \$200 million, and I think we need to reinforce these things because of what I have heard from the other side; and the Member for Chaguanas closed by saying that he cannot support the budget. So he is not supporting an increase to pensioners of \$150 per month; he cannot support the \$150 increase for disability assistance; he is not supporting the increase in public assistance; he is not supporting the 33 per cent increase in the number of food hampers distributed; he is not supporting the ex gratia payment that we are making to government pensioners.

People need to understand when the hon. Members opposite say they are not supporting this budget. What are they not supporting? The Minister of Finance made a point that we will achieve a fiscal surplus with our budgetary allocations for fiscal 2005. I believe the surplus is about \$7 million at this time which may change over the year depending on oil revenue; it may in fact be a little more than that. It has been the pattern over the last year.

The point is we have come to this Parliament, we have demonstrated how we are going to raise \$27 billion in revenue and how we are going to spend it, we have shown allocations to all the ministries. There is no fiscal irresponsibility here. Within that \$27 billion, there is a provision of more than \$1 billion going into the Revenue Stabilization Fund and even with that, we still have the account in balance during this budget presentation.

So what are they not supporting? It is not that we are running a deficit budget. We have shown what we can do and the revenue projections are quite reasonable; in fact, we have been very prudent in the last fiscal year. We had a certain revenue projection and exceeded it.

We pegged an oil price of \$25 and we exceeded that and we exceeded our revenue projections and were able to do a number of things during the last fiscal year, such as putting an additional \$1 billion into the Revenue Stabilization Fund and so on.

Let me talk about the collection of taxes because the Members on the other side would like to give the country the impression that this \$27 billion is unrealistic. Well, it certainly is extremely realistic. Based on our record in 2003 and 2004, we do believe that we will be able to collect the necessary revenue and have our accounts in balance for this coming fiscal year, in fact, we may very well be in surplus and I will give an example.

The collection of value added tax (VAT) in 2003 was \$2.1 billion; however, in 2004, the collection of VAT was \$2.86 billion, a \$700 million increase in VAT collections between 2003 and 2004.

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I heard some commentators after the budget was read, and I must compliment the hon. Minister of Finance for a very well-balanced budget, targeting specific areas such as education, national security, health, housing and so on.

If one looks at how the budget is distributed, one will see it is a very focused, well-balanced targeted budget. I heard commentators making the point that VAT collections had gone down during the last fiscal year. In fact, VAT collections have gone up over the previous year by \$700 million and that is testimony to the efficiencies that the Minister of Finance and his other Ministers in the Ministry of Finance had been able to achieve in terms of compliance and collection.

Also, it is linked directly to the growth in the economy because as the economy grows and more and more income is generated, and more and more taxes are collected, one should see a corresponding impact on tax collection and you are seeing it here. VAT increased from \$2 billion to \$2.8 billion in stark contrast to what was happening under the hon. Member for St. Joseph when in 2001 we in fact had—and if you want to know where it is, look on page 12 of the 2001 Estimates of Revenue. They projected collections of over \$2 billion in VAT and collected only \$1.8 billion. So the record of the previous administration in that area is not good.

We have been able to demonstrate in this fiscal year improved collections, improved efficiency, prudence and very strong management of the macroeconomic essentials of our economy. That is why I cannot understand the points made by the Members opposite: They “don’t” support the budget. “What is it yuh don’t support?” What do you not support?

Let me go into some issues dealing with my own portfolio, Mr. Speaker. I have some preliminary statistics which we are refining all the time. We have been looking at this over the last couple of months trying to get a handle on the actual number of persons in Trinidad and Tobago who are enrolled in post-secondary or tertiary education programmes.

Again, the hon. Member for Couva North said that Vision 2020 is a dream or so—I cannot remember the words he uttered because I fell asleep halfway through his contribution—but I do remember that at the beginning he said something about Vision 2020 is a dream.

One of the objectives to achieve the status of a developed country, is to increase the number of persons who are being trained. That is another fallacy in the public domain with which we need to deal—the fallacy that this Government is throwing money away into make-work programmes and is not directing

resources into training persons in marketable skills towards the country's development. That is a fallacy and we need to deal with it.

To acquire developed country status, one of our objectives is to get more and more of our school leavers, and more and more of those persons who complete their secondary education moving on to specialized programmes like craft, technical and academic at the post-secondary and tertiary level.

1.45 p.m.

It is a feature of every successful developed country in the world, that a high percentage of its population is involved in lifelong learning, continuous education, continuously upgrading its skills, and every developed country that has been successful has put a lot of focus into this area of national life; the aspect of training of citizens and higher education beyond the secondary level.

I have collected some information and the information available to me at this time, when I look at the public higher education system, looking at UWI, Institute of Business, School of Continuing Studies, our College of Science, Technology and Applied Arts (COSTAAT), the Trinidad and Tobago Hotel Tourism Institute, the Metal Industries Company training programmes, Trinidad and Tobago Institute of Technology, the Teachers' Colleges, the Nursing Programmes at the Ministry of Health, and so on—the information I have is that in 2001, the enrolment in post-secondary tertiary level programmes was approximately 21,000 persons, of which 15,800 were in the public sector and approximately 5,000 were in the private sector. If you look at colleges like Roytec, School of Accounting and Management, School of Business and Computer Studies, Caribbean Union College, and so on, you get a figure of approximately 21,000 persons enrolled in tertiary level programmes in both public and private institutions.

I will now turn to the current time. This is when they left. That is what the situation was like when they left, or rather they were retired in the public interest by the population of Trinidad and Tobago. When I fast forward now to our academic year, 2004/2005, the information available to me is that the enrolment in public institutions has moved from a total of 15,800 in the 2001/2002 academic year to 28,700. I want to repeat that. It has moved from the time of the UNC, from 15,000 to the time of the PNM, to 28,000 persons enrolled at public tertiary level institutions. I would give you the breakdown:

UWI core programmes	13,500
Institute of Business	560
School of Continuing Studies	3,300

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COSTAATT, one of the institutions responsible for this significant increase, the total enrollment in COSTAATT, which includes the technical institutes like John S. Donaldson Technical Institute, at the time of the UNC was 2,400 persons and as of September this year, COSTAATT has moved to 7,000. So we have increased the enrolment in COSTAATT more than 300 per cent since, as I said, the retirement of the other side in the public interest.

The private sector is rising to the occasion and, certainly, the introduction of programmes like the Government Assistance for Tuition Expenses in the private institutions is certainly an incentive. This has gone from a total of 5,000 to a total of some 7,400, giving a grand total in September 2004 of 36,000. So we have moved from 21,000 under the UNC to 36,000 under the PNM. The 21,000 under the UNC had us down in the doldrums at a participation rate of somewhere around 10 per cent.

What this means is that out of every 10 persons who completed their secondary education under the UNC, only one was moving on towards tertiary education. We now have that up to 17 per cent, and based on programmes that we would be introducing within the next month or two, we expect that by January 2005 we would be up to 20 per cent. So we are looking at a doubling of the national participation rate in higher education with the advent of the People's National Movement Government.

In three years this administration has been able to move our higher education enrolment number from that of a developing country to somewhere close to a developed country. Therefore, developed country status is no pipe dream. I have not included inside here post secondary programmes, because if I were to add those—which I am going to add now—into the system, when we look at the technician programmes taking place at the NEC Skills Training Programme in electrical installation, mechanical maintenance, instrument fitting, pipe fitting, carbon steel welding, flux core welding, building technology, automotive technology, these are all programmes being run by the National Energy Skills Centre.

The number of students in these programmes in the last month was 4,771. You would have heard reference to the HYPE Programme (Helping You Prepare For Employment Programme) which is run by Metal Industries Company, one of the institutions that reports to the Ministry of Science and Technology. HYPE has indicated to me that in the last 12 months they were able to enrol 2,159 trainees in their various programmes, in construction technology, primarily. The whole purpose of the HYPE Programme is helping youth prepare for employment. What is done there is that at-risk youths are brought into a programme; they are trained

in computer literacy initially, and then they are trained in a number of construction trades; then they are trained in business management, small business management and so on. They are essentially incubated and then they are assisted to become small contractors and they are provided with work. You would have heard the Minister of Housing talking about the contract opportunities that have been made available within the National Housing Delivery Programme for these HYPE trainees.

So we have some 2,159 trainees in the HYPE Programme; 4,771 in the National Energy Skills Centres training programmes. We also have our Laventille Technology Centre, some 400 students at that location. In the MUST Programme, we are already close to 1,000 trainees who are being trained in certifiable skills, again in construction trades: plumbing, electrical installation, masonry, carpentry, joinery and so on.

So you are looking at, in addition to our traditional academic degree programmes at UWI, UTT, TTIT, COSTAATT, Roytec and so on, we have 36,000 students in those institutions. In addition to that, we have over 10,000 students enrolled in post-secondary training programmes, which are certifiable programmes, being assessed and certified by our National Training Agency.

So you are looking at over 45,000 young people who are either going to university, going to our technical institutes, to private tertiary level institutions to get their diplomas, associate degrees and so on, giving us an effective participation rate in post-secondary and tertiary education, of 25 per cent. When we announced Vision 2020, we said we would get there, I believe, was it by the year 2010 or 2015? In 2004, we have already reached a 25 per cent participation rate in tertiary education, and we have only just begun. Over the last 12 months we had an increase of over 15,000 persons enrolled in academic programmes, diploma programmes, programmes of higher education, post-secondary training, and so on.

These are significant achievements and are taking us well on our pathway to becoming a developed country. So it is certainly not a pipe dream, and the figure that the Prime Minister, the Minister of Finance, announced in the budget about trying to achieve a 60 per cent participation rate, which would mean six out of every ten young persons—and nobody could argue with that; I know that the Member for Caroni East cannot argue with these kinds of objectives. He just made the point of the Singapore models. He cannot argue with what we are doing. But we need to let them know what we are doing, because if we leave it up to them, they would not want the population to know that 15,000 young men and

women—new students—have had the opportunity to go to the University of the West Indies; enter John Donaldson; go to the private tertiary level institutions or enter any one of our training programmes. We had 15,000 new students in the last fiscal year. They do not want the population to know that, because that is good news and they do not want the good news to go into the system.

But I need to move on and deal with the actual plans of the Ministry of Tertiary Education over the next fiscal year, because, again, I do not think anybody on the other side—there are some Members opposite who like to snicker and so on, and then come quietly to you and say, “Look, I want to talk to you.” But the point is, I need to report on what I consider to be a year of solid achievement for the Ministry of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education. If I look at the actual performance in terms of numbers, the initial budgetary allocation for the Ministry of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education in the last fiscal year for recurrent expenditure was of the order of about \$650 million. I do not have the exact figures, but my memory tells me—\$665 million is what the 2004 allocation was in the last year’s budget, when we were debating this matter last year.

I am very pleased to report that we were able to spend in excess of \$700 million in the last fiscal year. So we exceeded our original allocation in terms of recurrent expenditure. You were seeing it in the increases in the number of students, and so on. We went from \$665 million to over \$700 million in terms of our expenditure. And in our development programme, which is where, perhaps, the ministry had the best performance, we increased our expenditure on plant and equipment, on the refurbishment of the technical institutions, on the establishment of the University of Trinidad and Tobago, on the outfitting of TTIT with new laboratories, and so on.

Our original allocation for capital works the last time we were here was \$55 million, and I am happy to report that we spent \$145 million on our capital development programme. In other words, we exceeded our original targets for the upgrade, repair and refurbishment of our tertiary institutions by 200 per cent. That is why I believe that this \$27 billion budget is achievable, because if I use my own ministry as a yardstick—and all of the other ministries—if you look at our Public Sector Investment Programme, the performance in the PSIP is a performance rate of over 90 per cent. In fact, it could be as much as 100 per cent over the original allocation.

So that in this last fiscal year we were able, for example, to spend \$30 million procuring equipment for the John S. Donaldson Technical Institute; we were able to buy equipment for the auto and diesel workshop, for the air-conditioning

workshop, for the bookbinding laboratory, for the audio-visual laboratory at John S. Donaldson, for the electrical installation laboratories, the food preparation laboratories, the welding laboratory, and so on. We spent over \$11 million buying modern sophisticated equipment for the technical institute, John S. Donaldson Technical Institute.

At San Fernando—because we are holistic in the way we approach this matter—we purchased equipment to the tune of some \$16 million for the automotive laboratory, the surveying laboratory, the structural mechanics laboratory, the machine shop, hydraulics laboratory, the welding shop, the woodwork shop, the culinary arts preparation and so on, totalling, as I said, \$11 million at John S. Donaldson—and more is coming—and \$17 million at San Fernando. It is, in fact, a total of somewhere around \$30 million in modern sophisticated equipment that had been missing from John S. Donaldson throughout the entire tenure of the Members opposite, 1995 to 2001.

2.00 p.m.

They did not spend a red cent on equipment and plant at the two technical institutions. They were not selective in their discrimination. They ran down both technical institutions, one in the north and the other in the south. As a result of that and some other ill-advised measures such as the introduction of tuition fees for the craft and technician programmes, the enrolment at the technical institutes dwindled to less than 1,000 in 1997. The enrolment at our technical institutions in Trinidad and Tobago dropped from over 4,000 to below 1,000 under the tenure of the UNC. While the enrollment dropped the buildings were run down; no money was allocated; and no equipment was purchased.

I remember going down to John S. Donaldson Technical Institute when I was first given this portfolio and looking at some equipment that could not even be World War II—World War I is what it looked like. I am very happy that I have been given this opportunity to help the young people, particularly in the East-West corridor, San Fernando and its environs to re-enrol in our technical institutions. This is why the enrolment at John S. Donaldson Technical Institute is now 1,650, when it was 400 last year and San Fernando Technical Institute 1,700 when it was 500. There have been increases of 313 per cent and 240 per cent in enrolment in one year. I am happy that I was given the opportunity to help young people of this nation to get that kind of technical training. It is a sense of fulfilment! I am also happy that we have not just limited our focus to the technical institutions. They are well on their way and they would continue to develop, grow and re-establish themselves as premier technical institutions in the region.

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We have also targeted so many other areas. Let us look at our new University of Trinidad and Tobago. I have heard the bleating on the other side, a high pitched voice somewhere on the upper level in the back: "It is just a name change". What bothers me is the lack of intellectual capacity on the other side. They speak such inanities and they hope that people will listen to them. I am certain that some of them are aware that one of the fundamental differences between the Trinidad and Tobago Institute of Technology (TTIT) and the University of Trinidad and Tobago is that TTIT did not exist as a legal entity. It was not incorporated or a private non profit organization. They put up a building in Couva; put a name on it and they had no legal authority to offer degrees. It was not empowered under any statute, by-law or article of association to confer degrees and diplomas. The first big difference between the TTIT and UTT is that the University of Trinidad and Tobago has a corporate identity. It is empowered to confer degrees. We do not know what was going on in that institution prior to the coming into play of this PNM administration.

Some of the programmes were at the level of a polytechnic. For those on the other side who have a sprinkling of intellect, look at the differences among a high school, a college, a polytechnic and a university. These definitions are there if you want to read. The Trinidad and Tobago Institute of Technology was somewhere at the level of a polytechnic. It did not have any legal status. It was all over the place and offered five degree programmes and nine associate degree programmes. Let us look at the University of the West Indies. After 42 years of existence, the Faculty of Engineering offers five degree programmes in engineering. TTIT was offering 14 degree programmes. The whole question of quality comes in. That is one of the fundamental differences between the TTIT and UTT.

The other problem with TTIT is that it was dominated by part-time students. It was not a campus. A university is not just a building, but a set of rules and general principles. It must have a charter which defines the mission of the university, its aims and objectives. It must have standards in terms of its curricula, faculty members and credibility. The degree programmes must be recognized by some entity. You must also have a university environment. A university is not a building where you go to school and go home.

The University of the West Indies is a good example. If you look at the facilities you will see a number of ancillary facilities associated with the classrooms. There are dormitories which allow for residential student life and support facilities for students. A university is a way of life. Those of us who have been to one would know that. It is an important component of your life. The

general principles that you may apply in later life are developed and refined during university life. Many of the contacts that you may make among your peers are developed in that university environment. TTIT was missing those aspects of the university. It was missing dormitories and sporting facilities. I could go on.

It was a building in Couva with some equipment and people teaching some programmes. We have formed the University of Trinidad and Tobago and made that one of its campuses. We now have to augment what is there by building dormitories, facilities and other amenities for students; providing a faculty of international quality and ensuring that the standards are applied to the recruitment, retention and promotion of members of the faculty at TTIT. I can tell you that the people at TTIT have embraced the opportunity to grow up from a little child to a mature entity. *[Interruption]* You find that I am moving too fast. There is a fundamental difference between what the University of Trinidad and Tobago would be and what was the Trinidad and Tobago Institute of Technology. It was a good start.

2.15 p.m.

I do not want to be mean-spirited but the laboratories are, in some cases, cutting-edge technology, there is no doubt about that. *[Interruption]* No, one needs to say these things. I just want people to understand that a university is not just a building. It is the persons who are in the building; it is the use to which the facilities are put; it is the environment; it is the culture; it is the philosophy; it is the history and the traditions and all the things that go with university environment and campus life. As I said, it is much more than a building.

This is why UTT has absorbed that building in Couva as its Point Lisas campus and it is now adding all the things that were missing. We will be establishing other campuses in other parts of Trinidad and Tobago. We are establishing a campus in the Mayaro/Galeota area. We are establishing our main campus in Wallerfield. We will be establishing another campus in Mausica/O'Meara area, dealing with different aspects. In other words, the campuses will be programme-specific and this, again, is a fundamental difference. Rather than having a little scattershot approach, where we try to do 29 programmes in one little building, we are going to focus each campus into programme areas, so they will be programme-specific.

The Couva facility, for example, is being refocused to deal with the process industry. The programmes at that campus will be all geared towards the environment around it, the Point Lisas Industrial Estate and the wider business community, but it would be specifically geared towards the process industry.

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At Wallerfield, we will be doing information technology and business. Those are the core elements at Wallerfield. At Mayaro/Galeota, we will be doing petroleum studies, offshore technology and so on, so it is going to be programme-specific. *[Interruption]*

I am glad the Member for Diego Martin West brought that up because there is something else that is already in place. We have another campus of the University of Trinidad and Tobago already up and running. One of the problems, Member for Caroni East, is that we do not have enough time to let people know what is going on, but I am glad that you are listening attentively.

We already have university level programmes in progress at Chaguaramas in maritime training—training persons to become ship captains and so on at a very high level. We have linked up with the South Hampton Institute to do this. It is already up and running. We are using temporary facilities at this point but we will be establishing a maritime institute dealing with mariners, in particular. I am sure the Member for Tabaquite will be glad to hear this. We will be establishing a campus focusing around training of mariners and everything associated with mariners; the use of ship captains and so on. *[Interruption]* No, that is at UWI; remember this is a technology-focused institute.

Mr. Speaker, lest I forget, one of the most important elements of the University of Trinidad and Tobago, for which I am presently drawing together some of the more distinguished people in this country—will be a college of humanities, public affairs, journalism, media studies and so on. *[Desk thumping]* We cannot leave that out because again, at TTIT there was no emphasis on the humanities whatsoever. As I said, it was just a technical school, but we are creating a university and we cannot have a university—as I said, go in the dictionary; go into some glossary of technical terms and read and learn what is a school; what is a high school; what is the polytechnic and what is a university.

The University of Trinidad and Tobago will be incomplete if it did not have some sort of harmonized programmes, interlinking all the campuses in the area of the humanities, and did not have a campus, programme-specific, dealing with those elements of humanities that are currently not properly addressed in Trinidad and Tobago.

We do not have a school of journalism here at all! There is a school of mass communication or something in Jamaica but it is not an area—communications, media, publishing and so on—that has received the kind of attention in the past that it should now receive. Therefore, that is another campus we would be establishing in the Mausica/O'Meara area.

I would also say, Mr. Speaker, one of the fundamental differences, is the post-graduate programmes that we are offering at the University of Trinidad and Tobago. We are offering very focused post-graduate programmes in petroleum engineering, off-shore technology, modern manufacturing systems and so on.

I would also say that one of the ways we have been able to establish the credibility of UTT is to form partnerships and alliances with well-established local and international institutions. For example, some of our mechanical engineering programmes at UTT are being certified by the UWI. We are using the expertise within Trinidad and Tobago to assist us to develop some of our engineering programmes at UTT. There is already a synergy between the University of the West Indies at St. Augustine, Faculty of Engineering, and the University of Trinidad and Tobago.

We have also linked up with the University of Texas at Austin, which is ranked, I am advised, as No. 1 in petroleum engineering in North America, because we are striving for excellence. That is another thing that we must emphasize—[*Interruption*] University of Texas at Austin is No. 1 in petroleum engineering studies in North America. This university will be certifying and giving credibility to a number of the programmes, particularly, the petroleum engineering programmes that are being done in this academic year at the University of Trinidad and Tobago.

We are also forging alliances with the University of Cambridge of the United Kingdom—we are going for First-World, top class; we are not fooling around—which is one of the most prestigious universities in the world.

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

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

Question put and agreed to.

Hon. C. Imbert: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to thank hon. Members on this side and even the Members on the other side for giving me the opportunity to continue.

To show how broadminded we are, Mr. Speaker, in our thrust, as I said, we want to get everybody on board. Contained within the 15,000 new students for this year—[*Interruption*] It is the whole society. If you look at the cross-section of the new entrants into our tertiary education programmes, we are embracing the

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whole society, and so it should be. One of the overseas institutions that we are going to forge alliance with is Tata Industries of India, which is a major manufacturer of trucks, which the Member for Couva South might know about.

We are going to be linking with Tata Industries of India to see what sort of technology transfer and programmes we can have at our University of Trinidad and Tobago that would help us to understand the manufacturing process in the automotive industry.

We are also linking with South Hampton Institute of the United Kingdom—I have told you that already in our mariner's programme, and we are taking on board Southern Alberta Institute of Technology which is already on board with TTIT, adding these new programmes. We also have an alliance with the Energy Institute in Madrid, Spain (ISE) Instituto Superior de Energie, I believe, is the correct pronunciation, so that we are very broad-based in our approach. We are looking in the developing world; we are looking in the developed world and we are striving for excellence in terms of our affiliations.

The whole point is to provide industry-ready graduates. That is the fundamental difference between UWI and UTT. The University of the West Indies is a more academic-based degree programme where the engineering graduates, in particular, are taught in an academic environment and are expected to gain experience when they come out. That is the old British way of teaching engineering. What we are doing at the UTT, however, is insisting that for post-graduate programmes, in particular, persons have experience in an industry before they come into the university.

The programmes are geared towards industry-ready graduates. It is based on demands of companies like Petrotrin, Atlantic LNG, BP, the food processing sector, T&TEC and so on. We are gearing the programme towards graduates who can walk straight into jobs in these sectors, who would be ready to work and would require minimal training after graduating. That is just a little snippet, to give you an idea of the difference between a building in Couva and the University of Trinidad and Tobago.

I do not have four hours to give you an entire dissertation on our charter, but I can tell you that we are already close to 2,000 persons going into UTT. Mr. Speaker, that is a very brief description of what we are doing at UTT.

We are also not forgetting our already established institutions. We are supporting the University of the West Indies. In the *Estimates of Expenditure* we are giving UWI in this year, 2005, for direct university services, almost \$400 million.

There also is additional funding which will come to support the Medical School at UWI. The students at the Medical School at UWI are funded and supported by the Ministry of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education. The total financial support that the ministry gives to the University of the West Indies is: 381 direct university services; medical post-graduate programme, the Eric Williams Medical Sciences Complex got some \$20 million; the Institute of National Relations, \$22 million; subsidies to Mount Hope, \$15 million; the Hugh Wooding Law School and so on. The support given by this Government to the University of Trinidad and Tobago in this fiscal year will be well over \$400 million.

We have also approved a development programme for them for this fiscal year of \$40 million. While we build UTT, we are not neglecting the University of the West Indies. We are not going to make the mistake that they did when they built TTIT, where they neglected John S. Donaldson Technical Institute and San Fernando Technical Institute. We are not doing that. In fact, we are enhancing the labs at TTIT. We are supporting UWI in its development programme.

Mr. Speaker, I must say that UWI has a very ambitious student expansion programme. If I look at the figures; if I look at UWI's enrolment in 2001; its core enrolment was some 7,800. When I look at UWI's enrollment now in 2004 it is 13,500. So UWI has gone from 7,800 to 13,500 in just three years. It has almost doubled its intake. When I look at the budgetary support that we have given to UWI, it is phenomenal in terms of what they got before and what they are now getting from this administration.

If I go to the estimates and I look at what was going on before, the University of the West Indies got, in 2003—if my memory serves me right—some \$260 million in direct—the actual subvention given for direct university services in 2003 was \$260 million, whereas in this year, \$380 million. There is a significant commitment on the part of this administration to support the University of the West Indies and its expansion programme.

The University of the West Indies has told us that they have actually achieved 7,800 to 13,500 in just three years. They have given us an expansion programme to take them to 20,000 students by the year 2006/2007. If we continue on this growth path we will see a growth of UWI from some 7,800 students, under the tenure of the last administration, to an enrolment—[*Interruption*] Well, we are here dealing with the budget; I must talk about what we are doing. Mr. Speaker, if we do not say what we are doing we cannot depend on them to say what we are doing. We need to repeat these things.

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This PNM Government will have taken UWI from 7,000 in the era of the other side, to some 20,000 to 21,000 within our five-year period. In one term we would have supported, because UWI cannot do with without support; we are talking about the budgetary support. The budgetary support for UWI has virtually doubled since the other side was retired in the public interest in 2001.

As I have said, Mr. Speaker, we have doubled the support we are giving UWI, and to take UWI to 20,000 we may have to get very close to doubling it again. It is only a serious government that will give that level of support to our local indigenous institutions of tertiary education. We need to underscore these things because there is a lot of talk that we are throwing money away on make-work schemes and so on. We are putting \$450 million into UWI and people need to understand that!

Mr. Speaker, I can say that in 1986, 200 acres of the Orange Grove Estate—I know they are worried about Orange Grove for some reason—200 acres of Orange Grove Lands were reserved for expansion of the University of the West Indies and I can announce now that I have already had preliminary discussions with the principal of UWI towards establishing another campus of UWI in the Orange Grove area. I am very cognizant of the fact that taking an institution from 7,000 to 20,000—when I went to UWI in the 1970s, the land space was the same and the parameter fence there now is the same parameter fence that was there in the 1970s where the student's intake was just about 3,000, if my memory serves me right.

It was 3,000 in all and it went to 7,000 by 2001 and now it is 13,000 and we are going to take it to 20,000 by 2006/2007. Clearly they cannot all fit on that little piece of land and, therefore, I am informing the Members of the House that the lands that were reserved since 1986—200 acres of Orange Grove lands—will now be used to establish a new campus of UWI. I would probably, see if I can guide them in the direction of being programme-specific so that the overcrowding that is currently taking place at UWI can be solved by the establishment of new facilities in a new location.

Mr. Speaker, I hope this gives you some idea of how forward-looking we are in terms of the way we are developing our tertiary education sector in Trinidad and Tobago.

2.30 p.m.

There is the other side. The flip side is training. I heard this talk about throwing money away and make-work schemes. What we are doing at the Laventille

Technology Centre, which we would open next month is not a make-work scheme. We are training students in the NESC Automotive Technician Programme; we are training students in the HYPE Building Construction Technology Programme, the National Skills Development Journeyman Programme and a number of other courses at Laventille. There are already almost 400 students in that facility. Classes have been started and it is up and running; \$30 million was spent over the last 12 to 18 months at that facility—\$16 million on building and another \$15 million or so on equipment because we recognize the need to be at the cutting edge of technology in everything we do. And, we are going to continue increasing the intake at the Laventille Technology Centre probably up to the level of 800, 900 or 1000.

