

*Paper Laid**Monday, October 03, 2005***HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES***Monday, October 03, 2005*

The House met at 10.00 a.m.

PRAYERS[Mr. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]**PAPER LAID**

Annual report of the Teaching Service Commission for the year 2003. [*The Minister of Works and Transport (Hon. Colm Imbert)*]

**APPROPRIATION BILL
(BUDGET)**

[Second Day]

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on question [September 28, 2005]:

That the Bill be now read a second time.

Question again proposed.

Mr. Basdeo Panday (*Couva North*): [*Desk thumping*] Mr. Speaker, I respond to this budget of the Prime Minister and Minister of Finance for the fiscal year 2005/2006 in the context of a nation that is on the brink of collapse. In a three-hour long speech, he devotes less than 10 minutes to the issue of crime, the most serious problem facing the country, and in the end he gave us no hope—no hope to the citizenry—that there will be any abatement of this PNM-inspired scourge that has afflicted this once peaceful and beautiful nation.

Having convinced himself that the solution to all the country's problems is to lock down this and lock down that, the Prime Minister and Minister of Finance seems to have locked down his brain and made it impenetrable to any new ideas. With foot in mouth, not only does he frequently utter nonsense, for example, his recent advice on family planning was to watch television instead, but he also has failed to come to terms with the realities of the 21st Century and he is blissfully unaware of the priorities of the good citizens of Trinidad and Tobago.

In previous responses to the budget presentation of the hon. Minister of Finance, I have tried to follow convention. I have analyzed the key international trends and developments, looked at the context of the global challenges that we face, researched what the international institutions are saying about us and then made recommendations for moving our nation forward. This approach makes

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[MR. B. PANDAY]

Monday, October 03, 2005

sense if one is speaking to people who are willing to listen and learn but, more importantly, it requires that there be a measure of credibility on the other side.

By what criteria shall we assess the credibility of this Minister of Finance? Surely not by what he says he is going to do, but rather by what he has done in the past. The PNM carries on as if the population must accept what they say and do simply because they occupy office, and the Prime Minister speaks as though the test of truth is when something comes out of his mouth whether or not he has his foot in it. Kouzes and Posner, in their book *Credibility*, wrote under the heading: "Earning Credibility", and I quote:

"Credibility, like reputation, is something that is earned over time. It does not come automatically with the job or title."

In an extensive survey of several thousands of persons, the author said that the most frequent responses of people when asked to define "credibility" of their leaders were: They do what they say they will do; they practise what they preach; they walk the talk; their actions are consistent with their words. No one would expect the PNM to get a positive response to any of these descriptions of credible leaders. It is therefore very difficult to work up an enthusiasm for responding to this budget when we know that those opposite have no intention of walking the talk. They are neither practising what they preach nor preaching what they practise and their actions are not consistent with their words and they completely disregard the cries of the population.

Let us see how they performed on the promises made in past budgets. The 2005/2006 budget promises to do lots of things. However, when we examine the budgets delivered by this Minister of Finance since he was undeservedly handed office in 2001 on a platter, we begin to see that he and his administration have a deep-seated pathology for non-delivery, non-performance and for making promises and not delivering on them. No wonder the members of the business community, among others, view with a high degree of skepticism, the promises made in this budget.

Two years ago in the 2003/2004 budget presentation of the Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, the self-same Patrick Manning, Member for San Fernando East, promised to build a bridge to Tobago. What has happened to that bridge? The last time I was in Tobago I looked for the bridge. I did not see any bridge so I came back to Trinidad and went to Toco. If there was a bridge between Toco and Tobago, that bridge must have been built under water. In that same budget speech, the promising Prime Minister promised to begin construction of a highway to Point Fortin in 2005. The promise was repeated a year later, in the 2004/2005 budget.

In this budget for 2005/2006, we now hear that the Solomon Hochoy Highway will be extended from Golconda to Debe. It seems that as the years roll by this highway is getting shorter and shorter with every succeeding budget speech of this promising Prime Minister. The rapid industrialization of the southwest peninsula demands a highway to Point Fortin. While we are in the southwest, we reluctantly recall that in two budgets that preceded this one, the Prime Minister promised to build a hospital there. What has become of the Point Fortin Hospital? Maybe it has gone the way of the San Fernando transit hub that was promised two years ago, or maybe it has suffered the fate of the Mamoral Dam. Last week the Prime Minister promised that work will begin on the Mamoral Dam. The Mamoral Dam is quite possibly the most abused of PNM promises. It has featured in every budget speech delivered by this promising Prime Minister since 2002. My advice to the good people of Mamoral is not to go looking for any damn dam. The Mamoral Dam has the dubious distinction of being the recurring decimal of the PNM's false promises.

