

Leave of Absence

Monday, October 18, 2004

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, October 18, 2004

The House met at 1.30 p.m.

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, I have received communication from the hon. Member for San Fernando West, (Hon. D. Seukeran), requesting leave of absence from sittings of the House for the period October 18 to 27, 2004.

The leave, which the Member seeks, is granted.

SUMMARY COURTS (AMDT.) (NO. 2) BILL

Bill to amend the Summary Courts Act, Chap. 4:20 [*The Attorney General*]; read the first time.

CRIMINAL PROCEDURE (AMDT.) BILL

Bill relating to Criminal Procedure Act, Chap. 12:02 [*The Attorney General*]; read the first time.

OLD AGE PENSION (AMDT. AND VALIDATION) BILL

Bill to amend the Old Age Pension Act, Chap. 32:02, and to validate certain things done thereunder [*The Minister of Social Development*]; read the first time.

PUBLIC ASSISTANCE (AMDT. AND VALIDATION) (NO. 2) BILL

Bill to amend the Public Assistance Act, Chap. 32:03 [*The Minister of Social Development*]; read the first time.

ASSOCIATION OF CARIBBEAN STATES (HEADQUARTERS) BILL

Bill to provide for the implementation by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago of certain of the provisions of the Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago and the Association of Caribbean States on the Headquarters of the Association of Caribbean States and its privileges and immunities [*The Minister of Foreign Affairs*]; read the first time.

**APPROPRIATION BILL
(BUDGET)**

[FIFTH 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 Energy and Energy Industries (Hon. Eric Williams): Mr. Speaker, allow me to begin my contribution today by commending the hon. Prime Minister and Minister of Finance for his presentation of the Appropriation Bill, 2005. Indeed, he has delivered a package that is not only people centred but is fiscally sound.

The hon. Prime Minister has demonstrated, yet again, this Government's commitment to provide relief, training, and job opportunities for the less fortunate in our society, while at the same time putting the necessary mechanisms and frameworks in place to ensure that Trinidad and Tobago continues to develop in line with our vision for achievement of developed nation status by the year 2020. Mr. Speaker, with your leave, I ask your permission to read from my rather copious notes, given the complexity of the issue at hand today.

Mr. Speaker, the hon. Prime Minister, in his presentation to this esteemed House, identified three main imperatives for the country's economic strategy.

The first was to maximize our returns from the energy sector by increasing our participation in the value chain, and increasing our tax take in a manner consistent with promoting a high level of investment in the sector.

The second was diversification of the economy to reduce dependence on the energy sector so as to attain self-sustaining growth.

The third was to guarantee that the benefits of our economic growth and development reach all sections of our society.

My contribution today, then, will build on those statements to show how the energy sector would be leveraged to deliver these objectives. The major premise of my contribution to this honourable House will be to demonstrate how the expansion, which is currently taking place in the energy sector, is linked to a wider strategy of the diversification of our economy and the development of our people. This is consistent with Government's Vision 2020 plans, which require a significant increase in the rate of investments in the country and a sustained increase in annual GDP and GNP growth rates.

In this context, I will present a picture of how developments in the sector are being leveraged to transform the economy, bearing in mind, the inextricable link between energy sector growth and the country's sustainable development. The major driving forces here are our initiatives to, first of all, increase local content development and local participation in the energy sector.

Secondly, enhance the skills base to take advantage of opportunities in the energy sector.

Thirdly, the diversification thrust in the downstream natural gas sub-sector. This diversification is geared towards creating spin-off industries which have economic multiplier effects in the non-oil segments of the economy.

In addition, I shall show how Government has been mitigating the environmental fallouts from the developments taking place. Furthermore, I shall show the role being played by the local energy sector to integrate our economy with the wider Caribbean community and, indeed, the international community.

In the international context, the scenario in which we are faced today, Mr. Speaker, crude oil traded at record high prices and is currently trading at record high prices, with the average dated Brent price fiscal 2004 to date, being of the order of 32 or so odd-dollars per barrel. Of course, Mr. Speaker, you will be aware that there are a number of different markers, West Texas Intermediate, which to date closely approximates a light sweet crude oil on the New York Stock Exchange and others. Indeed, in Trinidad and Tobago we have different grades of crude oil which fetch different prices.

The reasons for the high petroleum prices today are, firstly, the increasing demand from the Asian countries and, indeed, from the USA; secondly, political instabilities in countries like Nigeria; our neighbours, Venezuela, although they have pretty much been clearing up their issues; Iraq and the former Soviet Union. Thirdly, supply disruptions from the Gulf of Mexico, particularly, as a result of the recent Hurricane Ivan.

Recent actions by OPEC to increase its production ceiling to stem the increasing prices have been so far ineffective. In part, this is because the output from OPEC has largely been of the heavier, more sour crudes into a market that places its highest premium and is, therefore, seeking lighter and sweeter crudes. We await the decisions from the OPEC meeting, that is scheduled for Cairo in December this year, which would chart the cartel's production policy for early next year.

The outcome of the US election in November can also impact on the current trend in prices. If we are to rely on the international energy agencies' projections

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[HON. E. WILLIAMS]

Monday, October 18, 2004

pertaining to economic growth, then demand will continue to be a significant positive factor in the price equation in the new fiscal year. The IEA projects that in 2005 the global economy will continue to expand at the relatively fast pace of 4 per cent, albeit more slowly than the 5 per cent factored for 2004.

Our current reserve picture—for the benefit of Members of this House and for the wider public—in our crude oil, our proven reserves as of January 01, 2004 have been estimated at 760 million barrels; the probable is estimated at 358 million barrels, and the possible at 1,644 million barrels for a total 3P—as it is called in the jargon—proven, probable and possible of 2,762 million barrels of oil.

In our natural gas picture, the proven reserves are now 18.81 trillion cubic feet; the probable of 5.89 trillion cubic feet and the possible of 8.63 trillion cubic feet for a 3P picture of 33.33 trillion cubic feet.

Our production predictions for the year: Crude oil production is expected to go from approximately the mid-120s where it is today, to the order of just over 203,000 barrels per day by the beginning of fiscal 2006—that is to say at the end of 2005. For budgeting purposes, one can average this out over the year—given how it will ramp up—of the order of 150,510 barrels per day. The increase in crude oil production will be due mainly to production from the Angostura field in block 2C, which is located off the East Coast of Trinidad and is expected to start production in January 2005.

Increases in production are expected from Petrotrin's Trinmar Unit and from the EOG resources as well. Natural gas production is anticipated to increase from 2.85 billion cubic feet per day to 3.22 billion cubic feet per day over the same period. In the case of gas, the projected increase in production would be due mainly to supply to new plants, which are expected to come on stream during this fiscal year; namely, the MHTL 5,000, the LNG Train 4.

Over the longer term, commercialization of gas from BHP's Angostura development is expected by as early as 2008, depending on reservoir performance. To meet these commitments, we must now bring on our natural gas resources that are in the probable and possible categories into the proved category. In order to do this, there will be a significant exploration and development campaign in the upstream this year. This will be achieved through the development drilling in blocks that are already under contract, and in the several blocks that are about to be awarded, based on the competitive bidding order of 2003.

In addition, we expect to conduct discussions on several of the blocks that were not awarded, as well as conduct a new offshore bid round in the coming

year. All of this activity, then, presents an opportunity to improve on the return to the gross national product, the GNP, of Trinidad and Tobago by ensuring that as many of the service sector jobs and processes that can be done in Trinidad and Tobago, by Trinidad and Tobago companies, are captured. In essence we aim to maximize on local content in the conduct of these very necessary activities.

In addition, we will build local capability and capacity in the service sector in support of the energy sector. The basis then for our local content policy is that while we can boast of a relatively high GDP growth rate and GDP per capita, certainly, which has been projected in the order of 6.2 per cent in 2004 and 6.7 in 2005, the real measure of our sustainable development is the gap between GDP and GNP.

As you are aware, Mr. Speaker, GDP is the value of all goods and services produced within the geographic boundaries of Trinidad and Tobago, regardless of the nationality of the producer. The GNP or gross national product, on the other hand, is the total value of goods and services produced within and outside the country by nationals, and excludes goods and services produced by foreign firms operating in Trinidad and Tobago. The gap between the two parameters, although fluctuating, remains high, and outflows of capital continue to surpass inflows from investments abroad. Last year that gap was of the order of TT \$3.14 billion, the year before that TT \$2.27 billion, and in 2002 before that, it was of the order of almost TT \$2.98 billion.

Our challenge is to reduce this gap since the energy sector is such a significant contributor to GDP, averaging of the order of 42.3 per cent in 2004. This sector then, clearly, has an important role to play.

Dr. Nanan: Mr. Speaker, with respect to the energy sector, is the Government giving consideration to having locals on board the LNG tankers since they call here once per month? Is this a possibility in the renegotiation of the contracts?

Hon. E. Williams: Mr. Speaker, that is a very valid question and I will address it in a broader way later on, but suffice it to say that has not escaped us. In fact, as I will show later on, we intend to have equity ownership in LNG tankers, which will speak to a number of those issues.

1.45 p.m.

To bridge the gap between GDP and GNP, first of all, we are seeking to enhance the role played by our own people in the local energy sector, to ensure that they enlarge their capacity to participate in all aspects of the energy business conducted, here and abroad which speaks to what the Member has spoken about.

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[HON. E. WILLIAMS]

Monday, October 18, 2004

Trinidad and Tobago nationals must be able to hold their own in the commercial, strategic and business development activities along the value chain wherever in the world they are conducted.

We must move beyond just being operators of plant and equipment, and managers of field operations. We must progress to market and technology analysis, to the development of new business models and trading opportunities, to the creation of new financing mechanisms and to the design of plant and equipment for use in Trinidad and Tobago; design engineering.

Secondly, we are seeking to institute measures to maximize the level of participation of our people, enterprises, technology and capital in the energy sector.

Thirdly, we are increasing the use of locally owned businesses, local financing and human capabilities in order to develop the private sector in our quest towards creating sustainability through reducing dependency on the State to create wealth and employment.

Fourthly, we are maximizing value to the local economy from the exploitation of our invaluable petroleum resources.

Some of the milestones in local content development to date have been as follows: The establishment of the La Brea Industrial Company (LABIDCO) fabrication yard, which was referred to both by the Minister of Finance and the Member for La Brea, which allows local companies to build offshore surface and subsurface facilities up to a maximum of 3,000 tonnes.

In April 2004, BHP Billiton's 700-tonne Kairi-1 platform was completed at the fabrication yard. Joint venture and sharing of technology and skills between Damus, a local company, and Golf Island Fabricators, a company out of Louisiana was the mechanism that was used for this. BPTT's cannonball platform which is currently under construction at the fabrication yard has a potential local content component of 32 per cent or of the order of US \$17.44 million out of a total EPC spend of \$54.5 million. Significant in this, is the high level of in-country and local engineering man hours and the number of Trinidad and Tobago nationals developed by the Summit on Fluor Joint Venture.

We need to send the message very clearly that joint ventures are an important way to get the know-how transferred to our citizenry as opposed to sub-contractor relationships. And true joint ventures, not store front joint ventures where work goes in the door and then goes to somewhere else and then comes back through the local door. Seventy per cent of the man hours dedicated to the pipeline design activities involving the construction of the 56-inch and the cross island pipeline

have been undertaken. In fact, they are currently being undertaken by locals. The challenge now is to manage the timing of the ongoing projects so that we can build on the capabilities that are being developed by these projects.

As an aside, one can now begin to think of the possible synergies with the resurgence and expansion of the iron and steel sectors and their value chains that I will elaborate on later in my contribution. But just think of it, if we can now develop the iron and steel industries so we can produce the plate steel, and/or other activities in a foundry which can then be linked to an offshore fabrication facility at La Brea, this can not only serve our local energy requirements as we engage in our developmental activities, but also become an export activity out of Trinidad and Tobago. Combined with this is the development of the detailed design engineering capabilities in the joint ventures that I spoke of, which can speak to the designs of these projects, and so we can see ourselves becoming an export centre for expensive off shore kit in the energy sector.

Some hurdles which currently hinder and or make local participation in the local sector difficult are as follows: Local businesses, though equally equipped in many instances, are being placed at a disadvantage in bidding for local contracts with their foreign counterparts, and this is a serious concern which we are addressing. Some local contractors also are not paid while others are being paid but on an untimely basis by foreign businesses after they have completed the work that they were contracted to undertake. As an aside to this, local businesses have proposed to us—and we are taking it on board very seriously—the imposition of a performance bond, and enactment of the appropriate legislation to deal with that.

Local content requirements also should be discussed at the project conceptualization stage but this has been difficult since, in most cases, project design has been taking place overseas where it is outside of our sphere of influence.

To address these challenges, we are creating multifaceted framework for promoting local content and local participation; the first of which is, that we have created a permanent local content committee. Secondly, San Fernando, our energy capital, is now the newest member of World Energy Cities Partnership and there are some other measures in various stages of development. Let me elaborate a bit on those.

Mr. Speaker, in March of this year we established the permanent local content committee and it comprises professionals from both the private and public sectors.

The committee drafted a policy statement and a work programme which has been approved by the Cabinet. The committee has been mandated to devise strategies to increase local content and local participation in all energy sector projects.

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[HON. E. WILLIAMS]

Monday, October 18, 2004

In summary, the local content policy as it stands now, effectively will do three things. Firstly, it will identify where to enable local value added opportunity captured from the sector by selecting, from time to time, specific goods or services for servicing the local content participation and supply capability development efforts.

Secondly, it will determine how to enable delivery of maximum local value; and, thirdly, it would ensure delivery of maximum local value added.

Mr. Speaker, local content policies would be supported by strategies designed to strengthen our human resources in a bid to equip locals to make the skill requirements of the sector. Among these, of course, is the University of Trinidad and Tobago and other educational initiatives that have been outlined by my colleague, the Member for Diego Martin East. But in addition to this, during the past year at the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries, a monitoring and evaluation unit was put in place. The unit's mandate is to curb the numerous abuses and, indeed, to oversee the whole work permit programme or to advise the Ministry of National Security in the issuing of work permits particularly in the energy sector.

There have been a number of anomalies that have been occurring in this whole work permit programme and this unit is now focused on this process in very great detail. Work permits to foreign expatriates are granted on the condition that the company has a local understudy to be trained by the foreigner. What we have been finding out is that in some cases there have been excellent stories of mentoring. Persons have come to us and said I learned this and have moved up in my organization. But there have also been stories that have been not so rosy. In fact, I recall one understudy in a lunch I had some time ago saying to me, "Mr. Minister, please check because I believe I am understudying seven individuals and none of them speaks to me."

We are finding that there are some anomalies. In fact, some time ago we held a lunch as it were, for all the understudies; because we wanted to encourage them to be essentially the best they can be, and many companies objected to us inviting those understudies for lunch. Some of them said to us that they routinely never tell the people that they are understudies for fear that they would aspire to the position that they are understudying. That, clearly, speaks to anomalies in the system. It could be that this particular approach may not be the optimal approach but it is what exists in the law today, and so we are trying to find ways to cause it to work.

All in all, the local content committee and the monitoring evaluations unit will complement each other to ensure that nationals get a fair chance when competing with their foreign counterparts for jobs in the energy sector. We are going to be requiring affirmative action in the development of Trinidad and Tobago nationals

to equip them with certain specific competencies. Beyond that, we will establish a committee to develop a minimum standard for health, safety and environment training for contractors who wish to provide services in the energy sector. The committee will comprise industry and Government stakeholders. We expect that once a local contractor meets or exceeds the standards set by this committee, that contractor cannot be disqualified from obtaining a contract on the basis of his HSE status. We shall be looking at other standards so that all local contractors will be able to overcome the burden of companies having their own sets of standards. Each of the upstream companies—Petrotrin, BP and so forth—has different standards. Contractors are required to have multi-training, if not they become disqualified so that we are trying to come to a common national standard so that people can get projects.

Mr. Speaker, the World Energy Cities Partnership: San Fernando has been accepted as the latest member as of May this year. Benefits of the membership of the City of San Fernando in the WECP are aligned to the current national objectives of the development of entrepreneurs and small and medium enterprises. Secondly, of bridging the gap in skills and technology needs. Development of capability in the energy sector for increased local content is also important to us. Local SMEs would also benefit from the alliances that are available via the WECP network as anyone who contacts the network can access the desired expertise in the worlds most important energy cities, and some of the other cities that are members of this: Halifax, Houston in Texas, Stavanga in Norway, Aberdeen in Scotland, Dachshund, among others in China, Perth in Australia, all of the major energy centres around the world are members of this and Trinidad and Tobago via San Fernando is now a member of this. It seeks to network local service sector companies so that they can learn from each other and develop joint venture relationships with the same multinational companies that operate around the globe. We are taking it a little higher so that we can create the strategic alliances for our local contractors for sustainable development and transfer of technology into our society.

Specific benefits, as I would point out, would include business development activities, joint venture projects, the sharing of information related to the petroleum industry. The development of the SME sector in this way will deepen Government's stated desire to build capacity and capability in the sector as a means of increasing local content.

The other initiative in the making which is in its early days yet, is something which we are hoping to call the Centre for Energy Enterprises Development; in

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[HON. E. WILLIAMS]

Monday, October 18, 2004

concept at this moment. It is not a policy position as yet but we are trying to fashion it. There have been a number of stakeholders who have been discussing it both in the private sector and within the Government, the concept of the not-to-profit company to be called SEED, as an alliance of private sector businesses and professional associations in the country.

2.00 p.m.

The main objective would be to increase local content and local participation in the sector through the offer of a range of services, including business consultancies and intelligence, training courses and a number of tool kits such as “The working with the major operating companies” tool kit. In other words, what do you do when you seek to get business with such and such a company? Or the “How do you access finance” tool kit, that takes a person through the process.

In reality, we are seeking to create the energy equivalent of agricultural extension services to take the small contractor into the arena to compete in the energy sector. A critical area for capturing significant local content then is the upstream subsector because of the high level of capital employed there. The typical integrated companies spend 70 to 80 per cent of their expenditure on upstream activities. Roughly 80 per cent is allocated to the procurement of goods and services from third-party suppliers and contractors, so potential returns for companies providing support services for the upstream industry are highly attractive.

The WECP, SEED, as well as the syllabi and the programmes at the University of Trinidad and Tobago and UWI will all be geared to assist in building the necessary intellectual skills and technical capabilities to take advantage of the opportunities. Joint venture arrangements between foreign companies with the technical expertise and local companies would be encouraged as a means of enhancing the skills base and technical capabilities of local players.

Mr. Speaker, I have already outlined some of the exploration and production activities that we expect to engage in, in the offshore, Trinidad and Tobago. From here on in, I am going to talk about some other activities in the upstream and also as we go downstream. Not only do we expect to have activities in upstream offshore but also in the onshore. I remember the Member for Couva South was speaking to some of this on the occasion he spoke. Unfortunately, he is not here for me to set the record straight in his concept of what we intend to do onshore.

Let me, out of an abundance of caution, outline our plans and proposals. Exploration in the southern basin on shore, what is called geologically the southern basin—if we were to run an imaginary line from Manzanilla point

paralleling the Central Range over to the Gulf of Paria—everything south of that we consider the southern basin. Exploration here was, in the past, guided by surface geology, well-to-well correlation techniques and 2-D seismic data.

While the methods have brought a certain measure of success, we need to intensify our exploration efforts. We propose to invite a consortium of companies to stimulate exploration and production activity in the southern basin as a whole, as I have just described it. The first step is to acquire a 3-D seismic survey across the entire basin, which promises an increase in the success for wells drilled when compared to 2-D seismic data. Many people believe that we should break the area into smaller blocks and go at it in a chunk-sized approach. The challenge with that in the geological context of Trinidad and Tobago is that our geology is so complicated that it is more advisable to acquire one contiguous survey across the island and then go after an analysis of the area.

An example of this is British Petroleum of Trinidad and Tobago (BPTT) offshore Trinidad and Tobago has been acquiring 3-D surveys in different areas over the years, as have other companies in and around. When they eventually recognized what the challenges were—that it is one basin and not just individual areas—they have been undergoing the technological challenge of trying to merge each of those surveys. The challenge is that each of them was acquired with different parameters and so they have to go through a number of technological things in the geophysics to try to make them all appear to be similar to each other. While that has been ongoing, they have not recognized that the much more efficient way to have done it was to have acquired, in metaphorical terms, a carpet of 3-D seismic surveys across the one basin that we have. That is going to be a very expensive exercise, therefore we would require companies that have the ability to put that money down as risk capital and that is the reason we are seeking to have one carpet across rather than break it into blocks at this stage of the new thrust.

The 3-D seismic data will enable improved reservoir management and offer us a better chance to increase hydrocarbon reserves. Traditionally, mature oil and gas fields yield at least 10 per cent new reserves when 3-D seismic data are applied and more than 80 per cent of all new oil and gas reserves found in places such as Texas and Louisiana in the past few years came from 3-D seismic in old field areas. Eastern Venezuela has also had similar success.

If we can get a consortium of very large companies to acquire this data over our area, we can get the data acquired over the existing fields that are operated currently by Petrotrin in a manner that minimizes the cost to Petrotrin and the local joint venture and farm-out companies, so that we can acquire the technology

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[HON. E. WILLIAMS]

Monday, October 18, 2004

over our area. We have to find ways to incentivize these companies to come in to do so, given that they are willing to do so; and we have had repeated requests from a number of the major and super-major companies to be involved in an activity such as this.

In addition to this, I would add a personal note. There is one other colleague here who was involved in that programme in the previous Southern Basin Consortium—my colleague, the Member for Ortoire/Mayaro. When that programme was conducted, it was 2-D seismic. In discussions with that company, today ExxonMobile, they came back and pointed out that the way the challenge was approached then was not optimal and what is required across Trinidad and Tobago is 3-D seismic, not 2-D; and we need to better understand the velocity of sound waves in the rocks. They have recognized that they may have gotten it, not quite correct and are willing to take another stab at it as are several other major and super-major companies, who have come to us with specific technological reasons as to why it should be done.

Such a programme also provides an opportunity for training and employment of our young professionals and technicians to be employed in the sector. We can provide an integrated training programme from the acquisition of seismic data right through to the drilling of wells and the proper mapping and remapping of our existing reservoirs. All the students whom we are now putting through UWI in the petroleum geosciences programme—the University of Trinidad and Tobago and those from abroad—can now be put into an integrated programme with one unified operatorship, so that they can get the proper training, so that they can become the next generation of petroleum professionals here in Trinidad and Tobago.

The analysis of how we intend to do it is that Petrotrin now operates a little over half of the acreage that constitutes the southern basin leases and licences. Most of those leases and licences were worked out under various legal arrangements, which no longer reflect present day industry norms and realities. Some leases have lapsed leaving Petrotrin without any valid legal authority with respect to those acreages in question, so it is a nightmare. The way forward then, we expect, would be that Petrotrin would be asked to relinquish all of its existing onshore leases by individual Deeds of Surrender.

The Minister of Energy and Energy Industries will simultaneously award to Petrotrin acreage of approximately 154,400 acres, to be known as the core areas, in a new exploration and production licence with updated terms and conditions. The Minister will then take the necessary steps to establish a consortium of companies to conduct an integrated exploration and production programme over

the southern basin. Any participating interest retained and/or acquired by the Government will be assigned to Petrotrin. So we intend to keep Petrotrin whole in the areas over which they are now currently active. We intend to provide the new technology that will cause them to more optimally operate those acreages and we will provide them with equity participation in the new arrangement so that, should we have any new discoveries, Petrotrin, aka the State and the people of Trinidad and Tobago would be effective equity owners. This is apart from the training opportunities and all of the other things of which I have spoken.

In addition to this, there is also carded another 3-D seismic programme for the area. It is for the area called the Central Block, currently operated by British Gas and of which Petrotrin is also a partner. It may be possible to have synergies between that proposed programme and the much broader programme.

Having spoken to some of the upstream activities, let me look at one of the other areas on which I said I would focus—the diversification of the energy sector. We see diversification as a strategic imperative for our energy sector. In our resource based industrialization thrust that we have been engaged in, we are not dissimilar to several countries around the world. We face similar challenges to those countries where there are large, lumpy and risky investments which are significantly dependent on foreign skills capital and technology and subject to fluctuating prices. The result quite often is a booming sector of whatever it is in that area of investment, while all the other areas of that society tend to lag and then there are few opportunities for small- and medium-sized enterprises. In short, it is something known as the resource curse. Well, we are proceeding to deepen our natural gas industry. That is, we are advancing our gas processing activities further along the chemical chain to downstream ammonia and methanol products. We are establishing an aluminium smelter. We are expanding our iron and steel production capacity and we are taking steps to construct an ethylene petrochemical complex.

These investments offer great potential for spin-off industries and provide avenues for us to create and enhance linkages between the energy and the non-energy sector. We shall be inviting participants in new ventures only on the condition that the rules of engagement ensure downstream linkages. Primary projects will only be contracted for in conjunction with off-take projects.

These investments also present significant opportunities for job creation and new skills development that can be even traded overseas. The expansion currently taking place and planned in the energy sector opens a window of opportunities for small and medium enterprises. A much greater emphasis needs to be placed on

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[HON. E. WILLIAMS]

Monday, October 18, 2004

these SMEs if the energy sector is to play a more meaningful role in generating employment and income and alleviating poverty.

Some of the opportunities for local equity participation also is in LNG projects. The global LNG industry is now experiencing unprecedented growth and new and large markets are emerging. The cost reductions along the LNG value chain are allowing new projects, which were uneconomic 20 years ago. Increased interregional trading is adding flexibility and security to the global gas sector and currently the primary source of Government revenues from this industry is via upstream royalties and taxes.

2.15 p.m.

Government currently has no main equity interest in downstream marketing, shipping and re-gasification and our participation in the value chain is far less than that of any other country that is involved in the export of its gas.

Our initiatives to optimize our position in the LNG industry are geared toward revenue maximization, extraction of full value along the chain, as well as securing our leadership position in the key United States market. To do this, Train 4, which is going to be an 800 million standard cubic foot per day (800 mmscfd) plant is currently under construction. Most of the agreements are in place. There is still more work to be done. We are considering then LNG expansion of at least another 800 mmscfd. Letters of interest have been received and are under review. The new partnership models are being developed. We are looking at ways in which the country has much more of an equity stake in this type of project.

With respect to re-gas terminals—at least 1 billion cubic foot per day (1 bcfd). We are finalizing economic assessment and a gas market study. As you are aware, Mr. Speaker, we have already signed an MOU with Freeport McMoran. What is also about to happen is that we are about to sign an MOU with an Algerian state company, Sonatrach, which is likely to be another partner in that Freeport McMoran project. We are also reviewing proposals from several other re-gasification terminal projects, the least of which are projects from Air Liquide, Sempra Energy and Excelerate Energy.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, at this time we are looking at equity involvement in LNG tankers. Three parties are currently under consideration and offerings for joint venture arrangements in the ownership of LNG tankers are being actively considered.