It is our intention to replicate that facility in many other areas of the country which are sorely in need of a proper technical institute at this time, perhaps, focused in a slightly different way. We may blend the John S. Donaldson Technical Institute, the Laventille Technology Centre to create a community-specific technical school in particular in areas such as Point Fortin, in the Mayaro area, in Diego Martin, in the Valencia area, and so forth because we have recognized there are large catchments of young men and women, for example, in the Malabar, La Horquetta, Maloney areas who have not been successful in the academic stream. If we do not provide these training opportunities for them, they would be left out of the system and marginalized. Just like the Laventille centre—we are not talking dreams here. I want to repeat, the Laventille Technology Centre is already accepting students. [*Desk thumping*] That is just in a period of one year and we have been able to bring that facility up to the stage where it has been commissioned and there is an intake of students. As I said, we would have the formal inauguration in a couple of weeks.

We are going to develop these facilities all over Trinidad. If we are to achieve our participation rate of 60 per cent, we need to have over 100,000 persons. That is the magnitude of the task. That is currently the secondary school population if you think about it. There are currently 100,000 students in secondary schools and we want to have 100,000 persons in post-secondary and tertiary institutions. That is our objective. We are going there and we want to pass that, too. We are going to be developing these technical institutions all over the country. We are going to be developing our training programmes and the quality of courses will be our benchmark. This is where the National Training Agency comes in; developing the vocational standards, developing the systems to make sure that the education and the training we are delivering is of the required quality.

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One of the new programmes we have started to deal with—and alienated young people—is our Multi-Skill Training Programme. And they do not want us to talk about these things. We have taken almost 1,000 young men and women off the streets; persons who are academically challenged, persons who are financially challenged, persons who dropped out of secondary school and who would have no alternative but to turn to delinquency and so on. We have put them into a structured skills training programme, first in the construction industry to deal with the demand that is being created. So there are almost 1,000 young men and women being trained in levels one and two of proficiency in carpentry, masonry, supervisory skills, electrical installation, welding and plumbing, and we intend to get that figure up to 5,000.

A feature of this programme is that it specifically targets school dropouts; people who had given up hope until the hand of the caring PNM reached into these depressed communities, plucked these people out and put them into these training programmes. And we are going to continue to be community specific in terms of our outreach programmes and in terms of our training programmes.

Mr. Speaker, I want the Members opposite to understand what we are dealing with. When they retired from the public interest in 2001, they had only 20,000 persons involved in post-secondary and tertiary education. We are aiming for 100,000 persons and we are going to do that before the end of this decade. [*Desk thumping*] We are putting all the systems in place.

I was happy to be able to inaugurate the Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago just a couple of days ago. I installed at the Council a broad-based panel of educators and practitioners from the private sector, people from TTUTA, people from the Employers' Consultative Association, from the private tertiary institutions, the Engineer' Association. I installed that board which now has the mandate to develop quality standards and to recognize and accredit our academic programmes in all of our new tertiary institutions.

This is a very holistic, broad-based and focused approach to developing our human capital, and I have to keep repeating that because inside that \$27 billion is One billion dollars for the Ministry of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education; \$1 billion is going to be spent in this fiscal year on higher education and training and as we look at the numbers—because we have to keep pushing the numbers up—we will see \$1.5 billion, \$2 billion and so on. We have to do this and we think there is no greater way of spending our petroleum revenues. We are investing in our country's future, we are investing in our people's future, and this is why I feel a sense of fulfilment at having been able to increase the participation

rate in tertiary education in one year by 41.5 percent. [*Desk thumping*] I feel a sense of happiness. I think it is necessary for us to get this message out. This Government is not squandering the revenues coming in from petroleum.

In the Ministry of Education we are spending \$3 billion out of our budget for primary and secondary education and \$1 billion for tertiary education. Eventually, as we move along we would have 100,000 students in the secondary system and 100,000 students in the tertiary system. You may see \$3 billion. So that one would see more and more investment in the necessary human capital for the development of this country.

Mr. Speaker, I heard the Member for Couva North, the hon. leader of the Opposition, attacking the hon. Minister from the other place twice in this Parliament—a disgraceful attack; a very vicious and mean-spirited, vile attack. The hon. Member for Couva North likes to quote from Shakespeare. He likes to throw these quotations. He was a thespian before he became a politician. He did some Shakespearean training in London. He likes London. He did not have a house yet. For example, on the last occasion, not yesterday, he threw out a quotation from Julius Caesar that Brutus was speaking about Julius Caesar and Brutus was trying to find a reason to assassinate Julius Caesar. Brutus is there talking to himself saying that he has to find a way to justify why he should kill Caesar. This is where that quotation about ambition came from, ascending the ladder and not looking back at the base degrees from whence one came. It was interesting that he would use a quotation from Brutus who was plotting to assassinate Julius Caesar to give vent to his feelings about the hon. Minister from the other place. It is clear what he had in mind. As I said, Brutus was trying to justify the murder of Caesar.

Mr. Speaker, I have a quotation from Shakespeare for the hon. Member himself, and since he is a thespian—they do not want to hear; but they will hear—I have eight minutes; that is enough time.

I have looked and I have found a quotation from the very aptly titled work of William Shakespeare to describe his speech. It is called “*The Comedy of Errors*”. The Member has been very, very vicious to Members on this side. I would like him to ponder these words to see whether they refer to anybody on his side. Act Four:

“He is deformed, crooked, old and sere
 Ill-fac’d, worse bodied, shapeless everywhere;
 Vicious, ungentle, foolish, blunt, unkind,
 Stigmatical in making, worse in mind.” [*Desk thumping*]

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And I could not think of a better way to describe him. Let me repeat it:

He is:

Vicious, ungentle, foolish, blunt, unkind, stigmatical in making, worse in mind.

And for those on the other side who do not know what stigmatical means, because there will be many of them; fifteen of them do not know, but the thespian knows—it means trying to impress with infamy or trying to impress with wickedness. As for “sere”; the quotation says, “he is deformed, crooked, old and sere”; it means wrinkled. I think it is a very appropriate quotation.

I would advise the Member for Couva North, if he wants to quote Shakespeare here, that I have a book with 467 Shakespearean insults in it. I will bring it with me. When he quotes, I will quote because I can find many.

Mr. Speaker, it is clear to me that the Member for Couva North is trying to engage in imagery. He started off by saying that this person has scorned the based degrees from which they are ascended. Then he describes our hon. Member as being something from some “Ramayan”. He then uses the imagery from the “Ramayan”. So he paints a picture of the hon. Member from this side, a very quiet, distinguished, very, very respectable Member. He is inciting violence! In the use of this imagery he is inciting violence, discord, disharmony; painting a picture of a person to inciting violence against that person.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, please cut the crosstalk to a minimum level.

Hon. C. Imbert: Mr. Speaker, in one of his utterances he has concluded that plurality equals instability. That is his equation. And that is what having lost the match, he took up his bat and ball and mash up the game. He is not going to play.

Mr. Speaker, I can tell you from what I have seen in this budget, from what I have seen in the investment of human capital in my own ministry, and I know this is going to be happening in the Ministries of Health, National Security, the Ministry of Sport, and all of the areas of national endeavour that are contained in this package; I am satisfied that we are going to continue to have solid economic growth in this country. I am satisfied that my government is going to continue to provide the necessary relief to persons at the bottom end of the scale, persons who are disadvantaged, persons who are most in need of help. I am satisfied that the quality of life in this country is going to improve over time. I am satisfied that whatever ambitions the Member for Couva North may have, that these will be unfulfilled ambitions because I am satisfied that the PNM administration will be in

power when we achieve a 60 per cent participation rate in tertiary education. [*Desk thumping*] In other words, we will be in power long after the year 2010.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you.

2.45 p.m.

Mr. Ganga Singh (*Caroni East*): Mr. Speaker, I rise to join this debate on the Bill to provide for the service of Trinidad and Tobago for the financial year ending September 30, 2005.

Having regard to the utterance by the hon. Member for Diego Martin East quoting Shakespeare, I think I might join with him. I paraphrase from *Macbeth* for the appropriate political circumstances.

Stars hide your fires;

Let not Manning see your dark and deep desires.

This Minister failed to recognize that governments come and governments go, but the processes and policies that are in place remain—for a while anyway. I would give you an example. In 1995, when we took office, the previous administration had left, owing to the University of the West Indies, the sum of \$300 million, because of funding constraints from 1991 to 1995, during the tenure of the administration led by the hon. Member for San Fernando East. We had to deal with that with a structured period of payments to the University of the West Indies.

When the hon. Minister took the portfolio of science and higher education, which was previously human development—the same contextual allocation of schedule and jurisdiction of agencies—there was in place the Dollar for Dollar programme. This was an innovative intervention into the tertiary education sector in which 50 per cent of tuition was paid for all the students gaining admission to all the state sponsored institutions. That was the first phase. The reason was that you could have established the quality and integrity of the offerings from the state-sponsored academic institutions of higher learning.

The second phase was the establishment of the Accreditation Council and we had put in place Anna Mahase who had these accreditation committee meetings, but the previous minister responsible for higher education, Sen. The Hon. Danny Montano, disbanded that committee so that there was a delay.

By February 2002, what ought to have been in place was the embracing of the private sector institutions so as to expand the tertiary level education in this country. That is what my colleague is talking about. They have raised the ante to

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60 per cent. I find, in the context of the gas boom and in a period of plenty, that that is a laudable objective.

The hon. Member also said that we in the Opposition are opposing. He seems to have a kind of Freudian desire for constitution reform. What is the role of the Westminster model in the current situation? The governing party proposes and the loyal Opposition opposes. It is hoped in the marketplace of ideas—John Stuart Mill calls it that—there would be crystallization and honing of the position and what comes out would benefit the national interest.

So this debate on this budget is about competitive virtues and we should not allow those competitive virtues to shade in competitive vices. In this context, I commend the Government on the programme for the elimination of the National Emergency Management Authority (NEMA). NEMA, I said, was a fraud perpetrated on the people of Trinidad and Tobago. We had experience, in my constituency Caroni East, in the aftermath of flooding on several occasions. I have before this honourable House a matter on the adjournment, which has been deferred. This matter deals with the need for measures for disaster preparedness and public safety. I have looked at the budget statement in which they have outlined a programme, but we need more details. I suggest that there be significant NGO and community content in the development of this office for disaster preparedness.

When it was indicated to the Member that the wiping off of the Trinidad and Tobago Institute of Technology (TTIT) and the putting in of the University of Trinidad and Tobago (UTT) was merely a name change, he sought to expand it and indicated what plans they had for the development of a university. We have no problems with that; that is a laudable goal. However, do not come to this Parliament and say that within one year you have created a University of Trinidad and Tobago. That is deception; that is a lack of congruence between what you are stating and the reality.

The Member did not tell us that in Wallerfield, in the area earmarked for the UTT campus, there is a guard with a portable toilet. That is the university campus right now. Do not come with that kind of approach. If you want to lift the level of debate in this House, do not come with that kind of competitive vice, because it will bring out that kind of vice. Let us deal with the virtues before us.

What is clearly emerging in this debate is the issue of credibility. The hon. Member for St. Joseph spoke about “disconnect”; the Member for Chaguanas spoke about “masters of deception and masters of illusion” and the Member for Oropouche spoke about “the widening gap as large as the Grand Canyon”. So

what is the critical point being made in this debate? It is that there is a lack of congruence between what is stated and what is being done; what they are preaching and what they are practising; what they are talking, and they are not walking the talk.

Notwithstanding the \$28 billion budget, people all over this country are crying out for quality medical care; for pharmaceuticals to be made available to them so that they can attend to their health concerns. That is why as the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, in order to address some of those things—and my colleague, Dr. Rafeeq, will speak more extensively on that area—we negotiated with IADB for funding to build the Scarborough Hospital. The people of Tobago waited for almost a decade. Today, we are hearing about a mammoth cost overrun at the Scarborough Hospital, even though it is still at the foundation stage.

I make reference to the *Tobago Pillar* newspaper dated April 29—May 06, Issue No. 10.

“Hospital Project overrun by Million\$”

I will read from the article by Barrington Thomas Jr., Senior Staff Writer.

“Could the Scarborough Regional Hospital construction project be another Piarco Airport Terminal Scandal? Chief Secretary of the Tobago House of Assembly and Dr. Keith Rowley, then Minister of Planning are on public record saying during their respective addresses at the sod turning ceremony of the hospital project, there shall be absolutely no misappropriation and everything will take place above board. An ultimatum was even issued by Chief Secretary London that the project must be completed within budget and its scheduled program. While this may be so, concerned citizens have asked the *Tobago Pillar* to investigate a number of improprieties that exist. The *Pillar* has been asked by these concerned citizens to provide answers to the following questions. Is it true that the architects (Stantec) is only a paper company in Canada and has never managed a project of the magnitude before? Are there already cost overruns on the project? Is it true that there are remedial structural designs being made every day?”

The writer goes on:

“The *Pillar* contacted Mr. Patrick Caesar of the National Insurance Property Development Company (NIPDEC) who are the Project Managers for the Project and incidentally, were the Project Managers for the Piarco Airport Terminal Project also. Mr. Caesar said, ‘He cannot make a comment on the matter without authorization from his clients.’

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A very senior director of NH International, a company known for being reputable told the *Pillar* from their Long Circular office quite categorically, they do not wish to make a comment on the matter...”

I go on to the final paragraph of this article.

“According to a senior source in the construction industry, NIPDEC should not escape blame in this situation because they should pay meticulous attention to what is being done as the project managers. Part of the responsibilities of the project managers is to accurately inform the clients of any changes proposed to be undertaken and only allow the consultants to proceed with the approval of the client...”

“Another source in construction industry told the *Tobago Pillar* the client should set their own unit up to manage the Scarborough Hospital Project because NIPDEC had demonstrated in the past its challenges with other major projects including the Piarco Airport Terminal and the ‘wall’ on the Milford Road Soil Retention Project.

This situation requires auditing and a very in depth investigation by the clients. Therefore, Mr. Orville London, please launch an investigation into this matter.”

So that is the *Tobago Pillar* newspaper.

I do not know whether the Member for Tobago West is aware there is any cost overrun in the Scarborough Hospital Project. I do not know whether the Member for Tobago East is aware of any cost overrun in this Scarborough Hospital Project. Mr. Speaker, sometimes the cruelest of lies is silence.

When the Government of Trinidad and Tobago and the IDB awarded the contract to NH International, notwithstanding that the NH International bid was \$35 million higher than the lowest bidder, the location of the hospital was Signal Hill, but what this Government did not tell the people of Trinidad and Tobago was that not too far away were idle lands at Mason Hall.

3.00 p.m.

Almost simultaneously, with the development of the hospital project, was a private sector project called Landate. These lands are owned by a minister. Mr. Speaker, I would show, by way of documentation, the systematic siphoning, carting away of material, equipment and resources from the Scarborough Hospital Project, to the site owned by the hon. Minister. I would demonstrate that, notwithstanding the Prime Minister and Minister of Finance’s enunciation of a

clear policy of integrity in public life in this budget statement, you have in fact corruption and sleaze taking place right underneath his nose.

I want to read the budget statement of the hon. Prime Minister. At page 44, [*Interruption*] Patience my friend, not only is he “thiefing”. Under the heading “Integrity in Public Life”, the Prime Minister said:

“We shall do more. We have implemented the new law pertaining to integrity in public life; a law, which is consistent with international best practice.”

I might add that it was the UNC that passed that law, together with the Opposition. It continues:

“We have gone a bit further, however, and strengthened the mechanisms for detection and investigation of all acts of malfeasance conducted by public officials. We intend to take all measures necessary to prevent the illicit enrichment of individuals at the expense of the People of Trinidad and Tobago. In other words Mr. Speaker, we shall deal clinically and comprehensively with corruption.”

This is the Prime Minister. The time has come for us, having regard to what I indicated earlier and what my colleagues indicated. Is there congruence between what you practise and what you preach? The time has come to test whether the Prime Minister has the political and moral fortitude to deal with this senior Minister.

Mr. Speaker, I intend to demonstrate to his honourable House on the documentation that I will present, that the Scarborough Hospital Project is afflicted with a communicable disease called “sleaze”. That is to say, this particular public official, this Minister, is pursuing a path of personal gratification, advancement or enrichment against a background of an official facade of respectability, rectitude and probity. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, I am speaking to the Prime Minister and Members of this honourable House, in the context of the PNM Charter of 1956. The PNM Charter of 1956, at page 22, said—one must understand in the context that no political party has a monopoly on virtue. No political party! There are few ascetics in the politics of this country, or anywhere else in the world. Jimmy Carter comes to mind. The next one might be Dr. Hamza Rafeeq. [*Desk thumping*] Other than that, no politician can claim to be a paragon of virtue. No political party can claim a monopoly on virtue. This is what is said in the People’s Charter: “eradication of graft, corruption and dishonesty from public life”. Who can fault that? No one can fault. It took the PNM all these years. Prior to 1987, it never implemented the

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Integrity in Public Life legislation. It took the NAR, when they came into power, to implement the Integrity in Public Life legislation and, subsequently, the UNC to expand it. Today, under the PNM's second administration, you are saying you will implement and extend by way of detection. I believe you.

Having regard to what I have said and having laid the framework, I now turn to the documentation before me. I have several envelopes. When you are in Opposition you get many envelopes. Envelope number one, I call it the "Stalin Envelope". This is the envelope of the gatekeeper. In the calypso, Stalin told the gatekeeper, St. Peter "Bun dem". [*Desk thumping*] This is the gatekeeper. In this country, people are killed quite easily for bringing matters to a head, for being open and clear as to why they engage in public life. I want the Prime Minister to listen very carefully. This is the gate pass. I have several gate passes and I intend to read every one. You can see the pattern.

"NH International Caribbean Limited

New Scarborough Hospital Project

27/03/04

License number: TBN 4312

Vehicle driver:

Approval is hereby given for the items listed below to leave this construction site.

3 pallets of 8x8x16 concrete blocks for Landate Project.

H Belfon"

Later on we would see that H. Belfon is the site clerk. Here it is, a public sector project, funded by the moneys of the people of Trinidad and Tobago, in conjunction with a multilateral institution, the IDB, and material leaving there to go to a private sector project.

Here is a similar situation. Gate pass.

"27/03/04

Vehicle: Truck

License number: TBC 2779

Vehicle driver:

Approval is hereby given for the items listed to leave this construction site:

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6.8 m³ of red sand for Landate Project.

H. Belfon

NH International Caribbean Limited

New Scarborough Project

27/03/04

License number: TBM 7312

Approval is hereby given for the items listed to leave this construction site:

3 pallets of 8x8x16 blocks for Landate Project

6.8 m³ of red sand for Landate Project

29/03/04

License number: TAW 4789

Vehicle driver: Moona Ramroop

Approval is hereby given for the items listed to leave this construction site:

1 load red plastering sand, 5x4 m³ for Landate Project

TS 56557

H. Belfon

29/03/04

License number: TBM 7312

3 pallets - 6x8x16 concrete blocks for Landate Project.”

Mr. Speaker, we go on and on. All these! [*Interruption*]

Hon. Members: Read them!

Mr. G. Singh: “29/03/04

License number: TBM 7312

3 pallets of 6x8x16 concrete blocks for Landate Project

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29/04/04

License number: TAW 4789

M. Ramroop

20 lengths—1½” PVC pipe for Landate Project

H. Belfon

29/03/04

License number: TAW 4789

Vehicle driver: M. Ramroop

35 bags cement for Landate Project.”

Mr. Speaker, all this material is coming from the new Scarborough Hospital Project. This is a public sector project. The material is leaving that public sector project and going to a private sector project, owned by a particular Minister. It continues:

“29/03/04

3 pallets 6x8x16 concrete blocks for Landate Project

01/04/04”

April Fool’s Day. I am not missing anything.

“License number: TAW 4789

Mr. Ramroop

5.4 m³ 1½” stone for Landate Project

H. Belfon

01/04/04

License number: TAW 4789

5.4 m³ of red plastering sand for Landate Project

MTS 5653

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01/04/04

License number: TBM 7312

10 sheets - ply ¾”x4x8 for Landate Project

1 drum of chemical from release agent.

H. Belfon

05/04/04

License number: TAW 4789

M. Ramroop

5.4 m³ 1½” stone for Landate Project

05/04/04

License number: TAW 4789

M. Ramroop

5.4 m³ sharp sand

2.5 m³ sharp sand”

Keep in mind that this is a public sector project—from the hospital. The people of Tobago have been waiting for a hospital for the past 10 years.

“06/04/04

M. Ramroop

3 concrete cylinders 450mm for Landate Project

30 pieces - 2x2x12

20 pieces – 1x12 RPP

08/04/04

License number: TAW 4789

5.4 m³ plastering sand to Landate Project

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22/04/04

License number: TAW 4789

Half sharp sand and aggregate for Landate Project

5.4 m³ plastering sand to Landate Project

26/04/04

5.4 m³, ½” aggregate and sharp sand for Landate Project

29/04/04

License number: TAW 4789

35 bags cement

1 pallet, 10 sheets 4x8x¾ form ply

06/05/04

License number: TAW 4789

M. Ramroop

30 pieces — 1x8x12

40 pieces — 1x12x12

30 pieces — 2x2x12 to Landate Project from plant department, via SHP

License number: TAW 4789

M. Ramroop

5.4 m³ plastering sand for Landate Project

License number: TAW 4789

M. Ramroop

1 pallet cement for Landate Project

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License number: TBM 7312

190 sheets mesh

2.5 tonnes mild steel rods 60mmx6m

2 pieces angles to Mason Hall Project.

05/06/04

License number: TBM"—[*Interruption*]

Ramroop was hired by NH International Caribbean Limited. I am coming to that. I have six envelopes.

“9 rolls plastic-coated chain link wire

90 pounds plastic-coated wire

20 pieces – 2x2x20 lumber to Landate Project.

11/06/04

License number: TBM 7312

3 pallets 8x8x8” concrete blocks

2 pallets 8” concrete blocks for Landate Project.”

3.15 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, so we see from the “St. Peter, Bun’ them Stalin Bun’ them envelope”, that the gatekeeper—you see, you could try your thing up at the higher level. As you leave the construction site, the gatekeeper would ask the truck driver: Where are you going? The truck driver would then say: “I am going to the Landate Project”. It appears very clearly that the property of the State is being dishonestly appropriated.

I now turn to envelope No. 2. I want to pay homage to some of our long gone political ancestors in the context of the governance of this country. I called this envelope, since it is dealing with material transfer slips—in our political history, there is one man who built the coliseum in Toronto. I call this envelope, “The O’Halloran Envelope”. [*Desk thumping*]

NH International Material Transfer Slip No. 55046, from Scarborough Hospital Project to Landate Project: 19 x 6 concrete mixer. This is dated November 26, 2003.

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Keep in mind that the Scarborough Hospital Project started in March 2003. This is November material slips that I have in my possession. I am sure that there are others, but this was brought to me. So, there was the concrete mixer, so other things had to be mixing before.

Scarborough Hospital Project to the Landate Project: This is dated November 27, 2003: 2 pallets, of concrete blocks; one pallet of cement; 200 pieces of 12 x something; 200 pieces of 120 millimetres; 200 pieces of 12 millimetres; et cetera.

Scarborough Hospital Project: Material Transfer Slip No. 55099: 3 pallets of concrete blocks; 3 pallets of 8" blocks; 1.5 metres of plastering sand.

Scarborough Hospital Project: Material Transfer Slip No. 56401 to Landate Project: You see they call it Landate because the people who are writing up this thing do not really want to put the real person's name, so they are calling it "Lamsden" first, and then it goes to Landate. The forensic expert would trace all of that. Last night, I tried to be a forensic expert, but it is a lot of work.

Scarborough Hospital Project to Lamsden Project: 5.4 cubic metres of sharp sand and aggregate—a mixed load.

Material Transfer Slip dated December 02, 2003, No. 56402. From Scarborough Hospital Project to Lamsden Project: Item: 3 pallets of 8x8x16 concrete blocks; 3 pallets, 8x8x16 concrete blocks; 10 bags of cement; and five lengths of PVC pipe.

From the Scarborough Hospital Project to Lamsden Project: Material Transfer Slip No.56404: I could go on and on, but I would stop at 56404 because I have many more envelopes. On one hand, you have the gatekeeper saying that the materials are going to Landate. The site clerk is sending material by virtue of a material transfer slip from a public sector hospital project to a private sector project. I would leave that matter.

I am now moving on to envelop No. 3 which points to another dimension in the corruption tree. The materials had to be transported from the Scarborough Hospital site to Landate which is in Mason Hall. So, there was the rental of trucks and cartage receipts. I call this envelope, "The Howai Envelope".

Project Landate Development Mason Hall, NH International dated March 19, 2004. This is for requisition use only. The rental of a three-tonne truck to transport materials from "SH" project to Landate: "SH" is the Scarborough Hospital. This is for the period of one month as of February 06, 2004. There is a rental service. There are three sets of rental services: P. Ramnarine Rental

Services, Value Added Tax (VAT) Registration No. 116937 delivery note and so forth. The name is NH International Caribbean Limited: Rental of one three-tonne truck No. TBM 7312 to transport blocks from hospital site in Signal Hill to Lamsden, Mason Hall. Lamsden and Landate is the same thing—from 8.00 a.m. to 12.00 noon. This is dated February 19, 2004. This one from Ramnarine Rental Services is dated March 01, 2004. The name is NH International Caribbean Limited: one 428 backhoe to work on site at Mason Hall, Lamsden—bring up red sand uphill and excavate trench from 8.00 a.m. to 4.00 p.m. with one hour lunch—seven hours. They did not rent a truck but they rented a backhoe. Remember, this is a private sector project. It gets deeper.

The same thing again on March 04, 2004. They took a Cat backhoe, TBF 794 to work on site at Lamsden, Mason Hall: Carry sand from hill to uphill and mix aggregate, 7.00 a.m. to 12.00 noon; delivered by Garry Hospedales.

Mr. Speaker, on February 01, 2004, Lamsden Mason Hall, NH International: one five-tonne flatbed truck, TBM 7312—Remember that we heard a lot about TBM 7312 transporting—to transport blocks from the hospital site Signal Hill to Lamsden.

On February 04, 2004, three-tonne truck, TBM 7312 to transport blocks from the hospital site to Lamsden, Mason Hall. That is the clear movement of material!

Mr. Speaker, I have cartage receipts. Those who are in the construction industry would know about cartage receipts. Brown Transport and Equipment Services: The time is there and so forth—from the hospital site to the private sector. This is from a building meant for poor sick people to a private sector project.

So, therefore, there was the Gatekeeper, the material slip transfer and now the trucks and the equipment that carried the materials. The journey is becoming very clear, but the journey now starts.

Mr. Speaker, one of the factors of production consistently is land—and we know where the land is located. We also know that you must have labour. So, if there is cross-fertilization between the hospital site and the utilization of public sector moneys to pay people in this private sector then the record sheet would show that. I am not telling you as yet where the capital is coming from, but I would get to that.

Mr. Speaker, I now turn to envelope No. 4 which I call “The Gene Miles Envelope”. [*Desk thumping*] There is NH International Caribbean Limited and there is a notation of who is the Minister.

Hon. Member: Leave that out.

Mr. G. Singh: There is the position of Manager and Foreman: Manoo, Hamilton, Belfon and Clarke. What are they doing? They are grubbing and cleaning the area. This is dated September 11, 2003. Remember the hospital project started in March.

On September 12, 2003, similarly, they are all working on this project. This project did not reach the stage where it had a name. There was no appellation for publicist of a fig leaf or some kind of device.

Hon. Member: “Yuh hear lyrics; that is lyrics.”

Mr. G. Singh: So they continue to grub and clear the land in September, 2003. [*Interruption*]

I now move to the daily record sheet of the people working on this project. So the people are there so they could be interviewed and so forth. NH International Caribbean Limited, Scarborough Hospital Project Daily Record Sheet: This is dated March 25, 2004. That was not too long ago. The names are: Saisnarine, Fiona Layne, Dale Peters, Winston, Wilson, N. King, Alton Adams, Enos, Mark, Wellington.