In the 2004/2005 budget, the Minister of Finance promised to build 12 new police stations and to introduce an integrated IT platform for the police service. Our checks indicate that these promises have never been implemented. In fact, the Government has not built a single new police station since the Prime Minister assumed office. While the UNC was in office, we built 22 new police stations and renovated and refurbished numerous others.

Following closely on the heels of her illustrious husband, by far the next most promising Minister is in the Ministry of Education. Last year the Minister of Finance promised that 43 early childhood centres would be established and that 3,000 computers would be distributed at the primary school level. How many, we ask, were distributed? He, and the Minister of Education, promised to establish IT units in each educational district to implement a wide area network, (WAN), connecting all schools. This is a project they dubbed "School Net". What has happened to School Net? Has it fallen through the net?

The promising Minister of Finance also promised to double the number of A-level places in the nation's secondary school system. That, too, has not happened. Last year he promised to build 16 new secondary schools and upgrade 100 others. Not a single secondary school has been built and there is no evidence of 100 schools being upgraded. In fact, the Ministry of Education has earned the dubious reputation of being the Ministry of bungling non-delivery. Twenty-five schools failed to reopen at the beginning of this year's school term because of the failure of the Ministry to repair the said schools. Of course, they blame the public

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[MR. B. PANDAY]

Monday, October 03, 2005

servants and threaten to set up a parallel organization to do the Ministry's work. The irony of all this is that the Ministry of Education continues to receive the largest budgetary allocation. It has become painfully obvious to all of us that the Minister of Education has not, and will not implement these projects because she cannot.

In the Ministry of Agriculture they failed to launch the National Agriculture Information Database to strengthen the agriculture incentive programmes; to set up the veterinary diagnostic laboratory and the phyto-sanitary system. I can go on and on. The list of promises that have never materialized goes on and on and can themselves be the subject of an entire parliamentary debate.

I have said before that the budget is one of the most important tools of good governance in a democratic society. An approved budget gives the Executive authority to spend the taxpayers' money and to use the national patrimony in the interest of the people. The budget then becomes a tool of accountability since the Executive can account for its spending in the context of the approved budget.

10.15 a.m.

Behind all of this is the foundation of credibility. Unless the population believes that the Executive will act on their promises and in their best interest, the budget is but an exercise in Arithmetic. It merely adds up all the revenues the Government will receive and all the expenses of running the country for a year and then sees if the difference is positive or negative. Without credibility we are wasting time. The fact that there is no credibility on the other side is the reason for the nation's impatience and despair. No one believes that this Government will do what it says especially with respect to crime, the most crippling problem in the country.

How do we intelligently debate a budget when the whole nation is under siege? People cannot go out at night. Bombs are exploding in the city. The schools are hot beds of violence. Business people are selling out and sending their children abroad. Good hardworking people have to pay their life's savings in ransom to get back kidnapped members of their family. The simple shopkeeper and small businessman are being robbed of their sweat with numbing frequency. While institutions in society are losing their credibility, there is no one to guard the guards and our Prime Minister is busy looking after the problems of our Caricom neighbours. Behind all of this is the foundation of credibility. Without credibility we are wasting time and the fact that the population does not believe that they will do what they say is the reason for the nation's impatience and despair.

Crime, the most crippling issue, the most important issue is the most critical issue facing the country. That has been so since the PNM Government came into power under suspicious circumstances in December 2001. This country will never forgive Robinson for that. The credibility of the PNM, or lack of it, is no doubt influenced by their illegitimacy. They have absolutely no credibility when it comes to dealing with crime in this small country of ours. This Government has failed so miserably in managing crime that it is a travesty to mention its name and the word “management” in the same breath.

Everywhere in this society people are expressing their frustration, anger and fear with respect to this Government’s relationship to crime and criminals. This PNM will go down in history as having created the fearsome age of crime in this once safe and peaceful land. A Government Minister once told me that the UNC gloats over the crime situation because it makes the PNM look bad. Nothing could be further from the truth. In my response I shall quote extensively from what others have said to prove my point on the dismal failure of the PNM Government to deal with the issue of crime that is plaguing our country.