With respect to the petrochemicals, we are advancing our discussions to develop an ethane cracker/polyethylene complex, as it were, which should be a

world scale project of the order of 800,000—1 million metric tons per year in ethane cracker. We are looking at methanol to propylene and polypropylene complex. We are looking at a local group going into the urea ammonia nitrate (UAN). This would be the Ansa McAl Group. The numbers are already out there in the press. CLICO Energy is also—

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.

Hon. E. Williams: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and Members of this House. We have announced that CLICO Energy is going into something called ammonia and urea, which would lead to something called melamine. The gas volumes for the project have been already allocated by the NGC and pricing agreements are being finalized.

Last, but not least, we are looking at something called a Syngas facility. Syngas, effectively is that first processing stage that the natural gas is subjected to prior to going into any of these other petrochemicals. If we can build a big plant, it would reduce the capital expenditure of any of these, what we call daughter plants, and the relevant gas that is required for each of these processes can be piped to each of the individual plants. It has the potential to reduce the capex on any of these new plants by as much as 30 per cent and therefore bring some of the costs down. Feasibility studies, conceptual engineering and preliminary cost estimates are already in progress.

We are moving effectively away from first stage to second stage processing of natural gas. We are diversifying by advancing further downstream. The Syngas Plant would of course provide us with a strategic direction. Of course, one can then understand some of the advantages of having a melamine facility in the country, which provides laminates, which can then be used locally in other industries. Ethylene and polypropylene speak for themselves. These are all areas in which we can stimulate activity here in Trinidad and Tobago.

The opportunities are quite large. There is also a large employment generation potential. The further downstream one goes, the more labour intensive and the higher the number of jobs per investment dollar. We are determined to get into the plastics and fabrics manufacturing business; in addition, not to mention, the export opportunities and foreign exchange earning capabilities for many of these projects.

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[HON. E. WILLIAMS]

Monday, October 18, 2004

We look also at diversification in the metal industries. We have already announced work on an aluminium smelter for a minimum of 250,000 metric tons per year. Already, there have been suggestions and discussions on expanding in of the order of 325,000 tonnes per year. We are certainly going to have to build a power plant to service such a facility. Currently we are looking at something in the order of 720 megawatts. We are also looking at downstream aluminium plants, a developmental centre, wheel plant and rod/cable plant, which would provide additional employment and additional products for export. T&TEC will, of course, have to upgrade its transmission system and in doing so, will then provide a greater and better service to the people of Trinidad and Tobago. Of course, this is now leverage off industrial development in the country.

We have already announced the NUCOR Plant. The ISG Plant, which is a restart of the CAL Circored Plant has actually begun. We will begin exporting shortly. We are currently in discussions to bring a new project, titanium oxide to the country.

Mr. Speaker, we are diversifying. While we are doing that, we are also trying to look at the fundamentals of what we have in place. Are we where we ought to be? Our GDP growth rate, as I mentioned, is going to be significant. Of course, most of these projections have been endorsed by the multilateral agencies. Among the major factors, which would be expected to fuel our GDP growth, would be the coming on stream of several of the new projects which I just elucidated.

Another major influence on the expected growth rate is the start of ALNG Train 4, in late 2005. To maximize revenues from the sale of LNG, we have been keeping ourselves abreast of the market and have been taking action as necessary in the national interest. We have identified an opportunity to increase our economic returns from LNG being sold under the contractual arrangements for ALNG Trains 1—3. These three LNG Trains, operating in Trinidad and Tobago, have a total capacity of the order of excess of 10 million tonnes per annum. The fourth train, which is under construction, will increase this country's LNG production capacity to over 15 million tonnes per annum.

Mr. Speaker, I think Members of this honourable Chamber and the national community need to know the following.

- The marketing arrangement for Trains 1, 2 and 3 that ALNG produced was contracted to be sold into the Spanish and US markets, where the prices at the time that these projects were conceived were very comparable. Since then, the Spanish market has experienced declining prices due to increased sources of supply of LNG and competition from alternative fuel sources, while the US market has been faced with high prices.

- In 2004, to date, prices have averaged of the order of the \$5.66 per million standard cubic feet on the US market, while in the Spanish market, the prices have been averaging of the order of US \$3.034 per million standard cubic feet.
- The off-takers of LNG, contracted to the Spanish market, have been diverting cargoes destined for Spain to the more lucrative US market.
- Under the terms of the LNG marketing arrangement, there is a provision for the sharing of any premiums in excess of the contracted price. Under the marketing arrangements, the parties are allowed to seek a contract price re-opener if the economic circumstances in Spain have substantially changed and the contract price does not reflect the value of natural gas in the end-user market.
- Therefore, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago now believes that there exists sufficient justification for the contracts to be revisited as there is scope for increased returns to this country. Such benefits would occur, provided there is a more equitable sharing of the benefits accruing from cargoes which are destined for the Spanish market that were diverted to the more lucrative US market.

Indeed, Mr. Speaker, those who framed those contracts on that day did not foresee the possibility of the diversion of the cargoes. Therefore, the returns to Trinidad and Tobago are based on a formula that derived from a destination in Spain. We have discovered that given the technology of the day, these cargoes are being diverted to the more lucrative US markets and are being supplanted by cheaper gas from other sources, but the revenue that is reported back to Trinidad and Tobago is the revenue as if it had gone to Spain. We are about to seek to close that loophole, a substantial loophole. [*Desk thumping*] That is why we wish to re-open contracts. It is not on a whim.

In the same way market conditions caused contracts to be revisited all along the value chain. We have had cause to negotiate production-sharing contracts (PSCs) on the request of operating companies when the market did not allow their businesses to be profitable. We currently have one such request under consideration. There is in fact a PSC—it has been in the press and the Minister has been prodded to try to fix it—where there is no cost recovery. The companies believe it to be uneconomic to explore and they wish the Government to re-open the discussion so that we can renegotiate the terms and conditions of that particular PSC.

2.30 p.m.

Similarly, if companies can request to reopen their Production Sharing Contract (PSC) when there are changed circumstances, as the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, we can do the same. We are not doing so on a whim and fancy basis. As I have pointed out, we shall revisit the PSC, if they do not allow the contractors to meet their obligations, under the Petroleum Taxes Act, and we intend to do so, particularly, as we are about to adjust the taxation regime.

Mr. Speaker, many persons have been wondering why we have not been able to do it, but the time we said. We have been discovering a number of loopholes. This is a very complicated exercise, and it has its genesis in the way a number of these contracts were negotiated in the first place. As we move along, there are a number of ramifications that will happen. Therefore, we have to take the time to get this matter correct. The Minister of Finance is entirely correct in taking his time to review the new petroleum taxes, and then to bring them to the country for the benefit of the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

Having dealt with that area, I now want to turn to our oil refining business. At our Pointe-a-Pierre refinery, a performance enhancement project started earlier this year, with a joint Shell Global Solutions and Petrotrin team to develop a programme of change management. The programme is designed to increase the cohesiveness of all the workers at the refining and marketing sections of Petrotrin in a bid to control high operating costs. Ineffective business processes and systems are also being overhauled. This is a three-year programme, and it is expected to cost in the order of \$18.5 million, and when operative, this programme would realize about US \$23 million per year.

The Petrotrin refinery is also currently facing other major challenges; the challenge of ageing and obsolete equipment, and undersized equipment that are unable to fully maximize the value of available feedstock.

The Petrotrin refinery will also encounter difficulties in coping with the tightening products specifications on fuels, which are driven by the global thrust for more stringent health and environmental standards.

The company will embark on a US \$316 million gasoline optimization programme, consisting of five projects over the next four years.

The incremental review to be derived from the project is of the order of US \$69.7 million per year. Major new pieces of equipment will be acquired which will further increase the already high quality of the gasoline and other products produced by the refinery.

We have listed these products in the budget documents. They include the following:

- Fluid Catalytic Cracking Unit (FCCU): to increase throughput so that more fuel oil will be converted to gasoline.
- Pre-Fractionation Unit: to reduce the benzene content in finished gasoline.
- Isomerisation Unit: to improve the light octane component of the gasoline.
- Continuous Catalyst Regeneration Platforming Units: to replace ageing catalytic reforming units.
- Alkylation Unit/Acid Plant: to increase the conversion of LPG from the FCCU to a very high quality gasoline blending component.

Petrotrin will be well placed to be the premier supplier in the region of high quality environmentally-friendly gasolines.

In addition to this upgrade programme, a feasibility study to establish a small gas to liquids (GTL) plant within the refinery is well under way. It is expected that this project will utilize a mothballed methanol plant, which will be relocated here and reconfigured to produce the GTL from Petrotrin's natural gas streams. This would produce a high quality diesel product which would then be blended with the diesel from Petrotrin's refinery stream, to improve the overall quality.

Let me now turn to the minerals sub-sector and the retail marketing sub-sector which fall under the purview of the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries. In the minerals sub-sector, the quarries industry is critical to national development, given the high demand for aggregates in the construction sector. The demand is expected to increase from 10 million tonnes in 2002 to 15 million tonnes in 2005. Export of aggregates to countries in the region also makes it a valuable source of foreign exchange earnings.

The thrust now is to locate commercial deposits of sands and gravels. Surveys are planned for the location of suitable deposits of limestone in the Northern Range.

Exploration has been concentrated for the sands and gravels to the Valencia area, where approximately 1,200 acres were evaluated, of which about 50 per cent contained economic quantities of gravel. So, during the next year, we are hoping to release new acreage for quarrying. We anticipate an increased demand for sand and gravel during the 2005 fiscal year. Therefore, exploration would be continued in this region.

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[HON. E. WILLIAMS]

Monday, October 18, 2004

We are very concerned that the quarry industry has not been effectively managed and monitored. This situation has been aggravated by illegal quarrying at various locations causing environmental problems; wastage of mineral resources; and loss of revenue to the State.

The Government is now pursuing several initiatives to effectively manage the quarries industry. These initiatives are as follows:

- The preparation of a new quarries policy to inform the drafting of new legislation. The Mineral Act of 2000 that regulates quarrying on both State and private lands has been deemed unworkable and is likely to be repealed by new legislation.
- One year interim licences have been granted to quarry operators, both on private and State lands, and also to operators of wash plants, providing that quarrying activity has taken place during January 01, 2003 to November 01, 2003. At the end of the one-year period, operators will be granted a five-year licence, subject to their fulfilment of established criteria.
- Those quarry operators and wash plant operators who have not met the established criteria, will have their operations terminated upon expiration of the one-year licence.

Mr. Speaker, this is a first. There have hardly ever been clear-cut reasons to revoke a quarrying licence in the past. We have put in place criteria that are based on environmentally sound and efficient operations. [*Desk thumping*] Those quarry and wash plant operators who have not been included in the list that we have sent out and published, by definition, are illegal. The State will be moving with its fullest force to deal with such illegal activities. [*Desk thumping*]

With respect to the National Quarries Company, this company is strategically poised to respond to increasing demand for aggregates, efficiently, and at the lowest possible price. The company has projected a 75 per cent increase in gross sales in fiscal year 2005, or of the order of TT \$88.7 million compared with TT \$50.8 million in the last fiscal year.

This projection is due mainly to the following:

- A new sand and gravel wash plant that will be purchased and commissioned by March 2005, to improve the reliability of supply of aggregate.
- Further development of the decostone white aggregate bagged product for decorative purposes, and the introduction of a clay product from the vast resources of clay that have been underutilized to date.

The company will be constructing a new building at the Turure site complete with all the modern amenities to accommodate its staff.

Mr. Speaker, let us look also at the petroleum retail marketing sub-sector. Environmental clean-up of the petroleum retail marketing sub-sector with the removal of leaded gasoline as a transportation fuel, began in April 2004. Action is now being taken to clean up the operations of retailers.

The National Petroleum Marketing Company (NPMC) inherited a network of stations containing steel underground storage tanks and piping, at least, 32 years ago. The steel underground storage tanks, as well as associated equipment are in varying states of disrepair and, therefore, pose a threat to the environment.

NPMC will conduct a massive upgrade on existing sites and site remediation programmes on 211 sites which are either in active service today or were in service before. An environmental clean-up programme would be conducted over the next five years at an estimated cost of \$444 million.

The objectives of the upgrade of the retail network are as follows:

- To have efficient, equitable distribution of petroleum products throughout Trinidad and Tobago.
- To be responsive to new demographics.
- To have environmental remediation and monitoring.
- Development of excellence in service.
- Modernization of the retail network.

As a subset of this, there are some key stakeholders in National Petroleum Dealers Association. The Petroleum Dealers Association has identified several critical areas that need to be addressed with the assistance of the Government. In fact, these areas have been agreed to between NPMC and the dealers, and they are as follows:

- five-year leases should be granted to petroleum dealers with a renewable five-year contract. At present, they operate on month-to-month leases, and they have been doing this for quite some time. As a result, they have been unable to finance their operations properly. So, we are moving now from a five-year lease, to a five-year renewable lease;
- there is need for an increase in the retail margins, and we would do so internally, without raising the price of gasoline to the consumer; and

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[HON. E. WILLIAMS]

Monday, October 18, 2004

- we are going to upgrade the deplorable physical condition of some of the service stations.

The next phase in the transportation fuels sector is to reduce the use of diesel as a motor vehicle fuel, and continue to examine the options of natural gas as a replacement fuel. There are “city diesels” that are available in some markets. Again, the Minister of Finance alluded to this. We are going to bring on compressed natural gas as a replacement for diesel. This move would be an initiative to distribute gas to homes in an attempt to enhance the quality of the environment for this and future generations.

Further, from a natural gas perspective, in the next few weeks, the National Gas Company (NGC) will move to reduce the price of natural gas to the local manufacturing sector. This will have the effect of reducing their cost of production. This price reduction will be predicated on the requirement that such savings will be passed on to their customers locally on products such as cement and clay building blocks to name a few items. [*Desk thumping*] Discussions are ongoing with the Trinidad and Tobago Manufacturers Association and closure is expected in the very near future.

Mr. Speaker, Lake Asphalt got approval this year for \$20 million in capital expenditure for the acquisition of a pelletization plant. Construction of the plant commenced in July 2004, and it will be commissioned in early 2005.

The benefits of the pelletization plant to Trinidad and Tobago Lake Asphalt would be to reduce the cost of packaging of products for export; to reduce the requirement for specialized equipment by end-users; and the pellets will provide improved portability and wider end-use applications.

They have already received commitments from China and Nigeria to purchase the product, and the company expects to see a significant improvement in its sales.

Mr. Speaker, I want to look now at international and regional relations. This year, we hosted the Hemispheric Energy Ministers Meeting in Tobago, and we gained further recognition as a petroleum producer. Next year, Trinidad and Tobago will assume the chairmanship of the Gas Exporting Countries Forum of the World. This is a forum of all the gas exporting countries involved in LNG and other forms of gas export. It is not the equivalent to OPEC, but it is a forum where countries get together to discuss the various issues surrounding gas export. The next annual general meeting will be held in Trinidad and Tobago. We would hold the chair for the next year after that.

The forum is a platform for consultation and co-operation among natural gas producing and exporting countries. A liaison office will be established here, and we will also be responsible for the hosting of meetings of executives and experts from around the world throughout the year. Of course, this will further enhance our reputation internationally.

With respect to Venezuela, we have already announced the memorandum of understanding to go after cross border gas. These discussions are ongoing. The Prime Minister has already announced the assistance to Caricom and there are a number of initiatives. The first initiative that the Prime Minister has already announced is the facility of TT \$375 million towards projects to alleviate poverty in Caricom countries which purchase Petrotrin's products.

Apart from this, we are co-operating with our Caricom partners to find a way to reduce the transaction costs that are associated with the acquisition of petroleum products through more efficient purchasing of crude oil, shipping, marketing and distribution arrangements.

There is also the Caribbean Gas Pipeline. We have already announced that a feasibility study has been completed and, indeed, it shows that it is feasible to go to several of the Caribbean islands.

The shape of Trinidad and Tobago's energy sector has undergone significant structural changes over the years.

Mr. Speaker, I have not spoken in any great way with respect to taxes. The taxes fall under the purview of the Minister of Finance. Many people feel that this falls under the purview Minister of Energy and Energy Industries but, in reality, it is the Minister of Finance. The Ministry of Energy and Industries, as part of a team, consults with the Minister of Finance, on the technical aspects of it. That work is ongoing. As we move forward, the onshore operations will be dealt with in the manner that has been alluded to by the Minister of Finance.

Mr. Speaker, I do not want to get too much into that matter at this time but, suffice it to say, that the share range of expanded sector activity, and the associated increase in the complexity of the industry has begun to outstrip the capability of the Government's administrative arm. As such, arising out of a strategic planning exercise in 2004, the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries is now well advanced into an exercise of institutional strengthening and restructuring in order to meet the new market realities.

2.45 p.m.

We are beefing up the numbers and range of skills of professional staff in order to effectively build and manage, as well as regulate and monitor, the various

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[HON. E. WILLIAMS]

Monday, October 18, 2004

activities taking place in the sector. At the Ministry we are pursuing institutional strengthening and capacity building. The rationale for these changes will be to move from being entirely operational to being more strategic in focusing; to become asset and customer focused; to create multidisciplinary teams; to align around stakeholders, who are responsible for high revenue generation; to increase the focus on analysis and research that is usable, relevant and timely for the relevant agenda and to ensure that Trinidad and Tobago captures maximum value from the resource under our management.

Our new organizational structure will comprise six core divisions: LNG and gas exports; resource management, commercial evaluation, contract management and an energy planning, downstream and retail marketing sector. In addition, there will be seven support groups behind all this. We also remember that the Petroleum Pricing Committee will be reactivated to ensure that we collect all rents due to us, in a timely manner. This, of course, will also include, not just petroleum, but also natural gas and LNG. I want to inform Members that we have already begun implementation of our strategic plan.

The account I have given to this honourable House today is a snapshot of the highly competitive, leading-edge energy sector. I have attempted to explain the essence of several initiatives that the Government is pursuing to further develop our energy sector, as we seek to ensure our future survival. It has been said that the energy sector is the engine of our country's economy. As a Government, then, it is our job to ensure that this engine is properly maintained and adequately fueled so it can deliver the results required to move our country towards developed nation status on or before the year 2020.

Mr. Speaker, hon. Members and members of the public and those who have been wondering whether or not there is a Minister of Energy and Energy Industries in the House, the answer is, yes. [*Desk thumping*] He is an enthusiastic and loyal team player in the Mr. Manning administration, for the service of the people of the blessed Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

Dr. Fuad Khan (*Barataria/San Juan*): Mr. Speaker, this country is really in serious trouble when we have to sit in this House and listen to my good friend, the Member for Port of Spain South, read a discourse and at the end of the total discourse, tell us all about the energy sector and never once mentioned the discrimination that occurred with Andrew Jupiter. [*Desk thumping*] Why was Andrew Jupiter, the former Permanent Secretary, unceremoniously removed from the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries, because he decided that certain

things were not going correct? They have now put a permanent secretary, no offence to the other one, who is extremely malleable.

I am very glad that my good friend, the Energy Minister, ended his discourse—which he could have photocopied and given to us—on that note. I think my friend did it, because the population of Trinidad and Tobago, through the media—who have now awakened—are asking the question: Who or where is the real Energy Minister? There is an article by Lennox Grant that I would like to read. I am not an energy person, so I have to look to people who are accustomed looking at the wide issue. I am not as fortunate as the Member for San Fernando East who got the University of the West Indies training in geology 30 years ago.

Mr. Manning: Thirty-four years ago.

Dr. F. Khan: Thirty-four years ago; so it is outdated then? Mr. Grant was wrong. The article reads:

Thirty years after having passed the course, UWI training in geology is being cited by Prime Minister Patrick Manning as qualification to practise as de facto senior Minister of Energy and Energy Industries.”

So my good friend, the Member for Port of Spain South, had all rights to say, “Yes, there is an Energy Minister in the House and it is not Ken Julien”. Such was the training that the Prime Minister had, although it was 30 years ago, when he had just come out of UWI and arrived, as a result of the “No-vote Campaign”. [*Crosstalk*] That was how he got in.

At that time, Dr. Eric Williams had commanded the whole House; he owned everything. He had to create an Opposition, so he asked some of these “fellas” to go across. He never gave the Ministry of Energy to my good friend from San Fernando East; he shoved him around different ministries. At one time he was a permanent secretary. I think he was also Parliamentary Secretary to my good friend, Hector McClean; now the Member for San Fernando East cites that as the reason for shifting his Ministers in different portfolios. Mr. Grant said:

“Today’s maxi conductor of government affairs has never forgotten, nor forgiven, whence he came.”

But he rhetorically says that is how it is supposed to be.

Most important in the article, which the Minister did not mention, was the question: Why was Mr. Andrew Jupiter, who was a very good permanent secretary in the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries for many years, unceremoniously

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[DR. KHAN]

Monday, October 18, 2004

transferred, because he disagreed with Ken Julien? He assisted in the formation of various energy matters. The Minister said nothing.

The article stated:

“It looked like the definite ascendancy of Finance over whatever self-determination had been left to Energy—the administrative extension of an established reality in Cabinet.

A month later, Finance Minister Manning's budget speech went to exhaustive lengths to demonstrate his command over energy matters. It looked bad, and energy specialists like David Renwick felt especially bad for the Energy Minister.

‘If Minister Williams is smart (and I believe he is),’...‘he will seize on his Finance Minister’s speech and elaborate on some of the matters raised...’”

So he told us about the cheaper diesel or the low use for diesel, moving around different whatever. He did not answer though.

The article continued:

“...the capacity of Finance Minister, Mr. Manning, had nothing positive to report on the over-arching matter of a new oil and gas tax regime. He had promised this new order for New Year’s Day 2004, but by 2005 Budget Day when nothing had been achieved, he promised only further postponements, and telegraphed attitude that’s expressed in gun talk. On a day when a barrel crude fetched up to US \$53, Mr. Manning voiced frustration that ‘tax accruing to this country from our hydrocarbon resources was considerably less than expected.’

Something had to be wrong. Mr. Manning had to appear as vexed as he could, in a \$28-billion Budget speech, largely based on energy income.

His response was to put everything was up for review. He vowed to reopen the long-closed production-sharing contracts signed by BHP Billiton and partners from the east coast and British Gas and partners on the north.

In their deal with the Government, the production-sharing companies paid no tax directly, but Mr. Manning signalled he wanted more out of those deals anyway.”

No taxes. [*Crosstalk*] This is the Energy Minister. He said that he wanted to go back; now there are no taxes. [*Crosstalk*] [*Minister Williams stands*]

Mr. Williams: Colleague, would you give way?

Mr. Speaker: The Member is not giving way, hon. Minister.

Dr. F. Khan: I have observed that when you sting them, they get agitated. [Crosstalk] I am not an energy expert. I am reading from people who are energy experts.

The article continued:

“The Government, he said, also wanted to review the agreements...He implied a kind of inquisition into UNC policy and practice, going back to 1998...” [Interruption]

“Yuh want meh talk about corruption?” “Yuh want meh talk about tiefing material and depositing money from the Central Bank into financial—yuh want meh talk about dat?” [Crosstalk]

Mr. Speaker: Order! Hon. Member, take your seat for one second, please. The Member is entitled to make his contribution in peace. I ask the Member to address the Speaker.

Dr. F. Khan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I sat and listened to the Energy Minister without making one utterance during his contribution.

The article continued:

“Mr. Enill served notice that new oil and gas taxes, when decided, will take retroactive effect from New Year’s Day 2004!

Back taxes they didn’t know they owed; ripped-open contracts they thought had been closed: this was the challenge put to the oil and gas company by the Budget...

‘One has to be careful not to kill the goose that lays the golden egg...’”

As our representative for St. Augustine said, we are experiencing an offshore boom, but we have an on shore bust. An article by Gregory McGuire clearly delineates it.

An article taken from the Trinidad and Tobago Review of June 07, 2004 showed the different programmes the Government was doing, based on the oil revenue. It looked at the social programmes and how they paralleled our previous oil boom of the 1970s. As a result of that, we are losing a lot of our income on social programmes, but they are producing nothing. The Helping You Prepare for Employment (HYPE) Programme, the Youth Apprenticeship Programme in Agriculture (YAPA), the Community-based Environmental Protection and Enhancement Programme (CEPEP) and so on, are just the main targets for wealth redistribution and have increased allocation; as much as 51 per cent of the Public Sector

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[DR. KHAN]

Monday, October 18, 2004

Investment Programme (PSIP), compared to 29 per cent that is going into manufacturing and .1 per cent in agriculture.

We are paralleling a similar situation to what occurred in the oil boom years. The only difference is that our Member for San Fernando East has started to go along the lines of the Cuban/Chavez/Castro/Mugabe model. I will show you how, Mr. Speaker, No single person has said that this Government's budget was good for the development of Trinidad and Tobago. Every single person who has commented on this budget has said something about the dependency syndrome, the lack of capital development, the lack of capital movement, "ol' talk" and no performance as usual.

What frightened me was what the General Council of the PNM said yesterday. An article in the *Sunday Guardian* of October 18, 2004 by Ira Mathur states:

"Welfare state with no returns"

She said that disturbing images came out.

"...Christian Mouttet, was asking for accountability from the Government... reading the now embarrassingly long undelivered shopping list of measures promised in last year's budget to combat crime..."

There is savagery out there..."

She went on to show some imagery of somebody being carried to the ATM machine, being lock-necked, et cetera, and their cash taken.

"Desperate acts by people who feel they have nothing to lose.

The private sector's overriding interest may be to make money but they understand that the wolves of illiteracy, unemployment, disease and poverty are at their doorsteps too, and will swallow them with everyone else..."

While Mouttet was saying that it's wonderful that Government has built more schools, but it is more important to ensure that systems are put into place so children emerge literate from them."

3.00 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, what is not making sense is that we have all these crimes, robberies, happening in this country today and the Prime Minister has said that the unemployment rate is 7.3 per cent, although the Social and Economic Policy Framework says it is 10 per cent for the first and last quarter of this year.

There are many social programmes, 128 in all—all these social movements, free housing for PNM party supporters all these things and yet, the crime rate is

high. So are all your social programmes not reaching the right people or if they are, they are not listening to what you are saying about the crime?

Every day that passes a dead body is found somewhere with hands tied and so forth. It is getting frightening that one has to wonder where the Government's programmes are going. Are their friends or community leaders the ones who are benefiting from them? Where is that money from all the kidnapping and ransom payments going? Is it going to the banks or places such as finance houses?

Mr. Speaker, certain finance houses come to mind. I do not want to mention them here but a lot of money is being washed and laundered through casinos and finance brokers. The kidnapping rate has died down for a while because the system in place in Laventille is working or maybe they are just lying low. However, I want the Prime Minister to listen to what I have to say about this.

Money laundering has become a cyber money laundering thing in this country. The kidnappers or persons with ill-gotten gains cannot put their money directly into a bank; they tend to wash it in a financial broker house or something where they buy real estate; they have E-banking, or they go to a casino where they get cheques as if they won in gambling which is then washed across to the financial movement.