This is what they are doing. Backhoe TBP 1445 started at 7.06 a.m. to 3.00 p.m.; digging drain to put down pipe lines; Backhoe TBF 7940 started at 7.00 a.m. to 3.00 p.m, transport material on site and digging box drain. There was no work for these three tractors. TAW 4789 started 7.00 a.m. to 3.00 p.m. This was supposed to be on the Scarborough Hospital Project, but here it is TAW 4789 started 7.00 a.m. to 3.00 p.m. and then went to the hospital. So, do you understand! It is there on the Lamsden Landate site working on the roster of the Scarborough Hospital. Who is paying for that!

Mr. S. Panday: The poor people in Tobago.

Mr. G. Singh: The Scarborough Hospital Project Sheet Daily Record: Remember what they are doing on that. The same crew: Saisnarine, Fiona Layne, Dale Peters, Winston Wilson, King, Adams and Mark Wellington. This is what they are doing: Transporting material on site with backhoe—the same number TBP 794—started work at 7.00 a.m. to 3.00 p.m. Backhoe TBP 7445, started work at 7.00 a.m to 3.00 p.m; digging drain to put PVC pipes and the other started 7.00 a.m. to 3.00 p.m, clearing land. TAW 4789 started at 7.00 a.m. and went to the hospital for material. Do you understand! This is the people working on the private sector site but filling out a daily roster under hospital. Who is paying for that?

NH International Caribbean Limited—this sheet is dated April 01, 2004: Saisnarine, Fiona Layne, King, Enos, Mark, Wellington, Figaro, George, Francis and Chamberlain. The sixth tractor started at 7.30 a.m. clearing land. Backhoe TBF 794 started at 7.00 a.m. to 12.00 noon. Transporting material on site, load fill on truck for roadway. Backhoe TBP 7445 started at 7.00 a.m. to 5.00 p.m., digging trench hole to put down pipe line and back fill. TAW 4789, started at 7.00 p.m. to 3.00 p.m. and went to the hospital for material and sand and half inch stone and moving fill on roadway. Do you understand!

NH International Landate Development, Mason Hall: Hear who are the fellows working on Landate. This is dated April 02, 2004. Saisnarine, Fiona Layne, King, Chamberlain, George, Thomas, Arthur and this is what they are doing: The sixth tractor started at 7.00 a.m., clearing land. Backhoe TBP 7445, started 7.00 a.m. to 4.00 p.m. transporting material on site—

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

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

Question put and agreed to.

3.30 p.m.

Mr. G. Singh: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We now move to 05/04/04; names of workers: Saisnarine, Fiona Layne, King, Chamberlain, Francis, George, Thomas, Olivierre, Endeavour, Endeavour, Invincis and Figaro. They are on the Landate Development Mason Hall daily record sheet now. All along, day by day by day, they are doing the same thing: backhoe, so and so, loading truck with fill and consistently moving fill on roadway at the Mason Hall site and went to the hospital site for material. So the trucks, equipment and labour working in the private sector project, in which a minister of Government has a beneficial interest, intimately linked and then they are going to the hospital to bring material. Land, labour, truck, material. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker, I come to envelope No. 5. I call this envelope "The seeing is believing envelope", because in the envelope that was presented to me I have colour pictures. I will pass it to you, Prime Minister. [*Mr. Singh shows pictures*] Scarborough Hospital, Job No. 1086; you can see the whole area in colour. The date of this picture, one of three, under the Scarborough Hospital, Job No. 1086, is Wednesday, December 03, 2003. They may have different dates, but in terms of

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the paper, it is paper 103 of Wednesday, December 03, 2003. “Yuh think dat tiefing start today?”

Mr. Speaker, on page 2, you have form work, steel and blocks. You have two of three, three of three, the whole area; then you have the Scarborough Hospital, Job No. 1086, but this site has nothing to do with the Scarborough Hospital project. This is the site of the private sector beneficiary, the hon. Minister; seeing is believing.

Hon. Members: Oh, Oh!

Mr. G. Singh: So there you have it, Mr. Speaker. At the Scarborough Hospital site there is no house, in Scarborough or in Signal Hill, but in Mason Hall there is a house.

Hon. Member: Who is in that house?

Mr. G. Singh: Who is in that house? I think if you check out the resident, John Quacko, you might get more information. Pass the picture to the Prime Minister. [*Pictures handed to Prime Minister*] I will keep the black and white copies. This is tangible evidence of the rape of the public purse. And you want to know why people are not benefiting from the monthly million-dollar oil largess?

Mr. Speaker, I now come to envelope No. 6. What should I call it? [*Crosstalk*] I know when the Prime Minister saw those pictures it reminded him of a Proverb:

“For my mouth shall utter the truth and wickedness is an abomination to my lips.” [*Desk thumping*]

I now bring you to some email. I mean, technology is available; the hon. Minister and the Prime Minister talked about the information technology sector. This is an email from John Connon, jconnon@nhic.tt.com, sent Monday, September 29, 2003, 5.09 p.m. to Jim Duffy and Jeff Grey, subject: “Landate”. I am quoting from the email from John Connon. Who is John Connon? He is a “big boy” in NH International. [*Crosstalk*] No, no, no; John Connon is the Managing Director of NH International Caribbean Limited, Long Circular Road, St. James.

The email says:

“Jim, Simon Ragbir will be in Tobago from tomorrow to start the above at Mason Hall. He is arriving on the 10.00 a.m. flight. I went through the gully culvert with him and gave him the sketches and photographs you handed to me on Friday. I spoke to the Minister and told him that there would be additional fill in the gully. He may have some material near his residence, but

we need to check the access, otherwise it would have to come from Studley Park. I spoke to Tony Romain...”

Hon. Members: Ooh!

Mr. G. Singh: Tony Romain is one of the subcontractors in the hospital project! “Yuh understand!” [*Crosstalk*] Connect the dots. Let me continue; I do not have much time and I want to get some of this in:

“he is to let us have some rebar details. It seems to me though that we will have to modify the design to suit. Simon can start to get the ground being constructed so that we can start filling. I told him that he will live at Rowley’s flat that we rent already.”

Hon. Members: What? Ooh!

Mr. G. Singh: The email continues:

“I told him to contact you regarding requisitioning of materials, plan, petty cash.”

“He will live at Rowley’s flat that we rent already.” “Allyuh understand?” This is the Minister of Housing, previously of the Ministry of Planning and Development. Renting a flat? I am reading what I see here.

“He has his own transport...”

He is talking about Simon Ragbir.

“At some stage we have to agree rates.”

Dot, dot, wink, wink, nod, nod. [*Laughter*]

“Simon has a copy of the un-priced bill of quantities. Rowley says he will be on site Saturday. We will probably require the D6 back next week. Access may be obtained over Balfour’s land. Apparently no problem providing feasibility otherwise on a one-off basis of the made up road, until we complete the culvert and filling. Suggest you take Simon up there and get him started. We ordered some materials for a small site office...”

Email; email! [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker, we have a minister of Government who has responsibility, under planning and development, for the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB) loan and for the construction of the hospital site. He started a project some time in 2003. When I go into the details of the documentation, Romain drew the designs for him.

Hon. Members: Ooh!

Mr. G. Singh: So subcontractor Romain drew the designs for him; I have it here—“NH building de hospital, NH renting his flat and NH building the private sector project!” Mr. Speaker, even if it is only the appearance of impropriety, you cannot have a sitting minister, overseeing billions of dollars in contracts, going to a contractor and then benefiting that way; that is simply not done! “Walk de talk.” [Crosstalk]

Mr. Speaker: Order, order! [Crosstalk]

Mr. G. Singh: Even the appearance! You know, the Minister has found his voice, oh, ah! Get up and explain what transpired! [Interruption]

Dr. Rowley: Mr. Speaker, since I have been invited. Insofar as I have any beneficial interest in that project and, by association, I was identified by the Member who spent the time describing it, I want to make one categorical statement: Insofar as there was any material used on the site, in which I am of beneficial interest, it has been paid for. [Laughter] I have no relationship, in terms of contract, with those details. I have paid for and I can demonstrate that when the Member has finished enjoying himself. [Crosstalk]

Mr. G. Singh: Mr. Speaker, I am happy to hear that. We want an investigation; we do not want an explanation, Prime Minister! [Desk thumping] “He feel he smart by a half.” [Crosstalk]

Mr. Speaker: Order, order!

Mr. G. Singh: Rowley does not even change the light bulbs in his house. Look at this:

“To Jim Duffy, Project Manager, Signal Hill

Re: Lights repaired at Keith Rowley’s Home”

Hon. Member: Ooh!

Mr. G. Singh: This is a claim for completed work at Dr. Rowley’s home:

- “1. Supply and replace two defective dust-to-dawn lights with two new dust-to-dawn lights;
2. Supply and install one new 150 watt flood lamp.”

Mr. Speaker, this is what is happening: NH International looking after everything for Rowley. [Crosstalk] We can go on and on, but it is clear to us. I will stop at envelope No. 6, in the context of time.

Dr. Rowley: Go to No. 9!

Mr. G. Singh: As the Minister of Planning and Development, did he have outline planning permission for this development? He said, “As far as I have a beneficial interest, I know nothing, that they was tiefing material.” Oh good Lord! Did you have outline planning permission? Did you have a certificate of environmental clearance? You bound to know these things; these are basic rules of law considerations.

Mr. Speaker, we on this side require a thorough investigation of the Scarborough Hospital and Landate Project and that all contracts awarded to Emile Elias by this Government, when Dr. Rowley was the Minister of Planning and Development and Minister of Housing, ought to be investigated. The Minister ought to excuse himself from the investigative process, pending the outcome of the investigation. [*Desk thumping*] [*Crosstalk*] It is clear to us on this side, that what you have in this case is what is happening in several areas of this country.

Dr. Rowley invited citizens to speak out. I read from the *Guardian* of October 07, 2004:

“Citizens have a responsibility to monitor the Government’s performance continually and to speak out if there is evidence of corruption...”

We are speaking out! What is the quantum of money spent on this project? Where is the capital for this? The investigation must give rise to all these things. Why was hospital material used in this ministerial project? Why did the Minister, who has been an active participant every step of the way, have to use subcontractors and the main contractor from the hospital project for his own private project? [*Crosstalk*] Whereas Emile said that he was not sleeping with the Minister, it is clear, from what I have said, that he was sleeping in the Minister’s house. [*Crosstalk*]

3.45 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, it is in this context that I go back to what the Prime Minister said on page 52 of the Budget Statement. He said:

“We are setting the standards and establishing the mechanisms for openness, transparency, accountability and integrity in the conduct of public affairs.”

You could imagine if Sadiq Baksh—when he was Minister with responsibility for the airport—was building a house and Ish was sending materials from the airport to his home? Well, it is no longer Ish, it is “NHish”. So I want to call upon the Prime Minister to respond to this, and, Minister, remove yourself from ministerial office pending the outcome of the investigation.

Thank you.

[*The Prime Minister stands*]

Mr. Speaker: You cannot speak, but if it is the wish of the House to hear the Prime Minister—[*Interruption*] Please, please, I am on my feet. The Prime Minister cannot speak now, however, the House regulates itself and if it is the wish of the House to hear the Prime Minister, then so be it.

Is it the wish of the House?

Mr. Valley: Mr. Speaker, I want to put a motion to the House.

Mr. Speaker: Can I do that?

Mr. Ramnath: [*Inaudible*]

Mr. Speaker: I am not saying to change the Standing Order, I am asking if it is the wish of the House to hear the Prime Minister. [*Interruption*]

Member for Couva South, the Chief Whip has agreed to put a motion to the House: I take it that the House agrees to hear the Prime Minister?

Agreed to.

The Prime Minister and Minister of Finance (Hon. Patrick Manning): Thank you very much Mr. Speaker and hon. Members.

I have not had a chance to consult the Attorney General and, therefore, I am in no position to say what form it will take, but I give this House the categorical undertaking that the matter just aired by the hon. Member for Caroni East would be the subject of a thorough and complete investigation and the results will be made public. In fact, they will be laid in Parliament.

Mr. G. Singh: I just want the undertaking from the hon. Prime Minister, having regard to what is said in the budget, that we must have an independent investigation of this matter. It is one in which allegations have been made against a senior Government Minister and, therefore, in order to protect the society, we cannot use people who are within the institutional apparatus who may have their political leanings. We want an independent, objective enquiry.

Hon. P. Manning: Mr. Speaker, I assure hon. Members opposite that the integrity of the investigative process is going to be preserved.

The Minister of Works and Transport (Hon. Franklin Khan): Mr. Speaker, I take this opportunity to stand before this honourable House this afternoon to give my support to Government's fiscal measures for 2005 as were so lucidly and profoundly articulated by the hon. Prime Minister on Friday, October 08, 2004. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker, I will request that the hon. Members settle down, control their heart beat and let us proceed with the debate of the fiscal measures for 2005.

Before I delve into the matters of the Ministry of Works and Transport, I take this opportunity to congratulate the hon. Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, the three Ministers in the Ministry of Finance, the Minister of Planning and Development with responsibility for the Public Sector Investment Programme, and all who have contributed to the documents before us today.

In fact, let me congratulate all Ministers of Government here today who have undertaken to steer their respective ministries along a prudent, sober and deliberate course as we aim for the price of high calling—developed country status for Trinidad and Tobago on or before the year 2020.

Mr. Speaker, if we had listened carefully to the Prime Minister's address, it is my opinion that in three glorious hours of presentation and three years before the 2007 election, the hon. Prime Minister has already hit the knockout punch to the United National Congress.

During fiscal 2003/2004, the Ministry of Works and Transport, under the Public Sector Investment Programme (PSIP) was allocated \$244.9 million and under the recurrent budget, \$1.067 billion. I am pleased to announce that by the end of fiscal 2003/2004, on the development side, the Ministry of Works and Transport was able to spend \$229.348 million reflecting an implementation rate of 93.6 per cent. On the recurrent side, we were also in the vicinity of 93 per cent being able to spend \$991.891 million.

Mr. Speaker, as you are aware, the Ministry of Works and Transport is a large and complex ministry. It has responsibility for roads and highways, bridges, coastal erosion, drainage and irrigation, government buildings, civil aviation, air services agreement, maritime matters, vehicle registration, traffic management and public transport.

Today I will attempt to outline our performance for 2004 and what we plan to do in 2005 in specific terms, but more importantly to set the planning framework as we attempt, at the Ministry of Works and Transport, to transform the highway and the transportation infrastructure of Trinidad and Tobago towards developed country status.

Mr. Speaker, I will like to deal with drainage first because it has been topical over the last several months and we are, in fact, in the rainy season. We will like to show that the first time in many years, I think the Government is on the right track as it relates to drainage and irrigation and I will attempt to show how we are

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putting systems in place to alleviate the flooding problem that continues to be chronic throughout Trinidad and Tobago with particular reference to specific areas in the country.

Before I do that, however, for the education of this honourable House I will explain very briefly what we face in flooding in Trinidad and Tobago. There are basically two types of flooding: Flash flooding, where the local drainage system is unable to move the precipitation over a specific period of time at the rate in which it is falling. That really is because of fundamental weaknesses in the local drainage system.

Areas that suffer from flash flooding are largely the Port of Spain and environs area. So when Wrightson Road and certain streets in Port of Spain flood, it is not because the drainage basin is in over capacity, it is because the local drainage system is unable to move the water at the pace at which it is supposed to be moved. I will deal with the Port of Spain drainage plant later in my contribution.

More significant is the major flooding systems that are related to management of a river basin. In Trinidad and Tobago, the three river basins that are most prone to flooding are the Caroni River Basin, the Caparo/Honda and the Oropouche Lagoon in south Trinidad.

These are the areas where we have to put our greatest efforts in terms of managing them in a scientific way so that we can deal with the issues of perennial flooding.

Mr. Speaker, let us deal with Caroni first. Over the fiscal year 2003/2004, the ministry was engaged in major embankment works on the Caroni River. We awarded a contract early in the fiscal year to the firm of Lutchmiesingh Transport Limited to the tune of TT \$10 million.

This work involved the building of embankments on the north and south sides of the Caroni River from St. Helena to Kelly Village. That work is about 40 per cent complete and when it is completed it will go a long way in alleviating the flooding of the Kelly/St. Helena areas.

Mr. Speaker, because the work was incomplete, about a month and a half ago, the rains that were associated with Hurricane Ivan resulted in some amount of flooding in the Kelly/St. Helena area. We toured the area with the Member of Parliament for Caroni East, and I wish to announce that the Prime Minister personally visited the people of Kelly Village and St. Helena and subsequent to that, a team of Ministers including the Minister of Works and Transport, the Minister of Community Development and the Minister of Agriculture, Land and

Marine Resources visited to make them aware that we were very concerned with what was happening and to articulate to the villagers what was being done as it related to flooding.

I am pleased to announce that after that tour, we have redefined the scope of the contract and it will now cost us approximately \$12 million—\$15 million because apart from the embankment from Kelly to St. Helena, it will now be carried from Kelly Weir straight on to Caroni Village, that is downstream of the Kelly Weir. We will also take the embankment upstream of St. Helena into El Carmen.

We will also straighten two meanders on the river; one in the El Carmen area, and one in the area downstream of the Kelly Weir into Caroni Village. This work is expected to be completed by the end of the dry season 2005. So as we move into the wet season of 2005, after an approximate cost of TT \$15 million, it is our distinct hope that the Ministry of Works and Transport, and the technical opinion of the drainage division of the ministry that with the embankments constructed and the straightening of the meanders we will be well on the way to alleviating most of the major floods in the Caroni basin and the St. Helena, Kelly and Caroni Villages.

Mr. Speaker, while we cannot guarantee that there will be no flooding, what we have to knock is that in the routine year, we should not have flooding. A routine year means when the average rainfall for the year approximates a 20 to 30 year average. When engineering projects are planned, it is done on 25—30-year cycles so every once in a while or once in every 10 years, statistically, the rainfall will be so high, or the deluge will be so great that some amount of flooding will be expected.

The challenge we face now as a Government, and I as a Minister of Works and Transport cannot be scared every time the rainy season comes around that there will be flooding in these areas. I want to give you the assurance that once this project is completed by the end of the dry season of next year, a significant part of that risk of flooding in central Trinidad will be alleviated.

4.00 p.m.

Concurrent with that, we have been doing significant work on the drainage sites throughout Trinidad and Tobago. During the fiscal year we completed the Honda/Caparo bifurcation structure which assisted in diverting water from the Caparo River into the Honda River, so that we can save the town of Chaguanas from being flooded.

During the fiscal year, at the cost of \$10 million, we completed improvement works to the Marabella River between the Southern Main Road and the Gulf of Paria. We note with satisfaction that up to today, no flooding has been taking

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place in Marabella around the area of the JTA Supermarket. [*Desk thumping*] That is an area that has continually flooded for many years and we did not undertake that project; it just happened to be in the constituency of San Fernando East, but it was well deserved.

During the course of fiscal 2004 we completed the de-silting of the mouth of the North Oropouche River—that is in the Fishing Pond area—at a cost of \$4.5 million. During 2003/2004, we completed the installation of pumps along the Caroni River, North Bank in Aranguez, El Socorro and Bamboo, at a cost of \$5 million. That has gone a long way in alleviating the perennial flooding problems of the Aranguez, Bamboo and El Socorro farmers.

During fiscal 2003/2004, we continued improvement works on the Ciperó River and the Vistabella River in South Trinidad. These works are 30 and 20 per cent completed, respectively. The Ciperó River contract was awarded at a cost of \$13 million. For those of you who have gone to San Fernando, we have already completed rubble walls, embankments and walling of that river, from the Ciperó River bridge, way past the Cross Crossing shopping plaza, going across to Gulf City. For those of us who live in the South, you will know many times when it rains in San Fernando, JTA Supermarket at Cross Crossing has always been flooded. That is now a thing of the past. And we continue to work on the Vistabella River.

We move to North Trinidad. Contracts were awarded last month and work is expected to begin within the month of November on the following projects: At a cost of \$5.3 million, we plan to do the Beetham drains improvement works. So all those nasty looking drains—sorry for the language—that run along the Priority Bus Route in the area of the Beetham Estate, will be significantly improved to enhance the drainage of the Port of Spain area. We will be doing works to the tune of \$7 million along the Maraval River and its tributaries. A contract of \$3.7 million has been awarded for the San Juan River Improvement Works. A contract of \$1.9 million has been awarded for the Tacarigua River Improvement Works. A contract of \$1 million has been awarded for the Satar Drain Improvement Works. For those of you who do not know, the Satar Drain is in San Juan. We have continued on the recurrent side to clear and clean watercourses all over Trinidad and Tobago.

I feel very proud of the Drainage Division of the Ministry of Works and Transport. There is a group of dedicated engineers who work extremely hard and they have been trying their best, both from an engineering and an operational point of view, to deal with the problems of drainage, the issues of irrigation and to try to put systems in place to reduce, if not totally eliminate, flooding as a major issue on the landscape of Trinidad and Tobago.

I now move to the road infrastructure of our nation. As was announced by the hon. Prime Minister in his budget presentation, we have begun a major strategic project called the National Transportation Study. I shall deal with that very shortly, and what will be unfolding from that. But to set this part of the debate into perspective, I want to share some information with this honourable House. As I stand here, there are approximately 450,000 motor vehicles registered in Trinidad and Tobago, of a population of a mere 1.3 million inhabitants. That gives us a population to vehicle ratio of just under 3:1. It is about 2.95. The ratio in the United States of America is 2.75:1. The ratio in Canada is 3:1; the ratio in France is 5:1.

So, Mr. Speaker, the vehicle population of this country is already—if we want to use the phrase—developed country status, if that is a yardstick. The problem is—and the issue that faces us—that we have a transportation issue and we have to upgrade the infrastructure to cater for the number of vehicles that we have. It calls for major policy initiatives and policy direction that has to be fuelled by a scientific study and understanding.

We just cannot get up one morning and say, “This is the solution”, or “that is the solution”. We live in a world of experts; in a world of scientific analysis; a world where the technology exists to advise as to how we craft the solutions for a country. It makes no sense coming and arguing whether we should build a monorail or whether we should build the interchange or whether the interchange should be bi-level or tri-level; or whether we should build a new freeway from Arima to Port of Spain; how do we deal with the traffic problems in the city; how we should decentralize and pull development east. Hopefully, as I continue my discourse, I want to set the perspective into which we are now positioning ourselves to really make a quantum leap in infrastructural development in Trinidad and Tobago.

It is in that context I want us to look at the infrastructure improvements of this country in the coming years at three levels. There are three strategic projects that are currently taking place at the Ministry of Works and Transport. The first is what I call the Strategic Expansion Project. This will include the new Highways Expansion Programme, which I will speak about shortly, and the possibility of bringing a light rail mass transit system to operate along the two major corridors of Trinidad, which is the East-West Corridor, in this context defined as Arima to Diego Martin, and the North-South Corridor, defined as San Fernando into Port of Spain. That is the Highways Expansion Programme.

The second strategic group or cluster of projects is what we call upgrading of the current road and infrastructure stock, because we also have a present stock and in some cases they are not up to the standard that is required. Those projects are

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largely driven by what we call the National Highways Programme, which is a jointly funded project by the IDB and the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

The third strategic template is what we have developed in the Ministry of Works and Transport called the Alternative Routes Concept, where we are using some creative design engineering concepts to bypass and build bypasses and alternative routes around major population centres of Trinidad and Tobago. The classic example, which I will mention later, is what we only last week opened up in the Princes Town area by upgrading the M1 Tasker Road from Craignish into Malgretoute, from Malgretoute right on to Usine to hook up with the M2 into Debe. So now you have a free flow of traffic coming east of Princes Town, bypassing Princes Town, linking up San Fernando to the highway and into the deep south.

There are a series of projects that will be defined by that concept, so as we parallel-process this upgrade, both from the large-scale strategic projects, the highways upgrade programme, the alternative routes concept, and, fourthly, and probably most importantly, the continual improvement of our maintenance system at the Ministry of Works and Transport, which is really being piloted by the IDB in, what we now call the routine maintenance package, which is a computer-based system in which we use the strategic software to plan the maintenance function at the Ministry of Works and Transport—because at the end of the day, the citizens of this country want to know that if a pothole appears in the road, there is supposed to be a finite amount of time in which the system picks it up automatically and repairs it.

I feel no comfort as the Minister of Works and Transport that I receive 10 and 15 letters a day saying that: “This road is bad; this road has a pothole; this road needs rehabilitation.” I feel no comfort that six out of 10 phone calls that you get are related to something like that. What we need are systems and processes, and we are building that software capability and management structure with the assistance Of the Inter-American Development Bank to bring to fruition some of these issues.

Let us deal with the larger strategic issues. I just want to go on record so that people would not feel that there is a disconnect between talk and deliverability, that on the highways expansion side, the Prime Minister announced a series of strategic initiatives as the highest priority to foster the development of the deep south through industrialization, especially in the towns of La Brea and Point Fortin. We would extend the Solomon Hochoy Highway into Point Fortin via Princes Town.

I am pleased to announce that the firm of ND Lee International Limited in a joint venture with Trintoplan Consultants Limited, has been awarded the contract to design the highway from San Fernando to Point Fortin. We have instructed the consultants that the design will be done—

Mr. Sharma: It was designed already.

Hon. F. Khan: It was never designed, Member for Fyzabad. Just listen. This is high talk and heavy talk.

The designs will be done in segments so that we can parallel the construction phase with the design phase, so we would not wait until we have a complete design into Point Fortin, but we will design it in segments. It is important to note that we have even, over the last several months, reconfigured the scope of the contract to not only include a highway from San Fernando to Point Fortin via La Brea, but a spur of the highway from somewhere in St. Mary's, Oropouche, that will parallel the Siparia-Erin Road; that it would take care of the other axis of population in the deep south, which is the Debe/Penal/Siparia/Erin axis.

So the highway will bifurcate and cover both clusters of population, the areas close to the Gulf of Paria, which is Point Fortin/La Brea, and the areas further in the middle of the peninsula, which is along the Siparia-Erin Road. So it is Debe/Penal/Siparia. We did that because good planning dictated—*[Interruption]* Well, it includes parts of Debe.

Mr. Speaker, this goes to show that in the planning process by this Administration, we leave nobody behind, because, you know, if we did not carry the highway through Penal, it would have been said by the Member for Siparia that we are not studying the people of Penal; we are not studying the people of Debe.

Secondly, the firm of Planning and Stantec Limited in a joint venture with Golder Associates, has been awarded the contract to design the highway from San Fernando to Princes Town. Another contract was awarded to the firm of Dessau-Soprin International in a joint venture with A de B Consultants Limited, to continue that design from Princes Town onward to Mayaro. The firm of BBFL/WSP has been awarded the contract for the design of the highway from Antigua Road in Wallerfield straight on to Manzanilla, via Sangre Grande.

So you have five major design contracts that would be operating in parallel. It is our intention, through a build/own/operate system, to attempt to fast-track and parallel process the construction phase with the design phase, and it is our hope that at least by the end of 2005, we should have the commencement of construction work on at least some of the highways, but most definitely, the one that goes into

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Point Fortin, because the development of the Union Industrial Estate at La Brea, the construction of the Aluminium Smelter and the UAN Plants, and the power plant at La Brea, are fundamental to the strategic development of the deep south of Trinidad and Tobago.

4.15 p.m.

For the record, all the contracts I have just outlined were awarded by the Central Tenders Board.

In the budget presentation, the Prime Minister also announced that the national transportation study would be asked to put as a priority and fast track, the full feasibility of a light rail system for Trinidad and Tobago. We will proceed very shortly to ask for expressions of interest on this project, even while the full feasibility is in progress. In my hand is a concept paper and pre feasibility study for the rapid rail transit system for Trinidad and Tobago that was done by the Rights Group. This is a state-owned rail company of India. This has been a government-to-government arrangement between the governments of India and Trinidad and Tobago.