In a recent survey by the Ansa McAl Psychological and Research Centre, it was pointed out and I quote:

In a week marked by drugs more gang related murders and kidnappings, today's poll shows that the people feel violence is fast becoming a way of life in Trinidad and Tobago and they generally feel unsafe.

Crime, the main problem confronting the country in recent years has become worse in the past few months with new frightening developments like bomb blasts in the capital; reports of senior members of the police service being involved in kidnappings and an increase in the number of police killing civilians.

In the wake of this the poll also reflected a high level of distrust of the police by the people and they expressed fear of victimization. They supported the replacement of the Special Anti Crime Unit with a local version of the United States Central Intelligence Agency. When questioned, the majority, 58 per cent said that they supported this initiative. The majority of the population, 54 per cent, also expressed fear of being victimized by the police. Asked how safe they will feel going out at night, a notable 73 per cent of the respondents indicated that they will feel unsafe going out at night. Asked whether they felt violence was becoming a way of life in Trinidad and Tobago, an overwhelming 85 per cent of respondents said yes.

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[MR. B. PANDAY]

Monday, October 03, 2005

One cannot help but ask oneself: Why are we debating a budget in these circumstances? If by the end of the year you are kidnapped or killed, of what use is the rest of this budget to you? If you cannot leave your home and enjoy the meagre fruits of your labour, of what use are tax cuts? If you cannot sit on your porch or be safe in your business place, what is the point of striving for a home or to set up a business, large or small? Planning, strategizing and budgeting make sense when the basic needs of the population are satisfied. You can make sense of a budget debate when people have food, clothes, shelter and, most of all, when they feel safe and secure as they go about their business.

The first and primary function of any government is the protection of the lives, limbs and properties of its citizens. That is why in ancient times the Chinese, Indians, Greeks and Romans built huge impregnable walls around their cities so as to protect their citizens. Protection and safety of the citizens were and still are the first priority of any government. Today, in our once peaceful twin island state, 24 per cent of the population is living in poverty and 100 per cent in fear. I am not exaggerating when I say that 100 per cent of the population is afraid. The fear is on the media; our roads; the churches; business community; Parliament; the Judiciary; the academic community and indeed, the international community. Even the Head of State, our President has expressed his fear and frustration in this matter.

While the Prime Minister in his budget is boasting that Trinidad and Tobago is on the brink of attaining First World status, let me tell you what the media is saying about crime.

An article entitled, "T&T on the brink of collapse on the *The Trinidad Guardian* of August 12, 2005 says:

"So far this year there have been more than 8,000 serious crimes reported to police, with 219 persons murdered and well over 120 others kidnapped. At today's date last year there were 160 killings and 164 kidnappings.

Murder and kidnapping now appear out of control, and the authorities have demonstrated that they are powerless in making the country safe again."

The figures today, that is at Saturday 30 September, 2005—when I was preparing this budget address, the figures were 285 murders plus 15 unclassified killings; 14 alleged police killings; 186 kidnappings, 46 for ransom. I am sure that those figures are now out of date, one day later. The article went on to say:

"We are dismayed by the ineffectiveness of the police in curbing crime worried about their lack of progress in the investigation into the July 11 explosion and very concerned about their ability to solve the bombing on the rainy August 10.

T&T is on the brink of collapse. The authorities appear incapable of finding effective solutions. Despite their promises they have not been able to deliver the security and protection the country needs and demands. They must get their act together and save T&T.”

Permit me, Mr. Speaker, if I rephrase that last line and say, “Get your act together or get out!” We are calling in the promissory note. What was the Government’s response to all these cries in the wilderness? Predictable. They buried their heads in the sand of denial and accused the *The Trinidad Guardian* of bias against the PNM.

Let us look at what another newspaper said; one that tends to be more PNM friendly. In the *Newsday* of August 17, 2005, in an article entitled, “The Cocaine Untouchables”, George Alleyne, well-known journalist wrote:

“Trinidad and Tobago’s major cocaine importers and distributors, merchants of death all of them, appear, for the most part, immune from arrests and prosecution, whether the arrest and prosecution should be initiated by the Ministry of National Security’s growing legion of agencies or from the Ministry of Finance’s Inland Revenue Department.