So I want the Prime Minister to put some mechanisms in place to track that and there is a paper to which I can refer him called *Cyber Laundering and the New Effects in the Wave of Crime* and it is by the law school of the University of Miami.

Even as I am saying that, it has been reported that a senior police officer and his son were seen depositing marked money into an account, the bank had called in the squad but we have heard nothing about that again. There are policemen who have been arrested with ski masks and guns, et cetera, and they are on bail.

Mr. Speaker, I am going to try to make a parallel by asking whether the social programmes which the Prime Minister is trying to put in the country are really being done to decrease crime, or are they really to produce a programme similar to that which Castro has in Cuba for further movement and power down the road? That is what occurred in different parts of the areas and no one saw it coming.

Another part of the welfare state is that the unemployment figures include make-work programmes; and they joked about HYPE, et cetera, but that is not my business. The past decade our economy has grown by 4 per cent because oil has a life of its own, and we heard from the Minister that a lot of our income comes from oil and the article "Offshore boom, onshore bust" tells us that much of the

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[DR. KHAN]

Monday, October 18, 2004

money is coming from oil and it is going towards more social and not many development programmes.

On page 20 of the *Trinidad Guardian* October 18, 2003, it says:

“Stockbroker Robert Mayers says the 2004—2005 budget was guaranteed to entrench the dependency.

‘We need to be clear that the dependency syndrome of which I speak is not only applicable to the people of Laventille and Cocorite and Pleasantville, but also to the Neal & Massys, the RBTTs, the Prestige Holdings, the Associated Brands etc. Everybody is looking to see what’s in it for them.’

He said Finance Minister, Patrick Manning, appeared to be bereft of any ideas of his own.

His major concern, however, is the absolute lack of process.

He said the Government, as well as others before it, seem to see everything in tasks.

‘This needs to be done, ... but nobody is taking a look at the big picture...’

Mayers referred to the more than 128 different social programmes being operated...

‘Inside of these programmes there’s a tremendous amount of overlapping. Where is the guiding hand, who’s looking at all of these programmes and thinking what systems can we create that will bring all the various responsibilities into focus and generate a process that will deliver efficiency.’”

This article indicates that the budget is producing and entrenching a dependency syndrome. It seems to be—with no offence to the philosophy—that the philosophy of the PNM Government since 1956 when Dr. Eric Williams started, and I have it in the book here—*The Elusive Eric Williams*, which I may read—that the philosophy was that power from the colonial masters like Bertie Gomes and those guys was removed and the populace expected so much from you that you had to grant them favours and it continued like that to this present day. The social programmes were a philosophy of the PNM Government since 1956.

Nothing is wrong with social programmes once they are used for the things they are supposed to be used. Social programmes for people who need them are good, but when they are being used to foster a political party in office, then it only creates a movement towards a sort of dictatorship.

Mr. Speaker, my good friend Minister Franklin Khan is quoted in the *Newsday* of Monday, October 18, 2004 as saying “PNM to meet ‘grass roots people’”. That is laudable, it is excellent, but there are certain things which he said that had me thinking.

I remember when Eric Williams—not this one, the “Father of the Nation”—said he started off his political movement and change in the political ideology of the country when he started giving lectures in Woodford Square and to different schools under the auspices of the commission.

When things were going hot for Dr. Williams he had to account to the taxpayer. Now we have “PNM to meet ‘grass roots people’” and I have been saying that the PNM knows who it is targeting. It knows exactly what it is doing. All kinds of things have been said about Mr. Manning, but he is a very politically astute person. After hearing the Member for Diego Martin East, and the Member for Arouca South I see that the PNM has targeted the poor of the society and youths of the society to win the next election. They are going to place them in houses as Castro did in Cuba, as Chavez is doing in Venezuela and as Mugabe is doing in Zimbabwe. Unfortunately, that process, one thing—social structure with a dictator. It does not have one without the other and that is where the problem lies.

Minister Khan, PNM Chairman said:

“It is an effort on behalf of the party not to make the Budget an esoteric type of document that doesn’t link directly with the grass roots and rank and file of the nation.’

He was speaking at the party’s post-general council meeting...

‘John public will have an opportunity to come directly and meet and question the ministers...’”

This is just an election campaign. No big thing. It goes on:

“...representatives of the various constituencies, ‘gave their accolades’ and the general feeling among the membership, was that ‘the Budget was along the right track.’”

Everybody else in the industry and trade sectors is saying that the budget is of a dependency syndrome and it is not producing capital development, not doing this and not doing that. Yet they are saying it is on the right track.

Mr. Speaker, it continues:

“Khan said more importantly, the budget told of Government’s plan ‘to deal with the day-to-day issues that confront people as it relates to employment,

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[DR. KHAN]

Monday, October 18, 2004

and especially poverty eradication and how we continue to manage the social sector.’

‘In a very balanced approach, obviously I am not saying that we are a socialist government.’”

Do you see what is happening here? It goes on:

“...but we plan to have an intricate balance where through private sector principles, we will determine how the Government runs its business, how it plans for the future...”

What I am saying is that he is transmitting to the country that they are heading to socialism.

Mr. Speaker, Fidel Castro became Prime Minister of Cuba in 1961 and shortly thereafter cancelled election and suspended Cuba’s constitution. Castro ruled without regard for the 1940 constitution. He transformed Cuba into a socialist nation inaugurating wide-ranging changes in the country’s social and economic systems.

He instituted programmes that dramatically increased the nation’s literacy rate and improved health care to most Cubans. The socialist nature of Castro’s government sent many members of the elite and professional class into exile.

Government’s seizures of properties and building holdings, the suspension of election, the militarization of the society—remember the programme, CEPEP? We have militarization of the society, the control of the media. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member for Arouca South, I think the Member is appealing for protection. [*Crosstalk*]

Member for Barataria/San Juan, make your contribution and address the Speaker.

Dr. F. Khan: Mr. Speaker, I was saying the militarization of the society, and all those programmes: You know what gets people vexed about these things? They are part of it.

Mr. Speaker, somebody called me and told me that someone was putting a Central Bank cheque of \$250,000 into an account at the Financial Complex. I did not believe it. I did not think that someone would have done that.

3.15 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, it goes on:

“Government seizure of the properties and building holdings, control of the media for three years, the politicization of education, convinced conservatives

Appropriation Bill (Budget)

Monday, October 18, 2004

and moderates to seek exile in Spain, Mexico, France and primarily in the United States.”

Do you see the parallel I am trying to draw? I want to talk about the domestic policy of Castro.

“Castro did not assume the office of president at first...Yet he brought before the politically moderate cabinet sweeping reforms...some of which appropriated business interests and private properties owned by U.S. citizens and corporations. Among the most important acts were the Agrarian Reform Law and the Urban Reform law, both passed in 1959.”

This is the part:

“These laws broke up large property holdings and redistributed them to the poor.”

That is what Chavez and Mugabe are doing with the land:

“Castro became prime minister in February in 1959, following the resignation of Prime Minister, Miró Cardona...”

Which was one of his people. He could not take what Castro was doing:

“At this point moderate cabinet ministers and officials began leaving the government. In May 1961 Castro canceled promised elections and declared the Constitution...outdated.”

I am alerting the population with this part, that when the next election comes around and the 41 seats are put in place, à la EBC, and all the housing policies kick in, and they put their people in the housing areas—which I would deal with later on—and they get a constitutional majority, “crapaud smoke our pipe” in this country.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: You better understand it.

Dr. F. Khan: And she is agreeing! Laugh as much as you want. Mr. Speaker, it states:

“Transforming Cuba into a socialist nation required a reorientation of values. To address this need, Castro and Che Guevera developed the New Man theory, which called for the development of a new type of citizen who would regard work not as a means of personal enrichment, but as a commitment to social change. This theory held that Cubans would no longer work for personal profit, but for the good of all people. Income and benefits, such as

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[DR. KHAN]

Monday, October 18, 2004

education and medical services, were to be evenly distributed. Under the new political structure, government agencies represented people, and political parties were dissolved. The state controlled the press, and neighborhood watch group (called the CDRs) checked for ideological purity.”

Listen to this, Mr. Speaker:

“People advanced at work and in government according to their loyalty to Castro.”

We hear about Malcolm Jones, Errol Grimes, Louis Lee Sing. We hear about Louis Lee Sing getting a licence; Sat Maharaj won a court case and cannot get one. So you see how it parallels, Mr. Speaker? They could laugh now.

“Castro and Guevarra also drew up a plan to export revolution around the world.”

So when Mr. Tony Blair goes in for a pacemaker in the morning and then comes out in the evening and does his work, our goodly Prime Minister spent two weeks there being indoctrinated. [*Laughter*] [*Desk thumping*] Up to this day he has not said which UNC doctor gave him the pacemaker.

Hon. Members: You! You! [*Crosstalk*]

Dr. F. Khan: If it was me, all my pacemakers go out of service in 2006, so call the election before 2006.

I draw that parallel because I want to draw another parallel with something I pulled off also about Venezuela, Chavez and the Referendum. There was a myth that the media, if positioned and pushed hard enough, could control the minds of the population. Chavez won the referendum. Do you know why he won the referendum? I will tell you why. He did not win the referendum because the media was for him, you know; the media had turned against him after a while, as the media is now turning towards the Prime Minister.

Mr. Manning: Towards me?

Dr. F. Khan: Away from you, sorry. You see how the *Express* and Ken Gordon have gone elsewhere? He said he is going to bring you down, you know. He is working now to combat the Ken Gordon thing. Do you know why?

“The results of the referendum demonstrate that powerful grassroots organizations built around successful struggles for social reforms can create a mass political and social consciousness which can easily reject media manipulation.”

Mr. Manning: Which can easily reject what?

Dr. F. Khan: “Media manipulation”—the social organization—the social things that you are doing.

Mr. Manning: Thanks for letting me know.

Dr. F. Khan: You know that already. That is what they taught you in Cuba. I know they taught you that in Cuba.

So when Mr. Franklin Khan comes—sorry—Minister of Works and Transport, my good friend—I have to commend him, by the way, for those barriers. I asked him to leave a gap so people could walk through.

When my friend, the Member for Ortoire/Mayaro, said they are going to meet the people and they are going to make sure that they account to the taxpayer, it just goes to show that the hon. Prime Minister is working the system well for, I would say, 2006. That is when the pacemaker goes off.

That is their right, to work the system, but I beg you, whatever you do—I would not bother to read the Mugabe thing; it is frightening. The Mugabe approach was to do the same thing that Castro did; the Chavez approach is doing the same thing, bringing in the indoctrinated Cubans to indoctrinate people at the lower socio-economic group. You see, they come in the form of doctors and ancillary workers, et cetera. They come very nice and easy but Castro does not allow anybody to leave Cuba unless they are fully indoctrinated and they could be part and parcel of his revolution movement around the area.

At the end of the day we have to be careful of the ideology that is being pushed at the lower socio-economic grassroots, because that is the way that the—if you look at a triangle, everything, according to Dr. Lawrence J. Peter, develops in triangles. All societies, all hierarchies, everything, develops in triangles. At the base of the triangle there is the income group and it goes up to the top with different levels of income. At the base of the triangle there are the most number of voters. Once you satisfy the base of the triangle—and the youth are part of that triangle because they are in the zero income group—then you would control the political movement in a country. This is why we are asking for equality of opportunity.

You see, in Castro's Cuba, Chavez's Venezuela and Mugabe's Zimbabwe, what they did was give to people who supported their party, movement. That is why you find, as I say again, people like—*[Interruption]* Do you want me to read the CEPEP contracts? I have all the names of the CEPEP people here, “eh”. You see how he got quiet? That quiet him up.

What I am saying is that this movement that is occurring in our country—*[Interruption]* Maybe the Prime Minister does not even know. *[Interruption]*

Mr. Valley: Why “yuh doh” go and do an operation?

Dr. F. Khan: You want a sex change, Member for Diego Martin Central? I could do a sex change on you now if you want, you know.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, please! Let us not degenerate the debate. I find, you know, you are taking bait. Forget that. Address the Speaker.

Dr. F. Khan: Mr. Speaker, why are you protecting him?

Mr. Speaker: I am protecting you.

Dr. F. Khan: I do not need protection. I will tell him about his sex change and all those kinds of things. I have files on all of them, you know. Mr. Speaker, he threw me off.

Mr. Speaker: Please! Save that for the tearoom or somewhere else, not in this honourable House, please.

Dr. F. Khan: Mr. Speaker, you are getting worried, too.

I want to take you back to before 2003. We have had three budgets under the PNM regime. These three budgets addressed social change, social change, social change, and the social change that is continuing is really not producing much of a developmental impact. In the first year of the PNM regime it was school grants, book grants—pre-election. They had 140 or 40 days of fete, book grants, giving out breakfasts and different things. In the second year there was largesse for the social programme such as YAPA—CEPEP came into being just before the election in 2002.

You see, Mr. Speaker, what is happening is that a lot of money is being spent on social reform, thinking that by throwing money at social reform and giving the supporters of the People’s National Movement what they desire—because when the Member for San Fernando East lost the election in 1995—a credit to him—he walked around the country and the people told him: “Boss, when you was in office in 1991—1995, you did not take care of we at all; that is why we vote you out.” So he is making sure he is not making the same mistake again. That is what he is doing. But what he is doing as a result of that movement is destroying the national capital development of our country.

On December 24, 2001, a day that would go down in history in this country, where a Constitution was not used to dispose a Prime Minister because of possible hate, because of all types of negatives you could think about, when a President came on national television and said: “Because of morality and spirituality, I then do this and I then do that” using the preamble of a Constitution

which is not legal. Then he did this thing, and as a result of that, a party that had the same number of seats but 265,000 votes versus 285,000 votes, was disposed of because of the whims and fancies of one President—no logical explanation—who said “I am putting Mr. Manning in office. I, as Prime Minister, will put Mr. Manning in office.” [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Manning: He said: “I, as President”.

Dr. F. Khan: He said: “I, as Prime Minister”. That shows that he was not lucid. He said “I, as Prime Minister,” three times. That is the past. The thing about it, when he used the words, morality and spirituality—

Mr. Manning: He did not say that.

Dr. F. Khan: The Member for San Fernando East, in his budget said the same thing about transparency, et cetera.

Mr. Manning: Moral and spiritual values.

Dr. F. Khan: Same thing. You are splitting hairs. Do not get worried.

As a result of that decision, the poor Prime Minister of San Fernando East has to be constantly blackmailed into giving cars, medical treatment, entourage, et cetera. Last year they had to come with an Appropriation Bill for \$900,000 to send Robinson, God knows where for medical treatment. I am just saying when you utilize public funds for your own personal gain, that is corruption.

3.30 p.m.

He did it for private gain. He did not do it because the PNM won more votes or they had more seats. He did it because somebody promised him two cars tax free and medical treatment. I am leading up to the next point. [*Interruption*] Leave him. He might walk out just now. When you take state funds, material or anything else for your personal use, that is corruption. I am pointing to where the corruption started; when the murder rate started to climb and kidnapping started.

Before 1995, do you remember when babies were wrapped in brown paper and there was no ambulance in this country? When you called for an ambulance you could not get one. The fire station and the Red Cross did not have any. Thanks to the Member for Caroni Central who put ambulances in San Fernando and right through. At one time when you called for an ambulance there was an ongoing competition that the ambulance reached before Kentucky, before 30 minutes. Now the ambulance goes up and down the road into the public institutions.

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[DR. KHAN]

Monday, October 18, 2004

There was a time when you went to the hospital and you could not get treatment under God knows how long and when eggnog was killing our senior citizens in St. Ann's. The Member for Ortoire/Mayaro might remember this. You had to wait on the Mafeking Bridge for a car or a long line of traffic to pass, when the other bridges were only one lane and you had to fight your way around it. As a result of that, in Ortoire/Mayaro, the price of land skyrocketed. Thanks to the access.

Above the Caroni Bridge there was a traffic light that determined how traffic passed left, right and centre. Their financiers made sure that the poor people in this country were not going to get foreign used parts and cars unless we opened the market. You could ask the Member for Diego Martin West about that. They made sure that the poor people could not own a proper car and the UNC government did it.

Mr. Speaker: The speaking time of the hon. Member for Barataria/San Juan has expired.

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

Question put and agreed to.

Dr. F. Khan: Thanks, Mr. Speaker, and my colleagues for extending my time.

Going back to the Caroni Bridge when there was one lane of traffic, UNC did that in eight weeks. Where is the Member for Toco/Manzanilla? That bridge in Valencia that took so many lives, it was under the UNC government and Mr. Sadiq Baksh that a proper highway movement was put across there.

The PNM targeted the UNC as they did in 1956 and 1961. Morality in public affairs, Robinson was part of that. It is important to understand that before 1995, the airport in Trinidad and Tobago was a dismal area. There is a nice new airport now but they have pulled down the roof. Be that as it may, the UNC made a development process making us the hub of transport in the region. We changed the postal system to be more efficient. You are not supposed to mention positives. The country got an airport and a postal system.

There was no pothole. Many roads were paved and it took two years for paving to start because a contractor put an injunction on the government because he was not chosen. That is the same contractor who had the ripple effect in the airport. This is a country that forgets. They forgot that was done. They only remember one thing. The PNM always does it.

It is time that we continue to work as a society. People have to start dealing with issues and not with what they are doing. They are coming back and saying

the same thing. I would start on a gentleman called Emile Elias. Emile Elias made much noise when UNC was in office. Winston Riley, Planning and Associates and Kenrick Burgess are all part of a cabal. You should have known this. There is a document you have to sign. I hereby declare that these goods are bought for whatever purpose and not for resale or exchange.

Mr. Speaker: You are making some very serious allegations against a member of the public who has no right of redress. I hope what you are saying is true. One must not make an allegation against a member of the public who has no right of redress, unless the Member making that allegation is fairly certain that what he is saying is true.

Dr. F. Khan: Mr. Speaker, I would have to withdraw that because I was told that by a colleague of mine who was at customs at the time. The records showed that this occurred. I do not have the documentation to produce, but we know that it happened. I will get the documentation and bring it to the House.

I brought that up because this man was making many accusations against the UNC, but today, he is the beneficiary of the Customs and Excise Building from UdeCOTT and the contract to build the Laventille Technology Centre. I want to see how many Laventille people going there. I would ask that question. From my investigation the Laventille Technology Centre was not given out by open tender. It was given by selective, invitational tender, similarly, to NEDCO's head office at Melville Shipping. When you look at them, they are financiers of the PNM.

I want to read an article dated 26th November 2000.

Category Trinidad Politics

December the election day draws closer.

A gentleman said this when asked about mudslinging and corruption.

“I disagree that our campaign is about mudslinging. If you have been following the PNM's campaign, you would see that the main issue is that of right and wrong. I have heard people say, ‘yes UNC tief’. I cannot support that. The government's role is not ‘tief’ some and give me some. Every night I am showing our population how the money is being misspent; how laws are being broken and checks and balances removed so money can be siphoned by Ministers.”

That is the hon. Keith Rowley.

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[DR. KHAN]

Monday, October 18, 2004

Hon. Keith Rowley in response to a question, I do not know any greater issue in this election other than to deal with the unsuitability of this present team on the grounds that they have the opportunity to manage our affairs and have misappropriated and misspent public funds.

Form of oath for minister or parliamentary secretary: "I do swear /solemnly affirm that I would bear true faith and allegiance to Trinidad and Tobago and will uphold the Constitution and the law; that I will conscientiously, impartially and to the best of my ability discharge my duties and to do right to all manner of people without fear or favour, affection or ill will". That is the oath of a minister.

I quote from the *Sunday Guardian*, AG Jeremie's tasks. Let it all hang out.

Once again corruption allegations have stolen the thunder of the debate three years ago. Then Opposition Leader, Patrick Manning, produced photos including that of Prime Minister, Panday's wife Oma and called for an investigation into a posh residence... In the ensuing furore the budget has assumed a lower proportion.

UNC's MP Ganga Singh detailed charges that material has been diverted from a government hospital construction to the private housing construction of Housing Minister Keith Rowley. The debate has been effectively sidetracked. It was the least that could be expected in this budget speech.

Mr. Manning had taken the high ground on matters of integrity. We are committed to being a government accountable to the people and absolutely rigorous in the management of public funds. Even from that high ground however, Mr. Manning was two days later, still to clarify how far reaching the probe has been. It has now been passed into the hands of Attorney General John Jeremie, responsible for advising what is to be done after the specialist study of all documents. It is now for Mr. Jeremie to instruct the procedure by which in this manner the Prime Minister's commitment to the highest standard of ethics, transparency and accountability in the people's business may be best upheld.

On the matter of the affair that is going on right now, people have been blaming Barrington "Skippy" Thomas saying that he is the Tobago UNC person who gave Mr. Singh the documents. He has denied the fact.

"Thomas claimed that 'everybody in Tobago' knew about the matter before Singh made it public and produced documents..."

The UNC official said he knew of Rowley's enterprise from a former employee of the hospital project who showed him certain documents.

Thomas said he took the information he had to Tobago House of Assembly Chief Secretary Orville London who promised to look into the matter, but never did.”

Suzanne Mills writing in the *Newsday*—

Mr. Hinds: Tell us what you think.

Dr. F. Khan: I think he “tief”. “Tief” going on. “What yuh want meh say?” He asked me what I think, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I told you before to address the Speaker and do not be sidetracked.

Dr. F. Khan: I wish I had an extra 30 minutes. I commend the Prime Minister for having this investigation. A couple things must be taken into consideration. We want to find out who was the Minister of Planning and Development at the time; how many contracts Mr. Elias got and were they selective or invitational tender?

The people who made the most noise when the UNC was there are the ones who are most corrupt. At the end of the day, I want an investigation launched into the Russel Latapy High School. Find out if the contractor was the lowest tender. Is he associated with anybody who did any investigation on the Biche High School? Was selective tendering there, too?

3.45 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to go into housing in my last couple of minutes, but before I do that I will read what the Constitution of Trinidad and Tobago states in section 4:

“THE RECOGNITION AND PROTECTION OF FUNDAMENTAL HUMAN RIGHTS
AND FREEDOMS

PART 1

Rights enshrined

(d) The right of the individual to equality of treatment from any public authority in the exercise of any functions;”

Mr. Speaker, the question was asked:

“Could the Minister state whether the occupants of the newly built Housing Units in Barataria/San Juan, St. Joseph, Tunapuna, San Fernando West, Ortoire/Mayaro have been selected, and if yes, provide the list of the names of the successful applicants and the date of applicants?”

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[DR. KHAN]

Monday, October 18, 2004

The answer indicated that:

“The Minister of Housing wishes to advise the House of Representatives that the Government’s housing programme is not formulated on the construction or distribution of housing units on a constituency basis.”

This was in March.

“...the Minister advises that no allocation have been made as yet in the areas mentioned in the question hence the names of the occupants of these new units are not available.”

Mr. Speaker, we went on to ask for environmental clearance certificates for those houses, and all the answers on Friday, April 23, 2004 showed that there were no certificates of environmental clearance; “They did not need any,” et cetera. Miss Beckles answered in that way and apparently she was put under some fire.

The Government has embarked on what is called an Accelerated Housing Programme to house the poor, the downtrodden, the low-income groups, et cetera. Mr. Speaker, that is what they call the Accelerated Housing Programme in keeping with Government’s policy.

The Prime Minister in this address on the budget indicated:

“The main goals of our social development programme must therefore be access to adequate shelter for the low-middle and low-income groups.”

He goes on to say that the accelerated housing programme in Barataria/San Juan, the joint ventures; an additional 6,300 units at 14 sites with the movement; urban renewal and development; there is a large complex in South at Roy Joseph Street, San Fernando and some in Caroni, and he goes on to speak about housing finances, et cetera.

Mr. Speaker, when asked about those housing lots, it was indicated that it was not given out on a constituency basis. It was given out on what basis, Mr. Speaker? It was given out by allocation, whoever applies, et cetera.

Mr. Speaker, the Representation of the People Act says in section 96:

“Other offences and savings.”

“(1) A person is guilty of a corrupt practice who is guilty of bribery.

- (2) (a) gives any money or procures any office to or for any elector or to or for any other person on behalf of any elector or to or for any other person in order to induce any elector to vote or refrain from voting;

- (5) An elector is guilty of bribery who, before or during an election, directly or indirectly by himself or by any other person on his behalf, receives, agrees to receive, or contracts for any money, gift, loan or valuable consideration, office, place or employment for himself or for any other person for voting or agreeing to vote or for refraining or agreeing to refrain from voting.”

And they go on for valuable consideration and so on.

Mr. Speaker, if the distribution of houses in this country is not in keeping with equal opportunities principles, and not on a constituency basis to allow the constituents to get access to those houses first, and you are bringing people and voters from elsewhere to gerrymander the voting demographics of this country in order to win an election, you are guilty of a corrupt practice.

The Equal Opportunity Act clearly indicates—it has not been passed by the Government—but discrimination by victimization against employees, sex, this was passed by the UNC government—equal opportunity—which is not being given to the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Speaker, in the United States of America they have recognized that there is a need for fair housing and equal opportunity, to the point that the US Department of Housing gives \$17.6 million in grants to public and private housing groups to fight housing discrimination. There are a host of laws and executive orders that determines—The Fair Housing Act prohibits discrimination in the housing, the Civil Rights Act, the Rehabilitation Act, the tightening of the Housing Community Development Act, the American Disability Act, because they have recognized that unequal opportunity exists in housing.

The United States Department of Housing also has a whole mission for non-discrimination, fair housing,

A strong commitment to affirmatively...further fair housing is not only Department’s guiding principles; it is a requirement for participation, housing contractors and community development programs.

What they are saying is that fair housing is necessary in the United States of America—a developed country which we hope to be in the year 2020. We are not practising that, we are just practising what we want.

Mr. Speaker, I now go to a situation in England. I am going to read something about a lady called Dame Shirley Porter. She was the daughter and heir of Jack, the

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[DR. KHAN]

Monday, October 18, 2004

founder of Tesco supermarkets. She married Leslie Porter, chaired the Environment Committee. She was a conservative councilor for Hyde Park Ward. I quote:

“The Conservatives were narrowly re-elected in Westminster in the 1986 elections. Fearing that they would lose control unless there was a change in the social composition of the City, she instituted a secret policy known as ‘Building Stable Communities’”.

Accelerated housing programme.

“An important part of this policy was the designation of much of the City’s council housing for sale rather than re-let, should the flats become vacant. The designated housing was concentrated in wards which were they most likely to change hands in the elections.”

A marginal area. I continue:

“Labour councillors and members of the public referred this policy to the District Auditor to check on its legality. In 1989 the policy was halted; however, in 1990 the Conservatives were re-elected in Westminster in a landslide election victory in which they won all but one of the wards targeted by ‘Building Stable Communities.’”