In this document, the Indian consultants have outlined in a fair amount of detail in a feasibility study what they think the solution would be. They have given some preliminary designs of the system; the type of rail that we should operate; the type of civil engineering that needs to be done and the type of carriageway. They even presented a map to us showing where the train stations and stops would be. It includes covering both corridors east/west, Diego Martin to Arima and north/south, San Fernando to Port of Spain.

I make this point because I have worked with the Indian engineers on this project. Some of the best technology in the world especially in terms of design engineering and software development is coming from India. This administration plans to continue its strategic alliance through the Indian Embassy in Trinidad to feed off Indian technology and aggression in business. When the UNC was in power, with all the engineering might of India, they went to India for rice; [*Laughter*] a rice shipment that never arrived. We have gone to India for technology. We have nothing against India. We want to feed off the entire globe and progress that is taking place. We want strategic alliances with Asia, China, Taiwan, Japan, South Korea and India, one of the emerging markets of the world. Through the energy sector we would continue to link with North America and Europe. Hon. Valley will tell you that we are looking to expand our base for export into Latin America. Trinidad and Tobago is strategically positioning itself to be a major player in this part of the world. As the days come and go, Vision

2020 and developed country status are getting a level of clarity that the population can see. It is now fast becoming very attainable.

I will now deal with the present stock of our infrastructure that is being upgraded. During the course of 2003—2004, under the National Highways Programme, five major contracts had been in operation at a cost of TT \$159 million. When I read this, the respective Members of Parliament are supposed to put up their hands. We have been upgrading the Cedar Hill Road from the Solomon Hochoy Highway to Mayo Road, a distance of 4.5 kilometres. Member for Tabaquite put up your hand. Couva Main Road from the Solomon Hochoy Highway to Gran Couva, Seereram Brothers; Diego Martin Highway from Acton Courts to the intersection of St. Lucien Road, a distance of 6 kilometres. We are dealing with largely drains and footpaths. Put up your hands. This contract was awarded to Seereram Brothers at a cost of \$43.3 million. That is contract 17.

Contract 18, Member for Tabaquite, you are lucky. Guaracara Tabaquite Road from the 2.5 kilometres to Morichal Junction, a distance of 13.75 kilometres was awarded to Seereram Brothers at a cost of \$48.4 million. This is the first time in the history of Trinidad and Tobago after a very long time, that this is not a road paving exercise. Drains, landslips and all the slope stability work have been corrected. Where the road foundation has been found wanting we have excavated to the sub-base and built back the road from the sub-base to the base unto the re-sheeting layer. That is total reconstructing, proper engineering and execution.

The next two contracts are Moruga Road from Petit Café Junction to St. Mary's Village, General Road Movers Limited at a cost of \$35 million. Contract 20, Haniff Mohammed and Sons at a cost of \$32.7 million, the Mayaro Guayaguayare Road, from Mayaro Junction to Guayaguayare Village. For the record, the Moruga Road and Mayaro/Guayaguayare Road have nothing to do with the fact that the Minister of Works and Transport is also the Member of Parliament for Ortoire/Mayaro.

The final contract 21, at a cost of \$35.3 million is in two components: the Naparima Mayaro Road from Allamby Street to St. Croix Junction, a distance of 8.9 kilometres. This is for Mr. Princes Town. The Southern Main Road #2 from B1/61 to Bowen Trace in the constituency of Point Fortin; there have been some snags on that contract, but they have been sorted out. That is in the Cap de Ville/Chatham area.

Mr. S. Panday: What about Barrackpore?

Hon. F. Khan: Only last month, the following contracts were awarded for the continuation of this programme. Ten contracts have been awarded for roads and

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bridges. The contracts have been awarded to repair Caura Royal Road, a distance of 8.25 kilometres from the intersection of the Eastern Main Road to the second Poole. That contract value is \$20.1 million. We expect construction to start in November.

Contract 27, a major contract at the cost of \$35.9 million which will repair Morne Coco Road from Diego Martin to Maraval and the North Coast Road from Maracas Bay to La Fillette in Blanchisseuse. The other contract at a cost of \$28.3 million would be to repair a segment of the Naparima Mayaro Road from the intersection of William Smith and Mantapoole Trace onward to the Poole River in George Village.

Concurrent with that, contracts have been awarded in four packages for a total of 14 bridges all over Trinidad and Tobago. Time does not permit me to list all the bridges. They span the length and breadth of Trinidad and Tobago: in Claxton Bay, Penal, Cedros, Icosos, Rancho Quemado, Los Iros, Morne Diablo, Navet Village, Guayaguayare, St. Mary's Village, Gran Chemin, Blanchisseuse, Santa Cruz, Warrenville, Grande Riviere and Sans Souci. The National Highways Programme is on the way of delivering what we expect to the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

There are few other roads that would be added later in the programme. The second phase of the year 3 contracts will include the continuation of Moruga Road from St. Mary's Village to Gran Chemin. It will include another part of the Naparima Mayaro Road from Poole Village unto Rio Claro. A significant project on the Toco Road would rehabilitate the Toco Main Road from the intersection of Valencia Road and Toco Road on to Cumana.

Members of this honourable House, I have made every effort to show that there are national coverage, engineering, transparency and value for money. That is the template on which we work at the Ministry of Works and Transport. San Francique Road is also listed in another project. We spoke about another project called the Alternative Routes Concept. That is such a creative project. Last week we opened the first project of that nature, the by-pass to Princes Town. As gravy on that project we include Daisy Road. You can turn off M1 Tasker Road and get a by-pass to Palmyra where you can directly access the Solomon Hochoy Highway for vehicles coming into Port of Spain from deep South.

Some of the other projects that we plan to do would come up in this fiscal year. I want to outline some of the creative thinking we have in the Ministry of Works and Transport. We plan to commission two projects this year. The first is the repair of the existing Bagasse Plant Road to improve the link between Rivulet Road and Phoenix Park Road Junction. We are also going to upgrade existing

estate roads to improve the link between Rivulet Road and Couva Town Centre and the new NHA Roystonia Development and Point Lisas.

Most importantly, for the Member for St. Joseph, we are building the Farm Road Bridge over the St. Joseph River and repairing Farm Road and Harris Street to link the Southern Main Road in Curepe to the Eastern Main Road in Champs Fleurs. Since I was a little boy that bridge broke down and nobody saw it fit to repair it. We are going to repair that bridge to by-pass some of that main road traffic.

In deep south, we have the upgrading of Petrotrin Road from Fyzabad to Forest Reserve to Point Fortin to Apex Fyzabad. I am sorry the Member for Fyzabad is not here. The Member for Fyzabad has sat—I lived in Fyzabad since 1982. I still live there by the way. The fact that I have chosen to leave Fyzabad is not only because of the distance to drive everyday from Fyzabad to Port of Spain, but also because the Member for Fyzabad is not doing a good job. I say that with no apology. Fyzabad is a dead end town. A dead-end town means that when you drive into the town you have to drive back out. Towns that are dead-end towns do not develop. The single most strategic project you can do to improve the quality of life and business climate in Fyzabad is to open the Forest Reserve Road to link Fyzabad into Point Fortin. We of the People's National Movement would do this.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the sitting of the House is suspended for tea. We will resume at 5.10 p.m.

4.30 p.m.: *Sitting suspended.*

5.10 p.m.: *Sitting resumed.*

Hon. F. Khan: Mr. Speaker, before we broke for tea, I was dealing with the concept of minimal cost by comparisons to develop major infrastructure. We had developed this alternative route concept, and we had identified 16 projects for implementation. Some of these will be very simple to implement; some will cost some sizeable sums in the region of \$10 million and less, and others which will call for major design and significant capital before they can be implemented.

As I said earlier, in the first instance we have completed the first of those projects, which was the Princes Town By-pass and that cost us, probably, in the region of TT \$12 million. Mr. Speaker, it is worth every cent.

Three projects that are on the card to commence shortly, that would not call for significant expenditure, probably in the region of \$5 million to \$10 million per project, would be the rebuilding of Farm Road Bridge and Associated Works, the upgrading of the Bagasse Plant Road to link with Rivulet to Phoenix Park, and the upgrading of the estate roads to link Rivulet to the Couva town centre.

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Other projects included in this basket of projects—at this time I want to put on the record that the projects are in two categories: one, the projects in the north which will call for significant expenditure. These are projects largely to interlink the valleys of the northern ranges through the mountains.

The second set of projects is really based in Central and South Trinidad. The part of the island which has been fortunate to have a template on which we can work, because within Central and South Trinidad there is the Tasker Road network that we can piggyback on to help open new areas and to create more storage capacity on the road network to ease the vehicle transport. In deep south there is the Oilfield Road network which we can again piggyback on and reduce significant costs to develop the infrastructure in deep south.

We are fortunate that the State is now the custodian of these assets. We do not have to ask Tate and Lyle whether you can take a Tasker Road to open it up. We do not have to ask Texaco or Tesoro whether they want to put a barrier on the road and say that only company employees can pass. Petrotrin is now a State asset and so is Caroni (1975) Limited, and the Estate Management and Development Company.

In this context we have projects that I had outlined there: connecting Fyzabad to Point Fortin via Forest Reserve; connecting Santa Flora to Point Fortin, via central Los Bajos, which has already been opened to the public; it is in the constituency of La Brea. Petrotrin has spent some money in paving some of those roads but the Ministry of Works will intervene during the course of the year and attempt to fix the shoulders and widen the roads to make them full-fledged arterial roads.

A significant project, Mr. Speaker—and these projects are really what I call projects that deal with irritants in the transportation network; irritants that we should not accept on a day-to-day basis—conversion and upgrading of the Union Road Crossing in Gasparillo, with full diamond interchange, adding ramps to the Solomon Hochoy Highway on all four quadrants and related works.

Those of you who travel south, the Gasparillo turnoff is a nightmare. The reason for this is that vehicles which have to go Williamsville and Whiteland and that area, have to pass through the small roads of the Gasparillo town centre before they get on to the major Union Road. Once we convert the Union Road Crossing, which is the overpass bridge there, into a full-fledged diamond intersection, all the traffic that is going into Williamsville and Whiteland and Mayo would not have to pass through Gasparillo thereby easing that situation very significantly.

Mr. Speaker, as we move into the northern area, directly linking Aranguéz Road to Bridge Road by constructing a bridge across the San Juan River we would be potentially eliminating the difficult aggregate crossing of the Priority Bus Route at the Croissee and Aranguéz Road.

Another project is upgrading the link between the Aranguéz Road and the Uriah Butler Highway through the Aranguéz Estate traces in Mount Lambert. As we move into the northern areas, these projects will call for some designs this year and it is really intended to interlink the valleys of the northern ranges.

I was just reading a part of the 1967 Transportation Plan and I was almost embarrassed to read it, because since then the planners were saying how we should have developed the settlement patterns in the valleys in the Northern Range. For whatever reasons, these things never happened. What we need to do now—there are a series of Northern Range valleys that start from Tucker Valley in the west, the Diego Martin Valley to the Maraval Valley, Santa Cruz Valley, St. Ann's Valley and the Maracas/St. Joseph Valley. The problem with the transportation network in these valleys is that basically there is one road in and one road out, so you do not have the concept of an alternative route.

The intent of this programme is to design a new series of roads that would interconnect these valleys, so that if people are moving west or east they would not, necessarily, have to go in the Port of Spain area to access these valleys. It is similar in concept to what the Morne Coco Road now does between Diego Martin and Maraval.

Mr. Speaker, if you remember what I read earlier, we have already allocated a contract for around \$20 million to upgrade the Morne Coco Road into a full arterial road through the mountains to link Maraval with Diego Martin. By that same concept, Mr. Speaker, we would be upgrading the Laventille Road from Saddle Road, San Juan to Lady Young Road, Mon Repos and Caledonia in Morvant.

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

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

Question put and agreed to.

Hon. F. Khan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and hon. Members.

As I said, on the interconnection of the Northern Range valleys, there are designs for the construction of a link between the Hololo Mountain Road in Santa

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Cruz, the Lady Chancellor Road via the hills of St. Ann's; the upgrading of the Hololo Mountain Road between Santa Cruz and Cascade; and the upgrading of the link and the design of a link between the Tucker Valley, Chaguaramas and Covigne Road in Diego Martin.

Of the 14 projects that are listed here, this theoretically is a good project which may be difficult to implement but it is listed in the report, that is the construction of a link between Marabella and King's Wharf, San Fernando then further to Lady Hailes Avenue along the abandoned train line.

Member for San Fernando West, if we move the squatters from the train line you will kill us. It is our intention that the housing programmes expand so we would be able to absorb people who live in squatter settlements into the mainstream of the housing programme. It is hoped that this project would become feasible in due course.

Mr. Speaker, before I wrap up on highways here I just want to talk about one other project which we call the PURE programme. This is really a road-paving programme that has been continuing from 2000 to 2001, 2002, 2003. There are still a lot of roads in Trinidad, especially secondary roads, that need intervention as it relates to repairing the road pavement via a road-paving exercise.

We have continued prudently, at least over the last two to three years, by spending an average of \$15 million per annum on road paving in the classic sense of the word, which are just some cursor runs, as they say, and resheeting the roads.

I am personally pleased that under my watch at the Ministry of Works and Transport over the last two years, in particular, that we have been able to optimize what is basically \$50 million and less per annum, in really getting a lot of road paving done at minimal cost.

I am always tempted to talk about NREP when I reach this point and my conscience says I should talk about it. Mr. Speaker, the NREP road-paving exercise cost this country TT \$1 billion. I will read what I did for \$42 million, or what this administration did this year for \$42 million. If I get \$1 billion today; if the Minister of Works, and this administration assign TT \$1 billion to pave roads in Trinidad and Tobago, I can guarantee you that after two years there would not be a single road in need of repair. [*Desk thumping*] What was done with TT \$1 billion baffles the imagination.

Mr. Speaker, on this year's PURE road-paving programme, we tried to spread right around. We did a lot of side streets in the Diego Martin area, Maraval area, and areas along the East-West Corridor. We did about three significant projects.

We went into the Point Lisas Housing Development, which was an NHA project where the roads were very dilapidated and we paved every road. [*Desk thumping*] We took that same small sum of money under PURE and we paved the Churchill-Roosevelt Highway from Wallerfield at the pillars to O'Meara, upgrading the intersections at De Freitas Boulevard that go into La Horquetta and Tumpuna Road. We took that same \$38 million to \$40 million and we paved the Uriah Butler Highway, north bound from Charlieville straight to the Caroni Bridge at Grand Bazaar. We took that same \$30 million to \$40 million and paved—Member for Nariva—from Rio Claro to Biche. The road was bad. We took that same \$30 million to \$40 million and paved a series of roads in Moruga: L'Anse Mitan, La Retraite; we paved a few side streets in Mayaro. We paved, as I said, along the East-West Corridor. We have awarded a contract—the work has not been done as yet—to pave part of the Arima-Blanchisseuse Road just past the Asa Wright Centre going further into Blanchisseuse.

Mr. Speaker, with the limited resources in that programme we have been able to do significantly more than one would expect. It is in that context I want to wrap up the highways part here to say that I attempted to put this thing in perspective. We have the strategic projects that would develop the country. Most of that is the planning stage and we expect to start some construction in fiscal 2004/2005. The designs contracts have already been awarded. The national transportation study is well on its way. It is our intention to fast-track the concept of a monorail and see how quickly we can set a new timetable to implement that project and to have segments of it operational in the shortest possible time, hopefully by 2007/2008.

We continue through the national highways programme to rebuild and upgrade the current stock of roads in Trinidad and Tobago. All the projects that I have outlined—the roads have a wide geographic spread—were based on a very scientific analysis of the community and the conditions of the road pavement at the time. We are pleased to announce that these roads are well engineered and well designed with drainage and slope stability issues, landslip repair and reconstruction of the road pavement.

5.25 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, on the PURE programme we continue to pave roads that are in dire need of paving, and it is our intention to continue that programme during the period 2005—2007. It is not the intention of this Government to bring a massive frenzy of road paving exercises in 2007. It is not our intention to fool anyone. I personally do not think that the population will be fooled. We want to continue to perform as the Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs said, year by year, budget by budget.

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Mr. Speaker, let me now deal with an issue that I will take some responsibility for, and which we hope to really accelerate in this fiscal year; the famous Uriah Butler/Churchill-Roosevelt Highway Interchange. As I mentioned before, the Government has taken a decision to construct this interchange with a revised design.

When I spoke about the traffic situation earlier in my contribution, I made the point that there was now one vehicle for every three persons in Trinidad and Tobago. When we looked at the peak traffic situation in this country on a morning and an afternoon, and we did a critical analysis of the intersection, on a morning the traffic coming from South into Port of Spain effectively has a freeway. The south traffic merges into six lanes and then merges into three. And that is exactly what an interchange would do. Yet, traffic still backs up way back into Charlieville. On an afternoon, with a signalized west to south exit—*[Interruption]* I am telling you that and I am trying to put it in perspective because we have to learn to analyze problems in a scientific way so we can know what the solutions are and how we craft and finance the solutions. On an afternoon, traffic moving from Port of Spain going South on a signalized intersection, which means that you do not have free flow—it means that it is staggered; the traffic backs up from Chaguanas right up to Grand Bazaar.

If we can do like “I dream of Jeanie”, and just wish an interchange, the situation would be worse at that intersection. What that really means is that a third lane south bound, on the Uriah Butler Highway is a more important project, than building an interchange. What does that mean? It means if we put an interchange at the Intersection at the Uriah Butler/Churchill-Roosevelt Highway and create free flow on a morning, just imagine what will happen if traffic East going West into Port of Spain have a free flow without a traffic light, they will get into that storage space long before South traffic could merge into Debe.

The interchange cannot be done in isolation. It has to be constructed with a series of other parallel projects. And it is in that context that the new design criteria that the consultants have come on for—the interchange will be constructed in parallel to a series of other upgrade, both upstream and downstream of the interchange. If you have an interchange and you do not upgrade the Aranguez and El Socorro intersections you are making it worse for people. If you do not construct new walkovers at Aranguez and El Socorro so that we can now get those lanes expanded to three lanes on either side and make it a six-lane highway, all you are doing is bottleneck with the traffic.

If you build that interchange—and most importantly, the single most important project on that East-West Corridor, the Churchill-Roosevelt Highway

Complex is the construction—let me repeat. I want to go very slowly on this. The most difficult project in this whole exercise is the construction of an additional lane from Sea Lots to Colville Street. It is the upgrading of Wrightson Road. From Sea Lots at NP to Colville Street intersection with Wrightson Road because that is basically where you are moving away the traffic and if you build all these things upstream and you do not open up Port of Spain to accept the additional volume of cars, you are spinning top in mud. You would be wasting \$250 million at the intersection.

Mr. Speaker, the project description now entails update of the traffic study undertaken in 1997, upgrade and final design and supervision of the construction of the Uriah Butler/Churchill-Roosevelt Highway interchange, update of the final designs of the Port of Spain Access Improvement and Supervision of Construction. That is what I just referred to; an update of the final design with a traffic control and surveillance system and supervision of its installation. What we now need is a surveillance system that one can stay in a room with a computer and synchronize the traffic coordination system coming along the Churchill-Roosevelt Highway. Most people fail to realize that the Churchill-Roosevelt Highway is not a freeway. The Churchill-Roosevelt Highway has 15 traffic signalization points.

Mr. Speaker, the firm of EDMC has already been procured. They are in Trinidad and are doing the contract documents so that we can start construction. The information I have from my technocrats is that commencement of designs is scheduled for November 01, 2004 and commencement of construction is scheduled for March 2005. I really wanted to put this into perspective. By the same token I admit that we probably are about six to eight months behind with this project. I apologize to the nation on it, however, in my own view, it was important in getting it right. Far too often, we go into massive projects—a project in excess of TT \$150 million is not something to just rush into especially when you know from scientific work that it would not provide the benefits that you would expect it to provide. When you bring a computer simulated overpass, and you put a big arch and suspend it with cable and put a billboard, and say build the interchange now, that is politics. That is exciting the population into believing in something that is not reality.

I am an engineer. Most Members on the other side have some understanding of logic and a sense of engineering, and how one can analyze and do what one has to do. You cannot be emotional about this. If Dr. Rafeeq from Caroni Central is prescribing a medical solution for something I would have to sit and listen. So by the same token, we on this side are saying that we have to study this thing and

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understand it. We have done that during the course of the year. I will be the first to admit that we are probably six to eight months late but it is better to be late and right than to be early and wrong.

Mr. Speaker, I will spend my final minutes on issues relating to the transport section of my portfolio.

The Traffic Management section of the Ministry of Works and Transport is one of the better performing units in my ministry. They have been coping with a very strenuous situation. With 450,000 cars on a ratio of three to one, when I entered the Ministry of Works and Transport there was one traffic engineer, Mr. Suresh Jogie. Below him there were no trained technocrats. Mr. Jogie alone could have done traffic simulation models and he had some software to decide what you do, how you synchronize traffic lights. When you see 30 or 45 seconds before a traffic light changes, or one and a half minutes, it is not something that you go and put 30 seconds. You have to have traffic counts; you have to have software to help you simulate what is the optimum signalization for these lights. It is scientific. You do not have a master's degree in traffic management.

These are the people who have been under trying circumstances trying to deal with the traffic situation in Trinidad. I think they have been doing a good job. We are proud that during the course of this year, we implemented the flashing amber light for pedestrian crossing which is now part of the statutes of Trinidad and Tobago. There are over 75 of these amber, flashing lights that have been installed during this fiscal year alone. Most schools throughout Trinidad and Tobago, from even the deepest rural areas into the city of Port of Spain, now have these signalizations points. I compliment the staff for that.

There had been a series of fatal accidents especially along the area of the Courts Mega Store and that area where the median is very small between the east and the west bound lanes. When a vehicle moves from one lane to another and you have a head-on crash that is death for sure. It is the most dangerous accident that exists in a highway network. If you have been travelling along the Beetham Highway recently you would have seen that we have installed over 500 New Jersey crash barriers along the highways where the median is extremely narrow. We have also done it in the West Mall area going through Cocorite. We have on budget this year to purchase 5,000 New Jersey crash barriers which will line from the Beetham Highway going straight almost to the Uriah Butler Highway intersection as a road safety measure.

Mr. Speaker, in the licensing area, if one has been following the press, recently about two months ago we signed a technical co-operation agreement with

the UNDP to procure, implement, train and administer a computerized system for the Licensing Authority. That is a very significant project. I have gone on record as saying—and I mean no offence to the people at the licensing division. Some of them work hard. Most of them do, but they operate under very antiquated systems.

If I have one headache in the Ministry of Works and Transport, that headache is the Licensing Department. This system will go a long way in alleviating our problems at the Licensing Department. Bearing in mind licensing is a major earner of revenue for the State—I think it is the fifth largest collector of revenue. Petroleum taxes, personal taxes, custom and excise and licensing come fourth. This computer system is envisaged with the state-of-the-art cutting edge technology. It will cater for the following:

- The issue and renewal of drivers' permits

- The inspection and registration of vehicles

- The issue of vehicle registration certificates

It will facilitate networking with insurance companies to monitor driving records of the client motorists.

These companies cannot sanction driving records of their client motorists by refusing to renew vehicle insurance or increasing premium. It will also facilitate the interlinking with the customs department to trace vehicles by chassis numbers to maintain audit credibility in tracing the whereabouts of vehicles.

Mr. Speaker, the courts may be allowed to access the database on the Licensing Authority to update traffic conviction records so as to influence suspensions of permits of delinquent drivers through the points system administered by the Transport Commissioner. The system would also facilitate real time access to the database by the law enforcement officers, the police and the Licensing Department to glean drivers and vehicle information at the touch of a button when confronting violators on the streets. In the area of criminality this will indeed be telling forward initiatives to the police and the Licensing Authority as these institutions grapple with an increasing level of lawlessness in this society.

This project should be completed by the end of 2005 at which time we will have a fully computerized and computer-operated licensing division which this country has waited very long for and is in dire need of.

Other improvements to the Licensing Division. We would be moving from our present location at Wrightson Road and moving further down Wrightson

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Road—there is a new building next to Flour Mills which has been recently completed that would be the new licensing headquarters of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, I would like to say that there are many other areas I can talk about but I would have to use another forum to do it. The Port, the Civil Aviation issues, the airport and many other areas that we could cover. The Port privatization process has been stagnated slightly and there is an interministerial team looking to see what the best options available to us are but even as we say that, because of the increased commerce in the country, there are severe challenges that are being faced by the port. There is now a team operating between the Manufacturers Association, the Haulers Association, the Trinidad Chamber of Commerce, the Ministry of Trade and the Port Authority are working out detailed solutions to get containers cycling faster in and out of the port. That little committee is working quite well and we expect to see some major improvements there.

Berth seven is almost complete. I think by the end of October, berth seven will become operational.

5.40 p.m.

The port has recently done a major land use plan for its assets and the port will be synchronizing with the Urban Development Company of Trinidad and Tobago (UDeCOTT) as to how we might use major real estate in the area of the waterfronts of Trinidad and Tobago.

On the airport side, we have made no secret that there is an issue with the airport runway contract and presently we are investigating that. We have modern consultants on both grounds and on the technical grounds to tell us what remedial action we can take, from an engineering point of view, to rectify the flaws and from a contract management point as to where culpability lies.

Mr. Speaker, as I said, I am about to close. I was very deliberate in going through some of the project details to show, most importantly, that the decision-making process on the projects we do—the choice of projects and the distribution of projects—is done in a very scientific and transparent manner.

Sometimes it hurts my heart when I hear the rant and rave of discrimination and nepotism; that we are only doing things here and there and we are not doing anything in Central and South. If they listened to my discourse this afternoon, they would see that there was logic, thinking, science, altruism, and fair play in everything that we do on this side.

It is in that context that I ask all Members to lift their attitude. When the Member for Couva North goes to the media and says that young Indians are ready to spill their blood and make those vitriolic statements, it serves no purpose. That concept that people would shed blood and that there would be revolution; that was in the days of Stalin and Lenin; that was in the days of the Bolsheveks; that was in the days of the French Revolution. We have gone past that.

Today China is going ahead of the world. India is going ahead of the world. All the countries have decided to sit. This is the time when a country needs to sit and put its perspective together. Opposition and Government are supposed to sit and define a course for this country. We have put a template in Vision 2020. We ask the Opposition to join with us. There are very credible people on this side and we plan to take this country forward.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you.

Mr. Harry Partap (*Nariva*): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This afternoon, I join the debate on the Bill to provide for the service of Trinidad and Tobago for the financial year ending September 30, 2005.

First, let me congratulate the Leader of the Opposition, the hon. Basdeo Panday, for his most brilliant, philosophical explanation of the budget as an instrument of governance. The Member for Couva North was able to dismantle the veneer and expose the budget for what it is—a wish list with no structure for implementation. It was a hopeless case of more promises to be broken.

I also congratulate my other colleagues who spoke before me and who, in their lucid and thorough examination of the budget presentation by the Minister of Finance, have also removed the mask and focused on the deceit and lack of credibility of the budget.

The Member for Ortoire/Mayaro, when he started his contribution, said that the UNC had received a knock-out punch by this budget. Clearly, he seemed to be still “bazodee” because I would have thought that it was the Member for Caroni East who had given the Member for Diego Martin West a real knock-out punch this afternoon. That Member stood up on this side when they were here and accused us, when we were in government, of stealing. Today we are hearing a different story. The Member for Caroni East has brought a different story to this House. We see that people are stealing from a brick go up and we wait to see what the Prime Minister will do for this.

The Member for Ortoire/Mayaro has also said that this is the time for the Opposition and the Government to get together to do things in the interest of the

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people of Trinidad and Tobago. Maybe he has just had this, perhaps divine insight, but we have been asking for this for a long time. We have been making representations on behalf of our constituents and there has been no answer except from a few Members opposite who would have responded. I want to say this afternoon that the Member for Ortoire/Mayaro is one of those Ministers who have responded to some of the concerns of the constituents of Nariva in terms of roads and bridges. I take the opportunity now to thank him.