The authorities have turned and continue to turn a blind eye...to involvement by the drug trade’s principals, even as they express horror at the growing number of young men killing and maiming each other as they battle for crumbs on the new slave master’s table.”

Mr. Alleyne was very charitable in his column. He did not directly call the authorities hypocrites, but he described them perfectly. Now I ask the PNM Government: Is the *Newsday* also biased against the Government, or is it Mr. Alleyne?

I said earlier that the Parliament is also expressing fear and frustration on the matter of crime. Speaking in the Senate on June 28, 2005, Independent Senator, Prof. Ramesh Deosaran, said that murder and kidnapping were increasing and even senior police officers were fearful of walking the streets. He noted that in the last 24 hours one murder had taken place in Maracas, St. Joseph where President George Maxwell Richards lived and the kidnapping of Nath brothers had taken place in Sangre Grande with apparent links to the Jamaat al Muslimeen which operated an illegal quarry in Valencia with the blessings of the State. Since money was not the problem, management had to be the key issue. So said Prof. Deosaran.

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[MR. B. PANDAY]

Monday, October 03, 2005

10.30 a.m.

He also warned that people were ready to take the law into their own hands, perhaps to even hire assassins to seek revenge against persons who offended them. He said foreign experts were not necessary and that statistics of increasing crime with lower detection rates in all spheres spoke for themselves as a dire indictment of the police. Prof. Deosaran also noted that the conviction rate for murders and kidnappings was also depressingly low and that the judges' and magistrates' laxness in granting bail to repeating offenders must be dealt with by the State.

The Senator said:

“The Police Complaints Authority had failed to clean up the police service regarding policemen who were clearly guilty of malicious prosecution, framing persons, nepotism and delinquency.”

But, Mr. Speaker, what is the point of Prof. Deosaran, or anyone else for that matter, speaking out? Is the Government listening? What is being done about the illegal quarrying in Valencia? Does Mr. Abu Bakr still have a Priority Bus Route pass? Does he still enjoy the status of community leader who is awarded contracts by state-owned Petrotrin? How many kidnapping cases have been solved? Does the Prime Minister still think that the kidnappings are bogus? What is his definition now of collateral damage? Does he still think that crime is temporary?

It would seem that the Prime Minister may have changed his position on kidnappings being bogus. Recently, the Minister of National Security announced that the Government had agreed to accept help from the United States FBI to train our own Anti-Kidnapping Squad. Recognizing that the incompetence of this PNM government is terminal and incurable, the UNC has been recommending that we get outside help since 2002. But this Government is a slow learner, and the tragedy is that the population has to pay the price for their inadequacies and incompetence with their lives, their limbs and their properties.

Mr. Speaker, listen to what the Judiciary said. High Court judge, Justice Alice Yorke-Soo Hon, in passing sentence in a robbery case said that the court had a duty to protect citizens from robberies and gun-related offences which now occur on a daily basis. She also said:

“There was a time when one sought refuge in the sanctuary of his home. That is no longer the case. Even in homes, citizens live in terror because they were being invaded by those who commit acts of brutality. Fear and terror now grip citizens. Citizens live in fear and terror.”

So said the learned judge.

Mr. Speaker, what is the Government's response to all of this? We had a little this morning: a little giggle here and a little giggle there, but for them it is business as usual. They simply continue with their heads buried in the proverbial sand to mamaguy the public; they pass the blame to someone else and accuse everyone of exaggerating about how bad things are.

What will it take to make this callous PNM government stand up and do something about crime? Mr. Speaker, you know, and I know, that the PNM will do nothing. To act against the criminals will be to cut their noses to appear to spite their faces. Do you think they will put in jail the very persons they used as muscle to terrorize the Opposition in the last general election? Never! Those are the people who put them in power and now it is payback time.

Added to that, it would seem that they get a kind of perverse pleasure from the kidnapping epidemic because they thought the victims were supporters of the UNC and the perpetrators were their supporters. Is this a kind of state-sponsored terrorism? You would recall, Mr. Speaker, I have often said that in a country as small and as compact as ours, you cannot inflict terror on one section of the society without hurting the entire body politic.

In attempting to “Mugabe-ize” this country the PNM has gone too far. All that remains is for them now to start confiscating the properties or the jobs of people who do not support them, as they have done to the sugar workers, the cane farmers and the employees of TTT.

Mr. Speaker, even the business community has begun to cry out against crime.