Shirley Porter, who had been made a Dame (DBE) in 1991, stood down as Leader of the Council...”

I continue to quote:

“In 1996 the District Auditor concluded that the “Building Stable Communities” policy had been illegal and ordered Shirley Porter and five others to pay the cost of the illegal policy, which he calculated as £27,000,000. This judgement was upheld by the High Court in 1997...”

She fled to Israel.

Mr. Speaker, there is precedence for litigation. There is an article from Matt Weaver, taken from the Internet Guardian.co.uk:

“The Westminster homes for votes scandal, Britain’s longest-running council corruption saga, looks set to enter a new phase as audit officials consider how to tackle a series of separate allegations about the affair.

Late last year, the Law Lords unanimously ordered former Westminster leader Dame Shirley Porter and her successor, David Weeks, to pay £27m surcharge for gerrymandering in the 1980s.

The decision vindicated the district auditor, John Magill, who investigated the scandal, which involved designating council houses for sale in marginal Tory wards in order to replace poor voters with professionals.

The audit commission is now deciding on whether Mr. Magill or another auditor should deal with separate objections on other aspects of the gerrymandering policy.

Other allegations include that the council sold off a homeless hostel in one of the key wards at a price way below market value, and that it targeted investment in environmental improvements in marginal wards.

Objectors also want an investigation into the amount of money spent on the gerrymandering strategy in terms of hiring consultants as well as the use of officer time. And they allege that the planning system was politically manipulated, resulting in a loss of public facilities in the borough.

And the investigation continued, Mr. Speaker, on February 04, 2004:

The leader of Westminster city council is facing calls for his resignation after the publication of the district auditor's...

...its disgraced former leader, Dame Shirley Porter, for her attempts to gain political support in the 1980s by selling off council homes in marginal wards to potential Tory voters.

...the gerrymandering policy that was officially known as Building Stable Communities."

Mr. Speaker, the PNM Government is guilty of that practice. Unfortunately, we do not have auditors. I hope that we have an auditor in the Ministry of National Housing who would be able to tell us about the link between the PNM, marginal seats, the housing scandal they are doing right now, and whether or not they are selling houses or giving away houses for votes in marginal constituencies. I do not know if the Minister of Housing, Member for Diego Martin West, would like to answer that. Of course, he is not listening.

Mr. Speaker, it has long been alluded to that that is what is occurring in this housing scandal. The marginal seats are being targeted a la the EBC report. Many of the housing complexes are being placed in areas that would give the PNM a definite advantage in the coming election. Mr. Speaker, we wanted to get proof on that and I got a letter signed by the Land Assembly Co-ordinator of the National Housing Authority, I think it is Deborah Cheeseman:

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[DR. KHAN]

Monday, October 18, 2004

Internal memoranda of the NHA

To: The Chairman National Housing Authority
From: The Land Assembly Co-ordinator of the National Housing Authority.
Date: February 26, 2002.
Subject: Report on the meeting held with the Chairman.

- (1) Matters discussed
 - (a) The government's objective to construct 100,000 two and three bedroom multi-family and single-family units for low-income citizens;
 - (b) Areas to receive priority attention for new housing construction are as follows:

4.00 p.m.

Areas to receive priority attention for new housing construction are as follows:

- (a) San Fernando West
- (b) San Juan/Barataria
- (c) Tunapuna
- (d) Ortoire/Mayaro
- (e) St. Joseph
- (f) Tobago.

Mr. Speaker, decisions taken—and I want the press to listen to this—in an official NHA document.

The authority to communicate with the People's National Movement constituency representatives and chairpersons for the listed constituencies seeking their assistance and co-operation in identifying the following:

1. Lands for new housing construction in those areas.
2. Contractors with a track record in the housing industry.

And I understand that a deputy political leader gave them many of the names of the contractors to do this house-padding and gerrymandering.

Mr. Speaker, it is here in black and white that this Government is now being accused of what Dame Shirley Porter—Dame Shirley Porter was fined £27 million for gerrymandering votes in marginal constituencies and allowed Tory to win a landslide election.

We call upon the public and the powers that there be, that the PNM is doing the same thing and this official document from February 26, 2002, puts it directly on the doorsteps of the PNM gerrymandering housing in this country to win the next election by constitutional majority.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you.

Mr. Speaker: I would like to bring to the attention of hon. Members, a certain development I have noticed recently in the debates. Members are using newspaper reports and other documents to quote from. It is quite clear in the May's *Parliamentary Practice* 22nd edition at page 72:

A Member may read extracts from documents but such extracts and quotations should be reasonably short. The purpose of this rule is to maintain the cut and thrust of the debate which depends upon successive speakers meeting in their speeches to some extent the arguments of earlier speeches.

I appeal to Members, when they are referring to newspaper articles and other documents, to be very short in using them. Do not let quotations from newspaper articles or other periodicals be the substance of your contributions.

The Minister in the Ministry of National Security (Hon. Fitzgerald Hinds): Thank you very warmly, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I join all of the organizations and responsible and well-meaning citizens of Trinidad and Tobago, including my colleagues on this side, in congratulating the Minister of Finance, in that capacity, and also as Prime Minister, for a budget that, in my humble view, takes us well along the way to achieving the national goal that we have set and outlined in the document, referred to as Vision 2020—regardless of what a few others might have to say.

I propose to deal with some of the matters within our purview at the Ministry of National Security and I, therefore, would like to set a bit of a philosophical backdrop to what I have to say.

Many Members of the Opposition made reference and, of course, led by the Member for Couva North, the Leader of the Opposition, to the horrific state of criminal activity in Trinidad and Tobago.

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[HON. F. HINDS]

Monday, October 18, 2004

Mr. Speaker, I agree with those who hold the view that crime is as we define it. Parliaments of various countries, and legislators decide what the society will treat or view as a crime—serious offences against the society—and treat with these in a particular way. But beyond that, crime and antisocial behaviour is a manifestation of human conduct, the human spirit which, as we all know, has the capacity to be positive, good, clean, noble and godly, so to speak; and on the other hand, to be ugly, horrible, devilish, and devious. Crime is a manifestation of that kind of conduct.

As is well known, all crimes are sins but not all sins are crimes. It is a sin to hate; it is a sin to hold murderous thoughts about someone; it is a sin to envy or to be jealous, but those are not in accordance with most laws including ours; those are not crimes.

The human spirit has also been a challenge to generations past, all generations. In fact, according to the Christian and biblical account of the beginning of man, even in the kingdom of God there was crime.

The story is told about the great angel, Michael, who became envious of the Creator, envious of His might and His power and sought to overthrow Him and became Lucifer, when he was cast upon the earth. The story does not tell us from earth he went any place else. So from the beginning he has been here with us and we have to contend with that element of the human spirit. And, therefore, with this as a bit of a backdrop, I often have to ask my friends on the other side, how they can blame anyone for crime.

I made it a point when we were in Opposition, in all of my numerous contributions to debates in this House over the last nine years, never to accuse the UNC or the Government for crime. Because common sense told me that it could not be right; it does not make sense blaming the Member for Couva North, when he was the Minister of National Security, for a murder that took place somewhere. What I did say is that because of the way the UNC governed, they created a climate in which crime proliferated, much in accordance with Durkheim's nomie theory.

The Leader of the Opposition, in his contribution, spoke at length about the purported colonial mentality of the Government which, according to him, underpins the budget presentation by the Member for San Fernando East and Minister of Finance. I want to quote the Member for Couva North very briefly, at page 5:

“When Trinidad and Tobago became Independent in 1962, the nation thought that we would be seeing the end of colonialism and the beginning of freedom in our land. The irony however was that having given freedom on the one

hand, our present rulers held on to a culture based on a hidden admiration for our colonizers. You see it in their thoughts and hear it in their speech and expressions and see it in their actions.

When you look at the budget on a whole, you are forced to ask: ‘In what mode is it being cast? Is it still in the colonial paradigm or is it within a democratic context?’ When a country such as ours; rich in natural resources, talent, beauty and brains, proclaims to be the lighted torch of democracy, are we speaking merely of the ability to run a country without colonial intervention or do we mean that we are intellectually and psychologically free from the shackles of our colonial past?”

Mr. Speaker, those were the words of the Member for Couva North just a few days ago! But as I continue to read his entire contribution in order to find few of the useful things he had to say, notwithstanding all that talk about colonialism, he quoted Albert Einstein; he quoted Warren Davis he quoted McGoffin, he quoted a Zen proverb, he quoted Bo Rofstein and Stolle, he quoted the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB) extensively and he quoted Helen Keller and ended by quoting Thucydides.

Mr. Speaker, I went into the Colliers Encyclopedia, Volume 22, to catch up on some of the Greek history with which I am vaguely familiar. Under caption for Thucydides, it says he existed between 460 and 400 B.C. He was an Athenian historian and he was born about 460 B.C. and died probably about 400.

Mr. Speaker, the text says he was not a democrat by conviction, for he held that the oligarchic constitution of 411 was the best that Athens had known in his lifetime.

I understood when I read that, why the Member for Couva North wanted to quote all of the criticisms about colonial past and why he would want to go that far. And interestingly enough, right after the definition of Thucydides, comes the word “thug” and that is defined as:

“THUG, a hoodlum or murderer, originally a member of a community of professional assassins who flourished in Northern India during the late Mogul period and were suppressed by the British in the second quarter of the 19th Century.”

The thugs were always unarmed, very apparently gentle, courteous in their demeanour, they attached themselves to individuals—and I want the Members for St. Augustine, St. Joseph, Couva South and others to take careful note—

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[HON. F. HINDS]

Monday, October 18, 2004

“or small parties of travelers and sometimes traveled for days with their prospective victims awaiting a convenient opportunity to strike. Three thugs were usually assigned one victim. When the signal was given, two grasped his arms and legs, the third strangled him with a running noose. The body was buried with dispatch and the booty collected.”

Thereafter, they performed a ceremonial sacrifice and they had a feast of raw sugar. I found that very interesting!

I do not want to go as far as Greek methodology; I do not want to quote any Zen proverb; I do not want to quote Albert Einstein or Helen Keller. I want to quote a son of the Caribbean, a King of Reggae, one of my favourite artistes, the original Rastaman, Bob Marley. Bob Marley tells us in a song, and I quote: “When the rain falls it ‘doh’ fall on one man’s house.”

So all of the Member for Couva North’s very threatening, hostile, aggressive and violent, inciting comments during his contribution, I say to him, in accordance with the words of Bob Marley, when the rain falls, it does not fall on one man’s house and that he should desist from that kind of conduct in this Parliament particularly and, in this country. That is my word on behalf of my constituents to the Member for Couva North. [*Desk thumping*]

I also want to tell him, because he described the Vision 2020 project that we have set this nation, as a silly statement. That is what he had to say. He dismissed it as being very silly. There are many countries in the world that have vision 2020, projects.

I have a copy of India’s vision 2020 document in my possession which I have read twice. All countries of the world from the Bandung conference days, the Group of 77 in the 1970s and 1980s, all countries in our circumstances want to develop, want to advance, want betterment for our people in education, science, medicine, health. We want modern cutting-edge standards for our people. What is wrong with the Prime Minister and the PNM coming up with a plan to take this nation forward like every other, and why would the Member simply call it silly and stupid? Is it because it did not come from him?

4.15 p.m.

I also want to tell him, quoting Bob Marley again, that even when that rain falls, it would not fall only on our house. He would benefit from the beauty and the growth that is envisioned in Vision 2020. This is for all of us, and as I understand the Vision 2020 project, all citizens—every age, every race, every

religious persuasion and every political persuasion will have an opportunity to grow as individuals, to achieve their personal best and while they do that, the nation itself will grow and rise up to achieve the best that we can as a nation and we will all be the better off for it.

In this contribution, he snarled in his usual way like a Bengal Tiger. I want to quote from an article. My friend, the Member for Barataria/San Juan, quoted lavishly, but I would not be so unkind to you, Mr. Speaker. I want to quote rather fleetingly from a document—in fact, it was reported by one Prior Beharry in the *Express* of October 14, 2004. Mr. Panday criticized Sen. Christine Sahadeo, spewing bile and venom at the hon. Member. He told this House shamelessly, after he described her as a proverbial putna and things that are not worthy of repeating; all sorts of typically nasty things—and this is the part that attracted me, particularly, in my capacity as support to Minister Martin Joseph in National Security:

“I need not tell you what was the fate of the ill-fated Putna. Krishna had no mercy in exposing the evil-doer for what she was, before taking her very life.”

Do you hear the words the Member uses? And he mixes it with Hindu philosophy and he pretends to be nice and honest and clean, but he knows full well that he is stirring up emotions in the national community, that threatens the stability of our society.

I remember well, in 1997, I told this Parliament that the Member for Couva North claimed, when he went to India, to have seen the honourable religious leader Sai Baba. But he could not have seen Sai Baba. Based on his conduct, he must have seen Ali Baba who taught him to manage his forty thieves. I said that here. He put his hand like this—I shall never forget—and he smiled at me. I saw his fangs when he smiled and he told me he was going to a meeting that night to tell the people what I had said. He went to the meeting and told them that I had said that Sai Baba is Ali Baba, and I received two letters containing death threats, which I still have. He did that; the Member for Couva North. [*Interruption*]

Yes, I can. This is the kind of thing he has been doing consistently. He is doing it so frequently and so deceptively that we are beginning to become immune to it. But I consider these things very frightening and very threatening because they are having an effect on his “listenership” and is threatening our well-being in this country.

He said of Minister Rahael and I quote:

“...last year I warned you that you had scorched the earth in Central Trinidad and that the earth would not forgive you. I assure you that it has not, and your day of reckoning shall surely come.”

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[HON. F. HINDS]

Monday, October 18, 2004

He went on to say, and I quote again:

“I am told that if it is Caroni lands you are looking for, all they will get is six feet of it.”

Can you imagine that coming from the mouth of a long-standing politician, a former prime minister? Clearly, this is a man who is determined to create mayhem in a country he feels he cannot live in unless he holds the reins of power.

And if that was not enough, the *Guardian* newspaper of Wednesday, October 06, 2004 reports under the rubric “Panday on discrimination”; headline, “Young Indians ready to shed their blood”. The article says:

“Opposition Leader Basdeo Panday has said young Indians were prepared to shed their blood to end discrimination in this country and he might not be able to stop the bloodshed...”

They are saying, ‘this is we land, too and we are going to fight for it, if we have to shed we blood’...

‘I can tell them now, if we don’t deal with the issue of discrimination in this country, racial, political and all kinds of discrimination...there will be a violent confrontation in this country...’”

You know something, Mr. Speaker, thank God the young East Indians of this country and the old—in fact the majority of citizens of this country—have been demonstrably patriotic, demonstrably social, demonstrably lovers of Trinidad and Tobago and demonstrably unwilling to follow the dictates, the encouragement and the incitement of the Member for Couva North. Thank God they ignore him in the main, but for a few exceptions.

Mr. Speaker, in all that we do, we look at Haiti; we look at Rwanda, the former Yugoslavia and we see what societies can degenerate to. We see in a neighbouring country, what societies can degenerate to. We see in Jamaica, for example, at election time, there is a tremendous amount of violence; and that very Member is coming in this Parliament to tell us about national security and curbing crime, while at the same time he wantonly and purposely encourages it. But God is good and we have escaped the worst excesses of that kind of thing and I trust we will continue to.

I listened to the Member for Caroni East and his contribution and he spoke, read documents and had himself a great time. That would not have been the first time that the Member for Caroni East had come to this Parliament and attempted to raise scandal without any real foundation. You will remember, Mr. Speaker,

that was the very Member who came to this House in a budget debate two years ago and said that two PNM Ministers were receiving bribes from some foreign oil company and when he was questioned about it, he went on record as saying that he had raised the matter with the US Embassy. When the press contacted the US Embassy, they said they had heard nothing about it and that the Member had never spoken to them.

I remember only recently—I do not think I want to remember those things; let me leave that. It is enough for us to understand what the Member is capable of and we have to watch him closely. We know the situation and we will not prejudice the matter. We will wait. Let me not waste my time.

I read carefully the contribution of the Member for Couva North and he says, of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service, an institution that I hold very dear for obvious and perhaps not so obvious reasons. It is obvious because I was a member and it was my first job as a young man. I tell people that I was born in the police service. I became a man in the police service. I left the Cadet Force at the rank of sergeant and I went into the Police Training College and it made me who I am and I am proud of that. I am very, very concerned when I hear wanton and reckless comments being made.

I was an instructor in the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service, too. I had an opportunity to share and to work with thousands of young men through my years as a police officer. Listen to what the Member had to say. People are listening out there so I must correct it.

“It is clear to everyone in this country that the police service has a serious imbalance with respect to the two ethnic majorities. For whatever reason, Afro-Trinidadians are the predominant majority in the service, as indeed they are in the regiment and coast guard”

Mr. Speaker, he said “for whatever reason”. He is an experienced politician. He understands the history of this country and he understands well why things might have appeared a certain way. Mr. Speaker, you can just look at the teaching service; you can look at the entire public service; you can look at the police service and you cannot see the imbalance he is seeing. You cannot. He incites these things without foundation.

I remind him that I served as a young constable under an Assistant Commissioner of Police called Mr. Dennis Ramdwar. I work closely now in my official duties with an Assistant Commissioner of Police called Mr. Hosein. I was not a member of the police service at the time when Mr. Kenny Mohammed was Commissioner and I can go on and on.

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[HON. F. HINDS]

Monday, October 18, 2004

I had an opportunity to look at a list of members of the police service and would be foolish to judge by names because, as I told this House before, I saw a very Chinese teacher in a senior comprehensive school at which I did an address about a year ago, and her name was Mrs. Ramsaran. You can see a pure African woman with an East Indian name or a Chinese name. This is the beauty of Trinidad and Tobago. So while I look at the list of those in the police service, I cannot come to conclusions, but I can tell you that the imbalance that the Member sees, nobody else sees it and that is what makes him dangerous.

Mr. Speaker, it is all intended to incite racial hatred in a beautiful land and we must reject it. We must reject it forcefully. I tell my children that racism is a sin and I mean that. He said, as well, in his budget response, that Trinidad and Tobago has become a key transshipment point for drugs and guns. See how clever he is or thinks he is. He did not say when, but from public knowledge we know because of our geography. We are the most southerly island in the region, next to Venezuela, that continent, South America. We know that Trinidad and Tobago is a transshipment point for drugs going to Europe. Actually it is the Caribbean chain. We are all grappling with this problem. The hon. Member knows that. He spoke about it in this House before. But he says “it has become”, lending the impression to unwary souls that it became so over the last three years. I just want to put it on record that it has been so for a long time and it is one of the challenges that this developing nation state that is Trinidad and Tobago has to contend with—to protect our people from the ravages of drugs and the illegal gun trade.

We are attempting to deal with those matters. You would have heard, hon. Members, the Prime Minister tell us not once, but twice, that we are establishing radar protection around the country, 360° radar coverage to maintain surveillance on the entire—

PROCEDURAL MOTION

The Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley): Mr. Speaker, just before we take the tea break, I want to move a motion in accordance with Standing Order 90(1). I beg to move the suspension of Standing Order 63(5) to allow this budget debate to continue tomorrow, that is the fourth day, after the resumption of the debate.

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. Speaker: At this time, hon. Members, the sitting is suspended for tea and will be resumed at 5.10 p.m.

4.30 p.m.: *Sitting suspended.*

5.10 p.m.: *Sitting resumed.*

**APPROPRIATION BILL
(BUDGET)**

Mr. F. Hinds: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Before we took the break I was making the point that we are in the process of establishing 360° radar coverage around Trinidad and Tobago to keep surveillance on our borders. As well, we are processing the retention of three OPV vessels with helicopter capacity. While we are sometimes aware of movement of illicit operators from the mainland into Trinidad, it is another thing to have the capacity to intercept them. That is one of the challenges. We are moving as well to procure some fast interceptors. They would be stationed at strategic position, along with the helicopters on these OPVs, so when we become aware of any illicit movement we would be able to strike and get a hold of them before they could make that 25-minute or 28-minute run from the mainland into the ports of Trinidad and Tobago.

That is the only part of the problem. Things come into the country by way of containers and barrels as well. We have indicated that we are trying to obtain equipment to scan the containers for illicit elements: guns and drugs. I know my friends on the other side and members of the public would ask, you want to do this and that, how is it that you have not done it as yet? The reality is that Trinidad and Tobago may be one of the better-off countries in the region, but by international standards we are poor. By international standards, we are a developing nation. We are evolving as we go along, obtaining higher edge and cutting edge technologies. This is the whole situation. This is why I find Vision 2020 so important.

What we need to do as a nation, not the PNM or the UNC, is to quicken the pace of our development, not only in terms of national security, but in education, health, social service delivery and all other facets of our activity. We as a nation need to quicken the pace of development. We need to stop squandering money as we do in some ways, so that we can have money. My friends on the other side say they want the best in education, they want schools and everything. Everybody wants health centres, hospitals and everything in health. Everywhere, in terms of governmental activity, everybody wants top level technologies now. The reality is that a country has to budget, which is what this debate is all about. In this case, we are talking about \$27 billion. This is a statement of intent. This is what we hope to raise by way of revenue. When you hear citizens saying they should remove value added tax, reduce taxes and drop the price of petrol for motor vehicles, you wonder how they want the Government to do all these things and at the same time provide all the services they demand. This is the challenge of government and we are up to it.

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. G. Singh*]

Question put and agreed to.

Hon. F. Hinds: I am most grateful. There are about 49 known ports around Trinidad and Tobago. Recently, we caused 28 of them to be IPS compliant. We brought them up to a level of security that is acknowledged internationally. We have done so with 28 and moving to do so with others.

I cannot help recalling again that the Member for Couva North said that certain members of the business community, East Indians, are being targeted by kidnapers. As I proceed I want him to know that people are targeted not because of their race or their sex, but because of money. I think it is money that attracts the horrible activity of kidnapping. There are elements of drug trade reprisals in all of that, too. These are issues that the intelligence agencies and the security services are monitoring closely and trying to deal with. Kidnapping is one of the most dreadful crimes that we can record. The citizenry is genuinely and justifiably very afraid and worried about this phenomenon of kidnapping that has developed over the years in the country.

The Member for Couva North made reference to kidnapping. What he did not tell us however, is that—this is not a boast, one kidnapping is too much, as far as we are concerned because it wreaks havoc with people emotionally and otherwise—the figures are heading south. That is because of things we are doing at the level of national security and the agencies that are responsible. There are some definite things that we are doing. The figures are there for all to see. The figures are heading down south. We will continue, until we bring the thing completely under control. I am confident and so, too, is Minister Martin Joseph. We can tell you we are confident, notwithstanding all the ill reports, that we are doing the right things and we are bringing the situation under good control. We are very unrelenting and confident.

Mr. Speaker, we are monitoring known offenders in this business. There are some that are known and they are under constant monitoring. We know that, they know that. The work is going on. We have improved the technology for the detection of certain kinds of crimes. In terms of dealing with kidnapping and drugs, we have improved our technology significantly and we are continuing. I want to take this opportunity—the Prime Minister announced the introduction of the special Anti-Crime Unit of Trinidad and Tobago last year. My friends were scathing in their criticisms but we know of its impact. We know it is up and running, working very, very well and the best is yet to be. That unit is impacting. I

want to congratulate the Brigadier, his men and women for an excellent job so far and only to urge them to continue. [*Desk thumping*] Crime is about opportunity.

As I said, crime is about sin. Once people have an opportunity to do things they would do them. What we are doing is trying to close the gaps and reduce the opportunities. It is not exactly easy in a highly competitive world; a world with information technology. You would be surprised to know that people who are producing documents outside of the official—there was a time in this country when things were happening in the official offices, documents were produced from the records. Today people are doing it outside, without the support of these offices. They are doing it particularly well. We have to get on the cutting edge of things and managing it is becoming more and more difficult, but we are up to the task. We know the problems and we are trying to resolve them.

We need a little support from time to time, in terms of legislation. We cannot be assured that we will get it. Recently we settled and we will be bringing, it is on the legislative agenda, some anti-terrorism legislation. We would really like the support of our friends from the other side. Do you know what they would tell us? Just like the Police Reform Bills, they would say: “We are afraid of the Prime Minister. We do not trust the PNM. We do not trust the Prime Minister.” That is what they will tell you. They will not give us and the country an opportunity to deal with the kidnappers and the gun runners because they are afraid of the PNM. They meet with us in the tea room. They are really not afraid, it is talk about fear. It appears as though they “fraid” the criminals less. If they were genuinely patriotic, as they should be, they would support the legislation which we brought here. We need to send a signal to the criminals that we are law-abiding people, particularly we, as parliamentarians, are solid in unity against them because they are bringing pain to the people of this country. With or without their help we will do our best, you can be assured of that.

Mr. Speaker, many people make comments about crime. When you really listen, sometimes you are in pain because much of it is often based on ignorance. There are a number of things: The police service is the major platform in our struggle against crime. If we fix the police service, we would have fixed our capacity to attack and prevent crime a whole lot better. As you know we came here and tried to get the management of the police service a little improved in this modern time and they were rebuffed by my friends on the other side. Now we have the task of managing, or attempting to support the commissioner and his executive in managing the police service on the same tracks that it ran in the pre-Independence days; thanks to the UNC.

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[HON. F. HINDS]

Monday, October 18, 2004

Fortunately for this country, the majority of members of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service are decent, hardworking and honest people. Of course, it is not any secret that there are some dishonest ones who are involved in illegal and criminal activities. We are trying to close the gaps and opportunities and we will deal with the criminals in the country inside or outside the police service, once we are able to get a hold of them. We are working to sort those things out.

There are approximately 216 murders to date, in the country. As I said earlier, I never blamed the UNC for crime. Recently, one of the murders involved two friends who were in a bar in Penal arguing over a drink and one killed the other. That contributed to it. How on God's earth could you blame the Member for Couva North or the Member for San Fernando East for that? In another case, in my own constituency, a man murdered his wife. It happens all over Trinidad and Tobago. How do you blame the Minister of National Security for that? These are the kinds of things. There was the London family who was convicted for certain things. What do you do? Mr. Speaker, the real struggle—in some cases they use guns. This is part of our policy and effort: to take guns off the streets. The Government finances Crime Stoppers and other institutions assist. We are trying to inspire the community to report the stolen guns, so that we can deal with them. We have improved the technology to find them without support. Once we use the intelligence we have, we could go out there and find the guns. We have been doing that.

The robberies around Port of Spain have gone down significantly. They would not compliment the Interagency Task Force. That is a group of soldiers, sailors and police officers, based not far from here. The joint army/police patrol is all along the corridors in Central and San Fernando. The snatch-and-grab robberies in Port of Spain have gone down significantly. They would not know that. You do not read about the bank robberies or robberies on Queen or Frederick Streets anymore. The guys understand that we have closed the gap and reduced the opportunity. Any corner they turn, they are likely to run into a serious military patrol. We do not hear about that too much anymore. They are not foolish. They would not stay in Port of Spain. They have gone elsewhere. We are moving with them. This is why the struggle is intelligence driven. This is why I am as vague as I am, because it is all about intelligence.