The Minister of Finance and Prime Minister has a serious credibility problem. It is serious because if he cannot convince cheerleaders and his fanatical supporters in the PNM and in the Corridor how good the budget is, then certainly he has gone to the dogs. I am not going to add to the many and varied descriptions of the budget by prominent citizens in this country, because the budget did not get a good review from the prominent people, the movers and shakers of the society. The budget did not meet their approval.

I intend to echo this evening the descriptions made by simple people who are hurt by the Government's lack of vision in providing sustainable employment and development for them. People wanted something to lift them out of their poverty and the budget did not provide this. So the descriptions that I would use this afternoon of the budget, I will take from one of the talk show hosts, who calls himself the Gladiator. Mr. Speaker, what the Gladiator is saying is very instructive because, whether we like it or not, the Gladiator represents as close as we can get to the blind leading the blind—hardcore, unrepentant, PNM-to-the-bone supporters who have been stung by this budget.

By the way, Member for San Fernando East and Prime Minister, the man says that the hon. Member for San Fernando East owes him money for services performed. I do not know what services he performed for or on you, but pay the man the money. Every day he is “bad talking” you on the radio. If the man performed services—

Mr. Manning: I thank the hon. Member for Nariva for giving way, but I think he has one question to ask before he puts any to me. He should address it to his good colleague, the Member for Oropouche.

Mr. H. Partap: The only thing is that he did not say that the Member for Oropouche owed him. Mr. Prime Minister, if you owe the man for services performed on you or for you, please pay him.

The Gladiator is saying that you are the worst Minister of Finance this country has ever seen. I do not know, but he has taken the time to acknowledge the great

budgets under the UNC. He had praise for the former Finance Minister Brian Kuei Tung and the current Member for St. Joseph, Mr. Gerald Yetming. He described the budget as deceptive, a con job on poor people, disrespectful to the poor, mauby and orange juice budget, misleading, favouring the rich, distressing the poor and offering postponed benefits. He summed it all up by saying that he thinks that we are all fools.

Mr. Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, if you have failed to convince your friends, then you really have a serious credibility problem. You are more badly off than I thought. It means that if you have failed to convince your stalwarts, defenders and cheerleaders, you really have a credibility problem. Even your friends and defenders do not believe you. They do not trust you. You have no credibility in their eyes. You are a hoax.

The budgetary allocation for the Ministry of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development was increased this year by \$94,341,412—a lot of money. This means that the allocation to the Ministry moved from \$44,558,778 in 2004 to \$138,900,190 in 2005, that is the new budget. But the bulk of this allocation, \$75 million, went to the National Entrepreneurship Development Company (NEDCO).

Mr. Speaker, NEDCO is yet to present a report to this Parliament about its expenditure and its operations, since it was established in August, 2002. We cannot get any official details about its expenditure. All we know is what we see in full-page colour ads in the newspapers, and the ads are carefully controlled, as you know. We see faces, but we have no way to test the veracity of the claims. We do not know if they are bogus. All we know about NEDCO is what the Minister of Finance told us in the 2003 budget statement and that was that NEDCO had disbursed 900 loans since it was established in August 2002. It was in October 2003 that he told us how many loans were disbursed.

We do not know what happened in 2003. We do not know what happened in 2004. We do not know if the so-called entrepreneurs have sustainable businesses. We do not know the level of repayment by those who receive loans. We do not know the level of delinquency on loan payments. We need answers.

NEDCO is not a programme paid for by the PNM party. It is a public programme. It is public money that is being spent, so we need answers. But we will never know.

5.55 p.m.

The Minister of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development refuses to answer questions in Parliament, because the Government has put NEDCO out of

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the reach of the Freedom of Information Act. There is no transparency. We question the accountability in the programme. We do not trust the PNM. The PNM has no creditability. We see it in the URP and CEPEP.

I have an inter-office memo that I would like to read, to tell you what is taking place in NEDCO. This may be an isolated incident. I do not know.

“03/10/04

Business Development Officer

Mrs. Dale Monzano-Wilson

Human Resource Manager

NEDCO

It is also my duty to inform you of the suspicious nature surrounding a disbursed file...”

That is a file where money has been disbursed.

“in the name of Marvin Joseph. The client was loaned \$50,000. Marvin is currently in the process of moving home from the United States. His mother, Mrs. Merle John-Joseph, received written approval from Marvin to sign on his behalf as having received the cheques. The loan was disbursed to the client’s mother, but the original legal document was, and still is, missing from the file.

While moving through Scarborough, I met Mrs. Joseph, who informed me that she had received documents from her son Marvin and hoped that I would save her the trouble of walking up the staircase to her office and collect them for her. I visited her place of work at approximately 2.30 p.m. and had to be let in by the security guard.

Mrs. Joseph informed me that she was unsure as to the reason why she was allowed to leave with the funds, as it was not the custom in her institution.”

Not NEDCO.

“I informed her that I was not privy to the circumstances surrounding the disbursal, but was still not aware that it was NEDCO’s practice to do the same.

She confided and further stated that she had no intention to get anyone fired or in trouble and as such, hoped that all was well with the file.

I reassured Mrs. Joseph that whatever the outcome, she was in no way to be blamed.

She further added that she was traveling to the United States on Friday to assist her son with the moving process and would bring the signed originals to the office on Monday.

I am also to reveal to you that the file of a client, Sherland Mungroo, was not prepared by me although bearing my name.”

That is the business development officer speaking.

“The centre manager also shields this client from company’s procedures, that is: post-loan evaluation, et cetera. Added to that, the centre manager pays the instalment of the client from her personal banking account.

Please note that although my name appears on the application form, it was not affixed by me.”

Minister of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development, please investigate. Somebody seems to be collecting money, using other people's names. Persons are carrying files. A word to the wise is sufficient.

Mr. Speaker, when we looked at the allocation to the Ministry of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development, an interesting development takes place. It has to come to light and I thought I might share it with you this evening. It would seem to us that the PNM is creating slush funds in the ministries. I will tell you. Because you have some subheads, contract employment, short term employment, fees and other contracted services. There are four Heads. Two of them are legitimate. I know that. When I was there, I had two in my ministry. They were legitimate. Contract employment and other contracted services are legitimate. Where did the short term employment and fees come from? What kind of fees are they? Who is getting the fees?

Are these funds to be used for the jobs of the PNM boys and girls? Are they to be used to buy votes in 2007? I had occasion, in the past, to reveal a list of a number of jobs that were given to relatives of PNM government members, as well as party supporters in the Ministry of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development. Clearly, provision is made, once more, for more of the same. Minister of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development, one got fired already; watch yourself.

Let us examine the estimates. A total of \$10,301,000 has also been allocated for these four items. Contract employment got \$7,091,000; an increase of \$2,663,600. Under short term employment, remember those two only came since the PNM came into office. They were not there under our watch. Under short term

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employment, \$210,000 was received; an increase of \$209,400. Under fees of \$1,500,000 there was an increase of \$485,500; and other contracted services, \$1,500,000; an increase of \$1,042,400. At least two of these subheads: fees and other contracted services, were created after 2002. The sum allocated, increased by \$4,400,900 in the allocation for 2005. The PNM is really living it up. Truly! They are carefully outmaneuvering the system to hide their corruption—\$10 million here and \$10 million there, nobody will miss it! Watch yourselves! I only hope that the Ken Gordon “Fix Me First Committee” is keeping an eye. I also hope that Mary King’s Transparency International has not gone to sleep.

Mr. Speaker, it is a scandal, that with an increase of \$94,341,412 and another \$10,301,000 in dubious allocations in the Ministry of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development, only \$1 million was set aside for the establishment of the Occupational Safety and Health Authority. This is a token allocation, because in the 2003 estimates, \$394,303 was allocated. That was only for OSHA. In the 2004 estimates, \$1 million was allocated, but was not used. In the 2005 estimates, it remains at \$1 million. Where is the commitment of the PNM to put the structure in place to manage the OSHA legislation? Where is the commitment? Is this the reason the regulations governing OSHA have not been brought to Parliament? Minister of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development, explain. Is this the reason not a single section of the OSHA legislation has been proclaimed? You tell us. It has been over one year. They said that it was a Christmas gift to the workers. Another Christmas is coming and I guess another one would come.

Mr. Speaker, they have also done the same thing with labour inspection at that ministry. There is no money to employ additional labour inspectors. The sum of \$1 million is allocated for OSHA and \$800,000 for overseas travel at the Ministry of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development. They are really going good.

Mr. Speaker, at page 47 of the budget presentation, the Minister of Finance said:

- “● In order to directly help the lowest paid of the labour force deal with recent price increases, we propose to recommend to the Minimum Wages Board that the minimum wage be increased from \$8 per hour to \$9 per hour with effect from the First of January 2005;”

Mr. Speaker, we on this side have no problem with that. We have no problem with an increase in the national minimum wage. In fact, we support the increase and we will support any effort that will be made by the Government to protect,

improve and make the workers' workplace safe. We will continue to support that kind of legislation.

We believe that the Government had been playing games with the workers and using bread and butter issues as leverage for political support. That is what we feel. The matter of an increase in the national minimum wage has been used by the PNM as a political weapon to win votes. That is all they are concerned about.

During the 2002 General Election campaign, the Member for San Fernando East made a promise to increase the minimum wage to \$10 an hour. During the 2003 Local Government Election campaign, he told the ALNG workers in Point Fortin that the energy industry construction workers would be given a minimum wage of \$28.

Mr. Manning: Who said that?

Mr. H. Partap: The Member for San Fernando East said that in the 2003 Local Government Election campaign.

Mr. Manning: Mr. Speaker, I thank the Member for Nariva for giving way. I want to correct the record immediately. The Member for San Fernando East did no such thing. [*Interruption*]

Dr. Moonilal: What he did?

Mr. Manning: If I am permitted to answer your colleague, what the Member for San Fernando East did was to commit the Government to a minimum wage of \$10 per hour over a five-year period. We increased it last year by \$1 to \$8. It is now \$9 and we have three years to go before we—

Mr. H. Partap: I thank the Member for San Fernando East and Prime Minister for the explanation. I think he owes the Member for Point Fortin an apology and, perhaps, to reinstate him in the Cabinet. [*Desk thumping*]

6.10 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, sometimes people say things and we could determine whether they are credible, based on what they are saying. The Prime Minister has disappointed me. Of course, we have heard nothing about this sectorial minimum wage that was promised to the workers. In fact, workers went on strike for about 100 days over that same \$28 minimum sectorial wage. The then Minister of Labour and Small Micro Enterprise Development was sacrificed. The Member for St. Ann's East should watch it! Do not put your neck on a block for them because they would cut it off.

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We understand that the Minimum Wages Board had sent a report to the then Minister of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development, who then took it to Cabinet. Cabinet had placed that report before an evaluation committee. That is another way of saying that the proposal is dead, and there goes another election promise. But offering a \$9 per hour minimum wage would not achieve the goals set by the Minister of Finance; it would not go far enough to assist the lowest paid workers in this country against the spiralling price increases; and it would not help them to meet the challenge of feeding, clothing and housing their families. In fact, the \$9 an hour minimum wage still puts them below the poverty line.

At any rate, the data available suggests that about 20 per cent of the low-paid workforce does not get the existing minimum wage that already exists, because there is no enforcement by the Ministry of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development.

I want to admit that enforcement was a problem since the Minimum Wage Act was introduced on June 18, 1976. Because of the nature of the employment of these low-paid skilled workers, the labour unions were reluctant to bring them into membership. The unions were even more reluctant to take up their grievances at the Civil Court. At that time, they went to the Civil Court to represent their grievances. Their grievances were considered civil matters, and these matters did not qualify to go before the Industrial Court. The UNC changed all of that during the short six years we were in office.

Mr. Speaker, we amended the Minimum Wages Act in 2000, to allow workers who fall under the Minimum Wages Order, to address their grievances to the Industrial Court instead of the Civil Court. The amendment also allowed for aggrieved workers to present their case to the Industrial Court on their own, or through a union of their choice. So that is the law. The amendment also allowed unions to monitor the implementation of the minimum wage and to report violations.

Mr. Speaker, is the Minister of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development asleep on the job? I do not know! Is the Minister so inefficient, lazy and out of touch with the problems that are affecting the low-paid skilled workers of this country? Clearly, it does not seem so to us, that the Minister of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development has any interest in workers' rights and decent work as enunciated by the International Labour Organization.

It appears to us that under this administration, workers' rights would be ignored, and their plights would also be ignored by the Minister of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development and the Government. I think it is highly

irresponsible for the Minister to expect that the complement of Labour Inspectors in 1996 and 2001 would be adequate to deal with the monitoring and enforcement of the minimum wage and the maternity benefits protection. The Government and the Minister of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development are shortchanging the low-paid workers of this country.

I am forced to agree with some of the commentators who say that the PNM is hell-bent on creating a source of cheap labour in Trinidad and Tobago. The PNM really does not care about workers in this country. If the Government cared about workers in Trinidad and Tobago, particularly the low-paid and low-skilled workers, they would have brought the bill to this Parliament that the Member for Oropouche and I formulated.

We formulated the Bill called: Basic Conditions of Employment and Minimum Wage. That Bill is there now! The Bill has gone through the tripartite process. That Bill would have addressed the questions of employment and the terms and conditions of workers who are not represented by trade unions. But the Minister of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development may be too lazy, or he may be disinterested in labour matters to do anything positive for workers in this country. *[Interruption]* The Member for Diego Martin West should not talk! The Member should be looking for the evidence and for protection! The Minister of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development cannot give you protection.

We had received the final report from the Cabinet-appointed committee that was looking at the Industrial Relations Act. When we left office in 2001, the final report was in. The Industrial Relations Act should be changed. The unions are begging the Government to do that. Mr. Minister, it is time for action on that matter. I do not know what the Minister expects the trade unions to do. The final report came in when we were leaving office. The committee had taken more than six years to do its work.

Mr. Speaker, what is holding back the Industrial Injury and Disability Compensation Bill that we left in the ministry? Why is the Government not bringing that Bill to the Parliament? That Bill is very important when you put the Occupational Health and Safety Act into operation. That Bill would benefit workers who are injured on the job.

Presently, these workers are covered under the Workmen's Compensation Act, which is outdated and archaic. The Member should not take advice from the Member for Laventille East/Morvant. Do not take any advice from the Member.

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The Member cannot give you good advice on this matter. The Member knows nothing about labour, absolutely nothing, and he would mislead you. Get busy, Mr. Minister! You may have to curtail some of your nocturnal visits to Guaico, Tamana. *[Laughter]*

I want to tell this House—the Prime Minister may listen—that I intend to get a lady friend for the Minister in every road that needs repairs in my constituency. *[Laughter]* The Member has been repairing the road that leads to his lady friend. Call me!

I was talking about the minimum wage. The Minimum Wages Act does not allow the Prime Minister to set a minimum wage. If one reads the Act, one would see in sections 11, 12, 13, and 14 that the Prime Minister does not have that power. *[Interruption]* You said that you were going to propose the minimum wage, but it is not for you to propose the minimum wage. This is for the Minister of Labour to do. You are not the Minister of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development—except that you are taking over everybody's portfolio. You are micromanaging.

Mr. Manning: Mr. Speaker, ever since our first budget in this term, we have moved away from the traditional way of presenting budgets, where we have made the budget a presentation of the Government. The Minister of Finance presents the budget on behalf of the Government. And, therefore, when the Minister of Finance says something like that, he is talking on behalf of the Government.

Mr. H. Partap: Again, the Member does not understand the Act. That is for the Minister of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development to do. There is a difference. The Act does not recognize you! *[Laughter]* That is putting it plain. The Act recognizes the Minister of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development. The Minister has the authority to recommend that the minimum wage be reviewed. The Minister could instruct the board to meet and recommend the minimum wage. The Minister has that authority, and the board would then take a number of matters into consideration.

In fact, if the board takes everything into consideration, the minimum wage would be more than \$9 an hour. I am sure they would do that. But the Government is not giving them a chance. The Government is doing the same thing that it did in Tobago—that is to ask them to discontinue the case against the fishermen. You are usurping the Director of Public Prosecutions position. That is wrong! You must not do that.

Mr. Speaker, when the UNC administration implemented the National

Minimum Wage, we began a reengineering of the Ministry of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development to strengthen its monitoring and enforcement unit. That is what we did. That was in 2000 and 2001. When we left office in 2001, the minimum wage was in operation. There were two Labour Inspectors II and 11 Labour Inspectors I in that division. That was in 2001. In the 2005 estimate of expenditure, the establishment still has two Labour Inspectors II and 11 Labour Inspectors I. Are we surprised then that 20 per cent of the low-paid workers in this country are not being paid the minimum wage? Are we surprised? We cannot be surprised.

Mr. Speaker, what is even more amusing is that in 2005 Draft Estimates for the Development Programme, the Ministry is now spending \$525,000 on a topic called: Enhancement of Labour Inspection Functions. That is exactly what we were doing in 2001, when the then President had moved us because of spiritual and moral values. *[Interruption]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. H. Partap: I am wondering if the Member is referring to the Member for Diego Martin West. So, for the three years that the Government has been in office, the complement of Labour Inspection Officers remained the same as it had been since 2001, even though the Labour Inspection Unit had increased responsibility. They have to now look at the minimum wage, the maternity benefits protection and terms and conditions of those areas where workers are not unionized. The Minister of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development should wake up. The Minister may be very tired but he should get some rest and get the work done. Help the poor people! That is what the Gladiator is asking you all to do.

Mr. Speaker, I want to raise some questions about the Commonwealth Caribbean Seasonal Agricultural Workers Programme in which some of our agricultural workers are employed on farms in Canada. That programme was seriously undermined by an incident involving a handpicked politically appointed labour attaché at the Labour Liaison Office in Toronto.

6.25 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, the labour attaché was a defeated PNM candidate for Couva South—"he brave boy". My information is—and I verily believe—that he was involved in a questionable transaction which compromised the labour liaison office in Toronto and, by extension, the farm programme. The incident was so serious that the Chief Manpower Officer, Mrs. Elizabeth Sealy, was forced to

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make a hurried trip to Toronto to deal with the matter. It also forced our High Commissioner in Canada, Mr. Arnold Piggott, to engage in diplomatic semantics to keep the issue under wraps. The High Commissioner's visit to Toronto was given a public relations twist—so common with the PNM—they made it appear that he was visiting the farms for the first time.

Mr. Speaker, that is quite true, because since 1976, when the programme was established, no minister had ever gone there. He found it necessary to go, but that was the cover; that was the cloak. The PNM spin doctors went to work and supplied the three daily newspapers with photographs of Mr. Piggott meeting farmhands in Canada. The newspapers very obediently carried the story and assisted, unknowingly, in the cover-up of this situation that developed in the liaison office in Toronto.

For the six years we were in office, we suppressed the appointment of labour attachés, because we felt they were an unnecessary imposition on the taxpayers of this country. They were, really, perks for those people who served the party well and we felt that had no place in government. We suppressed it. As soon as these people came back into office, they wanted to find jobs for every Tom, Dick and Harry in the PNM, so they reopened the matter, and now you have labour attachés, even in London.

Mr. Hinds: Otherwise you would complain of unemployment.

Mr. H. Partap: I call on the hon. Minister of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development to make a statement on this matter, to give the public the nature of that incident and to explain why that labour attaché is still in employment in Canada. The hon. Minister must also tell this country if the post of clerical officer is being created in the labour liaison office in Toronto to facilitate the wife of the labour liaison officer there, who is a close relative of a PNM operative. The Minister has some answers to give.

Mr. Speaker, that matter was taken retroactively to Cabinet on September 27 of this year and they all validated it. [*Laughter*] The woman has been in the office for two years now, operating without approval.

Mr. Manning: If we validated it, what is the problem?

Mr. H. Partap: The Minister must also explain why the liaison officer, who should be in the range of Foreign Service Officer I, is paying himself as a Foreign Service Officer II out of the workers' cess? The Trinidad and Tobago farm workers in Canada pay a cess. [*Interruption*]

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

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

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. H. Partap: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank my colleagues for the extension. I will not be long.

While the Minister of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development is investigating these things, he must also investigate why that same liaison officer is not paying the usual 10 per cent of his salary for the use of an official residence in Canada. [*Crosstalk*] A word to the wise.

Mr. Speaker, I want to hurry on now. I want to deal with the promise by the Government to establish a development bank so that the cooperative sector could draw down on this bank. I want to read what the hon. Minister of Finance said in the 2003 budget about this very thing, but I do not want to run out of time. Page 13 of the 2003 budget states that they wanted to establish a credit union development bank. I warned then, as I warn now, that the experiences of the ill-fated Cooperative Development Bank must not be lost to us.

The Cooperative Development Bank had the same ideals as those promoted by the Minister of Finance, but nobody cared. Loans were issued, but not documented, like what is happening now in NEDCO. The bank had no legal recourse when borrowers defaulted. It was a cash cow for friends and families of the PNM. It failed miserably and, as a result, many credit union members lost their life savings, because of the financial mismanagement and sluggishness of the PNM government to protect poor people's business, at that time. I urge great care in dealing with this matter. Please do not subject our credit unions to any further problems.

I want to look now at an issue in my constituency: The PNM Government continues to be a colossal failure in agriculture. Agriculture has fallen victim to PNM propaganda and public relations. I am not seeing the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources this evening. I never thought the day would come when I would see that Minister, the Member for Arouca North, featured in a full-coloured newspaper advertisement turning on a water pump somewhere in Wallerfield. That advertisement ran at \$8,000 a day for several days.

Hon. Member: It cost more than the pump.

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Mr. H. Partap: Yes, it cost more than the pump, but he wanted to see his picture in the newspapers. [*Laughter*] That is why he could not pay the farmers in Oropouche their money. He had to pay to see himself in the newspapers, so he paid them \$41, \$47 and \$50 for crop damage worth thousands of dollars. [*Crosstalk*] But he paid \$8,000 to see himself in the newspapers for several days; that was his priority. [*Interruption*] It would have been about five days in three newspapers; that is a lot of money, but I do not blame the Minister.

Mr. Manning: Why?

Mr. H. Partap: Nearly every day in the newspapers you see full-page ads with the Minister of Education. Of course, she is a charming woman, very nice, very photogenic.

Dr. Rowley: How would you know?

Mr. H. Partap: “Look, doh interfere in my business.” [*Laughter*]

The spin doctors in the Ministry of Education are running that Ministry in the newspapers and the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources is trying that now. I want to tell him that he should have a second thought about it. Why did he not use that money to pay the farmers their compensation in Plum Mitan and Cascadoux? The Ministry owes them for flood damage done in April this year. Pay the people their money! How does he expect agriculture to make a significant impact on the development of this country, if he does not spend money?

I heard the Minister announce that he would be spending \$50 million to develop Plum Mitan and Oropouche. I will talk for Plum Mitan; the Member for Oropouche will talk for Oropouche. I guess when he spoke about Plum Mitan, he was thinking about the 1,200 acres in the block A of the Nariva Swamp that he is able to cultivate—not where the rice farmers were; they were in the wrong area.

I know the Minister is not here, but I want to tell him that if he has to convert block A into the food basket that he promised, there are a number of infrastructural works that must be done. I want to tell him that it was the PNM that destroyed the water management in the Nariva Swamp. I do not know if you remember that brave soul, Victor Bryan, who brought in some Germans and they did the water management. It was all Victor Bryan. It has collapsed now, because of lack of maintenance and so, it is of no use to the farmers. If the Minister is going to make this area a breadbasket there are several things to be done. He has to regularize land tenure. We started it when we were in office, and you have to continue. For three years you did nothing; please get on with the work.

You have to concentrate on water management and provide other basic infrastructural works like access roads, the dredging of the three main rivers, placement of sluice and water control gates, the de-silting within the blocks, the building of bridges to interconnect the blocks, the proper functioning of a water pump to regulate one of the rivers and the establishment of, at least, four agriculture gangs in the swamp, so they can do the maintenance work.

Mr. Bereaux: What is the name of the river?

Mr. H. Partap: The river is called the Perimetre Cut River.

Arrangements must also be made for subsidies for chemicals, tools and machinery and you must provide a guaranteed market and help in the agro processing facilities for the farmers. If you do the things that I have mentioned—
[*Interruption*]

Mr. Ramnath: You will vote for them. [*Laughter*]

Mr. H. Partap: That and God face they will not see. If you do these 11 things that I have pointed out, then I will realize that you are serious and you are not only on a public relations gimmick. Mr. Minister, when you are coming there, do not come with any cameras; we do not want cameras. We want excavators and dredgers. [*Laughter*] Do not come with any set of newspaper reporters and so on. Mr. Minister, we want gangs to do the maintenance inside there.

Mr. Speaker, I cannot end my contribution this evening unless I make another plea for the Government to take the necessary steps to carry out the testing of the site of the Biche High School for toxic fumes, to rehabilitate the slopes surrounding the structure and to open the school. [*Desk thumping*] The PNM has taken this falsehood of poisonous gas and toxic fumes to ridiculous limits. Today, the Member for Diego Martin West will be paying for that, for the glibness of his tongue. I will stay there for the time-being.

They have made false claims that the building would collapse and the hill would blow up. It is now about four years since this state-of-the-art structure was abandoned and the spite and malicious attacks against the children of Biche continues. The children of Biche continue to travel 10 miles to Manzanilla and 17 miles to Sangre Grande and Rio Claro for secondary education, while a school, built for them by the UNC, stands in splendid isolation on the hill; built when the Member for Siparia and the Member for Tabaquite were former Ministers of Education.

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Last month, the Ministry of Education assigned four children from Biche to the Matura High School in Toco, 32 miles from their homes. These children will have to change taxis twice and they leave home at 5 o'clock in the morning in order to reach to school.

They should not have to fight for a transfer, and the scandalous thing was when they went to the Ministry of Education's office in Sangre Grande, the senior inspector of schools said to the parents: "Let them get up early in the morning, dey young." Let them get up and go to school. That heartless, senior inspector of schools, she could not have been taking instructions from the Minister of Education. I am sure she is much more cultured than that.

In fact, I wrote the Minister of Education when that happened and thankfully, she instructed that the children be brought to a school nearer home. [*Desk thumping*] "Doh clap yet, wait leh meh finish first and then see if you will still clap."

Mr. Speaker, only three children were able to get to a school nearer to Sangre Grande. One of them could not get a transfer, and the parents could not afford to pay the money and that child is at home. So that one child who you said should not be left behind was left behind. [*Desk thumping*] She was denied a secondary education by this spiteful PNM Government. Clearly, the PNM does not care if children are left behind, as long as they can continue their spite and vindictiveness. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member for Laventille East/Morvant and the Member for Baratavia, if you all wish to converse, the tea room is right down the corridor. Please let the Member make his contribution in peace.

Mr. H. Partap: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Let me tell you how our children in Biche are suffering for a secondary school education, and I hope that the Minister with his new heart will open the school. [*Laughter*] That was not a joke, I am serious, dead serious.

Mr. Speaker, last Monday, the bus to take the children to Manzanilla broke down and the children could not go to school, so they lost one day of school. That should be of some concern to you. "Leh meh hear yuh clap now."

What greater spite towards innocent children? As the Member for Laventille East/Morvant would say: God Almighty does not like ugly things. Jesus Christ had admonished his disciples when they were standing in the way of children, and I quote. He said:

“It is better for him that a millstone were hung about his neck and he were cast into the sea.”

Harsh words from the Lord Jesus Christ. Please, Mr. Prime Minister, get the thing done, get what you have to do, done, and open the school in Biche

Mr. Speaker, finally, this Government really does not care about children. I have written to the Ministry of Works and Transport in the eastern area requesting that a pavement be built along the Cunapo Southern Main Road in Coalmine to facilitate hundreds of children attending the Swaha College. I never thought I would even have to write for that. Why do these poor children have to fight with traffic on that short stretch to get to and from school?

Mr. Minister, I am asking you again when you go to your office tomorrow, order that a pavement be constructed. I call on you to do that before any of the children who attend the Swaha College—and of course, you know that college was established by the UNC. It was one of the six secondary schools which the UNC built in Nariva and which the Member for Diego Martin East thought were built for “douens” and parrots. He never thought anything good could come from rural areas.