The *Guardian* reported on August 16, 2005 in an article entitled: “UNDP Report:

Crime costing T&T business big \$\$ - TTMA wants PM to address issue.

A study of all countries shows that T&T Trinidad suffers the third highest cost to business as a result of excessive crime and violence, the TTMA has told Government in its 2006 budget submission.

The TTMA’s call for action against crime was at the top of its submission said Paul Quesnel.

TTMA feels strongly that the number one issue affecting the country now is the unacceptable level of crime. Already there has been capital flight, migration of business people and a hesitance to reinvest in the economy. People are afraid—they don’t know what to expect next after murders, kidnappings and now bombings.”

So said the TTMA.

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[MR. B. PANDAY]

Monday, October 03, 2005

Mr. Speaker, even the church is crying out against crime. Listen to what Fr. Garfield Rochard told his congregation about a month ago. Worshippers of the Church of the Assumption at Maraval were told that due to three break-ins of vehicles on the compound for the year, persons having weddings and funerals there may soon have to arrange their own security. Fr. Rochard told his parishioners that new security measures may involve closing the gates during worship, weddings, and funerals to ensure that no car drives out before the end of the function or without identification and/or authorization. He revealed that Belle Vue and Dibe have a self-imposed curfew because of gun activity in the neighbourhood.

What a shame, Mr. Speaker! What a disgrace, when peace-loving citizens cannot enjoy their weddings or worship in peace! That is the state into which this PNM government has brought this once peaceful and beloved country. How much lower can we sink when we must hire security to protect us against criminals, even as we pray or pay our last respects to our departed ones with some kind of dignity? What will it take to make this callous PNM stand and do something about crime?

Mr. Speaker, in the *Express* of August 12, 2005 the Manufacturers' Association said:

“The country is on the edge and the Government must act now before its citizens reach a point of no return. Kidnappings continue unabated, crime is in a free fall and now almost exactly one month after the first explosion in Port of Spain, we have a second, equally traumatic bombing on George Street.”

The Association continued:

“We live in a state of national insecurity...our fundamental right to live in safety has been totally compromised by the spiraling crime epitomized by this senseless act.”

Mr. Speaker, while all this is happening, the hon. Minister of National Security claims that the police have turned the corner. My response to this is: How loud do you want the population to laugh? The police may have turned the corner, indeed, but in what direction were they going in the first place? He did not say. Clearly, the hon. Minister of National Security, Mr. Martin Joseph, should not be allowed out of the company of his family members: Learie Joseph and Tommy Joseph. It is a tragedy when the joker Minister of National Security himself becomes the joke.

The maxi-taxi drivers have also joined the chorus of good people in Trinidad and Tobago who are crying out for protection against criminals. The Route Two Maxi-taxi Association has expressed frustration over the lack of security protection blamed for the robbery and shooting of maxi-taxi operator, David Reid, who was treated for a punctured lung.

The Association said that he was the third maxi-taxi operator and the second in a week to be robbed at gunpoint along the Priority Bus Route. The Association expressed its frustration over the promise given by the Minister of National Security to improve security.

Mr. Speaker, people of Trinidad and Tobago, the country has spoken. The PNM refuses or is unable to act. What do we do? President Richards in his address at the opening of this parliamentary session probably gave us a clue to the answer: "Call in the promissory note." They have promised to do something about crime; they have failed to keep their promise; it is time to call in the promissory note. But that is easier said than done. Without constitutional reform how are you going to do that? You shall have to wait until 2007 or earlier; God willing.

The whole country is suffering. It is not only the businessmen and businesswomen of a particular ethnic group that are under siege. Granted the PNM is deliberately trying to chase this group out of the country. What about the poor who support their party? Day after day the blood of their sons and daughters stay on the streets in Laventille, Morvant and Diego Martin. Not even the profusion of tears of mothers and grandmothers, sons and daughters, cousins and nieces, friends and families can wash away the blood stains of so many youths fallen in the prime of their lives. How could the PNM be so cruel; so hardhearted even to their own supporters?

When I suggested that the Minister of National Security should join his relatives in the entertainment arena, I was not only referring to his performance in respect of crime, he has done no better when it comes to the fire services. When Port of Spain suffered its huge fire loss in April of this year, one of the problems was the lack of water in the hydrants. It was a big embarrassment for the Government. Each state agency was blaming the other. Even the Mayor of Port of Spain was sharing out blame left, right and centre.