The Interagency Task Force, for January 2004, did 552 patrols in the day and 498 patrols in the night. I could go right on to September 2004. The figures are very fascinating. There were many patrols night and day: foot patrols and mobile patrols. There were significant numbers of arrests. They have detected several

firearms. In fact, we have a policy on getting guns off the streets. We are working steadfastly on that.

We are providing the police service with the resources that it needs. We recognize that throwing money alone would not do the business. It has to do with highly motivated and highly trained men and women. Therefore, we are moving to train the officers. We are looking at the training programmes from the Police Training College. We are sending police officers off to developed and other countries so that they can get the training and level of motivation that they need to fight crime. It takes a lot of courage and guts. They make a tremendous sacrifice in order to protect us in this country. As you do that, the business community and other people called for more robust searches. We are doing that. The public at some times are inconvenienced, but it is a price you have to pay. You have to balance that. Good citizens are willing and quite ready to deal with a little inconvenience in order that we can flush out and deal with those who are making all of us as uncomfortable as we are.

5.25 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, five police officers have lost their lives this year. There is not too much of an outcry when that happens. You hear an outcry when the police are involved in something and, justifiably so, but I think it should go both ways. I can tell you that across the national community, some of the persons who offend the society the most are the ones who shout out police brutality. This is something that we will never encourage. We have made it quite clear that police officers are bound by the law and bound by the Constitution. At the same time, there are persons who shriek when their homes or other homes in their neighborhood are being searched, but this is part of the price that persons would have to pay.

If there were no upsurge in criminal activity, there would not be that response. That response is absolutely necessary, and police officers are at the forefront of it.

I want to congratulate the Commissioner of Police, as well as police officers. Oftentimes, we take their work for granted. We run from bandits—we do not want to meet them and we do not want to see them—but these men and women, along with soldiers and others, have to go and find these bandits at 3 o'clock in the morning. I think the society deserves to applaud those who are so inclined, and those who do it honestly, as most officers do.

We are working hard with respect to improving the management of the police service, even with the current legislative arrangements; inadequate as they may be. Mr. Speaker, as we are all aware, \$2.3 billion was allocated to the Ministry of

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[HON. F. HINDS]

Monday, October 18, 2004

National Security. This was the second largest allocation in this year's budget presentation—second only to education. This shows the Government's priorities. So, there is education on one hand and national security on the other hand. These two ministries have received the best.

Mr. Speaker, just for the benefit of my friend from Fyzabad, I want to run through this matter quickly. We are not making any joke in the Ministry of National Security. Traditionally, there was the question of money for designs in one year, and the money for construction in the next year. We say, no, we have to quicken the pace of development. In this fiscal year, 12 new police stations will be built, and there are a series of police stations for refurbishment. [*Desk thumping*] This will be happening in one year, rapid fire. In this fiscal year, the people will be getting one police station a month.

These police stations are as follows: Belmont Police Station—I saw the design for that station. The Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West would be very proud of the design. We are doing things differently. "T N T" does not only mean Trinidad and Tobago for us, but it also means "try new things".

Mr. Giuliani came and offered advice, which we rejected for very good reasons. We are getting advice in policing from experts around the world; we are also getting value for money; and we are making great use of the advice. The new police station is a station for 2020. [*Desk thumping*] I wish I had more time to describe that police station. I will ask my friends to tour with us when we start opening these stations—one a month, during this fiscal year.

Mr. Speaker, the following are police stations that are listed for construction: the Police Post in Maloney, Tunapuna Police Station, Roxborough Police Station, Gasparillo Police Station, the Command Centre for the E999, Carenage Police Station, St. Joseph Police Station, Manzanilla Police Station, Maracas Bay Police Station and, of course, "Old Grange" will become "New Grange" in this fiscal year. [*Desk thumping*] I also have a list of police stations that are under refurbishment.

In today's world, we expect a police officer to be skilled in human relations; we expect that he or she would be educated; we expect that he or she would be intelligent, so to speak; computer literate; and very professional. A police officer would have left a well-equipped and well-organized police station; and he would be at the cutting-edge, so that citizens would be secure, and they would see that the PNM Government is doing what it can. We are not police officers, but we will provide them with the resources and the training that they need in order to do the great job. [*Desk thumping*]

The Member for Couva North told us that we rejected the Giuliani's proposal. I just want to put on the record some of the reasons we rejected that proposal. We got a proposal and we were supposed to receive the advice from the Giuliani team. Over a six-month period, they were supposed to visit us. This proposal was going to cost us, according to them, US \$2.4 million. We compared the Giuliani's proposal with other proposals we had received, and we thought that Trinidad and Tobago deserved better value for money. [*Desk thumping*]

Mrs. Job-Davis: Thank you very much.

Hon. F. Hinds: As such, we acted in the interest of the people of Trinidad and Tobago. For some of the persons who were on the Giuliani team, for them it was all about business. There is one fellow called Gary Griffith, a former Captain of the Trinidad and Tobago Defence Force. He is well known to the national community. When he was posted at the Prime Minister's residence, rather than get on with his work, he got on with other matters for which he became famous. I imagine that he may have endeared himself to the hon. Member for Couva North. Even as we struggle to fight crime—very typical of the UNC and its friends and supporters—and to protect our citizens, they were seeing this as a window of opportunities for money and more money.

A few days ago, I went through the VIP lounge, en route to do the Ministry and the Government's business—again to protect this country from the ravages of money laundering and drug dealing—and I saw the \$98,000 door; I saw the two tables valued at \$250,000 each. So, when these shameless Members come here and talk about who is stealing this and that, I know that they are genuinely shameless.

Mr. Speaker, let me put on the record a communication from a fellow called Gary Griffith to one Carlos John, in respect of Giuliani's proposal. He was part of the Giuliani's team, looking to see how he could get in on Trinidad and Tobago's resources, even as we struggle with crime. [*Interruption*] Mr. Gary Griffith also acts as a Senator from time to time.

I have always said—I know that time is against me—that one could just watch the West Indies Cricket Team, and one could get an idea of the kind of game that they are going to play; depending on if they bring four fast bowlers or two spinners. One can assess the nature of the game by the team. When you watch the UNC's team, you would have an idea of the kind of game "Captain Panday" wants to play. When there are men like Sen. Robin Montano, Sen. Arnim Smith, Sen. Wade Mark and one Gary Griffith, you would know the kind of game that they have come to play in this country.

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[HON. F. HINDS]

Monday, October 18, 2004

Mr. Speaker, I will now read the communication.

“Subject: Never say never:

After everyone thought that the Giuliani proposal was closed, I continued to push, technically and tactically, and after pressing the right buttons, Martin Joseph has conceded and will now be contracting Giuliani after all.

I just spoke to Sean...”

I do not know who is that person but I will find out:

“they are doing an amended proposal, upon which Martin Joseph will approve.

Obviously, Martin must not know that we are in the loop and know what is going on. So the only people in TT that are aware of this is you and I, but it is a definite go.

I am not even calling Bill, since my phone may be tapped.”

I do not know where he got that:

“As the project will start in TT, they will also be submitting a plan for crisis management to prepare large organizations from man made (coups etc) and natural disasters, which will be given to the business sector. CL...”

I suspect “CL” means the place across there:

“should be very interested in this.”

So, when we are dealing with crime—all the kidnappings, murders and so forth that they are talking about—they came here and shed crocodile tears—their friends are trying to see how best they could make a few dollars at the expense of people’s emotions. Mr. Speaker, all that is for the UNC. God is great.

We have increased the number of police officers, and we intend to continue increasing the number of police officers and provide training for them. Education is important.

Recently, Minister Williams and I attended the Ninety-fourth Anniversary of the Trinidad and Tobago Cadet Force. We sat around the head table with a number of other ex cadets. We asked ourselves whether we could name persons, who we know, were members of Trinidad and Tobago Cadet Force, whose lives have gone astray, in terms of drugs or criminal activity and I could only find one person.

I spent five years in the unit at Belmont. I would have known cadets who came in during the years after me, up until I left Form V; and all the cadets who

went before me, I could only think of one person. Minister Williams knows only one such person. Among the 10 of us, we could not count 12 young men, who were former cadets and whose lives have gone astray. That crude test demonstrates, to me, the importance of youth organizations like the Trinidad and Tobago Cadet Force. This is why we have announced that we would be expending the public's money to expand the cadet force; to expand the Civilian Conservation Corps; to expand the activities of the Boy Scouts, Girl Guides, Brownies, Boys Brigade and the Junior Achievement. [*Desk thumping*]

The philosophy of the cadet force was a mixture—this is one of the good things about colonialism that we have adopted and this has served us well. This was mixing education in a kind of paramilitary disciplined environment. That is what the Military Led Academic Training (MILAT) Programme and the Military Led Youth Programme of Apprenticeship Re-orientation Training (MYPART) programmes are all about. I wish I had more time to really get into the details of these programmes. The documents are available to my friends on the other side. On this side, we are seeing the benefit of these programmes, and that is why we are supporting the Minister of Finance, as he moves to expand these programmes, to protect the young people from getting involved in anti-social behaviour.

Mr. Speaker, the police officer that we are trying to offer to the public of Trinidad and Tobago is going to be a person as I have described earlier. We are very confident that we would be able to offer the public, value for money, in respect of this matter.

With respect to the question of prison reform and rehabilitation, the Prime Minister announced a serious concern with respect to this matter. In fact, the Ministry of National Security was given this additional portfolio, to deal with prison reform and rehabilitation, which is my own responsibility; a responsibility that I thoroughly enjoy.

I want to compliment the former Prime Minister because he had asked for a study to be done with respect to prison reform. When we came into office in 2001, we saw the wisdom of it, and we did not dismantle the whole thing. We continued with it and a copy of the report was laid in Parliament. We are working with respect to moving the system from the old retributive system, to the restorative justice philosophy. That shows the dichotomy between what the classicist thinks about crime and its causes, as opposed to the positivist. Most of my friends would have read about this matter, so they know about it.

The principle of restorative justice philosophy is that the society, as well as the offender, is in some way responsible for the offending behaviours. However,

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[HON. F. HINDS]

Monday, October 18, 2004

the offender is held accountable for his or her actions. This philosophy incorporates and integrates all stakeholders: the community, the victim, the corporate society and the penal institutions, in the fight against crime, and the various strategies implemented for the effective management of the offender, within and without the prison population.

This whole restorative justice philosophy has to do with the formulation of a new public policy on crime: a reintegrated penal policy, a shared responsibility, or a model of rehabilitation. We have already put in place a parole committee, which would be looking at the business of parole. That is one of the recommendations of the Task Force Committee, in respect of this development.

There is also the community mediation, youth justice, women in prison, constructive regimes, revenue earning activities in the prison, new management and administration of the prison system and human resource management. We have already begun to train prison officers and other persons in respect to this matter. Actually, the work has started and it is ongoing.

Recently, I told a journalist that this would not be the situation where a person would get up one Monday morning and everything would be in place. This is an evolutionary process—we are pushing it; and we are doing the work. Probation services must also be improved. There will certainly be need for some legislative changes, in order to bring about the full effect of this whole rehabilitation process.

5.40 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, we understand the linkages between the enforcement and detection agencies, like customs and police and all the other agencies that work to detect and prevent crime. We also understand the importance of education in all of this, because a trained, disciplined and educated mind, especially buttressed against a healthy self-esteem, tells an individual, if I may quote David Rudder:

“You don’t have to cheat to be a winner
You don’t have to steal to get enough
You don’t have to stab somebody in the back
And still call them brother.”

You can realize your own potential, quite honestly and in a law-abiding manner, if only you follow the beaten path and do not try, in some cases, to take shortcuts. That is the problem. We are recognizing the linkages between these and, for example, the whole administration of justice process.

People have no idea the number of hours, the wetting in the rain, the hiding under old houses or the hiding in cars that the police must put in doing dangerous undercover and surveillance work, and when they arrest the fellow and take him to court, there might be some deficiency in the law, some technicality or there might be a weakness in the system. The prosecutor, who is a police prosecutor—and that is something we are trying to work our way out of—may meet a very skilled criminal lawyer; the contest is terribly imbalanced and out goes the criminal.

Mr. Speaker, we are trying to get no bail for kidnappers. There are some persistent repeaters in the kidnapping business. They turned us back on the last occasion. We propose to come again. We hope that they would really think about it this time and support it, because they complained the most about kidnapping. They should support it so that those recidivists in the kidnapping business will not have a second chance, unless they want to kidnap some other prison officer on the inside. That is what we want to do. We understand these linkages and we see the need for them.

You will see a significant allocation for the Judiciary, because we understand the importance of the Judiciary in all of this, the whole bail system, the whole legislative system. All elements of the State: the Legislature, the Executive and, of course, the Judiciary, must work together, without encroaching unconstitutionally on each other. We must send strong signals to those who intend to behave in the way some of our citizens are behaving, that we are united against them. When my friends on the other side seek to put us under pressure and blame us for crime, I tell them flat, “I take no personal responsibility for somebody else's crime.” We have a duty, however, to put the agencies and resources in place to deal with it when it happens and when we can prevent it, in the first place.

One of the weaknesses in the whole thing is the question of parenting; the communities are getting weaker and this is why the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance would have demonstrated concerns for this with a serious social delivery package. The 128 programmes that somebody here talked about today and all the criticisms of the different programmes, whether it is Citizens Conservation Corp (CCC), the Military Led Youth Programme of Apprenticeships and Re-orientation Training (MYPART), the Community-based Environmental Protection and Enhancement Programme (CEPEP) or the Unemployment Relief Programme (URP) and so on, have their purpose. They are designed to train, educate and provide well-being for our citizens, so they will not, eventually, act in those manners.

Mr. Speaker, I conclude by thanking you for permitting me to make this very brisk contribution to this important debate. I wish the Government of Trinidad and

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[HON. F. HINDS]

Monday, October 18, 2004

Tobago—of which I am but a small part—very well, as we take Trinidad and Tobago forward through this fiscal year, upwards and onwards to Vision 2020, for the benefit of all Trinidad and Tobago, to ensure that when the good rain falls, it does not fall on one man's house, but on all our houses, to our own national delight.

I thank you.

Mr. Chandresh Sharma (Fyzabad): Mr. Speaker, let me join in congratulating the hon. Prime Minister, the Minister of Finance, for the budget.

The most important element in this Parliament is the reading of the budget, because it signals to the national community what it could expect, in terms of resources. It also tells the national community how we will be living over the next year and, to a large extent, the years later down the road.

This is the first budget, presented in this Parliament, that has attracted so much national attention. In fact, listening to all the financial pundits and others, they are very, very concerned with the provisions of this budget. Many are of the opinion that it does not seem to focus on human development. It seems not to take charge of the human element in our community. It talks a lot about spending money, but what returns are we getting from this money?

When one reflects on the history of Trinidad and Tobago and what obtained here in 1970, it was, similarly, as a result of what is happening today. The PNM government of the day was not listening and the people took action. Lives were lost and, to some extent, it changed the history of our country. Then in 1990, aided and abetted by the PNM, a similar situation took place in this same Parliament. From where I am standing, the three bullet holes in the window opposite me are a very important sign. [*Crosstalk*] The Prime Minister is suggesting that he put them there. He may have caused it; he may have lent support to it. The risk factor now, Prime Minister, is that more of it may happen, if you continue in the way you are going. You and I did not wish for 1970. We did not wish for 1990, it happened; we must learn from it.

It is a singular honour to be a Prime Minister; it is a greater honour to be Prime Minister of all the people. That is, perhaps, your small failing. I am sure, in your heart, you want to be Prime Minister of all but, today, more than 50 per cent of the national community feels left out. They do not feel part of this country. We saw earlier today in a newspaper that more than 4,000 persons are migrating to the United States. Why are they migrating? They are running from the PNM. [*Laughter*] They do not feel comfortable in this country. In fact, for the last two years, Trinidad and Tobago has seen the highest number of immigration consultants

coming to Trinidad from the United States and Canada, simply because there are so many people who want to go.

If you look in the newspapers under “Homes for sale,” you see that every day the number is increasing, because more and more people just want to leave this country. You must take that into consideration. Is it because of your actions? When I say that, I mean the actions of your Government. When Members on this side speak, the intention is never to be personal. You and I were elected equally. We represent the people and we have the interest of the people in our hearts. That foolish story about “when the rain falls” is insignificant; that is playing on the emotions of the people. We represent people, too.

When my colleague, the Member for Laventille East/Morvant, spoke, the *Hansard* record would show that some of the worst statements ever made about Members in this House were made by that Member under your guidance, Prime Minister; under your supervision. The *Hansard* will have it. I am no saint; I may have made similar statements, too; but it was never my intention to cause hurt.

An event took place recently in this House that has caused me to deeply search. This is nothing personal, but it was under your administration that a former Speaker of this House was locked up. Years later, it was also under your administration that two Members of Parliament were locked up in Chaguanas. It was through no fault of yours; you are a good man; you are from South. It was under your administration that the Member for Tunapuna beat up somebody.

Mr. Manning: They might lock you up, too.

Mr. C. Sharma: I am glad you mentioned that; it is not the first time. I will come to that. I will tell you how I intend to treat with it. I want you to remember what you have said, that I, too, might get locked up. I will tell you one thing—let me deal with it immediately, Prime Minister: Oftentimes you have used that line of threatening against Members on this side. I want to tell you today, the 18th day of October, in the year 2004, that I fear nothing of that sort. I am prepared to die in defence of the people. I have been elected here. [*Desk thumping*]

That is a statement you tend to use oftentimes, as Chairman of the National Security Council, and you encourage your other Members to use it. When Manohar and Rafeeq were locked up, it was under your chairmanship. You had to contribute to it. [*Crosstalk*] I am not changing my tune; they were locked up under your supervision. We were told that you were on the phone and a police officer was seeking your guidance on that particular matter.

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[MR. SHARMA]

Monday, October 18, 2004

We saw a particular incident in Tobago, where two persons, having committed an offence, were released. Again, the story being told is that you intervened. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Manning: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. Member for giving way. Under normal circumstances, I ignore a lot of what passes for contributions in this Parliament. I think that the Member is really going too far to suggest that when certain people were locked up I was on the phone. If I had to do something like that, I would have much more finesse than that, Sir. I would not operate in that way. [*Crosstalk*] The one thing you could be sure of is that it would not have been me.

Mr. C. Sharma: Thank you, Prime Minister. At the end of the day, the facts will show that when the Speaker of the House was locked up, it happened under you; regardless of whether you had any role in it or not. The Prime Minister is the leader of this Parliament. If two Members are locked up, they are your Members, whether they are on the Opposition's side or not. When one of your Members beat another, as obtained in the Tunapuna court, it was under your leadership. When a Member who sits on your side assaulted a Member on this side, it was, again, under your leadership. [*Crosstalk*] When did it happen?

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: When Dhanraj was locked up for murder?

Mr. C. Sharma: Were you the Prime Minister then? No you were not; so you are excused. [*Laughter*] Out of six, you are guilty of five. Prime Minister, I do not want to lose focus.

The Member for Laventille East/Morvant talked about a number of things that I want to respond to very quickly. [*Crosstalk*] He spoke about the police service. Prime Minister, you caused John La Guerre and Selwyn Ryan to do some studies, which showed exactly what the Member said. Pretending that it does not exist, that in the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service, largely under your watch, meaning under the watch of the PNM, the percentage of officers of East Indian origin has been approximately 25 per cent. In the Trinidad and Tobago Coast Guard and the Trinidad and Tobago Army, the percentage is a lot less, again, under your watch.

In fact, when the Member spoke I was surprised that he did not remember the Police Service Commission's report of 2002. It said that the Commission was informed, inter alia, that the last recruitment exercise revealed that the process was marred by nepotism, favouritism, partisanship and improper background investigation. [*Interruption*] The Member for Arouca South is saying that it also obtained in 2001. So it happened in 2001, no corrective measures took place and it repeated itself in 2002.

Even to this day, the Member for Laventille East/Morvant said that he looked at the names of police officers and he could not distinguish. But in a photograph taken right in this Parliament, at a meeting in which the Police Commissioner participated and was in company with 12 other senior officers, assistant commissioners et cetera, of the 12, there was only one person of East Indian origin. Those are the facts that obtain in the national community. The UNC did not create those facts. You cannot pretend to hide those things.

5.55 p.m.

Again, earlier today the Member for Barataria/San Juan spoke about what obtains in the National Housing Authority (NHA).

There is a form with areas to receive priority attention for new housing construction as follows: San Fernando West, Barataria/San Juan, Tunapuna, Ortoire/Mayaro, St. Joseph and Tobago. These are all marginal seats and it is happening under your watch, Mr. Prime Minister.

There is a particular form that is being circulated by the NHA; "A New Way Home"; the number of the form is 24203. It is the means by which persons can seek to make an application and one of the questions asked is: How many persons including yourself would be living in the new house if you are successful?

The questions continue: Of the persons who will be living in the new house, how many fall into the following age groups?

1. 0—4 years
2. 5—11 years
3. 12—17 years
4. 18 and over.

One may ask what is the political connection here. I will tell you. The instructions at the NHA is that homes must be given to persons 18 years and over and those between 12—17 nearest to 17 years so they will be qualified to vote in the next election. That is why it appears on the form. The question on the form has no other relevance. You cannot win support on this side by fooling the people all the time.

Mr. Prime Minister, the budget has to be taken against the background of certain things like what obtained in the past. The last administration, 1995—2001, presented six budgets and they offered jobs across the board. While there was less money, the people were happy because there was food for all, security was available, and training was also available.

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[MR. SHARMA]

Monday, October 18, 2004

In the last three years under the PNM, look at what has obtained: the highest increase in crime; the highest number of kidnappings; murders; the highest number of corruption; gang warfare; failed crime plans; discrimination; and racism—and these are areas that were researched.

The level of frustration by the business community is high; unemployment—even though statistics were presented with which nobody seems to agree and which can be justified—migration of citizens; capital flight; police brutality; the number of community leaders visiting the Prime Minister; brain drain; public spending; increase in food prices and all basic necessities; wastage of public funds; inflation; money in work schemes like CEPEP, URP and others.

In the first budget you presented, Prime Minister, you spoke about empowering people, the second was sustainable development, and today we are debating the third which talks about survival. How can you move from sustainable development to survival? Survival of whom? The PNM? Trinidad and Tobago? The people of Trinidad and Tobago? All the people of Trinidad and Tobago? Whose survival are you talking about? Why are you ensuring survival? How do you move from sustainable development, empowering persons in the first instance and today \$60 billion later we see nothing for it.

Look at the number of schools that were built under the UNC and look at your track record. The airport was built the cheapest per square foot in the world and the Minister of Works and Transport knows that. Today, you pave a runway of 10,495 feet long and 110 feet wide and we have spent close to \$60 million. It is the most expensive paving that ever took place in the world. In fact, the product from the lake asphalt is used to pave the runways all over the world and it has an 18-year shelf life.

Mr. Speaker, one of the very important areas in Trinidad and Tobago is the area of local government. Of all the Government ministries that touch the lives of people is that ministry. One may never have to go to a doctor, and may not necessarily need health care. For parents who may not have children at this time, what obtains in the Ministry of Education may or may not affect them, but every citizen in Trinidad and Tobago has to obtain the services of the Ministry of Local Government.

Last year approximately 4 per cent of the budget was given to local government and this year there were a number of workshops and seminars talking about local government because you wanted to place greater emphasis and you gave less than 3 ½ per cent this year.

Mr. Speaker, in Port of Spain under this year's provision 38 cents will be spent per electorate under the development programme and these are your figures: Arima, 31 cents; San Fernando, 17 cents; Point Fortin, which has the smallest electorate, 50 cents; Chaguanas, the largest growing borough, 19 cents; Diego Martin, 8 cents; San Juan/Laventille, 9 cents—and this per day—Sangre Grande, 17 cents; Couva/Tabaquite/Talparo, one of the largest geographical areas in the country, 4 cents; Mayaro/Rio Claro, 26 cents; Siparia, 8 cents; Penal/Debe, 12 cents; Princes Town, 12 cents.

Mr. Prime Minister, what is this money expected to provide for the citizens of those areas? Drainage and irrigation; development of recreation facilities, cremation and cemeteries; markets; local roads and bridges; corporation buildings; vehicle and equipment; rural electrification programme; police; and preparation of development plans.

This cannot be. In fact early September, the Ministry of Local Government had a number of consultations all over the country when the budget was supposed to be read in the first week of September.

I have a Draft Policy Paper on Local Government Reform and it says that the unemployment was 11 per cent. On page 15 of the document it says:

“Unemployment continues to be a major concern in Trinidad and Tobago. At present, the unemployment rate stands at approximately 11% nationally. However, the unemployment rate in local regions in the East/West Corridor and Southern Regions continue to be over 15%. This is certainly a major area of concern for the Local Government...are constantly bombarded by the general public for employment... The Ministry of Local Government is of the view that while they are not an employment agency, they, too, have a responsibility to address the unemployment situation in the country and, as a consequence, would be working assiduously with the Local Government bodies...”

So here we have the ministry identifying that unemployment was 11 per cent, but areas with 8 cents in Siparia, 4 cents in Couva and 38 cents in Port of Spain are to provide the following:

- “the distribution of truck-borne water...
- the provision, maintenance and control of all corporation buildings;
- the maintenance and control of homes for the aged, established by the Corporation;

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[MR. SHARMA]

Monday, October 18, 2004

- the maintenance and control of child care centres established by the Corporation...
- the construction and maintenance of roads except main roads and highways;
- the construction and maintenance of all drains and water-courses except main water-courses and highway water-courses;
- the provision, maintenance and control of parks, recreation grounds, beaches and other public spaces as the President,...
- the promotion of development within the Municipality in accordance with plans approved by the Minister with responsibility for physical planning;
- the maintenance of state property including such police stations, health centres, post offices and other government buildings as the Minister to whom responsibility for construction and maintenance of buildings is assigned, may by order determine;
- the disposal of garbage from public and private property; the development and maintenance of sanitary landfills; chemical treatment for insect and vector control...
- the co-ordination of local and regional trade fairs, athletic events and cultural displays and entertainment;
- the collection and distribution of forms issued by departments of Government;
- the maintenance and control of burial grounds and crematoria, subject to the provisions of the Public Burial Grounds Act and the Cremation Act;
- the provision, maintenance and control of public pastures and recreation grounds...
- collection of rates and taxes;
- making of bye-laws for good governance; and
- naming of streets and numbering of houses.”

Two other areas are:

- “(1) Quarry operations;
- (2) The Unemployment Relief Programme...”

So, Mr. Prime Minister, the first call I want to make is that you revisit the quantum of money for local government, and to give the 126 local government practitioners some assistance.

They are on call like Members of Parliament 24 hours per day and I ask that all members be permitted to obtain cars tax free like we do. I also suggest that some sort of pension plan be considered to include health coverage. There is none for us either.