Mr. Speaker, as I make this plea I end my contribution.

Mr. Hedwige Bereaux (*La Brea*): Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure, no small degree of satisfaction and indeed quite a sense of elation and achievement and vindication that I rise today, the Member of Parliament for the constituency of La Brea and a proud Member of the PNM’s parliamentary team to make my contribution in this debate on the Bill to provide for the services of Trinidad and Tobago for the financial year ending the 30th day of September, 2005.

However, before I embark on the meat of my contribution, I digress temporarily to congratulate the hon. Prime Minister and Minister of Finance on the delivery and spearheading of what must, indeed, be recorded as a stellar performance, a landmark budget statement and one which will go down in the annals of the history of Trinidad and Tobago as a budget statement which can best be characterized as setting the stage for the country’s major leap forward to becoming a developed country by 2020. [*Desk thumping*] I believe that if we continue steadfastly along the path upon which this budget has set us, that pinnacle which we seek will be achieved well before the target date.

Indeed, Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate each of the hon. Ministers who have spoken before: the Minister of Housing, the Minister of Legal Affairs, the

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Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs and the distinguished Minister of Works and Transport and Member of Parliament for Ortoire/Mayaro. Whereby their contributions have identified—I could not have left out the hon. Minister of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education. [*Desk thumping*]

They have identified how the work in their ministries and the plans for the new fiscal year fit into the mosaic of progress and opportunity which the PNM Government has designed for Trinidad and Tobago. I guarantee you, Mr. Speaker, that more of the same would be provided as this budget debate progresses so that by the time we are completed, those pseudo analysts who, year after year talk about more information without reading the budget documents and the estimates would be satisfied. In any event, we welcome criticisms. It is one of the hallmarks of a free society.

We are committed not only to making Trinidad and Tobago a quality nation but also to keeping it free. I will now direct my comments to some of the criticisms levelled at the Government by the contributors on the other side. [*Interruption*]

Since you have interfered with me, I look at the empty seat of the Member for Nariva and he will always get himself into trouble. When I looked at him I thought about John Agitation—it is joke he was making. I want to correct him to say that the Credit Union Bank or the Co-operative Bank had nothing to do with the Government of Trinidad and Tobago.

Secondly, when he spoke about the PNM having no concern for agriculture, I wonder. The Member for Nariva comes from an agricultural area, he was a Minister in the UNC Government and he came here today with a long list of things he needed for his constituency. Apparently, his colleagues in the UNC have no respect for him, his colleagues in the Cabinet had no concern for him. I am not a Member of the Cabinet, but you see how well La Brea is treated? [*Desk thumping*] I would get to that later. That is the strength of the People's National Movement and the unity of the parliamentary team. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: Order!

Mr. H. Breaux: Hon. Member for Couva South, if you want to interrupt me I have no problem, you can do it any time, you have no need to stay in your seat and talk to me. Any time you want to interrupt me, I will willingly give way; that is my style.

Mr. Ramnath: My apologies.

Mr. H. Breaux: Mr. Speaker, I want to deal first with the contribution of the

distinguished Member and Leader of the Opposition, the hon. Member for Couva North. He started off by saying central and south have been flooding for years—he was referring to the hon. Prime Minister—“how come he has only decided to visit now?”

I want to remind this honourable House that when central flooded—and I recall it because it was the first time in 50 years that that area in Montrose had ever flooded—the hon. Member for Couva North who was then the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, flew over in a helicopter on his way to Tobago to play golf with his newly found friends in the parasitic oligarchy whereas the Member for San Fernando East, then Leader of the Opposition, and the hon. Jarette Narine were in central.

6.55 p.m.

In fact, relatives of mine called me at home to tell me that the Members were there moving around and talking to people. So he must not concern himself. I know what his worry is. But the Member for Caroni East is not concerned. He was worried about the reception which the hon. Prime Minister received when he went to Kelly Village. But I know the Member for Caroni East is not concerned. He does not have to show them that he is strong; he can stand up for three hours, because there is no threat to his standing in his constituency, or any other place.

There are several statements that were made, or several commentators on this budget also spoke about the dependency syndrome. The hon. distinguished Leader of the Opposition also spoke about that. But I want once and for all to make this statement in this honourable House. The resources of the country belong to all of us; all Members of this House and all citizens of Trinidad and Tobago. They are all entitled to some of the oil revenues. There are those of us who are able, because we might have received Government scholarships, free secondary, free university education, or our parents may have had some money, we could better access the largesse in the country. There are some who cannot and our business as a Government—and that is part of why we would always be here for longer than the Opposition, because we think about the poor people outside, those who cannot access—have to ensure that they get a share of what is correctly theirs.

So whenever the People’s National Movement Government comes here and passes laws and puts programmes in place to give the poor people something, you must not talk about dependency syndrome, because a number of persons who stand on the outside and talk about dependency syndrome, what happens to them

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is, they are able to access Government contracts; they make money and they benefit from the oil revenues and they would like to see the poor who are unable to benefit or unable to access those revenues—they want to hear about the trickle-down effect. But the trickle-down money is taking too long to reach the poor people so we have to give it directly.

A number of persons got up here and spoke about building companies and competitive edge in companies. For 20 years and more the poultry industry and those people who control it, that cartel, have been benefiting not only from the protection of 86 per cent surcharge, but from the protection of customs duty, and immediately they decide, as though they are entitled; they have a licence to make money—but when the Government of Trinidad and Tobago decides that we will now ensure that the poor people—that all of us, in fact—get poultry at a reasonable price, they say, no, we should leave the surcharge on so that they could continue making money.

If for 20-plus years they have been receiving the protection of the surcharge, do you not think by now they should be able to compete properly? That is not dependency syndrome? It is only when poor people are getting something from the State they are talking about dependency syndrome.

Let me go further. A number of the areas where we have our social programmes do not only give people money, we teach them things. We are training them. I know of a number of persons who have been in the GAP (Geriatric Adolescent Partnership) Programme. Of course, they got some money. But they graduate to other things. Some of them are now working in the hospitals; they are working in Homes for the aged. When I hear people talk against the On-The-Job Training Programme (OJT), I get seriously upset because look at what happens. When young persons leave school and have completed their O'levels and sometimes A'levels, they start to apply for jobs and what they find is, everywhere they apply as young persons, they are asked: "What is your experience?" So if their parents do not have a business or their parents do not know somebody who could take them in, they do not get the jobs and they do not get an opportunity to ever get the experience that they need to get the job. It is a vicious cycle.

Well, the PNM Government had an On-the-Job Training Programme for young persons and we knew it worked well. We brought it in again and there are thousands who have benefited. I know, because I have an OJT trainee in my legal chambers and I know that the last one I had is now employed somewhere else and doing good work. And there is one more, and when that one has finished, I will take another one.

Dr. Moonilal: In your legal chamber?

Mr. H. Bereaux: Yes, in my legal office. And believe me, those young people work hard.

But as you talk about your consultancy, let me ask you a question. I will sit so you can answer me. That gentlemen from NEDCO who you said was fired by NEDCO, I understand you are providing consultancy to him. Do you believe what he has told you?

Dr. Moonilal: May I use the opportunity, at your invitation, to invite you to the Industrial Court on Monday at 1.30? You will hear for yourself my belief.

Mr. H. Bereaux: I assume that you believe what he has told you and, therefore, I will deal with that subsequently.

Let me go on. I do not want you to take any of my time. I have a lot of things to say. For instance, this budget underscores the Government's commitment to the long-term goal of making Trinidad and Tobago a developed nation and it sets out to create an environment where we can progress towards developed nation status, but in the meantime enjoy an enhanced quality of life in the process. We are not going to enjoy developed nation status in 2020. We are going to enjoy it along the way; increased education; increased health; better health conditions; better housing conditions; better infrastructure, comparable to the highest standards obtained in modern societies.

You would see that the common thread running through the entire budget statement is an attempt to lay the foundation for promoting it: high levels of economic growth; eradication of poverty and improving the quality of life through social development and modernizing of the infrastructure; increasing the competitiveness and expanding and deepening it with the use of new technologies and also enhancing public sector efficiency in the delivery of service.

Indeed, in some instances the plan appears to be so finely tuned that the budget statement is able to identify the actual year in which certain improvements will obtain. For example, in 2006, we know that we will see new standards of health care; in 2007, we know that we will have a 750 kv power plant in La Brea; in 2008, we know that we will have a smelter plant in La Brea. In addition to that we will have free tertiary education in Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] In 2010, we would have a steel smelter; in 2012 you are looking at the light mass transit system, and in 2015, 60 per cent of the population will be graduating from tertiary education. And those who do not understand what that means, they talk

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about education on the one hand and they do not understand the size of the quantum leap we are going to be making, because education, as we all know, is the only escape from poverty. By 2010, we will have universal pre-school education.

Nowhere is this work of the PNM more manifested than in the constituency of La Brea. But, you see, they say those who do not remember the past cannot interpret the present and have difficulty in having a vision for the future. Therefore, I want to go on to one other point today, and that is why I asked the hon. Member for Oropouche whether he believed the statement made by the words of that gentlemen whom he is representing in the Industrial Court.

Dr. Moonilal: What do you believe?

Mr. H. Béréaux: I believe what he told me. I do not know what he said to you.

Dr. Moonilal: I believe what he told me.

Mr. Béréaux: All right, well, fine.

You see, Mr. Speaker, in 1995 as a result of an initiative by the People's National Movement Government, the Labidco Estate had begun and we had Farmland MissChem there in LABIDCO with a favourable gas price in order to build a chemical plant. Ninety-four bore holes were drilled and then, according to a promise made by one of the colleagues of the Members opposite, even after the hon. Prime Minister then—I hope he will never be again—came and turned the sod, they stopped the plant and sent it elsewhere.

7.10 p.m.

When that same gentleman, I would not call his name—[*Interruption*] When that same gentleman whose name I will now call, Stanley Ryan, defeated candidate for La Brea—they sent him to try to win La Brea to fool people—they made him a backdoor senator. At least at that time, his heart was in the right place. He asked for things for La Brea and the distinguished Member for Couva North, distinguished only by his hate, said—it is reported and printed. Ryan is the man who reported it. I respect this House too much to use the “A” words and the “N” words that he used. [*Interruption*] In a gist he said, “Let La Brea people ketch hell. They voted for PNM.” [*Interruption*] Ryan reported it. Ryan did it. I was not there.

He proceeded to cut every programme in the constituency of La Brea. However, election came and the hon. Member for San Fernando East, hon. Prime Minister and leader of the People's National Movement, came to Majouba in La

Brea. He told them that whenever the PNM returned to power, "I would change the landscape and make this place a rebirth of the industrial town that it was before." I am proud to say today that this is a good day. It is a day that I would always remember. Today is good and budget day was even better. The reading of the budget statement was even better.

[*Interruption*] Hon. Member for Oropouche, you had an opportunity to speak and I did not interrupt you. If you would like me to attack you I will. I can do it. I am not in that. I came here to speak about my constituency. I am trying to get you to be quiet.

Mr. Ramnath: You are not in the Chair today.

Mr. H. Bereaux: You do not worry about when I am in the Chair. You would not have any problem when I am in the Chair.

I am proud now to be here today to express this and to remind Trinidad and Tobago of the vindictiveness of those people on the other side. They stopped every programme in La Brea to bribe them to get things, but it did not work. You heard some of the things in the budget. The Palo Seco School was burnt down and in no time 16 classrooms were built over two and a half months. It is a three storey building. We built the Palo Seco Primary School. As soon as the PNM came into power we turned the sod for the Vessigny High School. It was built and occupied.

In addition to that, the Palo Seco Secondary School for 850 students is being started. That is PNM on one side. That was not in the plan you had. It is here now. We put it in. There is the road to Erin, opening up the lands.

What do I say about La Brea? This is like the siglo de oro of La Brea. The golden age! Do you know what got me? The hon. Member for Couva North came and started to read something from the Inter American Development Bank (IADB) and said that somebody told him about platforms we dragged from the Gulf Coast to Trinidad. This is what I do not like. You do not help him to prepare his document? He did not know that a platform was already built by DAMUS and some foreign companies for BHP Billiton and another is being built in La Brea? La Brea Industrial Development Company Limited (LABIDCO) is filled with people who are here and others are coming in.

We have Union Estate with power plant, smelter and a number of other plants that are growing. The beauty about that is that this development is coming at a time when the People's National Movement has done the first thing. We have made technical education in San Fernando Technical Institute, Point Fortin and

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John Donaldson Technical Institute, free. We have gone back to PNM principles. We had it free and then you came and made people start to pay and downgraded it. We put it back free.

Hon. Member: Freeness. Freeness.

Mr. H. Beraux: It is our oil money. It did not come from anywhere else. It is not the preserve of any one class or group. That is it! It is free and by being free, the young people of La Brea, south and its environs, Debe and Penal, too—we are not leaving out anybody—would be able to aspire to hold jobs in the industry because they would get training. It is not how much money you have. It is the desire to be trained that would correct that.

Dr. Khan: Why are you pointing at me?

Mr. H. Beraux: I am always proud of you. Although I did not teach you, I was a teacher when you went to school. I am proud when I see you. I am proud of you. I was there when you were going to school. I will not make any attack on you.

All these various developments are coming at a time when the young people in La Brea, Palo Seco, Santa Flora and Point Fortin can say, there are jobs they can have and they know where to get the training. I am not bound to have any money to get it. All I need to have is the desire and will to work hard. Therein lies the strength of the budget; the underpinning and foundation for the 2020 vision.

You talk about health facilities in Point Fortin. I do not want to steal the thunder of the Member for Point Fortin. You know that La Brea and Point Fortin are one. We have the Point Fortin Hospital, housing and a number of things. I would not go there. I would leave that for the hon. Member. They tried to damage La Brea, but when God is on your side, do not care who is against you, you would win. I have come here today to see the hon. Member for Couva North. As we say, he tried to stop it. He stopped it for a while, but La Brea has arisen and will rise.

The hon. Member for Oropouche asked the hon. Prime Minister: What would be your legacy? Let me tell you what would be his legacy. His legacy would be many and varied. At least he would be able to say that he was the person who was the architect of the industrial development of La Brea and the south west.

Mr. Singh: I am very interested in this industrialization concept. Is there any part of that concept that requires the dedicated supply of water for that particular part of the area? To conduit water there with the St. Patrick water supply having failed in the context of the empty pipe line, will there be a dedicated water supply?

Mr. H. Bureaux: Definitely. There would be. The hon. Minister of Public Utilities will be pleased to address that. I do not want to move into that.

Let me tell you something and maybe the hon. Member for Couva South has not told you. I used to be the Divisional Manager Legal of Petrotrin and before that, the legal advisor and company secretary of Trintopec and in the oil fields. If you do not know, there is so much water that they drill and use for steam injection, that all that could be siphoned. I do not want to get into that. I did not come here to talk about that; I came to deal with certain things.

Hon. Member: For 38 years PNM ruled La Brea and they did nothing.

Mr. H. Bereaux: Do not worry. I did not represent it for 38 years. We are now doing it. That is the level of commitment of this parliamentary team and the influence of the Member! [*Desk thumping*] It is Hedwige Bereaux that they are dealing with.

I want to deal with another vexed question and it is important. Every time the PNM seeks to do something for the underprivileged and persons who are disadvantaged, they talk syndrome. They have tried their best to make CEPEP a bad word and they would not tell you their concern. I would tell you the concern. I have a good friend who was a UNC councillor.

Dr. Khan: Stanley Ryan?

Mr. H. Bereaux: No. He was never a UNC councillor.

He said that after CEPEP started moving, when they went into Rienzi Complex the hon. Leader of the Opposition was so upset, that he looked at them and said, "All of all yuh here and nobody could not think about an idea like that?" [*Laughter*] You could laugh. Let me get to the point. During 2002, when the PNM was in government, they were in the civil disobedience non cooperation mode. Their leader told their supporters not to apply or cooperate with the government and apply for anything they want. When CEPEP was advertised almost all their supporters did not apply. I am not upset with them. At one time, coming as I do from the area I come, I was not pleased with the balance of the contractors.

A question for written answer was asked in this House for the names of all those persons who did not get CEPEP contracts. When I saw the names of the persons who did not get contracts, I realized what had happened. Your supporters did not apply. You could tell me it is "ol' talk" as much as you want. Just like you, I looked at the numbers and names. That is what happened. You misled your

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supporters. That is you. You could do what you want.

The first time I heard people talk about CEPEP, they said that it makes work. I have seen CEPEP people work. I know that they take care of the environment. If the CEPEP people stop working what would happen to the grass?

Mr. Ramnath: Nothing.

Mr. H. Béraux: It would not grow. That is why CEPEP came in. [*Interruption*] Do you want to talk?

7.25 p.m.

They keep saying it is a make-work programme, but the grass will grow and somebody has to cut it. The Community-based Environmental Protection and Enhancement Programme (CEPEP) is cutting it, first-class. [*Desk thumping*]

I live in San Fernando West. I have had that house there since 1986, and there was so much grass across the road, I did not even know there was a concrete drain there. I only found that out when CEPEP came. If you think I am joking, I invite anyone to go to La Brea. I get a lot of talk from Members on the opposite side, from time to time, about people from La Brea who are selling young mangoes and so on. I invite them to go through La Brea and to go through Sobo—Sobo is rivalling Port of Spain and Woodbrook in terms of the way the grass is kept. If you do not have money, I will pay for you to go. [*Interruption*] They should, because the grass is well kept.

There is another element that you do not know. A number of the CEPEP foremen, at least, those that I know, have been sent to the University of the West Indies to do courses in landscaping and some have gone to do small engine repairs at YTEPP.

I know of six CEPEP contractors, there may be others, some from the constituency of La Brea and Fyzabad, all of those CEPEP contractors, on Saturdays and Sundays, when they have time, do other jobs for people. They are not just waiting on the Government. When we wake up one day, they will be full-fledged contractors in their own right. There is one who is doing massive farming in Boodoosingh.

When people say that CEPEP is not sustainable work, it appears to me that they have no concern for the environment or health. If we think like them we would leave the grass to grow; to let the water collect and then we would have to deal

with dengue. Mr. Speaker, I thought I would get that out of the way.

Mr. Speaker, the way people are talking, they are trying to give the impression that we are supposed to leave out some people. But I am telling you that for every citizen of Trinidad and Tobago who feels happy and comfortable, those of us who have more will feel better. That is what we have to look at.

I now come to the hon. Member for Oropouche, my good friend and distinguished colleague. In making jokes about the budget he said it was an opposition's dream. Well, if this budget is an opposition's dream I say to you, it is a Government's dream, too. It is a beautiful budget: 7.8 per cent unemployment; 22,000 jobs; 6.2 per cent growth; and steady reduction in the public sector debt and a continued, strong foreign reserve position. We like that.

You indicated that you analyzed the figures and in the way expected from a distinguished educator, you were able to put some holes through it. But the only flaw in your argument is that you were unable to tell me that when the UNC showed the same kind of figures what the situation was. Did you or did you not use the numbers? If you had disaggregated those URP jobs and so on, what would the number have been?

Dr. Moonilal: Mr. Speaker, I just want to clarify the point, because I think the Member seriously wants a discussion on it.

I have clarified the point with the Member for Diego Martin Central. When the UNC was in office, the UNC government did not have available to it—There are almost one dozen public make-work programmes that the current Government has. You are correct, in a sense, that in the UNC job-creation programme, you would have had URP as well, but certainly not the numbers that you have now for URP, CEPEP, and the Civilian Conservation Corps, which came back with your Government. The point I am making is that if you would subtract the make-work programmes—your employment level today is 11.2 per cent. Whatever it may have been before today that is the real unemployment level.

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

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

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. H. Bereaux: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I thank hon. Members for agreeing to extend my time but I am not prone to take a long time.

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I have heard what the hon. Member has said and I only want to take this particular issue with him; those are not make-work programmes; you call it that. We are saying that those programmes are two things: first we know about Reaganomics and the trickled-down effects and people would like us to adopt that. We are saying that is taking too long to reach the man at the lowest rung of the ladder. If our Members do not want to say it I will. A number of persons down there are hurting, so we are finding ways to bring it to them. In the process of doing that, however, we are also educating them.

Let us take the HYPE programme: Helping You Prepare for Employment, Mr. Speaker, when you pass through that programme you would not have to go back. When you go in the Geriatric/Adolescent Partnership Programme you would not have to go back. Those persons who sit on *Morning Edition* and so forth and talk, they are far removed from the population.

I sit in my constituency office in Santa Flora every Wednesday when I have an opportunity. I sit in my constituency office in La Brea every Thursday. I see the number of persons that come in, and I know they need help. Mr. Speaker, there was a time when I used to put \$300 in my pocket in \$5 bills because people would beg me and I would give them. [*Interruption*] Yes, that is all I could afford. I do not have to do it now, Mr. Speaker, so I see the effect of the PNM's programme.

Mr. Speaker, when you tell me not to do that, they are damaging people—and people are not stealing. The constituency of La Brea has a low crime rate. People would not beg you for others to see, they will do so [*Member gestures*] and ask you for it, and I give because, thank God, I could afford to. But I do not have to do it now. I stay away from bars now because they want to give me drinks and I cannot take it.

Dr. Moonilal: Thank you very much for giving way, hon. Member for La Brea. Let me say this is what the real spirit of debate should be, to engage each other.

First of all, I must tell you that the people who do not come by you anymore—I now keep \$300 in my pocket on my constituency day. [*Laughter*] I spend about that amount on my constituency day as well, in \$5 or \$10, so it still exists. It probably does not exist in La Brea but it certainly exists in Oropouche.

The point I want to make is that all of us can watch qualitatively and have a sense of what is happening: people are unemployed, people are doing well, people are doing badly and so on, so that you might see one picture, of course, but I am

also seeing another picture and you could understand that.

My second point is, and this is where you can answer if you have the information. If you just take four programmes OJT, HYPE, CEPEP and YTEPP—I have never, in my contributions condemned these programmes, in principle. With respect to these four programmes, do you have any information—based on your position in the Cabinet before and now on the Government Benches—any research, any data that would tell the Government what is the success rate of these programmes by way of getting people into permanent, long-term employment?

As I said, we can see, we have a qualitative sense, I may know one person who was an OJT and now has a job in Ministry of Education, for example. But do we have any study, any data that tell, specifically, over a one-year period or two-year period that 20 per cent of all the OJT personnel who had their training went into the labour market and are now happily employed? That is what I meant and that is what I am calling for.

Mr. H. Bereaux: I really do not know because I do not have the data at hand. I am not saying that it is not available. If it is not available, I agree with you that we should have something qualitative so that we can measure. That is important because in all instances of delivery of services if you cannot measure, not only would you be unable to tell the success of the programme but also you would be unable to tell of persons who were double dipping. So I agree that is something we have to look at.

The honourable and distinguished Leader of the Opposition also made a comment. He did not tell us about the countries he measured Trinidad and Tobago against in the report, but he said Trinidad and Tobago was second to last, or in the penultimate position, except for Mauritius, in terms of over physicians. Well, I do not know if that is so, but I know that we are under-supplied with physicians, and that we had to bring doctors from abroad.

Mr. Speaker, this budget statement has put us on a follow-up to addressing that problem. I just want to read a little from page 21:

“To address the shortage of medical practitioners in the country we shall:

collaborate with the University of the West Indies to expand the medical faculty at Mount Hope to increase the intake of doctors and pharmacists;

pursue the provision of training for our medical students in Jamaica and Grenada;

expand GATE programme to include the cost of accommodation and books

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for all students and extend its applicability to medical studies undertaken in Jamaica and Grenada;”

I know the hon. Minister of Health will deal with that extensively but I just wanted to point out that particular area to you so that we would be sure that we know what is going on.

7.40 p.m.

Sometimes unfortunate things happen. Your leader is prone to attacking. He talks about the People’s National Movement and violence. I am saying to him that it is not a PNM Member of Parliament who wants to beat a police or is charged for murder. Do not bring that stupidity to us. That is an unfortunate statement and, I would not go further on that.

As a matter of education, the Constitution of Trinidad and Tobago does not provide for the separation of powers. What we possibly have is a convergence of powers, but in principle—and I agree, as far as that particular element of the Constitution would permit, we should—I do not like when lawyers try to fool people when they talk about separation of powers. This is a good day and as I said before the PNM is on its route to take Trinidad and Tobago into a brighter future. It appears as though the powers at high are with us and recognizing what we are going to do, have provided us with the revenues to do it. But this belief—and this is the one I want to debunk.

There is a belief where people say that we are lucky that we have natural resources. I want to make it categorically clear, that the benefits which we acquire from natural resources did not come just like that. The natural resources were there a long, long time and it took the brains, it took the ability of people to make sure—there was a time when we were receiving 25 cents per barrel of oil. This is a piece of history. It took a PNM Government in the 1960s, when 70 persons from the Inland Revenue Department were sent abroad to study accounting in Leeds and when they returned to Trinidad and Tobago the oil audit was then formed, and as a result of that, Trinidad and Tobago and Indonesia were the first countries to introduce posted and tax reference prices and that is what brought the oil boom that everybody talks about. It was intelligence training that brought the oil boom and we have done several things in the meantime—all governments have done.

I am not going to say the United National Congress did not do anything. It is unfortunate for you, that you did certain other things that caused Members of your own party to be so disappointed in you that they caused you to implode. But do

not blame us for that. We have been fortunate to be here and believe me, we intend to stay here long and to serve Trinidad and Tobago with distinction.

Thank you.

Dr. Adesh Nanan (*Tabaquite*): Mr. Speaker, I enter the debate on a Bill, an Act to provide for the service of Trinidad and Tobago for the financial year ending on the 30th day of September 2005.

I will confine my contribution to the environment and tourism, but I have to respond to the Member for La Brea with respect to the accusation of nepotism by the UNC government at that time.

I categorically deny as a Member—

Mr. Bereaux: I never accused them of nepotism. I said they did not do anything for me. Nepotism is a different thing—neglect maybe, but not nepotism.

Dr. A. Nanan: For the record, there was no nepotism because I can go from Diego Martin Central all the way to Point Fortin and list every single Member here this evening but I would not do that because it would take up a major part of my contribution. But in terms of the delivery of services—[*Interruption*] I can go directly to La Brea with one item, and that is the restoration of the Vessigny Beach. When I was Minister of Tourism we had an Adopt-the-Beach Programme and page 10, it identifies specific areas for commercial expansion including yachting and merchant marine—a very laudable objective. But when I looked through the documents that were given to us, I did not see any revenue-raising measures. In the *Draft Estimates of Revenue for the Financial Year 2005*, on page 11 under the heading Director Maritime Services, Ministry of Works and Transport, there is a revenue-raising measure here for registration of ships and the figure in 2004 was \$30,000 and the estimate for 2005 was the same \$30,000.

There is an anomaly here with respect to this particular measure. There is an opportunity for the Government to attract revenue from this particular area. The situation at present with respect to registration of ships—it is better for a shipowner in Trinidad and Tobago to fly the flag of another country than his own country. And why is that so? If a shipowner flies the flag of Trinidad and Tobago and requires spare parts for that particular ship, the taxes are very heavy. Taxes are prohibitive. However, if that ship flies the flag of, let us say, the island of St. Vincent, taxes are minimal or almost negligible, nil.

We have an opportunity here to capture that market. That market can be captured with respect to giving incentives for locals to own ships and to be able to

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fly the flag of their own country. When you see a figure of \$30,000, you see a small amount for registration fee taking place within your own country. That is a definite area as the Government looks to go into merchant marine expansion, where the Government can generate revenue.

Mr. Speaker, I want to make reference to an Act, called the Droghers Act—Mr. Speaker, you seem familiar with the Act. Droghers Act, Chap. 50:07—this is Act No. 41 of 1914, which was amended in 1921 and then further amended in 1964. The amendment in 1964 shows quite clearly that this Act has been reviewed. What is important about this Droghers Act, at page 11 in the *Draft Estimates of Revenue for the Financial Year 2005*, there is an area under the Ministry of Works and Transport called droghers. The actual collection in 2004 was \$120,000 and the estimate for 2005 is \$100,000.