But history was to repeat itself when on August 25, 2005 fire struck A S Bryden & Sons (Trinidad) Limited. in San Juan. On that occasion it was felt that the fire services took too long to come to the scene and once more even the Chief Fire Officer was heard to complain about the inadequacy of the water supply.

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[MR. B. PANDAY]

Monday, October 03, 2005

The same thing happened again when fire struck in San Fernando at Seukeran's Mall. Here is how the *Guardian* reported the matter.

“For close to an hour firemen tried to overcome low water pressure which slowed their efforts.

San Fernando Mayor, Ian Atherly, said he and San Fernando West MP, Diane Seukeran arrived well before WASA responded to a request to boost the water supply from a hydrant.”

Maybe we should put them in charge of WASA.

10.45 a.m.

The article continues:

“An upset Atherly said he had been led to believe that water pressure was good and that the city had a fire lorry, which is used to transport fire hoses.

By 8.30 p.m. the water pressure was boosted but by then the entire upper floor was alight.

Atherly said, ‘I am appalled by this. We are not prepared for any such disaster. Look at this! The water pressure is no more than that of a garden hose.’”

They could not have put out the fire with his crocodile tears which flowed so profusely. This is the same Atherly who breaks down vendors' stalls while he illegally occupies the pavement in front of his rum shop opposite the Skinner's Park in San Fernando.

The Ministry of National Security was allocated almost \$2 billion in 2004, \$2.5 billion in 2005 and would get almost \$3 billion in 2006, and this is the state of the country. What point is a budget of \$34 billion? As usual, on that fire incident—the Minister set up an enquiry after the Port of Spain fire but to date, he has not told the public why this fiasco occurred in the first place. Think of the loss of property, the insurance cost, the loss of jobs, the loss of business and how long it would take to recover from these fires. Does the Minister of National Security respond to all of this? How does he do that? He said he will resign if the Prime Minister asks him to do so, and then he promptly proceeded to pat himself on the back as if he had made himself honourable merely by uttering those empty words. Like all the rest of his Cabinet colleagues he does not begin to understand what is

meant by accountability and responsibility. As long as this continues to be so, Trinidad and Tobago would languish in the mediocrity and non-performance of the People's National Movement that has now become legendary.

Mr. Speaker, the advent of a new crime in Trinidad and Tobago is a cause for more fear among the population. Bombings are now the 2005 new year phenomenon.

In an editorial dated July 12, 2005 the *Newsday* raised some very pertinent questions about this new crime. They noted that fingers would be pointed at a criminal organization which masquerades as a religious body. I want to add that this organization is facilitated by the PNM and that Sen. the Hon. Joan Yuille-Williams has been identified as the major facilitator of this group. The editorial, however, observed that they knew that the bomb squad exists but opined that their expertise was confined to locating and disarming explosives. They noted and I quote:

“The timing of this incident may also be significant—at least ironic—in relation to Prime Minister Patrick Manning who just last Saturday was talking about throwing a security net around the country—a net that is so significant that it is with difficulty that such a net can be penetrated.”

The editorial also said:

“It was only a few months ago that Attorney General, John Jeremie, was making vague noises about collecting the \$20 million owed to the State by the Jamaat—but since then he has apparently been devoting his energies to legislation mostly designed, it seems, to limit citizens' rights and then last week, Energy Minister Eric Williams was saying that illegal quarrying in Valencia couldn't be stopped because of loopholes in the law which—even if true—doesn't explain why the Government continues to buy aggregate from the Jamaat-run operations.”

Mr. Speaker, the *Guardian* editorial of July 07, 2005 also addressed the issue of bombing in very serious terms. They deemed it an act of terrorism. They said:

“Some of those who should have been offering leadership and guidance in the aftermath of the explosion failed to rise to the occasion. Why did the Prime Minister merely issue a statement from Whitehall and not address the nation? This task was instead undertaken by the Minister of National Security Martin Joseph, who first appeared in downtown Port of Spain, at a spot where

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[MR. B. PANDAY]

Monday, October 03, 2005

the blood of the injured could still be seen wearing shockingly, a broad grin. This inept reaction was followed many hours later by an address to the nation close to 10 pm—too late for inclusion in yesterday’s newspaper. Why was Mr. Joseph’s response so slow?”

The editorial continued.