An allowance should be considered for each local government practitioner to have an office similar to a Member of Parliament's office. While I am speaking of Members of Parliament, may I be permitted to make some suggestions there, too?

In recent times, the demands of the Members of Parliament have been tremendous in terms of people seeking guidance and resources. I did some quick calculations; if there are 1.3 million people divided by 36, that is an average of 37,000—40,000 per constituency. If the poverty rate is 25 per cent—*[Interruption]* Well, let us assume it is 25 per cent for the time being for the argument. *[Interruption]* All right, let us assume it is 10 per cent, this means that in every constituency there are 3,700 persons living below the poverty line. If 25 per cent of those persons come to your constituency office on the day you are seeing members of the public, that means you are expecting 900 persons on a weekly basis.

In addition to that, in every constituency—and I am talking about both sides—there are about 15 elementary and secondary schools, about 100 NGOs including churches, mandirs, masjids; sports groups always come seeking assistance. We cannot turn them away and we cannot dip into our pockets all the time.

I want to make an appeal that you give consideration by establishing a committee to look at it and work it out that each Member of Parliament be given a budget of \$5 million, 36 Members at \$5 million will be \$180 million, and \$180 million from the \$27 billion budget is less than two-thirds of 1 per cent.

6.10 p.m.

There must be a proper process by which to treat this money. For instance, in my constituency—if I could use that as an example—some houses burnt down in the last year. They came to the Member of Parliament for assistance and there is very little I could have done. *[Interruption]* No, with social welfare there are two things: they always do not have resources and, secondly, they delay extremely. Many months pass and they have done absolutely nothing. So when they come, the first thing that happens is there is a fire services prevention report. The fire services have to visit even if they did not respond to the fire. The report will show

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[MR. SHARMA]

Monday, October 18, 2004

the cause of fire, losses, where mother, father and five children, everything, was lost. They have absolutely nothing to go by.

A Member of Parliament could now treat with that. They can start with a \$10,000 grant. We can mobilize the community, so within a few days that person is back on track. If a disaster comes, a roof blows off, or a house collapses for some reason or the other, we can treat with that. A person who is self-employed, a taxi driver, for instance—in fact, I know a maxi-taxi driver who has a 25-seater maxi taxi and he got into an accident. The maxi-taxi is on third party; no insurance coverage. His loan on the maxi-taxi is \$4,120. He cannot pay the loan; he is injured; he is on crutches; he has no money; he is married with his four children and two grandchildren who live with him. Ever so often we would give a little hamper. But he cannot survive. A Member of Parliament could respond in cases like that.

On Friday there are 10 centres in the Hindu community celebrating Ramleela and not a cent has been given to them by the Government as yet. I know moneys will be given but, again, they come to the Member of Parliament. The celebrations run for 10 days. That is 100 days. When you see what moneys are allocated for different occasions for similar events—[*Interruption*] Ten by ten is 100 days. Member for Diego Martin Central, it is 10 days' celebration and 10 places are hosting it—10 by 10. [*Interruption*] It is a 100-day celebration. If you have 10 centres with 10 days, it means that the national community has 10 places to go for 10 days, so it is 100 days of celebration. Is it not 100 days of celebration? [*Crosstalk*] Let us not decide how many days now, the point I want to make is that resources must be made available to any NGO, any CBO going to a Member of Parliament's office. That Member of Parliament, whether he sits on the PNM side or the UNC, must not say, "We cannot help you."

Mr. Valley: Why was that not happening in 199—

Mr. C. Sharma: It does not matter why. Corrective measures are required now. If we go on that premise we will not advance the country.

Mr. Valley: Will the Member then agree that whenever they come back in government, 2020 or 2030, that the equity that they are now requesting, they would practise it then also?

Mr. C. Sharma: When we come back to government you and I may not be here. [*Laughter*] Let us do it for those who come after us. It does not matter who is here, let us treat with the national community.

Mr. Prime Minister, you introduced a very good programme in Trinidad and Tobago in 2002, the National Social Development Programme, and in 2002 you spent \$95 million. In case you did not hear me, Prime Minister, I said you caused a very good programme to be introduced in 2002 known as the National Social Development Programme, but you would be very disturbed by some of the statistics I present to you. These were presented in this House; they are your statistics.

In the *Sunday Express* at page 6 it states:

“Pipeborne water comes to Bridge Road—First time in 10 years.”

This project was done in Diego Martin East and there is a photograph of the hon. Member drinking water. It was financed by the National Commission for Self-Help. What is very interesting is that 340 persons, according to the report, benefited from this programme and the project cost \$83,000. All the moneys were provided by the National Commission for Self-Help.

Let me tell you what they spent under the NSDP. In Arima, the number of beneficiaries was 1,132 with a cost of \$1,953,200. That is about \$2 million; per person it is \$1,725. When we do a project, whether it is on the PNM side or the UNC, this runs to about \$700 per person.

It does not stop there. I would skip a few: In Diego Martin West—and these are figures provided by Government—for 200 persons we spent \$841,000. That is \$4,200 per person. When you use a ratio of six persons to a home to connect one house, it is \$25,254.

Mr. Manning: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. Member for Fyzabad for giving way. If I remember it correctly, that project involved the construction of a lift station also, which means that they would have had a heavy capital outlay in pumps, and all of that. I think we are talking about the same project.

Mr. C. Sharma: No, Prime Minister, this is only for the laying of pipes. I will come to the stations. What you are saying is another set of expenditure. It is in this document. I will come to it very quickly.

In Fyzabad—and this is where I live and as the MP, I went to the area. The Member for Ortoire/Mayaro is familiar with this area. There are 125 persons—and I have the addresses and so. Again, I am saying this is their document. I will photocopy it and give it to you after—we spent \$850,000, which is \$6,807 per person, but per house it is 125 divided by six—you are saying a mother and father with three children and grandparents—it is \$40,000 per house. When you started this programme you did not intend it to be like this.

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[MR. SHARMA]

Monday, October 18, 2004

I am saying these figures are accurate. These are figures presented by your administration. Are you prepared to cause \$82,956,000 to connect one house with water?

Mr. Manning: That is not what happened. That is an average figure.

Mr. C. Sharma: Prime Minister, if you give and take by 5 per cent, it is \$80,000. Let me repeat the information. Do not defend it so early.

In Laventille West, the number of beneficiaries was 20; the cost was \$276,000; per person it was \$13,826 and per house it is \$82,956. These are the figures presented by your Government.

Mr. Ramsaran: That is gold pipe?

Mr. C. Sharma: This has been presented by you in this Parliament. In Arouca North, for 2,000 persons it is \$640,000, which is \$320 per person. In Diego Martin West, Scorpion Road, Carenage, the number of persons was 200, the cost, \$466,000 and per person it was \$2,333. In San Juan/Barataria, Upper Sixth Avenue, Malick, for 1,100 persons the cost was \$1.2 million and per person it was \$1,090

Mr. Khan: Mr. Speaker, I thank the Member of Fyzabad for giving way. The NSDP was designed to carry public utilities services at the extremities of the system, where, under the normal economic models used by WASA and T&TEC, it was uneconomic to spread the service to the extremities, by definition, meaning that the unit cost per delivery is high and that is why the Government made a strategic intervention, because it is our position that every citizen of this country is entitled to public utilities, whether it is water, telephone or electricity. Hence the reason for those types of figures you are seeing there, because it is the extremities, where, by definition, the unit cost will be high.

Mr. C. Sharma: It is only because you are from Fyzabad that you came up with that smart answer, you know, because you know I am coming to Ortoire/Mayaro now. That is an engineering response, not an economic response. That is not a Member of Parliament's response. You cannot tell me that you are spending taxpayers' money—Listen to what the Member for Ortoire/Mayaro is saying: For 671 the cost is \$10,055,319; per person it is \$14,985. You did not run this water from Mars; per house it is \$89,910. The excuse the Member just made, withdraw it.

This programme was never intended to be that way. The total money spent in the NSDP for water alone is a total of \$44 million-plus—I do not know how you would justify this one—and \$38 million of it was spent in PNM constituencies. There is no justification for that. In 2002, \$95 million was spent on this programme; in

2003, \$100 million, a total of \$195 million. The total number of persons who benefited from this programme across the board, was 20,000, and if you divide 20,000 into \$195 million it is approximately \$8,000.

The point I wish to make is that we are extremely happy that citizens have obtained services, but it is the cost of delivering it. Because on the one hand you are saying, let us do this, and then you give very little money to self-help, but self-help is delivering the same water—and I showed it to you—for 310 residents, at \$83,000. But very interesting, self-help last year did approximately 320 self-help projects and 86 per cent were in PNM areas, with the Laventille areas getting the most—project after project.

In fact, if I quickly tell you, projects were done in Diego Martin Central, East, West and Laventille East. Of course, there were three in Couva South, one in Couva North. In fact, in Chaguanas, the water project for Guayamare Village for 200 residents cost \$142,000. What we are seeing is that moneys are being spent but moneys are really being thrown away. That is where the stories and the issues of corruption and favouritism come up, because how can I tell somebody in Fyzabad, we spent \$10 million in Ortoire/Mayaro to give 400 people water and we cannot get \$400,000 in Fyzabad? Let us balance it. That is why I am suggesting that we revisit the \$5 million per Member of Parliament's office to be administered by whichever process you see.

Under the National Commission for Self-Help, the development programmes, a \$10,000 grant—this is \$10,000 given to persons who may have lost their house or to repair a roof, rebuild their two-bedroom house—minor repairs. Of the 99 cases that obtained this \$10,000 grant—I do not wish to give you the exact numbers—the large majority is in PNM-controlled constituencies. It is not that PNM areas have more poverty; it is not that PNM people are suffering more than people in the UNC-controlled constituencies, so these statistics have to be revisited and we have to make sure we correct them so that when Members on both sides express concern that people are losing faith in the system; that they are getting fed up; that they would take to the streets, it is because of this kind of thing. Really, this is how people are beginning to feel. We can pretend it does not happen, you know, but we will be revisited like 1970; we would be revisited like 1990.

6.25 p.m.

The Member was right. He said that these things happened in Jamaica and thousands died. It happened in Grenada. He called Uganda. We saw it in Haiti. Look at what has happened in Haiti. Let us prevent that kind of thing. You are in a

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[MR. SHARMA]

Monday, October 18, 2004

very good position to prevent it. We are asking for some degree of fairness. I have never come in this Parliament to ask for anything that I am not allowed to ask for. I have never asked a favour.

I do not want to go there, but when you look at CEPEP nothing has changed. The employment practice is the same. The contractors are the same. When it is added it is another PNM. It is 99 per cent. Nothing is wrong with them getting the jobs. Let there be some fairness. Let us save this country. Prime Minister, I do not mean to be personal, but when Benny Hinn came to this country he said that there were many devils. I do not know if there are devils in this Parliament. I do not know if there are devils on both sides of this House. Do you see yourself as a devil? You do not. We are not devils. He said so and you agreed with him. Where are these devils? The devils are in programmes of this kind. When you spend \$195 million and say it is no big thing, PNM people have to get work, too.

The Minister said that they are not taking the project to other areas. Prime Minister, you should see what is happening with street lighting in this country. I will tell Members on both sides of the House that when you raise things about T&TEC in the Opposition, they threaten to cut your electricity. They threaten to treat you badly. I bet you they will cut off electricity in Fyzabad. So be it!

In Arima, 248 street lights were installed at a cost of \$487,000. In Nariva, 249 street lights were installed. The difference of one street light was \$58,000. In Port of Spain South, we paid \$1,350 to install a street light and in St. Augustine we paid close to \$4,807 for the same street light. In San Fernando East it cost \$2,022 to install a street light and across the road in San Fernando West, \$1,892. You cannot make excuses for this. The same people are getting the contracts if they bid. They decide who must get the contracts and this is how it happens all the time.

One of the major matters we need to treat with and the budget has to find ways to deal with, is the question of discrimination and with that comes racism. We cannot say that there is no discrimination or racism. How do we treat with it? We must first look at the fallout of it. The country has a high incidence of rape, murder and social ills. When you look at the prison population it is frightening. Many of our children there are between the ages of 15—24 years. There is a very high rate of teenage pregnancy and HIV/AIDS. If tomorrow morning the US and Canadian embassies say that they would give 100,000 visas to go either to Canada or the United States, you would get about 500,000 applications. Why is that so? It is because people are feeling a level of frustration; the lack of will; getting jobs and not being comfortable. Parents are scared to take their kids out.

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

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

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. C. Sharma: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I was on the question of the effects of racism and discrimination. For the argument, I want us to agree that racism and discrimination obtain. The fallout of it would cause us to lose our country. It is that bad. Nelson Mandela fought for 27 years because of racism and discrimination. Mahatma Gandhi went to South Africa to lend to that struggle. Martin Luther King—

In the early days when Dr. Williams came on the scene, he said those things obtained as well. Government after government has seen it. All the social researchers and scientists we have in this country point to it. For too long we keep saying that it is an Opposition thing. When the PNM was in Opposition they said it. I remember when we were in government the then Leader of the Opposition and now Prime Minister said, "Another black man bites the dust." Every Monday morning was some black something. The Member for Diego Martin Central was throwing his voice with it. Nothing is wrong with that. That was the politics of the day. So be it! What happens today? Nobody feels comfortable anymore. It does not matter on which side of the fence we are.

The budget is the document that provides funding. People are seeing discrimination. When you look across the public service there are elements of discrimination. The report of Selwyn Ryan and John La Guerre identified it. I do not wish to visit those statistics. When the Government caused Caroni (1975) Limited to be shut down, people on all sides of the fence, Indian, African and Chinese saw racism and discrimination in it. Based on the Government's statement in this House from a Senator who spoke some time ago, of the 9,000 workers who were sent home from Caroni only 500 got work. There were 22,000 persons who got employment based on the Prime Minister's figure in his presentation of the budget. The Member for Laventille East/Morvant said that there are 125 programmes. We are very happy for those programmes.

Our quarrel is with the fairness of it. When you look at the mix in the Civilian Conservation Corps or any one of the programmes, it does not reflect the mix of Trinidad and Tobago. We have to accept that and treat with it. This will be the

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[MR. SHARMA]

Monday, October 18, 2004

greatest service we can do. [*Interruption*] You should feel ashamed to talk. I am sorry. I just raised the question about ensuring that there is equality and the Member for Diego Martin Central, I am sure that he means well, wants to know if it would continue. Let us allow good things to continue. Let us create it and make it happen. If it happens it happens. Let us contribute to it.

Many of the Members opposite talked about implementation. I was in the ministry and I was very disappointed, Member for Ortoire/Mayaro. You have to be careful that you do not mislead this House. At the end of the day you and I cannot fool anybody. You are not brighter than anybody and neither am I. When you say that there is a 95 per cent inflation rate, you are fooling the people. You have to say based on what. You cannot make a vacuum statement. You are not correct.

Under the UNC there was less money delivering more goods. That is a fact. Under the PNM you have more money delivering less goods. The implementation rate was higher. The project that we built for \$250,000, the early childhood centre, the implementation rate was close to 100 per cent. You have not delivered any, but it has gone to \$450,000. Every project undertaken by the Government has had a variance and inflation. The one that is attracting attention is Scarborough Hospital. The contractor was not the lowest bidder. I heard him say on the radio that he won a contract in Port of Spain because he was the lowest bidder. When it is convenient he is the lowest bidder. In Tobago he was not the lowest bidder for the hospital. It was \$139 million. It is now estimated to cost \$216 million; that is more than \$100 million. The perception of mismanagement and corruption obtains. I got a text message that if you have a project of \$139 million and it goes to \$260 million and the kickback is a house or a housing project, so be it. You call 10 projects and I will tell you that there have been cost overruns in all; that is in all the major projects including the government complex on Richmond Street that is under construction now. The foundation for Scarborough Hospital has not been finished and there is a cost overrun of close to \$20 million.

Look at the Airports Authority. Over the last three years the expenses have been more for the same period than under the UNC for less value. In the Port Authority the same thing obtains. NHA houses, conflict of interest arises. In Tarouba, the project is approximately 400 homes. To date, about 80 have been finished at a cost of \$35 million. That costs the taxpayer over \$400,000. Those homes will be sold for \$171,000. It is costing over \$120,000 to build a wall around the house. It is some fancy system they have employed because the land is moving.

Five minutes from there, when you look at the housing estate at Cross Crossing, those lands were made available to the house owners, serviceable lots

for up to \$20,000 and look at the size of the houses. You are building a house for \$400,000 and selling it to the taxpayer. A few will get at \$171,000. That story goes around. That is the history of the PNM. Cost overruns over and over. That is why under the National Social Development Programme you see the expenses. You are not seeing the goods for it.

The Prime Minister talked about the booster stations. They were done at Tunapuna at the cost of \$600,000. One was done in St. Joseph in Mendez at the cost of \$436,000; one in Laventille East at the cost of \$1.4 million; one in Diego Martin West at the cost of \$1.6 million; one in Diego Martin Central, Union Road for \$838,000. In La Brea, a project was done at the cost of \$4,280,885 and 2,862 benefited.

Mr. Bereaux: That expensive.

Mr. C. Sharma: That was a fairly good thing. It came to the price for house was \$1,408. You and I work closely and we know these figures very well.

CEPEP is a good programme because it is providing some employment. The question is that there is no training and the price that you are paying. Last year you spent \$400 million for 5,000 workers. At \$75 a day they work for \$3,000; 36 by 5,000 is 180 million. The workers got a salary of \$180 million. The contractors were left with \$220 million. That is what you pay 100 contractors. *[Interruption]* I do not expect you to understand. That is big money. “Yuh eh reach dey yet.”

6.40 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, my colleague, the Member for Caroni Central raised the question about CDAP. He indicated that \$50 million was made available. In response you said that 500,000 persons would now benefit from this programme and money would not be a problem. What I cannot understand is that you are aware that the programme cannot go through with \$50 million; for instance, if you have 500,000 persons and you have 60 per cent access in it, that is 300,000 people. If 50 per cent of those came with a prescription every month?—the cost of filling a prescription is \$10—Is that correct, Minister—then your \$50 million is gone. If 150 persons have to pay \$10 once per month—because the prescriptions are filled every month—then it is \$150,000 x 12 x \$10. The \$50 million includes the cost of moving the drugs from C40 to the pharmacy, for which you are paying TTPost.

Many people who are going to the pharmacies are saying that they are unable to obtain pharmaceuticals because the pharmacies are not being paid and the money is running out, so you need to make sure that you do not frustrate people.

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[MR. SHARMA]

Monday, October 18, 2004

In addition, many health centres are without medication. This is happening all over the country. Many pharmacies are without basic medication, it is always: "Come back a next day." One of the difficulties, Mr. Minister of Health, is that if someone goes to the Fyzabad Health Centre and the particular prescribed drug is not available that person does not have the authority to go to another health centre to have the prescription filled. He must have that prescription filled at the Fyzabad Health Centre, so we must revisit that. For instance, there are the Siparia and the Oropouche Health Centres but he must have that filled at the centre at which the document was stamped.

The budget also spoke about \$137 million in disability grant. If a person receives \$650 per month, in a year he would receive 12 x \$650, that means that there are about 20,000 disabled persons in Trinidad and Tobago. My concern is that there are not enough provisions for them. Simple things like accessing offices; design of pavements, those under construction, how to access transport.

Mr. Speaker, I saw there were some buses, which were recently purchased, but none has come to south, Minister of Works and Transport.

Mr. Khan: They will be coming on Thursday.

Mr. C. Sharma: How many?

Mr. Khan: Five.

Mr. C. Sharma: Five? You bought six buses and you are sending five to South?

Mr. Khan: Oh, you mean the buses for the disabled?

Mr. C. Sharma: Yes.

Mr. Khan: Three.

Mr. C. Sharma: Mr. Speaker, again, we need to treat with those things. If we have 20,000, three buses could each accommodate about six persons, which equal 18 persons. I mean, it is a good start. Mr. Speaker, that is why I am suggesting that the \$5 million coming to the MP offices could lend assistance to those things. We can cause NGOs to get involved; to lend transport, someone who is retired and who has a car.

The other matter, Minister of Health, which has come to my attention, is that persons go to the St. James Health Centre but there is never enough medication and there is also a long wait.

Mr. Speaker, what the budget seems to be saying is that it is low on development but probably high on deceit. It seems to be telling people money is

not a problem; we have lots of money, but a consultation process, perhaps, has not taken place. In fact, I read in today's newspaper where my colleague from Ortoire/Mayaro said that they were going to the communities to explain the budget. Mr. Speaker, it is a good thing, by the way, because people do not believe it, so you now have to sell it to them. Mr. Speaker, the budget should have been sold before it was presented.

We must engage both sides and say listen, this is what we are going to do; what are your proposals; what are your suggestions? We represent the people, too. You are not brighter than us; you do not meet more intelligent people than we do; you do not meet people who are in greater need than we do, we all meet them. At one time you might be a PNM or a UNC candidate; that is how the world is. So to represent people and to advance their lives must be the big challenge for all of us.

The other matter I want to raise is that the budget does not seem to incorporate the national community—pockets are involved. Organizations that support the PNM, they win their support; however they do it, it is not important. We have to find the process where we can engage more people and the best way to start is with the Members of Parliament from both sides. That is why there are constituency offices, and constituency days.

Mr. Speaker, I made this point to my hon. friend and he observed and recorded it—the Member for Laventille East/Morvant: when PNM is in Government there is a tendency for people to be afraid of the PNM. People would not talk to Members of the Opposition if a PNM person were close by. Why are they afraid of the PNM? That is because the PNM has a history of violence, of demoting you, of sending the police after you. That is why I told the Prime Minister to be careful, when he said: “You, too, might get locked up.” The Prime Minister is no saint. The Prime Minister cannot frighten me with lock up. Tomorrow if I feel threatened I will send my four children away and I will stay here and fight every day of my life. I am prepared to do that. I do not fear that. That cannot fool any one of us here, you know.

The history of this country, whether you like it or not, would show that the most corrupt government has been the PNM. They stole millions of dollars. In fact, the University of the West Indies presented a position paper on Caroni, and the Government did not treat with any of the recommendations because they wanted to put their hands on those lands.

You must respect the observation of the Member for Couva North, when he said that the only land that you would go with is six feet. That does not mean anything but what it means: that at the end of the day you and I will die. Where will

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[MR. SHARMA]

Monday, October 18, 2004

we go? I will go to the cremation site and you will go to the burial ground. You will get six feet. Mine will be temporary because when I am cremated today, tomorrow morning my ashes are washed into the sea and another body takes my place.

The University Position Paper recommended:

- That the Government move immediately to prepare and publish a comprehensive plan detailing how it intends to restructure Caroni (1975) Limited.

That never came to the Parliament.

- That the Government takes urgent steps to convene a national consultation on the Caroni resources and on the published plan.

That never took place.

- That in respect of the use of Caroni lands, any departure from the national Physical Development Plan—the substantive legal document framed to govern land use in Trinidad and Tobago—must be done through the legally stipulated process, which includes bringing amendments to this Plan before Parliament.

That was never done.

- That all conditions for the lease and tenure of the Caroni lands be detailed to the public in a published document, to meet the requirements of transparency.

Never done, Mr. Speaker.

- That the Government immediately establish a mechanism for consultation and information gathering with the Caroni workers, in order to determine (a) their skills, experience, intentions, dispositions, so that (b) a detailed and authentic skills bank will be created and that (c) their determinations are taken into account in the transformation process, so that (d) they may have choices of how they may be integrated in further planned enterprises.

That was never done.

- That the State establishes an independent Screening Committee to stringently screen potential investors who seek Caroni lands as their location of business.

That was never done.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, I will tell you what took place. A Government Minister caused a meeting to take place in the Boca Raton in Florida to discuss how to

share Caroni lands: who would be the potential investors. This is a small country. When the junior Minister of National Security comes here and feels he could fool people and read some email showing some intelligence gathering—he got an email from some person—that does not impress anybody and it does not frighten me in the least. So when you go to Boca Raton in Florida and you host these high-powered meetings at the expense of the State to distribute the wealth and to determine who get contracts, that will have to come to an end. They say Boca Raton has big rat; well this side has big cat, so be careful.

- That the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources establish an independent Authority charged with the implementation of plans for agriculture and agriculture-related industries.

That never took place.

Mr. Speaker, the point is that it was a calculated effort by the PNM administration to get rid of Caroni (1975) Limited for political reasons. Because you would have known what your earnings would have been for this year so it was never a question of money; it was a question of discrimination and racism and that is manifested today in all government-related things.

If you look anywhere in this country where government has an input: if you start with WASA; you do not see the balance; in employment, you do not see the balance, and in award of contracts, you do not see the balance. Mr. Speaker, if you go to MTS you do not see the balance in employment or in contracts; at the Airports Authority; T&TEC, Petrotrin, the Port Authority, anywhere the Government has its hands that is how it operates.

Mr. Speaker, as I come close to wrapping up, I want to reinforce the points I tried to make earlier that is the budget is for all of us. All 36 of us represent the national community of Trinidad and Tobago—34 in Trinidad and two in Tobago. Each one of us has taken the same oath of office. An election is going to be called some time; we do not know who is going to sit there or over here; that is not important. Between now and then, whenever those elections are called, we have a God duty to serve the people and to add value to their lives.

The budget as it is presented does not seem to communicate that in any way. We are saying that we must be involved in lending assistance to the people in the constituencies that we represent and those elsewhere. I am sure Members of Parliament, on both sides, from time to time, would receive persons from other constituencies. I am asking that there be fairness and equal opportunities for all. That the opportunities that obtain in areas of employment, in the award of contracts,

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[MR. SHARMA]

Monday, October 18, 2004

in the award of scholarships, in the award of promotions, that all our nationals be given a fair opportunity to access them.

I have made the point that as it relates to local government, which is perhaps the single Ministry that touches the lives of all our people at any given time, we find ways to get them more involved; that we give more assistance; that we create more partnerships with our local government practitioners; that they provide more opportunities for us to meet and network and share the experiences; find out how to add value.

These moneys are not intended for any other purposes except to help us discharge our duties; that it be made available, if the Prime Minister agrees, perhaps to start with a Joint Select Committee of both Houses; that we meet and discuss and we seek the legal workings of it; that we get the advice of the Attorney General and the Solicitor General and cause that fund to be established and that there be a proper method of disbursement; the areas it is to cover; how it is going to be treated.

Perhaps the funds may not necessarily need to reside—although in recent times through the Parliament, each Member of Parliament has been required to establish a constituency account; that money can go into that account. *[Interruption]* No, it should not go there. Okay, so the money should go under the supervision of the Auditor General or Comptroller of Accounts. Once the guidelines are established and the procedure is agreed to, we would make some errors, but I am sure at the end of the day what we will do is to cause people to feel part of Trinidad and Tobago.

6.55 p.m.