Mr. Speaker, again, there is a situation where there is need for an amendment to this Droghers Act. It has to be brought into 21st Century thinking and what is a Droghers Act.

In the old English system, there were boats which carried gravel and bulk cargo around on the high seas. Today, according to the definition in this Act—‘drogher’ means a vessel employed in the lading or unloading of a ship which is to put cargo or freight on board, or in the conveyance of cargo from some part of Trinidad and Tobago to another part. Another situation with respect to this Droghers Act, and what is happening now, is if you are moving from Point Lisas to Hydro-Agri, which is about a mile apart, you have to fill out customs documents. I am not saying that is a bad thing, but it provides a kind of obstacle and it is really a nuisance. I want the Government to look very carefully at this particular piece of legislation, these kinds of punitive measures that are taking place with respect to the movement of ships between ports in Trinidad and Tobago.

The owner, according to the Act, must register the drogher, with the Chief Harbour Master and be issued a certificate for the year. However, whenever a captain travels from one port to another within Trinidad and Tobago, one has to make these entries into books. One has to say what one is carrying, what is the distance to be travelled. Things like that, that can be easily gotten rid of— and I am sure that you agree with that. The other situation with respect to this Droghers Act, it is also limiting the trade between Trinidad and Tobago and I will come back to that particular aspect.

The other area I want to deal with is the Certificate of Competence; another area of revenue earning. We see in 2004, \$135,000 and the estimates for 2005 are

the same \$135,000. Obviously, the person who is preparing the budget document for the Government is just doing line budgeting. You can see that quite clearly, \$135,000 in 2004 and \$135,000 in 2005. It is the same thing with respect to the other areas. It is very easy to transfer it across.

The Government must look at this particular measure to see how it can be a revenue-raising measure. With respect to Certificate of Competence there is an anomaly in this country. With respect to driver's licence there are certain classes that are issued for licensing. It is the same with ships.

Mr. Speaker, under 50 tonnes in this country you can obtain a licence but as you go to 100 tonnes, 150 tonnes, there is no licence for this particular tonnage but one can go to St. Vincent and obtain a licence to operate a ship for over 100 to 150 tonnes. Again, the Government has an opportunity here to introduce this type of licensing for the various classes of ships and to be able to generate revenue from this measure so they would not have to come to the Parliament with \$135,000 in 2004 and \$135,000 in 2005.

The Budget Statement is saying quite clearly they want to use merchant marine for a particular expansion.

7.55 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, with respect to safety certificates, again \$130,000 in 2004 and \$130,000 in 2005. In the contribution of the Member for Diego Martin East, we heard about the university offering marine courses and he talked about high-end training. We have to ask the question: What high-end training? He said he is going to partner with Southampton University for this training.

I was hoping, when I saw the measures in this budget for merchant marine, that we would have seen a conscious effort being made by the Ministry of Works and Transport to take shipping further as we expand the merchant marine industry. What we have to see is the Ministry of Works and Transport identifying a certain classification, but when we look at the Estimates of Expenditure for 2004 and 2005, we are seeing the same number of staff and the same levels of staff. So there is going to be no increase in staff in that particular Ministry in certain areas.

I would like to point out those areas because they are very important. In the Estimates of Expenditure for 2005, Head 43, page 275, there is a Director of Maritime Services, a Deputy Director of Maritime Services and Superintendent Mercantile Marine and an Assistant Superintendent Mercantile Marine in the

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Division of Maritime Services. Then you have another section in that particular Ministry called Surveys and Inspections. There is a Principal Marine Supervisor, a Marine Surveyor (Nautical), a Marine Surveyor (Engineering) and a Marine Surveyor (Small Craft).

In 2004, it was the same Estimates of Expenditure, the same classification and we are seeing, in 2005, that there is no increase in staff. So in terms of merchant marine and the Prime Minister's statement that they would be looking at merchant marine and yachting to increase revenue, we are not seeing, in the documents, what we are looking for in terms of back up for the implementation of this particular statement by the Prime Minister.

As I speak about that statement on merchant marine and yachting, the whole area of marine pollution has to be considered when we are looking at revenue generation. We have to look at the disadvantages of yachting as well as the advantages.

Mr. Speaker, you would have seen, over this active hurricane season, what I call the storm machine—the African coast—a number of hurricanes and tropical waves just whizzing by Trinidad, and Tobago to some extent. I recall tracking that particular hurricane, Hurricane Ivan, on my computer and I was very disappointed with the meteorological services at the time. I will tell you why.

The hurricane came on the Tuesday. The Miami Hurricane Centre, on their website, gave a forecast track of that particular storm. When I looked at the website on Saturday, I saw the track with that Category 3 hurricane, Ivan. In fact, I recognized it from the time it left the African Coast. That is to tell you the kind of technology you can use.

From the time it left the African Coast, Mr. Speaker, based on the Miami Hurricane Centre and the Tropical Atlantic discussion from the Miami Hurricane Centre, based on the troughs and the particular formation, you would have been able to tell it was coming so quickly at that time that you could have predicted that in less than a day it would have moved from a tropical wave to a tropical storm. At that speed at that time, you knew that because of the condition in front of that particular storm heading west that it would have developed into a hurricane before it even came close to the island. A thousand kilometres away you could have predicted that that hurricane was headed our way.

That is why I was disappointed in the meteorological services at the time because when I was tracking that particular storm, I used several websites to make sure that there was no particular congruence with respect to predictions. I warned the country on Monday morning that the storm was coming towards Tobago.

When I did that, they sent out a release on the television stating not to follow websites; that you should stay with your local meteorological services.

I have no problem with that, but you know, Mr. Speaker, that when a storm is being tracked by the Miami Hurricane Centre, from the time it reaches 100 miles from your island, the local meteorological services are supposed to kick in. When that storm on Saturday was coming in, I was able to predict on Monday that the storm would pass very close to Tobago because the forecast was initially on the very edge of Tobago.

I have no problem with the forecasting—if it is going north or south. But let us just say, for that particular area—those few kilometres—at that time it was necessary to warn the country. If you are warning the country with respect to an approaching Category 3 hurricane, it may be very close to the island; but they said nothing. They left the people totally without any kind of forecasting because during the weekend there is no forecasting of weather, so people just end up in a situation where a storm is on their doorstep on Monday and the bulletin came in on Tuesday that it was headed our way.

The meteorological services were very disappointing. They have the capability to utilize the same websites I used to track those storms. I am also disappointed with the National Emergency Management Agency's (NEMA) operations and that is why I am going into the other part of your budget statement with respect to that office of disaster preparedness.

I experienced a situation in my constituency where 76 roofs blew off with a freak storm. Mr. Prime Minister, you would know that there is a National Disaster Plan. Once the Prime Minister declares a national disaster, everything kicks in. I am informing you, Mr. Prime Minister, that not one cent was ever obtained for that particular situation. The situation is that NEMA is not equipped to deal with this particular situation. We have to use our local government bodies and they are starved for funds, so we have to beg hardware stores to get them to supply mattresses. We have to beg for tarpaulins. That is how it is. It is a private sector initiative.

Mr. Speaker, this is very dear to my heart and that is why I am spending so much time on this area. I have a lot to talk about with respect to the other areas. I was in the Cayman Islands one week before the hurricane hit them. The Cayman Islands is a developed country with respect to the kinds of buildings that they have and the building codes they have utilized to construct their buildings. That hurricane was not supposed to hit the Cayman Islands. It was supposed to pass just over the southern tip of Jamaica and north of the Cayman Islands.

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Normally storms would pass north of the Cayman Islands, so most of the houses were concentrated in the south, which is supposed to be the sheltered side of the island. However, when Hurricane Ivan, at Category 4 strength with 200 miles per hour wind gusts passed along the south of the Cayman Islands, it just destroyed the entire south of that island and brought a partial tidal wave across that particular part of the island. I am sure the Prime Minister is aware, because he toured everywhere else, of the potential of a hurricane to destroy an island. We can have all the natural resources; we can have all our oil wells off Manzanilla—I am not even sure that the refinery in Pointe-a-Pierre would have been able to withstand a hurricane of Category 5 strength because of the age of that refinery. We are looking at a tremendous capability for destruction.

The Cayman Islands is 12 miles long and in some parts you can stand on one side and see the sea on both sides. [*Interruption*] Exactly! It is a tremendous disaster potential and that is why when this office was put in the budget, I said, at last, but we have to understand that we have to get the chain of command organized properly.

[MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we can never imagine sustained 200 miles per hour winds. We look at the television in some of the reports and we see a Category 4 hurricane coming in and all we see is a reporter reporting, then the next day we see the destruction caused by that hurricane—200 miles per hour winds, not a leaf on the island and wind has stripped the bark off the trees. That is the kind of destructive power we witnessed.

Normally, when I go to an island, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to be on the seafront. Now, I want to be as far inland as possible because the sea is the most destructive thing when a hurricane is approaching. Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is something to take seriously. That is why our meteorological services must get their act together. There are quite a number of staff if you look at the establishment of the Meteorological Services Division.

I was very disappointed. I asked the Member for Ortoire/Mayaro, the Minister of Works and Transport, about the radar system in Tobago. The reason that the Meteorological Services Division did not have the capability to predict, 100 miles out, is because of a non-functioning radar system. I am sure the Minister is well aware of that. We have no eye; we cannot see. We are operating in the dark, so when they say Vision 2020, we have no vision with respect to a hurricane. We cannot see. We are just operating in the dark.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I speak on the radar, I am reading from page 19 of the *Public Sector Investment Programme 2005*, because I want the Prime Minister to understand what was available and what was projected for Brasso Venado in the Central Range.

8.10 p.m.

“Work progressed satisfactorily on the establishment of weather radar as part of an EU-funded Caribbean Weather Radar Project to facilitate the provision of accurate and timely information on meteorological phenomena. A contract in the sum of \$0.6 million was awarded for the construction of an access road to the Brasso Venado site of the proposed Doppler Digital Weather Radar. Infrastructure work for the local element of the networked radar system for the Caribbean region continued with the installation of a three-phase electricity supply for the facility utilizing \$0.3 million. This project is intended to facilitate the development of an effective and modernized network of Radars in the English-speaking Caribbean to replace non-functioning units in Trinidad and Tobago, Barbados, Belize and Guyana.”

When I read this, I was so happy. What is the reality? We heard the Member for St. Joseph talk about the disconnect with respect to what is presented on the paper. We heard from the Member for Chaguanas, with respect to what is in the documents and what is actually on the ground.

What are the facts? The fact with respect to this particular project—probably they were awarded the contract worth \$600,000. What happened for 2004? Every month, they would take a bucket of gravel up the hill to construct the road. Month after month, they would take a bucket of gravel up the hill to construct the road. *[Interruption]* I do not know about the contract? Eventually, one week ago, a tractor came and graded part of the roadway. What we are seeing in the document is not what is happening on the ground. I do not know if the Minister of Public Utilities and the Environment is aware.

With respect to the other part about the infrastructural work for the local element of the network radar system, there is no three-phase electricity supply established for that facility. The contract was \$300,000. What are we to believe with respect to this particular document and what is on the ground?

The Doppler Digital Weather Radar in the Central Range would be linking with other radar systems along the English-speaking Caribbean. We will be able to have eyes, so to speak. We would be able, with the Doppler Radar to say how much rainfall will be coming with a particular storm, where possible—we do not

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have tornadoes here but we can have possible waterspouts or some whirlwinds in the area—Where are safe areas and where our target areas would be.

What NEMA also did, Mr. Prime Minister, is when they issued the order to stay indoors, they said there were shelters. Where were these shelters? Every single school and community centre was a shelter. I called a friend in Tobago, because I was looking at the satellite picture where the hurricane was going to hit Tobago. It is a very eerie feeling to be watching a storm going to hit Tobago and suddenly it moved north and missed Tobago. I called Tobago to find out what were the conditions on the ground. I was told that the people in that particular area were told to go to the nearest community centre. That was the shelter for that particular area. The shelter that they were sending them to, the beams were rotting. Those shelters could not withstand a 20 miles per hour wind, far less a 30 miles per hour wind. That is the situation.

That is why, when you are setting up an office for disaster preparedness, you have to be able to identify the buildings you would call shelters. You cannot say every single community centre and school. Just imagine they were going to send the people in my constituency back to Brasso Venado. The school is on top of the hill. A projectile could hit that school. When these storms come, they would take up the trees and throw them like missiles.

In fact, I do not want to ramble on, but it is interesting to know. When a 200 miles per hour wind or a lower grade of wind hits a coconut tree, if it does not rip out the tree with the winds, it takes the coconuts off the trees. Those coconuts become missiles or cannon balls. Those coconuts would smash glass. That is what happened in the Cayman Islands. That is the kind of power of winds. It twists metal. You can see it from the Grenada Stadium.

When you issue warnings, you must have identified hurricane shelters. You have to recognize your buildings that can be used as hurricane shelters. You cannot—like the Member for Barataria/San Juan said—send people and then say you have no shelter managers, so it remains closed and you are out in the cold. You have to manage the situation. You are dealing with a population that would be terrified when you issue a bulletin. In fact, normally, the citizens of the islands would not worry, with respect to a tropical storm or hurricane approaching. They have a laissez-faire attitude. When you look at the storms that came before, and the kind of destruction they are seeing over the television, then the majority of the population now becomes sensitized to this type of disaster that is approaching.

We have to manage the situation. We cannot tell everyone to stay at home or they can go to the shelters. These shelters are hopeless.

The Brasso Venado School that the Government identified as a shelter, sits on top of the hill in the Central Range. That would have been the first target if a storm was heading towards the Central Range. You have to plan in advance. You cannot say you would be setting up an office of disaster preparedness and run the same kind of format you are running with NEMA. That is why it is important, in terms of the situation with disaster preparedness.

I am going back to the aspect of shipping and marine pollution. There was a Bill that was brought before the House with respect to the 1973/78 Marpol to deal with marine pollution. As I said before in my contribution, you can use it as a revenue-raising measure. That is why I am introducing it in the budget. The revenue-raising measure would be—let me give you an idea of the kind of garbage that comes from these particular ships. In this budget statement future tourism and trade expansions imperatives target the cruise industry and yachting. The average cruise ship, carrying 1,200 passengers, generates approximately 4,200 kilos of garbage daily. With respect to yachts and other pleasure craft, a yacht carrying four persons will generate eight kilos of garbage per day. However, there is evidence that the operation of marinas in Trinidad and Tobago is currently exempt from adequate regulatory scrutiny and guidelines. Much of the garbage, as well as sewage, are discharged directly into our coastal waters.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, given these circumstances, there is a need to ensure that the available port and municipal waste facilities are adequate to receive, treat and dispose of the quality and quantity originating from commercial and pleasure shipping.

I want the Prime Minister to understand, when he makes reference to yachting in the particular sector and that they would expand the sector for revenue generation, we are seeing right now—because of our luck with respect to the hurricanes—a number of yachts are coming into the sheltered area in Chaguaramas. What I told you is that you have to deal with the problem with respect to sewage and garbage in our coastal waters. That is a revenue-raising measure.

We heard a whole dissertation from the Member for La Brea with respect to SWMCOL and the values of CEPEP. In my opinion, SWMCOL has lost its moorings. It is being driven towards CEPEP but it should be dealing with the national solid waste management. I have no problem with CEPEP as an aside, but their terms of reference include: to manage with respect to national solid waste. SWMCOL is supposed to be

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able to set up a system where they would be able to collect, treat and dispose of this particular waste. That is why, when the Minister of Tourism stands and beats his chest about the arrivals in this country, the more cruise ships we have visiting our ports, the more revenue we can generate, but we have to get our act together.

When I saw in the PSIP, with respect to SWMCOL and what they are going to do, I have to ask the question: “Did they read, understand or see the Prime Minister’s budget statement, or did they know of that particular measure, merchant marine and yachting?” What is happening in SWMCOL? What are they doing? In 2005, according to the document, they are getting ready for preparation of a programme to assess the groundwater quality within the Beetham, Guanapo, Forres Park and closed dump site areas. That is only one part. I would not leave out the other part because it is important.

I know for a fact, with respect to the book, they are going to do a feasibility study with respect to the national solid waste management system. Is that good enough? Will they be dealing with this particular situation, where there is going to be so much garbage coming out of these cruise ships?

As I am dealing with SWMCOL, I also want to deal with the situation in Tobago. On page 55 of the *Public Sector Investment Programme 2005*, it is stated that:

“The sum of \$3.8 million has been allocated for improvements in sea transport in Tobago. The allocation would be utilized to construct jetties at Studley Park, King’s Bay, Delaford, Charlotteville, and Scarborough Small Boats as well as to extend the Scarborough Port.”

When we deal with the jetties in Tobago, what are we dealing with? Are we dealing with small jetties, or are we going to develop Tobago in such a way that Tobago can receive ships from abroad? Tobago is in a peculiar situation. If you look at Trinidad and compare it with Tobago, in terms of territorial waters, we are bounded by Venezuela, Suriname and Guyana on one side. We have to negotiate those treaties with respect to territorial waters. Tobago, on the other hand, is near the northeastern side and more towards the northwest of Barbados, is free. They have their territorial waters. They do not have to negotiate with anyone. What is interesting is that as the ships come in from aboard, they pass through Tobago waters to get to Trinidad. There is a suggestion, as you develop the Port of Scarborough, why not develop the jetty at Studley Park, in terms of being able to attract larger size vessels? At Studley Park, there is the quarry. A lot of the metal coming from Studley Park quarry was used for the ALNG project.

In terms of holistic approaches, rather than piecemeal approaches with the jetties in Tobago, the Government is developing the Scarborough Port and it can develop Studley Park Jetty to an acceptable jetty that can receive large ships coming in and it can also use King's Bay, which is a sheltered bay, to develop another port.

8.25 p.m.

So, there would be ports in Tobago that could attract the ships coming in from abroad. But you may ask the question: How can I go further? I want to throw out the suggestion that the Government of Trinidad and Tobago could tell the Tobago House of Assembly (THA) that they could go into joint ventures with big container companies like P&O and Sealand. So, the THA could have a joint venture with those two shipping companies, and containers could come into Tobago.

What is happening presently—and when the Member for Caroni East spoke about the tonnes of steel in Tobago—I do not want to pun on the word “steal”. The price of half inch steel in Trinidad is \$30, and in Tobago the price is \$41. So, steel in Tobago is at a much higher value than in Trinidad. Why is that so? Let me explain to Members why that is so.

Mr. Speaker, when you order steel from a hardware—let us say Bhagwansingh Hardware—the steel has to leave on a truck to go to the port. The steel then has to be loaded onto a flatbed, and then the steel has to be loaded onto the *MV Panorama* for the Port in Tobago. There is the same kind of system in Tobago and then it has to get to the particular location. That is what sends up the cost of steel in Tobago.

Now, I spoke earlier about the Droghers Act and the limitations in the Act with respect to this particular matter. It is a nuisance. I do not know how many Members are aware that a local shipping owner has to post a bond with customs and that bond is prohibitive. If the Government tackles this obstacle, then it could have people getting involved in shipping between Trinidad and Tobago. A whole new enterprise could evolve, if the Government could just get past that Trinidad and Tobago link. Once the Government could do that and give incentives in this sector, it would be able to encourage our own locals to get involved in shipping, rather than Tobago having to pay \$41 for the price of steel, the steel price may be \$35. Once there is that kind of link rather than having all those different facets to go through to get the steel to Tobago; that is what brings up the cost. In terms of Tobago, that is an area that the Government could look at.

In the Minister's presentation, he said that there is an allowance for the THA to borrow up to \$500 million with the permission of the Minister of Finance. When

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the Minister of Finance was making his contribution to Caricom, it was given as a grant. Why is the Minister putting that extra burden on the THA? In fact, the Government would have to pay back the interest on that loan. Why did the Government not put that \$500 million in the budget, rather than put another burden on the THA? That is just for consideration. [*Interruption*] The Government has \$5.1 billion debt repayment in this budget. I am sure the Member is aware of that matter. What the Government did was to stay within the 4 per cent to 6 per cent range which was the arbitration value.

In fact, if the Government opens up the market, the *MV Panorama* would not have the strain of being back and forth with cargoes when the Government could open the particular sea run to smaller vessels.

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

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

Question put and agreed to.

Dr. A. Nanan: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I still have two other areas that I would really like to get into. With respect to the Maritime Services Division, we saw in the Public Sector Investment Programme (PSIP) the development of the coast guard with respect to planes and boats. The coast guard would play a very important role with respect to the monitoring of marine pollution within our territorial waters. Is the Government looking at the role of the coast guard? When I looked through the budget documents, I did not see anything with respect to scholarships or training initiatives in the budget. Although we are having this particular link with South Hampton, there must be an avenue where scholarships could be offered for persons who are already qualified in the field to go even further. In my contribution, I said that in terms of marine training, the higher levels that you have the better it would be.

I also want to point out to the Government that in its management structure for any marine authority, a mariner must be included—someone with marine experience. PLIPDECO did it, and they are doing quite well, in terms of having that kind of experience within the management structure. The Government should look at that matter when it is looking at the expansion of the merchant marine industry.

I introduced into the debate some interesting topics with respect to revenue-raising measures. I want to go to another area that is dear to my heart, and that is

Chaguaramas. Just for some background information in terms of Chaguaramas, Chaguaramas is a 14,000-acre region. It includes a peninsula with five offshore islands with 3,000 acres relatively flat. There is an intricate system in Chaguaramas because there are mountains—panoramic views from the top of the hills. There is the Chaguaramas National Park in that area and that is unique because it was once part of the South American mainland. So, in terms of diversity of species, it is one of the most unique places in the country.

In fact, if you play golf on the golf course in Tucker Valley, you may encounter a red howler monkey. There are also iguanas on the golf course. So, in terms of the flora and fauna, it is very intricate. When I heard the Government talking about tourism, I was not happy with the piecemeal approach with respect to Chaguaramas. I am sure the Member for Diego Martin Central would recall—if he could clear the cobwebs from his mind—that the main tourism anchor in Trinidad was the Chaguaramas peninsula.

For the Chaguaramas peninsula I saw a budget allocation of \$3.9 million. Now, there is a nine-hole golf course there. When I was the Minister of Tourism, we built the golf club and now I see there is going to be an administration building. The nine-hole golf course was supposed to be upgraded to an 18-hole golf course in the last fiscal year. I want the Minister of Public Utilities and the Environment to understand that the role of the Environmental Management Authority (EMA) is enforcement; the role of the Ministry is implementation.

When I make the contrast, I want to show you that it is unfortunate that under the estimate of expenditure, there is supposed to be an Environmental Engineer, an Ecologist Biologist, an Environmental Economist, a Senior Environmental Planner and a Director of Policy Planning. Mr. Speaker, that particular resource in that Ministry was very important. I want the Member for Arima who is the Minister of Public Utilities and the Environment to understand that this particular Ministry was very important in terms of driving the Solid Waste Management Company Limited (SWMCOL) and the EMA. With this particular lack of staff in that Ministry, the EMA is running loose and SWMCOL is doing its own thing.

In 2001, when we left unfairly, the National Solid Waste Management System was already designed. The Ministry had the cadre of staff that would have been able to come up with that particular design. I am sure the Member for Ortoire/Mayaro would understand that if the Ministry had those technical officers, they would be able to do that because they have the capability to do the ROPs and to be able to go out for tender. We were at that point, and we were going to

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approach the Central Tenders Board to have the National Solid Waste National System go out for tender. That was in 2001. We are now in the budget fiscal year of 2005 and the National Solid Waste System—there was no proposal, no tendering, or anything happening in that Ministry. There is the link between the Solid Waste Management System and this merchant marine expansion and yachting.

Mr. Speaker, not only was that Ministry driving these authorities, but we are seeing the EMA acting as a stumbling block in this country. Now, I have no problem with respect to certificates of environmental clearance. With respect to certificates of environmental clearance, I want to take you back to a question that I asked with respect to that same project in Tobago which the Member for Caroni East brought up in the debate. I would have thought that when that question was asked with respect to the certificates of environmental clearance for that particular project that the Member for Diego Martin West—at least some alarm bells would have rung in his mind, but apparently they did not.

8.40 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, it is my understanding that money was allocated through the Chaguaramas Development Authority (CDA) for the expansion of the golf course to 18 holes, but for the entire year the Environmental Management Authority (EMA) gave the people a runaround; it always wanted something else before it could grant the certificate of environmental clearance. It was never granted and the money was never spent for the expansion of the golf course. I want the Minister to understand that I am aware that these particular projects may not require an environmental impact assessment, but there is a specific time frame in the Act within which the EMA must act, whether it is saying no or yes. You cannot have people running around for a whole year and they cannot get all the money that was allocated to them.

In fiscal year 2005 we are seeing the allocation coming back for the expansion of the golf course. With respect to the Chaguaramas peninsula, it goes further than expanding the golf course in Tucker Valley. I am sure the Member for Diego Martin Central, with all his trade, Caricom and international experience, will recognize not only the potential of the peninsula, but what about the islands off the peninsula? The opportunities for investment in that particular sector include resort and golf tourism in Tucker Valley and eco tourism at Scotland Bay.

Have you ever been to Scotland Bay, Mr. Speaker? It is a lovely secluded area. In fact, people come there from all over the world just to chase butterflies; so you have a kind of magnetic attraction to your country with that particular

natural resource. You could also have up-market/low density tourism on the 985-acre offshore island of Chacachacare. We could even go further, in terms of planning for Chaguaramas. We could go to the south shore where we could have a deep water harbour because, as you would recall, there are distinct deep lanes in Chaguaramas in that particular area, so you can have a turning basin there for cruise ships and a shopping facility. The opportunity for tourism is not only yachting within the peninsula; you also have the expansion of tourism opportunities on land, with respect to the expansion of the golf course and the resort tourism aspect.

Mr. Speaker, tourism and crime are inextricably linked. I have to make mention of travel advisories in this discussion, because it is important. You may be preparing your products within your country for visitors to come in, but you also have to look at how the world views your country. Permit me to read the Australian advisory for Trinidad and Tobago on safety and security:

“Australians in Trinidad and Tobago should be alert to their own security. Violent crimes, including assault, kidnapping and murder have increased. Armed robbery is also prevalent, particularly in the Trinidad capital of Port of Spain and extra care should be taken when travelling from the Piarco Airport. Visitors should, if possible, arrive during daylight hours and should avoid travelling on the Beetham Highway late at night. Taxis should be used when travelling after dark. Petty crimes, including bag snatching, pickpocketing and theft from cars are common, especially in and around tourist attractions and public transport and in larger cities. A number of serious robberies and attacks, including rapes against tourists and foreign nationals, have recently occurred in the Southwest of Tobago. Isolated areas should be avoided, especially at night.”

That is the Australian advisory on Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Speaker, this is the Canadian advisory, the travel report on safety and security:

“Robberies are common, particularly in Port of Spain and other urban areas. Extra care should be taken when travelling from Piarco Airport late at night. Violent crimes, including assault, kidnapping and murder occur. Canadians should avoid Laventille and other known high crime areas. Avoid deserted beaches and unpopulated areas. Tourists are also victims of crime in Tobago and visitors should be vigilant, especially after dark. Robberies with violence, including assault and rape, have increased during the past months.”

Mr. Speaker, the United States advisory on Trinidad and Tobago states:

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“Visitors should exercise normal caution and good judgment when visiting Trinidad and Tobago. The US embassy advises visitors to exercise caution when travelling from Trinidad’s Piarco Airport, especially after dark, because of incidents involving armed robbers trailing arriving passengers from the airport and then accosting them outside the gates of their residences. Violent crimes, including assault, kidnapping and murder, have involved foreign residents and tourists, including US citizens. Since the beginning of 2002, there has been an increase in kidnapping for ransom. While US citizens have not been targeted, at least one American citizen has fallen victim to kidnappers. Burglaries of private residences are common. Robbery is a risk, particularly in urban areas.”

So these are not old travel advisories; these are recent travel advisories on Trinidad and Tobago. It is very important, when you are looking at your tourism market, to be able to control what is happening with these advisories, because if an Australian businessman wants to come to Trinidad and Tobago, it is very easy to go on the website to find out what is happening in Trinidad and Tobago. I urge the Government, as you project tourism as part of your growth pole, that you deal with the crime problem.

We have seen where murders are happening on a regular basis; it is a deterrent to visitors. Somebody raised a point with me and I want to share it with you, Mr. Speaker. The figure for arrivals seems high, but was the fact that people just use the Tobago transport hub to come to Trinidad factored in? There is a new kind of development where people are coming to Trinidad and then going to Tobago to get a cheaper flight.

Mr. Valley: Somebody made that point already.

Dr. A. Nanan: They did? Well, that is fine, because it is a good point that has to be considered with respect to arrivals. So when you are factoring your arrival figure, you have to understand whether you are using arrivals in Tobago as part of your arrival figure for tourists.

Mr. Speaker, I dealt with Chaguaramas and the marine industry.

Mr. Valley: You were comprehensive; you dealt with everything.

Dr. A. Nanan: I have not finished. I want to deal with a few items here and there.

I have made a certain observation, Mr. Speaker: In the draft estimates of the development programme for the financial year 2005 for the Ministry of Local

Government from the Consolidated Fund, the allocation is \$1 million—if I am reading correctly—for reconstruction of local bridges.

I do not want to get into agriculture, but I want to deal with bridges and the importance of having them repaired, not only with respect to the inconvenience to constituents. In the particular area where the bridges are in my constituency, I have a unique situation where one river, within a distance of one kilometre, crosses the road five times; so I have five bridges. They were all wooden bridges in a very dilapidated state. So far one has been repaired, but there are four other wooden bridges that are in a very bad state and can fall apart at any time.

When I see an allocation of \$1 million for bridges, and I presume that will be for the entire country, with respect to the Ministry of Local Government, I have to ask the question: Did the Minister of Local Government get submissions from the various corporations to include in his budget presentation to the Ministry of Finance? Was the Minister of Local Government not able to make proper representation to the Minister of Finance for an allocation? The estimate was \$1.1 million and the revised estimate is \$1.1 million, which means, if we look at it logically, that they spent all the money that was allocated to the ministry. So there is no reason why the Minister of Finance should say, “Well, you got \$1.1 million, we are going to give you \$1 million in 2005, when you spent \$1.1 million before,” if we are going according to this budget.

Mr. Speaker, I am sure the Member for Diego Martin Central is aware that when you are doing line item budgeting, you have to be a little careful, because it is very easy to put the same figure you had last year for this year, just transfer the same value in this year’s budget. I find something very peculiar and I hope it is not some kind of sleight of hand taking place, with respect to the documents: in too many cases I see 100 per cent. There is an allowance for 90 something per cent or 80 per cent, but 100 per cent across the board? If you are fudging, do a little change “nuh”. Oh, gosh! You do not have to put the same thing; change \$1,000, at least; but to put the same thing! When I was looking through the document, I found that happening a little too often, that is why it attracted my mind to that particular kind of line item budgeting and putting up the same figures.

I was dealing with bridges, with respect to local government and the role of agriculture, because the Government is projecting, in this particular budget, fiscal 2005, the growth of agriculture or the use of agriculture as one of the pillars. That particular area is what you call “the breadbasket” of the constituency and, probably, the breadbasket of the nation, because a lot of produce originates from that area and they have the worst bridges and roads. It is an anomaly, because the

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Minister of Works and Transport is using money to fix small roads in all parts of the country. He said it today, that he used a little here and fixed a road in Mayaro and another road that was not a main road.

The Member for Arouca North, the former Minister of Local Government had more roads to repair, in terms of kilometres of roadway, so the allocation has to be higher to make a difference. You cannot go to the Minister or write to him every year and have the Minister tell you, "Well, that was not in the allocation for this year, so I cannot facilitate you; I will wait until the variation of appropriation." Of course, when the variation of appropriation comes, you are not getting any money there.

There is another area I want to deal with, which is the Courland Estate in Tobago that came to the Parliament for \$90 million approval, Member for Diego Martin Central. It was actually \$300,000 per acre for the 300 acres; that was the figure for the particular market value. I ask today: Was that figure too high for the Courland Estate?

8.55 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Local Government needs to focus on the wooden bridges in my constituency. The corporation that deals with the particular areas in my constituency is the Couva/Tabaquite/Talparo Regional Corporation and they told me that the allocation was not in their estimate so the bridge would not be repaired. So the constituents would have to suffer for an entire year because money was not allocated.

It is a very large budget we are talking about, over \$28 billion, so I think we should have had more money in the Ministry of Local Government for local bridges and roads.

Mr. Speaker, I want to deal with another area which is another burning issue; the National Parks and Wildlife Conservation Authority. In 2001, the bills were completed for that park and the legislation drafted to be presented to Parliament. We even went so far as to designate Matura as a national park. So I want the Minister of Public Utilities and the Environment to bring the legislation before Parliament.

We have seen very tardy approaches in that ministry and I am not blaming the Minister, but there are certain key pieces of legislation that need to come forward especially if we are going to deal with yachting and the marine industry. There are the Water Pollution Rules which the Attorney General said was on the agenda and the Air Pollution Rules which the EMA was supposed to have drafted three years

ago; there is also an important one—the Oily and Hazardous Waste Rules. We need to have these pieces of legislation from the ministry.

Imagine a certain amount of money was spent over the last year just to survey two national parks. This tardiness cannot be accepted, there must be a mechanism whereby the ministries would forward the legislation to the Attorney General who would bring it to Parliament.

This particular programme is very dear to my heart because it was developed within the Ministry of the Environment. If I remember correctly, this National Parks and Wildlife Conservation Authority is a \$19 million project which was supposed to have assistance from the Global Environment Funding (GEF) which can only be accessed if you are able to produce a document.

So we are having a situation where we are not accessing the funding. I see in the document that there is an allocation of projected expenditure of \$300,000 for the continuation of development work to establish two national parks at Buccoo Reef and Caroni Swamp.

Mr. Speaker, the Cabinet designated Matura as the first national park, Main Ridge in Tobago was supposed to be another national park and I am not hearing anything about them.

How much time do I have left, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Speaker: Thirty seconds.

Dr. A. Nanan: Thirty seconds? Mr. Speaker, so this particular National Parks and Wildlife Conservation Authority is a concept of the United National Congress. It was developed by the UNC and we are claiming birthright for that programme. I urge the Government not to shelve it because it was developed by the UNC. [*Interruption*] Okay, it was not developed by the UNC, the technocrats in the Ministry came with that project and I would like to see it go forward.

Mr. Speaker, I hope that in this particular contribution I have shown the opportunities to have revenue-generating mechanisms, as well as to get the ministry going and the country in recognizing that the Government is working towards dealing with the pollution in the country.

Thank you.

The Minister of State in the Ministry of Community Development, Culture and Gender Affairs (Hon. Edward Hart): Thank you very much Mr. Speaker, I am sure my friends from Chaguanas and Caroni Central will agree with

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me that it is always difficult to go out and bat and there is nobody in the pavilion.

However, I always consider it an honour and indeed a very special privilege to make my contribution in this honourable House on the occasion of the budget debate.

Mr. Speaker, my pleasure to address this House is rooted in the knowledge that I speak for the “man-in-the-street”, indeed the “small man” with whom a significant part of my life experiences are strongly tied.

Before I proceed with the specifics of the area of my responsibility, I wish to preface my contribution by congratulating the Prime Minister and Minister of Finance for once more placing emphasis on the lives of the poor, the lives of the “have nots”, the lives of the elderly, the lives of the mentally and physically challenged and the lives of the young people of Trinidad and Tobago, our jewels.

My Prime Minister knows the special joy he has brought to my brothers and sisters in the beautiful constituency of Tunapuna and indeed throughout Trinidad and Tobago. I know this because they meet me in the streets and indicate their great satisfaction. I know this because my life story is inextricably linked to the grassroots and indeed the youths of this our beloved nation.

The action of the Prime Minister has shown a major departure from the concept of a trickle down economy to the development of an economy where all people can experience a great sense of equity. The underpinning philosophy is that of a bottom-up approach to the development process.

Mr. Speaker, this budget has given me additional reasons to be proud to be a Member of this side of the House because it is clear that this Government has not lost touch with the common man and it is truly a Government that cares. We care, Mr. Speaker, we really care.

The budget as we see it is the catalyst for further development as we move towards developed status in the Vision 2020 initiative. Every sector of the community has been catered for. Plans for the reduction in crime, the improvement of education, the eradication of poverty and the delivery of quality health care as well as the promotion, preservation and celebration of our culture are included. Nobody could have done it better.

Mr. Speaker, since the reading of the budget I have had the opportunity to listen to the views and comments of some persons who without much thought have passed judgment on the progressive insight of this Government. Their concept of culture seemed to be locked in the traditional thought of performance and edifices to satisfy that need. Some people still believe culture is just calypso,

chutney or steelband—far from it.

My mission is to address this honourable House and enlighten it on matters of culture understood here as defined by UNESCO and I quote:

“...as the sum total of the ways of life, thought, and action, behaviour, belief, customs and values underlying them.”

In other words, I am talking about a system of shared beliefs, values, customs, behaviours and artefacts that the members of a society use to cope with their world and with one another which are transmitted from generation to generation through learning.

Here I am speaking about our artistic expressions, our values, the experiences and behaviours which make us Trinbagonians, our heritage and the way of life which has influenced and will continue to influence us. To be absolutely clear to all, when I speak about culture, I speak about that unique identity of all of us as a people and as a nation united in our diversity.

So when the Prime Minister addresses poverty, he addresses matters related to culture. When the budget seeks to improve the education of our people and reduce the level of crime, here, too, culture is addressed. The narrow myopic vision used to define culture is inadequate as we forge our identity in a global village. So the Prime Minister must be congratulated for the holistic approach used to deal with culture in this year's budget.

On November 10, 2003, the portfolio of the Division of Culture was placed in the Ministry of Community Development, Culture and Gender Affairs. Given the change, the strategic direction of the culture division when it was with the Tourism Ministry shifted and the strategic alignment with the other portfolios is in the final process. The completion of this process will not only position us as the cultural capital of the Caribbean but will allow us to compete successfully in the global village.

The Ministry of Community Development, Culture and Gender Affairs is comprised of many agencies and/or divisions which are responsible for the delivery of culture products and projects of a cultural nature. These include:

- the National Steel Orchestra
- the National Carnival Commission
- the Division of Culture

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- the National Museum and Art Gallery
- Queen's Hall
- Naparima Bowl; and
- The Archaeological Society

Mr. Speaker, I wish at this juncture to highlight some of the achievements of this ministry and to show that under this current administration, culture is not only alive but doing exceptionally well. I will also articulate some of the ways this ministry proposes to take culture forward for the fiscal year 2004/2005.

The Trinidad and Tobago National Steel Orchestra (TTNSO) was established on August 31, 1998 with a complement of 30 players. Their function was basically one of performance. However, the ministry felt that, given the current trends of the global steelband environment, the talents and skills of the players were pathetically underutilized.

9.10 p.m.

In December 2003, a decision was taken to provide these talented pannists with the necessary training to transform them into pan tutors. As a result, the ministry ensured that members of NSO read for associate degrees in Music and Performing Arts at the College of Science, Technology and Applied Arts of Trinidad and Tobago (COSTAATT). To date, 15 pannists have been successful. In addition, for preparation for teaching assignments in Government schools, the ministry has also begun the tooling of pannists at an overall cost of \$678,750 in the areas of:

- Music Education
- Practical Teaching
- Pan in Education
- History of the Steelband
- Steelband Management Studies

The development of steelband today is a science. So pannists can now rest assured that based on this initiative, the opportunity to formalize their skills are now open and the opportunity to pass on to others what we have acquired sometimes by ourselves through hard work and sacrifice, is now possible. For the first time in the history of Trinidad and Tobago pannists can read for a degree and

be accepted to teach and practise his/her craft in a formalized establishment.

I just want to mention that this is a classic example of inter-ministerial collaboration as, no doubt, these young pannists will be absorbed in the Ministry of Education's Pan in Schools initiative. As recent as Monday last, we introduced 16-piece steel orchestras in 50 schools, both primary and secondary. Last week there was a graduation exercise at the Crowne Plaza where 62 students and 28 teachers graduated in pan arranging and drumming. The August vacation was a success story for young, budding pannists. "Birdsong" in Tunapuna had classes for 60 contact hours and 60 students graduated and it was touching to me when these pannists, just in 60 contact hours, were able to perform: "Let There Be Peace On Earth." It was really touching and an appropriate tune at this time.

At Matura, we have a hero in those parts, Geon Ramnarine, who has been working for years with young pannists and he, too, conducted classes with seven schools combined, at the Matura Government School. I was there at the graduation exercise. Again, there were over 50 young children who graduated.

The National Steel Orchestra entertained the youth from John John and they, too, had their experience in music literacy, and so on. Today we have given \$2 million to Pan Trinbago to embark on a pan-tuning course with 100 tuners at different venues: In the East at Sforzata Panyard; in San Fernando at the Hatters Panyard; in Port of Spain at Starlift—and Tobago is not left out—the Hope Pan Groove Pan Theatre. This is to ensure that the art of tuning these instruments continues, because most of our tuners are over 50 years of age at this point in time. Recently one of our famous tuners departed this life, Mr. Leo Coker. We had before him, Mr. Alan Gervais.

So we have these people there doing their courses where they are exposed to music literacy. Long ago there were people tuning pans but they were not music literate. They are now exposed to the history of the steelband, because they should all know that. They are exposed to metallurgy, because right now we have steel drums which contain a lot of lead so the tonal quality is being affected. So they must know how the metal responds to stress and so on. So work is going on at a pace.

During the last fiscal year, the Ministry of Community Development, Culture and Gender Affairs also set about the preliminary work to establish the Trinidad and Tobago Steelband Institute. The function of this institute is to develop pannists and to prepare them for key roles in the industry. Pan is a big industry now. We have pan factories all over the world. As a matter of fact, a tenor pan in Japan now would be about US \$5,000, believe it or not.

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The basic objectives are:

- To develop an institution to service the human resource needs of the steelband movement in Trinidad and Tobago;
- to provide trained persons for roles as pan tutors in schools and in their communities in Trinidad and Tobago;
- to impact on the development of community-based bands in Trinidad and Tobago;
- to expose youths to a range of training and expertise towards the preparation for professional roles in the steelband movement in Trinidad and Tobago; and
- to develop a course of study based primarily on steelband development.

This institute stands as a replacement to the TTNSO which was only a performance-driven organization. Within the institute performance is just one aspect of its function. Mr. Speaker, pan is definitely on the move.

The management and promotion of our carnival is the major focus of the National Carnival Commission, led by Mr. Kenny De Silva. If we are to believe the feedback and the analysis of the performance of the NCC from not only our well-wishers, but also our critics, I have to conclude that for Carnival 2004 the NCC has done exceptionally well. [*Desk thumping*] Carnival was really nice—incident-free. The bands flowed freely through the Savannah. So I must commend them.

We have given this world now about—the latest count was 69—Trini-style carnivals. You name it—Brooklyn, Washington. Even this year Members would be pleased to hear that we had carnival in India. [*Desk thumping*] Some of our artistes went there.

One of the key responsibilities of the NCC is the adjudication of the Dimanche Gras and Parade of the Bands. This year the NCC mounted a series of training programmes in preparation for the manual and digital on-site recording of competitors' scores. A new system of checks and balances was instituted and this allowed for a more scientific approach to the compilation of results. No longer do we have to wait for hours for the judges' decisions. The successes of 2004 would be manifested in greater success and earlier announcements as we move towards greater efficiency in the management of our carnival in 2005. It is going to be better, greater and grander.

The ministry, through the NCC, also completed in timely fashion, the erection

of 160 vendors' booths, an increase of 25 per cent from 2003, along with construction work on the Grand Stand site. The booths cut a beautiful picture around the Savannah. Additional amenities, such as increased toilets and baths were also provided. With respect to infrastructure, we were also able to provide not only greater, but improved access for the differently-abled patrons whose levels of comfort would be further increased next year.

I am also happy to announce that we drastically reduced the erection of illegal structures, which made our vendors extremely happy this year. This financial year we promise to do even better. While the Dimache Gras over the years has been experiencing a decline in attendance, this year, however, through a re-fashioned show, a tighter production, we have been able to turn the decline around and register increased participation by a wider cross-section of the public. This year, we experienced an increase of more than 2,000 paying patrons.

Mr. Speaker, you may be wondering why the excursion into these detailed achievements. This is necessary because there is so much negativity about culture in the media, so much hype, that if the truth is not placed on record, people will start believing that culture is dying—far from it. The public needs to know that NCC supports some 52 regional carnival committees that organize carnival activities in their communities. These committees have increased a much greater participation in carnival both at the community and national level.

Last carnival the regional carnival was launched at Talparo. I journeyed there at the junction and it was a beautiful sight. There were people from neighbouring villages like Brazil, taking part. It was very colourful and everybody had a wonderful time. I particularly enjoyed the stick-fighting.

In 2004, the Ministry of Community Development, Culture and Gender Affairs increased its support to these groups from \$1.3 million to \$1.7 million. In addition, over \$100,000 were spent providing traditional characters for the regional festivals. We have worked hard and brought back things like the “Jab-Jab, Dame Lorainne, Bats”, all these characters.

The transmission of our culture is important to this Government. That is why the NCC conducted over 48 workshops for our school children at a cost of \$800,000. We have also successfully repeated the Carnival Art Project from 2003, whereby the public is given the opportunity to come and view the work of established and new artists and craftsmen working around the theme of carnival in one space for the enjoyment of all.

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To further promote the arts we conducted a two-week Culture and Sports Camp for four institutions, namely:

- St. Dominic's Home
- St. Mary's Children Home

which, to use a term from my friend from Tabaquite, is near and dear to my heart.

- St. Jude's
- Success/Laventille R.C. School

At this workshop the art of costume building and the traditional speech of the "Midnight Robber", along with the finer points of Chess and other board games, were passed on by young instructors and veteran masqueraders. The ministry's thrust is to ensure that these art forms remain alive for generations to come. In so doing, we facilitate the training to our posterity who holds the future of this glorious nation.

Over the last fiscal year, the Carnival Institute of Trinidad and Tobago was re-established in the NCC in January, 2004. Half a million dollars were spent to conduct research on Carnival arts at our various festivals and to document the work of veteran masqueraders, like George Bailey, Harold Saldenah, Neville Aming, and so on, and the authenticity of the costuming of traditional characters. This is in keeping with the ministry's goal to facilitate, promote and preserve the cultural heritage of Trinidad and Tobago.

Throughout the last fiscal year, the ministry also concentrated on the institutional strengthening and restructuring of the NCC which resulted in:

- the improvement of its marketing structure
- the strengthening of the Events Management Unit to ensure more efficient service to clients renting the facilities; and
- the reorganization of the Human Resources function with greater emphasis on the development of policies and procedures to govern our operations.

As a result, the NCC is a more efficient, emotionally intelligent and quality-driven organization which continues to work closely with its major stakeholders in the delivery of its many cultural products. If in the work of the NCC over the last fiscal year, people still ask what is happening to our culture, then something is

radically wrong. Culture is alive and kicking.

The Division of Culture is a governmental agency which is directly responsible for the promotion, preservation and development of the culture of Trinidad and Tobago, and I am happy to say that during the fiscal year 2004, the Division of Culture has not reneged on its duty; we are at work. One of the key roles of the division is the provision of funds for the celebration of national and religious festivals via funding to cultural and community groups.

9.25 p.m.

Over the last fiscal year, the Ministry of Community Development, Culture and Gender Affairs provided in excess of \$3 million for the following festivals: Eid-ul-Fitr, Ramleela and Divali. I take part in Divali. I live in a district with many East Indians. We have Phagwa. I take part in Phagwa with the aber. We have Indian Arrival Day. I am also there bearing in mind that I am a dougla. I take part in Emancipation and Independence. I take part in everything. Funds were also provided for local carnival and festivals such as Point Fortin Borough Day; Arima Fest and St. Peter's Day. This is a festival in Carenage when the steelbands are mandated to play only religious tunes. We also have Laventille Steelband Festival; We Beat; Tunapuna Celebrations and Toco Season.

Via the provision of funding, the Ministry of Community Development, Culture and Gender Affairs ensures that the rich heritage resident in the diverse culture of Trinidad and Tobago is celebrated with equity and fairness.

The ministry also conducted institutional strengthening initiatives with key stakeholders. One such stakeholder was the National Ramleela Council of Trinidad and Tobago. Courses were conducted in wire-bending and drama for the 29 Ramleela groups at a cost of \$40,000. The purpose of these courses was to improve the delivery of the Ramleela plays and the quality of their costumes. I am also there. I have witnessed those plays at times.

The ministry also launched its Cultural Training Programme where courses in specific cultural areas are conducted to allow for further development in the art forms. This forms a critical part of the cultural outreach programme and will continue during the fiscal year 2004/2005. Some of the areas identified are dance; drama; music literacy; songwriting; calypso/extempore; visual arts guidance programme; theatre arts management; welding for panmen; drumming; event management; pan sinking and tuning. Via these programmes the ministry provides training in the communities where it can be easily accessed by those who need it most. The community-based groups and non-governmental organizations

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also benefit from institutional strengthening, since they partner with government in the execution of these programmes. Through these training programmes, Government assures the transmission of our culture from prosperity to posterity. We are doing some good work on Nelson Island but I would leave that for my friend and colleague, the Member for Laventille West.

During the fiscal year 2004, the ministry also started the development of a cultural policy. The Member for St. Joseph will be happy to hear this because he spoke about it earlier in the debate. The growing importance of culture and cultural industries as a significant sector of the national economy; its emergence as a key element in global relations; the contemporary acceptance of cultural heritage as a source of wealth creation; and the equally significant place of intellectual property and its critical linkages with traditional cultural expressions and expressions of folklore, among other things, make the need for development of a national cultural policy very urgent. The Culture Division has developed a draft of a proposed National Cultural Policy for consultation and discussion with stakeholders in the national society.

For the new fiscal year, a number of policy objectives have been identified with respect to culture. For instance, this ministry will develop cultural expressions at the community level; expose and train children in the artistic patrimony of the nation; preserve the nation's historical and built heritage; preserve the oral and intangible heritage of Trinidad and Tobago; develop and propagate the musical traditions of the nation and strengthen the institutions of culture and the arts. This will be accomplished through the provision of training in various artistic disciplines; the immersion of schools across the country in artistic activities; the training of local persons in recovery techniques of artefacts; the securing for Carnival the accolade of the oral and intangible heritage; the institutional strengthening of agencies and divisions with the ministry which deliver cultural products and the development and implementation of a National Cultural Policy.

One thing this Government will never be remembered for is putting the cart before the horse. Clearly, the budget as it speaks to cultural concerns recognizes the many gaps which exist and sought to address these before putting money in infrastructure which will be underutilized and other deliverables which will be of a substandard quality.

What culture needs now is the development of our human resource capital and the harnessing of these resources to work for the common good of this country. It

also needs the institutional strengthening of many culture-based organizations. We are working with TUCO and they have benefited tremendously from that. Dr. Armstrong and his associates are working with them. There are about nine strategic priorities. I will not call the nine but I feel good about World Cup 2007. This will present a unique opportunity to showcase calypso to an estimated audience of 5 million regionally, and globally, 800,000 million to 1 billion. Commercial opportunities can range from the selling of music and mementos to the production of entertainment shows to a travelling calypso review among the islands. This is one thing that Dr. Armstrong is working on. They have acquired their headquarters at Jerningham Avenue.

That is not to say that the things that are perceived only to be cultural will be ignored. The strength of this Government is that it cannot help but listen to the cries of its people and respond. For this reason, during this fiscal year, Pan Trinbago will have its home. [*Desk thumping*] It will cost about \$5 million to have it completed. We are going to do that because we care. The only percussion instrument invented during the 20th Century will have a place of honour where visitors around the globe must come to experience not only the currency, but also the historical development of such a wonderful instrument. So, one of the major projects for this fiscal year is the completion of the home for Pan Trinbago.

On the agenda is the completion of the pan theatre for Desperadoes. When completed it would be beautiful. I have seen the plans. They have already vandalized what was there but we would work hard to complete it. If we are to change the branding associated with Laventille, one of the ways to go is to erect edifices of excellence of which its people can be proud. This is just the beginning of the thrust to culturally transform the hills of Morvant/Laventille, to a place more renowned for its contribution to cultural excellence. We also have plans for Tokyo in John John and Kalamo Kings in San Fernando. That is just the beginning. We would address these pan theatres. We say that, and I am sure that as night follows day, we are going to do that. In addition, the ministry proposes to create performing spaces throughout the community, but during this fiscal year work towards the erection of the Centre for Performing Arts will begin. We are tired of going to the Jean Pierre Complex, standing up in tuxedos and seeing the open sky. We are tired of going to the Queen's Park Savannah and dodging posts to see the artistes on stage. The Centre for Performing Arts is coming. The plans have been drawn up and the money has been put aside.

Before I take my seat, I need to make a plea, one that is very close to my heart. There are four important characteristics located in the defining of the word "culture".

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These are symbolic composition; systematic patterning; learned transmission and societal grounding. This honourable House is a site where behaviour is not only observed but also emulated. As we seek to develop and change the behaviour of society to create a culture of peace within our twin island state, we must recognize that we must start that change. This is where the contribution in culture for this budget begins. It starts with social reform, with behavioural change. One cannot make the paradigm shift that we are all asking for, if the behaviour associated with the development we want is at variance with the way we behave.

People talk about accountability and transparency. However, if at the end of this fiscal year we can boast about a change in the culture of the way we do things in this honourable House; the way we talk to each other; the way we share issues; if we can bring respect for each other in spite of sitting opposite each other, I would be convinced that this country has made a quantum leap on the road to cultural excellence. This is coming from a junior minister. [*Interruption*] Thanks for the correction, Member for La Brea.

Mr. Speaker and hon. Members, although we have a depleted team in here now, all Members in this House have a sacred responsibility to the people of Trinidad and Tobago. Any talk of civil disobedience; blocking town; blood bath and mashing up Parliament is clearly abrogating our responsibility to the people we are elected to serve.

Mr. Speaker, if you would permit me I would like to underpin what I have just said from Paul's writing in the *Holy Bible*.

“As we have many members in one organization and all members have not the same function. So we being many are one body in Christ and everyone, members one of another.”

I hope that people are listening to what is being said.

This is a good budget. I say that without any fear of contradiction. It is not about just doing; it is about changing, developing and taking us forward. Let me again thank the hon. Prime Minister for his foresight and shrewd planning. Let me also thank my Minister, Sen. The Hon. Joan Yuille-Williams, for her solid leadership over the past year and generally, her prudent management of the culture. Culture is in good hands. In fiscal year 2004/2005, culture will again deliver because we care.

The Member for Oropouche asked the question about how the Prime Minister would like to be remembered. I want to say to my very good friend that I will remember my Prime Minister as a dapper and youthful looking prime minister. I

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will remember my Prime Minister as one who contested the election in 1986 and the PNM was devastated. NAR wiped them out worse than Ivan. Our Prime Minister then went on the Opposition Bench with his two colleagues. Unfortunately, both have gone to the great beyond. In the short space of five years he led the PNM back into government. [*Desk thumping*] I must remember him for that. A fantastic job! That called for belly, guts, grit, determination and proper planning. I will remember the Prime Minister for many other things. I can go on and on. Our Prime Minister is a man of impeccable character.

At this point in time, according to the old song, “ain’t no stopping us now”.

Thank you.

Motion made and question proposed, That the House do now adjourn to Friday, October 15, 2004 at 10.00 a.m. [*Hon. K. Valley*]

Question put and agreed to.

House adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 9.40 p.m.