What would be the results of that, is that you would see a reduction in the crime rate; you would see a coming together of all our people; you would see love, peace and happiness; you would see a desire to plant the land, you would see a desire to educate your children, you would see the racial tensions being reduced; you would see discrimination going on the backburner. People would start to love each other again.

Mr. Speaker, more than that, you will have a much easier task managing this honourable House.

I thank you, very much.

The Minister of State in the Ministry of Community Development, Culture and Gender Affairs (Hon. Eudine Job-Davis): Mr. Speaker, it is always an honour and a privilege for me to stand in this honourable House to

represent the constituents of Tobago East, the people of Tobago, and by extension the people of Trinidad and Tobago. Mr. Speaker, I, too, like my colleagues on this side, commend the Minister of Finance, the Hon. Prime Minister, on his presentation of the budget 2004/2005.

Mr. Speaker, over the past few days I have listened attentively to Members on both sides of the House contribute to the debate. What became very clear to me in this instance is that most of the Members on the other side really do not have any solid and grounded criticisms of this budget. Therefore, they come to the House with all sorts of extraneous issues. On Friday last, the hon. Member for Caroni East spent one hour and 15 minutes ‘titivaying’ in this House. I went through his contribution and there was not one mention of anything to do with the Member’s constituency. It is my understanding that the hon. Member left Trinidad, jumped on an aeroplane, head for Tobago, flew over Mason Hall, came back with copious envelopes with all sorts of names to bring information in this honourable House to “mek commesse” and baachanal on Tobago people.

Mr. Speaker, I can assure you that if his constituents read his contribution to the debate, I know for sure that next election, he “ain’t going back dey’. So intent was the Member on “bussing” a mark and gaining headlines that he did not even stop to think that there may have been a reason for what he came to this House to disburse as information. In my classes—I am finished now—at the university there was a professor by the name of Professor Kirpalani, who was one of my last lecturers. He left us with a bit of advice I would never forget. I want to share it with the Member. If you do not have anything else in this life, you must always be able to think critically and develop social skills.

I want to suggest that the Member join his colleagues at the University of the West Indies, IOB, and see whether taking that course would help him.

If this headline on the Saturday *Express* of October 16, 2004 that says, “UNC has stolen papers” is correct; that “These stolen goods are in the hands of Ganga Singh” as was said by Emile Elias, I, too, call on the Leader of the Opposition to launch an enquiry into a sitting Member of this House for being in possession of stolen goods.

Mr. Speaker, the Member further came to this House crying crocodile tears for the people of Tobago, poor Tobago people, but do you know what? When they were supposed to be helping Tobago people they were smashing them down like cockroach; when they gave them the Government in 1995, instead of helping them up, they helped them down, and now they are saying poor Tobago people.

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[HON. E. JOB-DAVIS]

Monday, October 18, 2004

We do not need any help. We will handle our own affairs, thank you very much. [*Desk thumping*]

I listened attentively to the Member for Fyzabad, my good friend. The Member indicated that the highest increase in crime is under the PNM. I have said it already and I will say it again, there is a saying in Tobago, that “green leaf does not rotten the same day it falls in water”. The PNM inherited a situation that it is trying to deal with, and with the number of programmes that are being implemented at this time these are certainly intervention strategies to deal with those crime measures. Enough said on that.

The Member was going so well and I was saying he was not going to mention anything about race in the House today, but I pre-empted the Member. Of course, he had to mention race and he had to talk about eminent people like Martin Luther King and Nelson Mandela who had genuine struggles to get rid of apartheid and to ensure that black people in America could get a vote. The Member comes to this Honourable House and equates the situation or whatever he believes is the situation in Trinidad and Tobago with what obtained then.

In this country, if any Member on that side could genuinely tell me that there is discrimination and racism, they must stand up and say that. One does not have to do it for political expediency because we do not know anything about race and who is Indian and who is Chinese.

Mr. Speaker, my son came down from Tobago about one year ago to attend school in Trinidad. The first child that came to my house was an East Indian child from Chaguanas and he is his best friend, then a Syrian Lebanese guy. The rainbow mix; and I was wondering to myself where is the racism in this country. It has to be in the minds of the perpetrators. Nowhere else, because when you look on the ground it does not exist.

Mr. Speaker, I hope that we would all try to stop that nonsense of racism and racist talks in this country and let us progress as one. Furthermore, the most racist and divisive statements that I have ever heard in this House would have come from the Member for Fyzabad.

Mr. Speaker, like I said earlier, I represent the constituency of Tobago East, and not just Tobago East, I am also a Minister in the Ministry of Community Development, Culture and Gender Affairs. [*Desk thumping*] I am, so to speak, the new kid on the block, having just recently accepted the position, and I believe that there are two eminently qualified Members to speak on the activities of the Ministry than I am, and they have done that with distinction.

I congratulate my ministerial colleague, the hon. Edward Hart, for batting as he said, in an 'empty oval' but putting down his head anyway and going for four hundred like Lara. I also want to congratulate my sister Minister, the hon. Eulalie James, for her worthy contribution.

Be that as it may, I think that seven months in the Ministry would have been sufficient time for me to understand and appreciate how important that ministry and the work of that ministry is to the development of this country. If we have to achieve our Vision 2020, that is, developed country status, and if we are to prepare our citizens for the Caricom Single Market and Economy, if we have to prepare them for the Free Trade Area of the Americas, if we have to rid our society of the twin evils of crime and HIV/AIDS, if we have to become a really productive society with people at the helm, then it has to begin at the level of the community, because we all know that strong families lead to strong communities, and in turn build stronger nations.

Since the Budget has been read, I have heard Members of this House denigrate the intervention strategies that are targeted towards disadvantaged persons in our communities. I have heard them say the Government implemented work programmes to win votes. They heap scorn on intervention strategies like public assistance, talking about a 'visionless Government throwing scraps'. They have talked about creating a 'dependency on the State' and 'learnt helplessness'. One Member said that the Government is 'focusing on the youth and the poor to win votes'.

Mr. Speaker, Government has to adopt a holistic approach in its planning, it has to be strategic in whatever it does, because Government has to ensure that even while the disadvantaged persons are accessing training they are able to meet their basic needs, and that is what the budget is all about.

Mr. Speaker, young people come to my office with absolutely no skills. They are not employable and, therefore, they cannot be employed. So what we have to do, as a Government, is to ensure that these persons develop skills; we need to train them and while we are training them, they need to live. We just cannot throw our hands in the air and feel that they did nothing with their lives. They live here and we just have to do it. We do not have a choice.

I understand the concerns of Members opposite and others, of course, in this community when they speak of creating a welfare state. But I humbly suggest that there is overwhelming evidence to suggest otherwise, and if hon. Members speak to their constituents they would recognize that these are proud people who really do not want handouts, people who just want to work and earn an honest living. They do not want to live off the State and clearly, it seems as though hon.

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[HON. E. JOB-DAVIS]

Monday, October 18, 2004

Members opposite are not in touch with their constituents or they would not come to this House spouting their ivory tower intellectuals ‘gobbley dy gook’.

We have prime examples of people who have grown up on public assistance and who are now citizens contributing their fair share to the development of this country. I can speak for Tobago, I can speak from whence I came, because most of us were recipients of the Government’s public assistance programmes and you cannot find anybody dependent on the State for a living; you cannot find anybody looking for handouts. They have all gone to school, they have qualified themselves and they are contributing. There are examples.

Recently, women have accessed our skills training programme, for example, the Non-traditional Skills for Women, the Women in Harmony Programme, all those programmes and they are not dependent on the State. They did not learn helplessness, instead, they have established companies like ‘Sisters with Skills’ and they are now building furniture, they are doing welding, plumbing, they are wiring their own homes. [*Desk thumping*]

7.10 p.m.

In Tobago, one of the young ladies proudly said to me, “You know meh house fall down from the hurricane, but I tell them I want to wire it mehself”. That was one of the young ladies that we trained. So when all these persons start to talk about creating dependents and about learned helplessness, I do not know if they know what they are talking about.

Ask them, all of them who are talking, what they are doing to contribute to the people in Carenage, Laventille and Cocorite, who are spending all their money and making sure that they earn a living? They have a social conscience that they need to exercise. Someone came to me today showing me a proposal that he took to one of these companies—\$16,000—to help to develop the children in the Carenage and Cocorite areas. Do you know what they said? They cannot do it. Sixteen thousand dollars and that it is a multimillion dollar corporation. What are they saying?

When we train these women and they start taking their places in this society, we know the society will move. It is often said that the status of a society is dependent on the status of the women in that society and since I have come into the Ministry of Community Development, Culture and Gender Affairs, I have realized that with the number of women who are being trained within that Ministry, Trinidad and Tobago will certainly achieve developed country status by 2020.

Mr. Speaker, the Government, through the Ministry, will continue to empower communities to engage in government by participation; to govern themselves through

their communities, hence we have developed programmes such as the Retired Adolescent Partnership Programme, which is, of course [*Interruption*] Is that your programme? That is very good. Let me commend the hon. Member if that was his programme, but ideas are a dime a dozen. People who implement them are priceless. The Retired Adolescent Partnership Programme is now ongoing and it brings together the young people and the senior citizens in the society. It also empowers the community to take care of its own. That is what community development is all about.

We have the HIV/AIDS Intervention Programme for women in rural communities. This was implemented in January of this year and this is to educate women about the deadly HIV/AIDS virus. Mr. Speaker, as you heard from our hon. Minister, we continue to construct community facilities; all in an effort to give to the community the spirit of empowerment and an opportunity to take care of themselves. All those other programmes the other Ministers talked about so eloquently—the Minister of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education, the Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs—are designed to empower people; to give them training, so that they can become productive citizens of the society.

Mr. Speaker, in the budget we did not just think about the present, the hon. Prime Minister and his team thought about the hereafter. That is why he proposed in the budget, ‘a transparent and effective mechanism to ensure that the rents from higher oil prices are not frittered away but are utilized for revenue stabilization for inter-generational and for high-quality investments that would benefit the people of Trinidad and Tobago’.

There is a saying that if you look at zero, you will see nothing; but if you look through zero, you will see the world. We on this side are looking through the zero and what do we see? We see a blessed country. We see a rainbow country. We see a country coming into its own. We see a country going into developed country status by 2020. We see people living in harmony. We also see selfish people who try to divide them for their own political expediency.

I want to tell our hon. friends on the other side, that when we look through the zero we see mother Trinidad and Tobago. I want to ask: When they look, where do they look? When they look, what do they see?

Mr. Speaker, with your permission, I would now like to do my duty to my constituents. As you know, Act No. 40 of 1996 gives the Tobago House of Assembly complete autonomy, almost, to develop its policies and to plan and implement its programmes in Tobago. Certainly, as a Member of Parliament, the Act, which was hastily developed for several reasons—I wonder who was in power then—gave the THA the responsibility to do its own thing, so to speak. It never

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[HON. E. JOB-DAVIS]

Monday, October 18, 2004

considered the Members of Parliament and, therefore, the Members of Parliament for Tobago have, at this moment, no portfolio. I have said that on several occasions. However, we still have a responsibility to our constituents and we still have a responsibility to ensure that whatever happens in Tobago is done to the benefit of those people whom we represent.

I heard one Member mention the youth and the poor. In anything we do, at this time, we must consider the youth because whatever we are doing now is not just for us but for them. We have come up against a generation of young people, who the marketers have now dubbed “Generation Y”. We have moved from baby boomers into the age of “Generation X”; and we have moved out of that, into the area of “Generation Y”. This is what some of the marketers had to say about these people and I am quoting from a textbook by George and Michael Belch, called *Advertising and Promotion*.

“Marketers may have to learn new tricks”.

What they are saying about this generation—Teen Research Unlimited, which does research throughout the world—is that this generation is a bit jaded. They are a bit more skeptical. They readily reject false images and no one has yet found the right ingredient to capture their attention and interest. They are affected by things like overseas labour practices, which have contributed to Nike and those others not being able to sell their wares. They believe in truth and they also like humour and irony. I am saying that to say that those are the same people with whom the governments have to find ways and means of treating.

Because we have not yet found ways and means of dealing with their needs, the only people who can tell us what they really want are them. It is against that background that we in Tobago East held a well-attended youth symposium a month ago. We wanted to establish some of the reasons for what was happening in Tobago East. We found that the “block” culture was becoming all pervasive. There is also an increase in gangs; drugs and HIV/AIDS seem to be very prevalent. We wanted them to tell us what we could do.

Unlike hon. Members on the other side, we cannot blame the Government for everything. For some things, we need to establish the “whys”, and this is what we did. Coming out of that symposium, the young people did not just tell us what the problems were, they told us what they felt should be done. They gave us solutions and they alluded to a multiplicity of factors that caused their problems—even themselves.

They talked about themselves, their families, their education, their schools, and they talked about the policy makers. So they shared with us some of the

things we needed to do and I am hoping that, in the tenure of the Tobago House of Assembly, these measures would be implemented so that the young people in Tobago East would be taken care of.

Some of the problems they identified were the lack of discipline in schools and the illiteracy that seems to be pervasive. They talked about teachers needing counselling and social assistance. They talked about men at risk. One of the things I have always felt is that Tobago should never have implemented that universal secondary education for all as purported by the United National Congress. They were not ready for it, and we have a problem today because of that. You put the children in the schools [*Interruption*] You see, Mr. Speaker, they know nothing about the primary schools. They just took all the children, regardless of their literacy skills, and pushed them into the schools. [*Interruption*] Of course, it would cause a problem because when they go to the secondary schools, they cannot deal with the work there.

The United Nations has articulated universal primary education and universal secondary education. Nothing is wrong with the concept, but if you are doing it, you have to do it properly; and I am not talking about me, I am saying what they said. According to them that is also causing a problem now in the schools. It is resulting in high drop-out rates, in children being unable to cope and in frustration.

Recent research by Daniel Goldman, who wrote extensively on emotional intelligence, which is now a departure from intellectual quotient (IQ), said that young people now, all over the world—again because they did worldwide research—are under pressure. They are more subject to doing all sorts of wrong things. They are more depressed and all that. These are the things that we are up against and we have to understand that whereas long ago—you know we always try to think in terms of long ago; we have to disabuse ourselves of that—the socialization process of these children was really in the home and in the community, it is now from America; from all over the world through the television.

7.25 p.m.

They are exposed and therefore, these young people are now feeling the pressure. One of the things they said was that we removed corporal punishment from schools and that has resulted in a lack of discipline. It was removed and not replaced by an apt substitute. Those were their exact words. We sit here and criticize them and say all sorts of things, not knowing that today's solutions are always tomorrow's problems. When we have to do things we have to look at the implications somewhere down the road. We just cannot do it *vaille que vaille*; not anymore.

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[HON. E. JOB-DAVIS]

Monday, October 18, 2004

The children talked about their parents. They said that adults are now afraid of youths. Long ago, when adults could have cautioned young people, they can no longer do that. They said that we are afraid of them. Even though we talk about doing a budget, everything is not really fixed by it. There are some other issues that we have to look at. They said that their parents no longer educated them about life, culture and heritage. Members on the other side, when things are happening, it is not the fault of the Government. You blame the Government for the increase in crime. It is not really that. That is why we wanted to hear from them, what was causing their problems. Parents are no longer educating children about life, culture or heritage. They said that their parents needed to upgrade their own educational skills, because parents now do not understand how to deal with children.

They further said that children were making children and uneducated parents lead to uneducated youths. Who could blame the Government when crime increases? Why do we have to do that? If we do not know the problems we can never fix them. If Members on the other side take the time to go through their communities to find out what is causing the problems among their children, or the crime in their areas, then we will be able to fix things, because we would have an idea of what is happening.

They also said that they lacked financial skills. Long ago your parents used to give you a cash pan made out of coconut. We do not do that anymore. We do not encourage children to save. They said that they do not know how to budget. They do not know how to manage or invest money. These are the things from the Ministry of Community Development, Culture and Gender Affairs' perspective that we have to now look at and implement. That is what community development is all about. When we talk about empowering the community and going back into the community, this is what we mean. When we start doing these things, I am certain that we are going to see an improvement in what obtains in certain areas.

Mr. Singh: Give the people in Ramleela their money!

Hon. E. Job-Davis: Give the people in Ramleela their money—they will get it.

Mr. Speaker, the young people also talked about the value system. They indicated that they have an identity crisis. They are not too sure, at any given point in time, who they are. Coming from them, I think it was very touching for them to have recognized that. All these things would contribute to how they behave and respond. We are putting out programmes there and in some instances they are not accessing the programmes. In some way, these children are lost. It is not like you are not doing anything, they just do not know what to do. Therefore, we in turn, if

we really care about the people we represent, would go out there and really find out. They said that the value system has shifted and that they have become more superficial and materialistic. These are their words, not mine. Therefore, when you see they want money now—the Government sent them to train. We have millions of training programmes. They are told to go and train —“No we want the money now so that we can buy the things now”. It is a material culture. Therefore, it is a whole attitude problem that we have. We have to change the attitudes of these young children. We need transformation, not come here and shout that the Government did this or that, or racism. No, it is not that! Let us be serious because when we come to this Parliament we do not come here for fun. We come here because people have vested interest in us and people have imbued us with their own sense of responsibility for them. I heard one of the Members on the other side say that the people in their constituency cannot come to Parliament, they sent them. That is what they come here for, not to ‘titivay’ and do nonsense!

These young people also said to us that they needed a voice. They need to be heard. They said: “We need somewhere to go, where people can listen to us.” That is why I want to propose at this time that we establish a permanent young people’s Parliament in the country. It has been done in England. It is being done in Bermuda, so it is not anything new; it is happening all over. Also, apart from the fact that these young people will have a voice, it gives us the element of succession planning. We are not going to be in this Parliament forever. In order for them to take over and not come here and butt their heads all over this Parliament, we need to start to train them now. I would like to humbly propose that a young people’s Parliament be established.

I would like to further propose that the THA establish a young people’s Assembly. Recently I was listening to Sen. Dr. McKenzie talking and it made real sense. What is happening is when someone in Tobago dies and you listen to the death news you hear mother of so and so from United States, so and so in Germany, this one in Japan, everybody gone. Therefore, we have to start to inculcate in our young people the need to stay and contribute to the development of Tobago for their future. We have to understand that we are over the hill. We might look young, but we are over the hill. Therefore, it is really important for those two institutions to be established as a matter of urgency.

They said they want to make their parents accountable for the actions of their children. They want that. They also want that parents must understand and realize that they must not leave the role of child rearing to the teachers. I was so amazed at what they came up with. Do you know what they said? They said: “You have to

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[HON. E. JOB-DAVIS]

Monday, October 18, 2004

start to teach our parents. Bring them back to school; and you have to talk to us because we could get them to come.” That is what they said. We have built some spanking new schools in Tobago. I am hoping that the THA would utilize those schools in the evening, to do what these children said. I will speak to the Chief Secretary. As a matter of fact, he will be getting a copy of this.

Mr. Speaker, these children also spoke about the community. They said that long ago the village council really used to work. The village used to take care of its own. Do you know what is happening now? They are saying that it is no longer viable, that they cannot get access to some of the community centres. Do you know what they proposed? They proposed that the Government or the THA establish a council of councils, meaning that they need a board comprising members from the various villages as an oversight body for all the village councils to report to. When they want the keys for the community centres, they cannot get them. When they want to get into the centre they cannot; anything they want to do in the centre is a problem. They need a reporting body comprised of the villagers to oversee their actions, so that the young people can have access to do whatever. They want to have homework centres. There are no proper facilities in Tobago East right now. Therefore, the only things they can use are the community centres. If they do not have access to the community centres, what next? What do they do? Most times they just sit on the block.

I want to really commend the Member for Toco/Manzanilla in absence about the BLING initiative. It is something I would like to see happen in Tobago. I really believe that initiative is going to be very, very successful.

Mr. Speaker, these young children also wanted a performing arts centre in Tobago East. I am happy to note that, in the development programme that I see for Tobago, the THA is in fact going to put one at Louis D’or. Most of those young people are culturally inclined. Pembroke won the Prime Minister’s Best Village Competition last year. I think they had a queen. They are always participating in cultural activities. Therefore, they need somewhere where they can go to start having shows probably every week. What they are saying is that they have so much time, sometimes, and they need to find some way of channelling that energy. I am happy to see that the performing arts centre, in Tobago, will be built by the THA.

There is one other issue that a young lady spoke of. It is her experience. She is an athlete. At that symposium what she said to us was that the national education policy should strive to achieve a balance between academics, sports and skilled development. The reason she said that is because she leaves Tobago, comes to

Trinidad to represent the school in any sporting activities that take place here—it is not just her, it happens to any of them as well—but no sort of preparation is made for them when they return to school to catch up on the lessons that they would have missed. They have a problem with that. It is probably not the ministry's problem, but the issue should really reside at the school. If these children are going out there to represent the school, they bring back the trophies and the school has them, then the school needs to ensure that those children are well taken care of, in terms of their academics as well. That is going to help us to produce even more rounded students.

They said that we should make guidance counselling part of the Teachers Training Colleges' curriculum. I am not sure if that is there now. If it is not, that is something that they propose. What they are saying to us is that the way these teachers treat them, sometimes, they have a serious problem with that. They talk to them anyhow. They said that the teachers sometime curse them. I am not in school; I do not know. I am just taking their word for it.

They also talked about instituting the parental education programmes. One other issue that was raised was the age limit. I think that was a very good point; that we put age limits on the training programmes we have. I see that the Ministry of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education has taken off the age limit. They are requesting for programmes like YAPA, et cetera, that we remove the age barrier from 25 years, because there are young women and men who would have left school and are not doing anything now and would want to be part of a training programme but cannot get access to the programme because there is a cut-off age limit. They want to see the age limit removed, so that they can also access these programmes. It seems as though youth is now from 18—89.

7.40 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, you see, these little things are really just irritants that can be removed and taken care of with a budget of \$1.2 billion, plus the ability to borrow \$500 million. I am certain that once the Tobago House of Assembly (THA) gets the allocation, they would certainly implement some of these measures that these young persons talked about.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the speaking time of the hon. Member for Tobago East 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. E. Job-Davis: Mr. Speaker, thank you. I would like to thank my honourable colleague, from the other side, for his generosity. This is really the essence of what the young people would like to see happening in Tobago.

There are some other issues that I have to deal with, and one of these issues, is the issue of crime. During this year, we have seen an increase in crime in Tobago; we have had approximately four murders for the year; and these murders are not related to domestic issues. These are murders that are drug related. They are using real guns and shooting bullets. In Tobago, this was unheard of.

What has been identified is the fact some of these criminals are coming from Trinidad. I am not exempting Tobagonians from doing some of these wrong things. What we have is the experience of the Trinidadians, coupled with the knowledge of the terrain of the Tobagonians, and together as a team, these persons create a lethal combination.

Trinidad and Tobago is one country and, therefore, one does not need a passport to get to Tobago. However, at this point, I would like to propose that we initiate measures, to have more controlled entry, at the points of entry in Tobago. One of the measures that I would like to see is the installation of a closed-circuit television in the airport and one in the Scarborough Port.

In addition to that, what now obtains at the Scarborough Port is that when the boats come in, people just come off these boats and they just mix and mingle throughout Tobago. I would like to propose controlled entry—meaning that the entry points at the Scarborough Port would have to be restructured and passengers would have to be channelled, through a controlled exit, so that the cameras would pick up passengers, so that we would know who is in Tobago. More than that, this is going to give the police some ammunition to work with. When anything happens in Tobago, the police would then be able to go back to the tape, and see exactly who came through the port at a given point in time. That is something that we need to implement.

In Tobago, we had the house of a former Member of Parliament being broken into; and then we have criminals shooting at the police. That was really unheard of in Tobago.

Mr. Singh: They are coming from Laventille.

Hon. E. Job-Davis: Actually, they are coming from Penal. [*Laughter*] We know that we have a problem. As a matter of urgency, that is another measure that we need to implement.

I also want to touch on the matter of HIV/AIDS. This is a global issue and one that threatens to derail all the plans and programmes of any country. As a matter of fact, the World Bank Report of 2004 indicates that approximately 60 million persons worldwide are now affected with the disease. They have also estimated that there are 14,000 new cases daily, and half of that figure is below the age of 25. That is indeed frightening. Our schools are no longer immune from this scourge. They have also found that school children are suffering from this disease.

The statistics from the World Bank Report also confirms recent information in the *Trinidad Express* Newspaper dated August 2004, which reported the feminization of the disease and, therein lies the problem. If we have to go by the *Bible*, we are supposed to be fruitful, multiply and replenish the earth. But when we have feminization of the HIV/AIDS disease, this means that we are in serious trouble.

Mr. Singh: What do you mean by “feminization”?

Hon. E. Job-Davis: The feminization of the disease means that more women than men are affected with the disease. The balance has changed. In the ministry, we have mounted an Anti-Aids Caravan Campaign which we are hoping to take throughout the length and breadth of Trinidad and Tobago. This campaign would be targeting women. Women will now have to learn how to take care of themselves and learn how to say no.

We also understand that HIV/AIDS is a lifestyle disease. So, you cannot blame the Government. The Government gave money to the THA to assist with the HIV/AIDS programme. If people do not access these programmes, then we will still have problems. I am really heartened to note that legislation to criminalize deliberate acts by infected persons would be coming before this Parliament.

Mr. Speaker, there are success stories of the number of HIV/AIDS infected patients taking a downward trend. Countries like Brazil, Uganda, Bahamas and Cuba have reported success with respect to HIV/AIDS. I have spoken to members of parliament from Uganda. They have said that they have adopted the “ABC” and now the “D” approach to dealing with HIV/AIDS. Uganda has instituted the “D” and this is where, I suppose, we will be going. What this simply means is that they have asked their citizens to either abstain, to be faithful, to “condomize” and “D” is to disclose, which is most important for us in this region.

Tobago only has 50,000 people. If the infection rate is even close to what they are talking about, then we can anticipate what is going to happen. People are always hearing about Tobago, but the problem is also in Trinidad, and in the rest of the region.

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[HON. E. JOB-DAVIS]

Monday, October 18, 2004

As parliamentarians, I want to urge all of us to take up this mantle. This is something that is going to come home to us, without a doubt; it is going to come home. We have to take up this mantle of HIV/AIDS in a serious way, not just the Government, but all of us. I am certain that the Member for Caroni Central will agree with me that we have to take up this mantle and run with it, and preach this word as it has never been preached before, or else, we will be in dire trouble.

Mr. Speaker, I hope that the funds that the THA received from the Government this year would be utilized, to address some of the niggling issues for Tobago East. Tobago West is more developed than Tobago East. This has always been so. Therefore, the east has to jump, leapfrog for a couple of years to move forward. I do not have a reason for that, but it has happened. The fact of the matter is that we have to address this situation.

Mr. Speaker, before I close, I want to say to this honourable House that last week, I had the opportunity to attend the President's Symposium on National Self Discovery in Tobago. The theme of that symposium was: Tobago and Trinidad: Another Look. At that symposium several issues were highlighted.

I would be failing in my duty to Tobagonians, if I did not bring to this honourable House, some of the issues which were highlighted at that symposium. The people of Tobago felt that we needed to take another look at the political relationship between Tobago and Trinidad; we needed to take another look at the Tobago House of Assembly Act; we needed to take another look at the present system of governance in Tobago; we needed to take another look at the economic independence for Tobago; and we needed to take another look at the constitutional arrangements between the two islands.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, I would once again like to congratulate the hon. Minister of Finance and his team for this budget. I would also like to endorse the three pillars on which the budget was premised and they are: maximizing returns from the energy sector, through participation in the value chain and raising the Government's tax-take; diversification of the economy to reduce dependence on the energy sector and to achieve self-sustaining growth; and ensuring that the benefits of economic growth and development are shared by all sections of the population.

Mr. Speaker, this budget is a budget for the people of this country. This Government recognizes that we must put people at the centre of everything that we do. You see, there is no calling more noble or no responsibility greater than enabling men, women and children to make a better life for themselves.

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

The Minister of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development (Hon. Anthony Roberts): Mr. Speaker, thank you very much. I am, indeed, very grateful for the opportunity to be part of this budget debate. I want to immediately congratulate my colleague, the Member for Tobago East, on her contribution. [*Desk thumping*]

The Member also made the point that we all have to make a serious contribution to the development of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

7.55 p.m.

I am excited about this experience, at this time of our country's development. Today, I join with the thousands of forward-thinking Trinidadians and Tobagonians who are lending their support to the measures in this budget. The hon. Prime Minister, the Minister of Finance and Member for San Fernando East, must be highly commended for his master presentation. [*Desk thumping*] We thought that he was setting the stage for an excellent debate. The presentation says something about the hon. Prime Minister and the Government which he leads, when we witnessed in this budget debate the Opposition's inability to respond to the measures. This is sending a clear message: At this time, the country does not have a suitable alternative to this Government. [*Desk thumping*]

Before I proceed, I think it is necessary for me to comment briefly on some of the contributions from my colleagues on the other side. We heard from Members on this side, particularly the Member for Laventille East/Morvant, when he took pains to deal with the contribution from the Member for Couva North and his reckless behaviour. [*Crosstalk*] I will not go down that route again; I think the Member dealt with it adequately.

I make reference to a pertinent question raised by my friend, the Member for Oropouche, when he asked the question: What would the legacy be of the hon. Prime Minister, when he demits office? Some Members on this side again dealt with that issue, but I would add that when you look at the contribution of the hon. Member for San Fernando East, you will remember him for his caring attitude towards the people of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker, I ask the question: What would be the legacy of the Member for Couva North, because he, too, was leader of this country? I want to suggest what his legacy would be. I believe that he was responsible for encouraging divisiveness between the two major races in this country, and that is what he will be remembered by. He will be remembered for trying to create strife and racial discord in Trinidad and Tobago and for promoting civil disobedience and

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[HON. A. ROBERTS]

Monday, October 18, 2004

violence in our country. That will be his legacy. [*Desk thumping*] I could go further to indicate that we must remember the Member for Couva North, because he was the person who presided over the most corrupt government that this country has ever seen. [*Desk thumping*] The people of this country know the Member for Couva North, so I do not have to get into that.

I now take some time to deal with issues raised by my colleague, the Member for Nariva; unfortunately he is not here. [*Crosstalk*] I listened to his contribution which, in my view, was baseless and without any kind of substance. As you are aware, Mr. Speaker, that Member is one of my predecessors in the Ministry of Labour. It did not take me any length of time to realize that his stay in the ministry was very uneventful. He spent six years in the ministry and created absolutely no impact whatsoever.

I thought he would have told the Parliament what legislative contribution he made during the six years he was there; I will deal with that a little later on. Now that he is no more at the ministry, he has just realized that the Labour Inspectorate is unable to cope with the amount of work it is supposed to. He had no foresight when he was there. I wish to tell him that in just a couple of months we will be taking care of that, because of the strategic and restructuring exercise taking place at the ministry. We will be bringing the ministry in a particular position to meet the current realities of the labour market in Trinidad and Tobago. We are taking care of what he did not do during his six years there.

It was under his watch, as Minister of Labour and Cooperatives, that the co-operative movement dwindled, almost to the point of death. But I am told, by friends in the ministry, that almost everything on and around him is dying. When he and the Member for Oropouche made their contributions they made reference to problems and expressed concern about the National Entrepreneurial Development Company (NEDCO), which is part of my ministry. I had no real problem when I heard them speak about NEDCO in negative terms. I feel confident that the initiative of putting NEDCO together was an excellent one. [*Desk thumping*]

I am pleased to tell you that in just two short years NEDCO is doing extremely well. Over 80 per cent of NEDCO's loan portfolio is performing, providing over 7,000 sustainable employment opportunities for the people of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] The intention for putting NEDCO together was really to assist the disadvantaged in the community; persons who would not, normally, have gone to the regular banks. I am pointing particularly to the small man in the community. I do not know if they have problems with assisting the small man, but

that is what NEDCO is doing in our country today. I have absolutely no problem with them when they say negative things about NEDCO, because I am convinced that all they are doing is playing to the camera, because there are Members on the other side benefiting tremendously from the efforts of NEDCO. One Member went to the National Entrepreneurial Development Company (NEDCO) and offered his constituency office for them to meet with his constituents. [*Crosstalk*] [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Member: Say who the Member is.

Hon. A. Roberts: It was the Member for Oropouche, because he is an intelligent young man. Another Member sent letters congratulating NEDCO for the work it is doing, so it is just a question of them coming to “gallery” to the cameras, when they complain about NEDCO. [*Interruption*] [*Mr. Singh stands*]

Mr. Singh: Will the Member give way?

Hon. A. Roberts: So I have absolutely no problem with them, when they behave that way. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Singh: He said that the Member is benefiting by giving his office; that is not right.

Hon. Member: We understand what he means. [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. A. Roberts: I want to revert to my friend, the Member for Nariva. [*Crosstalk*] That is the same person who said that the current Minister of Labour is lazy.

Mr. Speaker: Order!

Hon. A. Roberts: It was under his watch that the Cipriani Labour College lost its way and became one of the hottest beds of corruption. God alone knows what was the relationship between that Member, the then minister, and the then Chairman of the college; God alone understands. [*Crosstalk*] I do not know; I do not want to suggest and I do not want to think, but we understand that moneys which their government approved for the construction of that building had disappeared. We know that. I will deal with that too, a little later on. With the new strategic direction, we are going to take the college back to its core function. It is going to play the role that it was really supposed to in this society for the development of Trinidad and Tobago.

When the Member came here and performed before the gallery, he should have told the Parliament that he provided absolutely no leadership to the ministry. His ministerial incompetence was beyond comprehension. [*Desk thumping*] I

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[HON. A. ROBERTS]

Monday, October 18, 2004

could tell that when the then Prime Minister appointed a junior minister at that ministry in the Member for Oropouche, the Member for Nariva panicked. He went to members of staff and told them that the ministry had only one minister and he was that minister. [*Crosstalk*] Mr. Speaker, I want to understand: In his house, does he have to say that he is the man of the house? He is not sure. [*Crosstalk*] The ministry never felt his presence; maybe he collected a salary under false pretenses.

In this budget debate, the ex-minister, the Member for Nariva, behaved as if he wanted to impress someone, but I will not allow them to detain me. Clearly this budget is another giant step, as this Government solidifies this country's economic position, adding credibility to the theme of this budget, which is ensuring our future survival. That is exactly what the PNM Government is doing for Trinidad and Tobago.

8.10 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, I confidently want to give the assurance that this Government is on target to achieve its vision for the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

The measures outlined in this budget, in addition to concretizing our economic base through encouraging significant investments in the oil and non-oil sectors, this Government is ensuring that there is no squandermania. This country will never again endure the kind of squandermania and pain that was a feature during the tenure of the UNC; especially prior to the PNM's return to office. They went crazy, Mr. Speaker, so we must thank God for the external factors, and coupled with the prudent, economic management on the part of this Government today we are able to secure on behalf of the people of Trinidad and Tobago a healthy savings in the Revenue Stabilization Fund. It is because of careful management.

As my colleague, the Member for Tunapuna, indicated, we in the PNM understand what it is to put something aside for the rainy day. [*Crosstalk*] You set up a fund with nothing in it. You had it elsewhere.

Mr. Speaker: Order! Order!

Hon. A. Roberts: That is exactly where it was. What we have done, was not done by neglecting to satisfy the needs of the people of this country because this budget is all-embracing. It provides assistance for every strata in the society because we are ensuring that no one is left behind including the supporters of the Members on the other side.

This Government understands that employment is central to the economic growth and prosperity, and for this reason as a Government, we are not at all surprised at the Central Statistical Office's (CSO) statistics which show that the unemployment rate in this country went down to 7.8 per cent.

I want to refer to a contribution made by my colleague, a good, long-standing friend of mine, the Member for Oropouche. [*Interruption*] Yes, he is a good friend of mine; he is just in bad company.

Mr. Speaker, he said that we should not consider certain—what we call employment. It should be left out when they are doing the analysis, and I know that he knows better. I credit him with that intelligence because for the purpose of the analysis, to say that those employed in what he called make-work should be discounted a joke, because I know that he knows what is considered employment when it comes to the International Labour Organization (ILO).

I will quote from the *Labour Statistics Report 1999—2004* from the Ministry of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise. It says:

“The employed, or persons with jobs comprise all persons, trainees, including apprentices whether paid or not and unpaid family worker who worked or held a job during an established reference period. Persons who had a job in which they had already worked, but from which they were temporarily absent because of illness or injury, industrial dispute, vacation, or other leave of absence or disorganization of work, such as bad weather or mechanical breakdown are also considered as employed.”

So Mr. Speaker, I know that my friend understands, but for the purpose of the debate, he had to say something because he realized that they on that side missed the opportunity to exercise, or maybe they are incapable of exercising creativity in coming up with some of the social programmes that we on this side were able to put in place to have an impact on the unemployment situation in Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

Their real problem is that they have a fear that the PNM will meet its target of full employment, so they will come up with all sorts of arguments to try to discount it. The PNM did not manufacture the figures you know, they are the CSO's figures and the same method and analysis that the CSO used during the period of the UNC, is the same analysis and method they used during the period under the PNM Government. So they have to learn to come to terms with the reality. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, this thing is a bread and butter issue and they have to understand that. What the PNM is actually doing now is putting bread and butter on the table of the people in this country and at the same time as you heard from my sister, the Member for Tobago East, we use the opportunity to train them so that in the long run they will be able to find themselves sustainable employment. That is what we

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[HON. A. ROBERTS]

Monday, October 18, 2004

are doing. They will be able to wean themselves, and those of us who were breast fed would understand what I mean when I say wean themselves from the programme.

I recall when our distinguished and visionary Prime Minister indicated that there was a possibility to import labour in Trinidad and Tobago, his detractors jumped to his throat, they almost killed him, but I want to tell you that from surveys done by my ministry, it is extremely difficult to find a skilled tradesman in Trinidad and Tobago today. You cannot find a good mason or carpenter. But my colleague indicated that we are taking care of that too, and that could be one of the legacies of the hon. Member for San Fernando East.

After the experience with the NAR, he had to lead the PNM to clean up and fix Trinidad and Tobago, and so too we had the experience after the UNC. So he will be remembered as the “Fix-it man”. You see this Government has a deliberate and structured approach to pursuing poverty reduction through job creation, and so the Ministry of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprises is playing its supportive role.

At this time, it is pursuing a series of policy formulation in different areas including employment. As you are aware, employment, its creation, its quality and sustainability are central to our social stability and cohesion, to our social development, to the alleviation and eradication of poverty and to industrial peace in Trinidad and Tobago and so this Government—as the Minister of Finance indicated in his budget presentation—has made it a key part of its third pillar of economic strategy.

That pillar is not simply to ensure that the benefits of economic growth and development are shared by all the population, but to act on the recognition that the economic growth must be accompanied by the creation of full employment involving permanent jobs along with the high quality of health, education and general welfare.

So the commitment to employment is clear and unequivocal, but also implicit in this commitment is one to decent work. Full employment is described as one of the most important targets over the medium term, and so the target over the next three years, is the creation of 34,000 additional jobs ensuring that unemployment is brought down to the rate of no less than 5 per cent in Trinidad and Tobago.

8.25 p.m.

I am saying to you that no one will be left behind and I would say it as often as I can so that they could understand. You see, Mr. Speaker, I have had the opportunity to serve, not at this level, but while they were in government, so that

when they come to this House and talk about discrimination, I understand it. [*Desk thumping*] The people of San Juan/Laventille understood it. We know about discrimination. When they were in government they gave the San Juan/Laventille Regional Corporation \$100,000 to pave roads, while millions of dollars were spent in other areas where they had control. But they come here now to talk about discrimination. They talk about street lighting, and I recall—and it was the Member for Caroni East; I think he was the then minister—\$5 million for street lighting. Not one street light in San Juan/Laventille.

Mr. Singh: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. Member for giving way. We instituted a national street lighting campaign and the process was headed by a committee headed by the Permanent Secretary and it was the responses of the various councillors that provided the basis for the implementation of the street lights. [*Interruption*] I just merely want to say that a PNM councillor, Godfrey Lee Sing, in the Moruga area, got the most street lights—102 street lights installed.

Hon. Member: We are talking about Laventille.

Hon. A. Roberts: Who was the Member of Parliament for Ortoire/Mayaro?

Mr. Singh: Your councillors are lazy!

Hon. A. Roberts: Mr. Speaker, I am sorry. I will leave the Member to deal with his conscience.

Mr. Speaker, the success in achieving these targets by this Government is critical for individual and community well-being. The jobs that we will be creating will be sustainable and productive in the energy sector, in construction and infrastructure, in commercial activities, in manufacturing, in high technology and in agriculture. Let me expand a bit on the question of full employment.

The Ministry of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development has undertaken two projects which would help Trinidad and Tobago to achieve full employment status in the shortest possible time. Project number one is a survey of the labour market. This would help the country to determine what is the nature of the labour market, what jobs are needed; what jobs are in short supply; what are the growth areas; where there is a decline and what needs to be done to ensure Trinidad and Tobago's successful participation in the world's economy.

At this time a conference is taking place in Trinidad and Tobago where they are discussing the importance of labour market information. This conference involves the International Labour Organization (ILO), the Ministry of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development and the Ministry of Planning and

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[HON. A. ROBERTS]

Monday, October 18, 2004

Development. The second project involves the formulation of an employment policy. This will assist the ministry to enhance its capacity to help persons to find jobs and provide a more comprehensive employment service, driven to ensure that there is full employment.

I want to elaborate a little more when we talk about job placement, because, you see, the ministry would continue to develop its one-stop career resource centres. I want to take this time to pay tribute to my colleague, the Member for Point Fortin—[*Desk thumping*] because this emerged under his watch. I do not know what the Member for Nariva could point to, but this emerged under the watch of my colleague. [*Interruption*] I know that God has been good to him.

These centres are located at the office of the ministry in Port of Spain, Furlonge Street in Point Fortin and on the Main Road in Chaguanas. There are other centres to be opened soon, and they would, at Sangre Grande and Tobago. But in addition to job payment, these centres also provide individual employment counselling and job preparation. They assist the young people in the preparation of resumes; they teach them how to dress for the workplace; they teach them etiquette and how to carry themselves in the workplace.

At this time I could say that the Ministry is so much different from what my colleague left.

Mr. Hinds: Did you say, left?

Hon. A. Roberts: What he left, yes. We are not talking about feet now.

The ministry at this time is energized and well focused to assist the Government in attaining its vision. So in this ensuing year we will be promoting and supporting the development of a well-trained and flexible workforce, the enhancement of productivity and the utilization of good labour and employment practices. We would be strengthening worker and employer education in respect of the worker and employer rights, and health and safety in the workplace. We will be implementing an active labour market policy on human resource development to match the needs of the constantly changing labour market. We would be actively pursuing and promoting industrial peace by way of proactive intervention, strong and effective conciliation and advisory services and the enhancement of social dialogue.

The ministry will insist on the application of the principles of decent work in the workplace. We are going to accelerate the promotion and development of small and micro enterprise and of cooperatives, and strengthen these sectors. I recall my friend from Oropouche indicating that an important pillar for employment

is through the small and micro enterprise. We are going to aggressively pursue job placement, strengthening the social safety net by way of updating legislation and policy affecting workers.

What I have just done was to outline the action plan of my ministry. It is important that we recognize what are the implications for this unprecedented and dynamic situation in which we find ourselves. I want to paint a picture here, because what this Government is, in fact, creating is a sustained period of high growth, high investment, and high employment. Businesses will expand; new businesses will open; opportunities will increase for persons with skills and workers will feel free to migrate from job to job, and to enhance their skills and their opportunities.

By the same token, some workers will want to extract more by way of bargaining from their employers. Many employers will poach from others in order to find the skills and experience they need for their operations. It can be expected from this kind of scenario that the labour market will become more turbulent. I am saying to you that we are going to find diverse ways in dealing with this turbulence.

One of the approaches in this connection would be through training and this would be pursued aggressively at the Cipriani College of Labour and Cooperative Studies. We are currently in the midst of completing the phase one of major expansion, to which I refer, at the college, which my colleague, the Member for Nariva, had started and which tossed the whole college into that hot-bed of corruption to which I referred.

It would mean additional classrooms to accommodate an increased intake of students. It will also mean an expanded faculty, a restructuring of the institution, greater decentralization of its operations and a refocusing of its course offerings onto its core mission in the provision of training in industrial relations and cooperative matters, which will also include small and micro enterprise.

This college will provide tertiary education for the working class, as well as the under-privileged, and will provide them with the wherewithal to facilitate their upward mobility in the workplace. It will also ensure a greater education and understanding in employment relations and cooperatives. The new thrust of the college will provide a better trained cadre of trade unionists, as well as managers who would have a better appreciation for labour relations issues and cooperatives.

However, my ministry considers it to be absolutely essential to pursue at this time a large-scale programme in public education and persuasion in support of industrial peace in order to underpin the improvement of the social dialogue

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[HON. A. ROBERTS]

Monday, October 18, 2004

machinery and other efforts at proactive industrial relations. I am pleased to indicate that the planning of this initiative has already commenced.

As Trinidad and Tobago strives to achieve developed nation status by 2020, one needs to appreciate that it is doing so while the context of the world of work and employment relations is changing and there is a general complaint, that is, a worldwide phenomenon produces indecent or poor work, usually considered inferior, insecure contingent jobs and interrupted and discontinuous employment. This is a reality of the contemporary global economy and world of work.

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

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

Question put and agreed to.

8.40 p.m.

Hon. A. Roberts: Mr. Speaker, I extend my gratitude to Members for extending my time.

The Ministry of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development is very conscious of this development. It is also conscious that these new forms of work relationships pose tremendous challenges to the traditional industrial relations system and the legislative framework for regulating employment relations. I have indicated that during this year the national community will continue to see the ministry embarking on several policies and administrative and legislative initiatives that would allow Trinidad and Tobago to successfully deal with the challenges.

To confront the changing context of the world of work, employment relationships and the challenges they pose, the ministry is developing policy on employment standards. The essence of the policy direction so far is the development of industrial relations infrastructure in Trinidad and Tobago to create an environment of enhanced working conditions and standards to promote industrial peace, harmony, productivity, profitability, international competitiveness and sustainable development. The main pillars of this policy envisage the encouragement of collaborative and consensual relations at work, through the development of mechanisms such as labour and management partnerships at work and in the wider economy.

The extension of the industrial relations dispute settlement and determination mechanisms to include coverage for workers who are unrepresented by trade unions, or who otherwise do not have access to the Industrial Court and the dispute settlement mechanism under the Industrial Relations Act.

There is the creation of law to ensure that Trinidad and Tobago meets its international legal obligation as a member of the International Labour Organization. That is its obligation to promote opportunities for women and men, including the mentally and physically challenged, to obtain decent and productive work in conditions of freedom, equity, security and human dignity.

The adherence to international labour standards is the underpinning mechanism through which Trinidad and Tobago will produce and effectively participate in international trade and more particularly, in the regional global society and economic organizations such as the Caribbean Single Market and Economy and the Free Trade Area of the Americas.

I now turn my attention to the industrial relations climate in Trinidad and Tobago. During 2004, the country experienced industrial conflicts in the energy and energy-related sectors, especially among the heavy construction workers. From time to time, the state sector has had its share of conflict primarily among health workers. The private sector's major conflict has been the lockout of workers at Carib Brewery. This matter is now before the Industrial Court for determination. Nevertheless, one cannot conclude that there is a breakdown of industrial relations systems, as some of my friends want us to believe.

The reality is that as a country continues on its growth path and development as we are, and there is a perception that there is wealth in abundance, as manifested in the upward movement in oil prices, one can expect greater demands being placed on employers in both the state and private sectors. It is classical industrial relations that as an economy does better, the greater is the tendency to industrial conflict because workers make greater demands of their employers. The Ministry of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development will continue to take all steps to limit industrial conflicts in Trinidad and Tobago.

The ministry has strengthened its capacity to advise and counsel the social partners. It would expand the opportunities for dialogue to ensure that appropriate administrative and legislative steps are taken to promote good industrial relations. It would encourage the development of a system for collaboration and consensus between employers and trade unions to promote increased productivity and profitability, while at the same time ensuring that work is conducted in an environment of freedom, peace, equity, safety and human dignity.

The Minister of Finance in his budget speech raised the question of the national minimum wage. I have taken the necessary steps to have the Minimum Wage Board address the question, so that the measure can take effect from January

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[HON. A. ROBERTS]

Monday, October 18, 2004

2005. I will take the opportunity to let the business enterprise and employers who stand to benefit from the tax rebate as a result of the national minimum wage know, that they are expected to conform to the law to pay the minimum wage.

The ministry has given consideration to the restructuring and strengthening of the Labour Inspectorate to ensure compliance with the measure, as well as the monitoring of conditions of employment and standards in Trinidad and Tobago. We will take steps to re-engineer the Labour Inspectorate in respect of the quantity and quality of staff. It will adopt a very aggressive approach to the enforcement and compliance. Furthermore, it will enhance its advisory capacity to ensure greater awareness of rights and responsibilities among trade unions, employees and employers.

I want this honourable House to note that the legislation that regulates the minimum wage empowers and affects individuals, any trade union of their choice and the ministry to initiate action in respect of non-compliance. It is indeed a pity that individuals in Trinidad and Tobago are still reluctant to insist upon their rights and what is considered their just due. Minimum wage workers, it is your right to ensure that you are paid the minimum wage and enjoy all the attached terms and conditions. Insist that you are paid the correct wages. I urge all workers who are affected to bring their matter to the attention of the ministry.

I call on my colleagues in the trade union movement to take up the cause and plight of minimum wage workers, as they are empowered to do so under the Minimum Wage Act. Some of these workers may not be unionized. I know that the trade union leaders in this country have the interest of the workers at heart. I know that because they have told me so. I urge the trade union movement to collaborate with the ministry to ensure that there is compliance with the national minimum wage.

In 2004, the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago enacted the Occupational Safety and Health Act, an interesting piece of legislation. The Ministry of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development has been taking steps to give effect to this Act. In doing so, Cabinet appointed a Safety Council to examine policy and develop codes of practice and regulation. The Council has reported. The report is now before the Executive of the Tobago House of Assembly and the Ministry of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development for consideration, before submitting its recommendations to the Cabinet of Trinidad and Tobago.

To complete our comprehensive approach to the management of employment relations, cooperatives, small and micro enterprise developments and job creation, there is need for some legislative intervention. However, before outlining some of the ministry's agenda, I want to point out this.

I refer to my friend for Nariva. I want to point out his shameless conduct. Recently, the hon. Attorney General brought a legislative agenda to this honourable House. I understand that it was the first in the history, a guide to all government's legislative intention. It was viewed by my hon. friend for Nariva as an opportunity to satisfy his starvation for media coverage. He ran to the press claiming the same nonsense that he indicated in this House when he was making his contribution. He indicated that there is no labour legislation and they left legislation drafted in the ministry. I wish to remind hon. Members that during his tenure, six years he spent in government, he brought one new piece of legislation to this House. That was the Maternity Protection Act of 1998. He brought one amendment and in addition to that, the Minimum Wage (Amdt.) Act of 2000. That was the sum total of the legislation that the Member brought to this honourable House.

When the Member spoke about what was left in the ministry, could you imagine a PNM Government taking God out of its thoughts to bring legislation without carefully analyzing these things? We do not operate in that way. This Government does not pursue governance in an ad hoc manner. There is detailed policy formulation to inform legislation, as events by my insight into the employment standards policy. That would inform the Employment Standards Bill. Our approach is strategic and deliberate. In time, this House will receive legislation on the minimum age for admission to the employment world.

This piece of legislation will deal with the employment of children. This piece of legislation would propose a minimum age for employment in Trinidad and Tobago.

8.55 p.m.

Secondly, the Employment Standards Bill, which would establish a minimum flow of rights for all employees in Trinidad and Tobago, and give access to justice and to the Industrial Court to an extended group of employees, which includes the domestic workers. [*Desk thumping*]

The co-operative society: You will see legislation which will amend and repeal the current Co-operative Societies Act and usher in new systems for regulation, supervision and good governance for co-operatives, including credit unions.

At this moment a co-operative policy is being reviewed at the ministry. Mr. Speaker, the ministry approach is one of responsible governance, thus its initiative will be a combination of precise administrative and institutional reengineering, and appropriate legislative intervention to ensure that Trinidad and Tobago would have a collaborative and consensual employment relations at work, in an environment of freedom, peace, equity, safety and human dignity, and that the co-operatives

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[HON. A. ROBERTS]

Monday, October 18, 2004

and small and micro-enterprise will be well governed, and they will contribute to sustainable development and the Government's plan to make Trinidad and Tobago a developed nation by 2020.

Mr. Speaker, during the excellent presentation of the hon. Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, one could not help but notice the distress on the faces of my friends on the other side—and that is understandable—as they are witnessing a government in full flight. [*Desk thumping*]

More than that, Mr. Speaker, they are witnessing a Government utilizing the rich resources of our beautiful twin-island state in the best interest of all the people of Trinidad and Tobago. I reiterate, Mr. Speaker, that no one will be left behind. [*Desk thumping*]

I want to urge my colleagues on the other side to be the beneficiaries of lessons in good governance, a display of integrity in public life. I want them to listen to this one: the upholding of the commandments of the Lord: “Thou shalt not steal.” And others. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: Order! Order.

Hon. A. Roberts: It is only then that friends will have an appreciation for the successes of this Government: full employment, poverty eradication, and benefits for all. I urge my friends on the other side to join with us, as I conclude, by assuring the people of Trinidad and Tobago that no one will be left behind.

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

Motion made and question proposed, That this House be adjourned to Tuesday, October 19, 2004 at 10.00 a.m. [*Hon. K. Valley*]

Question put and agreed to.

House adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 9.03 p.m.