“Similarly, the Police Commissioner Trevor Paul took three hours to reach the scene, although he was no further away than Tobago. Mr. Paul thought it necessary to make a grand entrance by helicopter, landing practically on the site of the explosion and blowing dust and debris all over it, thus possibly making futile the work of his own investigators.”

Mr. Speaker, even the most incompetent of governments would have known that this kind of crime had to be dealt with swiftly if they were going to put an end to it. It has to be nipped in the bud but, to date, we see no resolve on the part of the Government to attack the perpetrators and the perpetrators seem to be having a good laugh at the Government as their third bomb exploded on September 10, 2005 at KFC on Independence Square, right under the nose of the ‘eye in the sky’. Is it again because their friends are involved? Is it somehow not in the best interest to find the perpetrators? Given their cozy relationship with these terrorists, the population can be forgiven for thinking that this PNM Government “likes it so”.

Mr. Speaker, the feeling is compounded by the refusal of the Prime Minister to launch an enquiry into events of July, 1990. His reasons for refusing are nothing short of nonsensical. It ranks with the advice he has given for family planning; watch television instead. Instead of what? I am not sure. He is now the local expertise at talking absolute rubbish. He claims that people would have forgotten. When it comes to memory, the Prime Minister must speak for himself. There are too many unanswered questions about July 1990 to let it go uninvestigated and the PNM should get on with the job regardless of my own views, except, of course, the Prime Minister has something to hide.

Mr. Speaker, when speaking of the Jamaat, the question of gangs also comes into play. Recently when Mr. Glenroy Charles was shot, it came to be known that he ran the URP in the West and controlled all the gangs in Diego Martin, Petit Valley, Carenage and the Maraval areas. It was reported that on the morning following his shooting every gang leader and their followers were in Diego Martin. Such was the fear in the area that the Guard and Emergency Branch had to be called out.

Earlier this year, the Minister of National Security revealed that there were 66 known gangs in the country with an estimated 500 hardcore members. The Minister boasted the Government would not allow a small group of criminals to threaten the safety, security and well being of our nation. We will not allow these criminals to ruin or compromise this country's inexorable drive to developed nation status by 2020. Fat talk after fat talk, after fat talk.

Mr. Speaker, within hours of the shooting of Mr. Charles, a reprisal shooting occurred in the area. So much for the Minister's boasts. Once more this comedian has given justification for our recommendation that he should not be let out of the company of his relatives, and why he should find a career in the entertainment business.

In an editorial dated August 25, 2005, the *Newsday* raised some very pertinent questions with respect to gangs. This is what they said:

"The young men killing one another are not just mindless psychopaths, but casualties in a battle for significant resources. Moreover, the conflict is not over drug money alone. It appears that the State has also contributed to the situation by its mishandling of the largesse of the URP."

Mr. Speaker, when I said the same thing they accused me of making irresponsible statements. The editorial concluded:

"The solution, obviously, is not to help gang leaders—or as some now call them, community leaders—to become more powerful, but to cut the heart out of the drug trade. It is also becoming apparent that something has to be done about the URP. Only if the authorities take action to make both unprofitable, and to give the young men involved other options, will we reduce the violent crime in our country."

The Prime Minister vaguely hints at tackling the dependency syndrome when he intimated that he may re-introduce the UNC concept of training into the programme.

Mr. Speaker, you would recall when we came into office we changed the name of the Unemployment Relief Programme (URP), to Education and Training Programme (ETP). When the PNM came into office in 2000 they promptly reverted it to URP. How can we believe this Government is genuine when they say they are going to introduce a training element in the programme, and how can you introduce a training element into CEPEP where there is no relationship between the Government and the employees? The relationship is between the employees and

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[MR. B. PANDAY]

Monday, October 03, 2005

the CEPEP. The CEPEP, who is a contractor as I understand it, employs the employees. How is the Government going to tell them they must take education training as a condition of their jobs? The relationship is a relationship of employee and contractor and not Government and employee.

The issue now is what is the Government doing if it knows that there are 66 criminal gangs with 500 members? If you know who the criminals are and where they are, how come the crime spree is not abating? On the contrary, the spree continues at an even faster pace. Are people in high places protecting gang leaders and their members? Is it of any significance that one Minister owns a boat that makes regular prowling trips to Venezuela, and that he also seems to have his own private port? Is it wise that such a person should have been a Minister of National Security? Incidentally, how did the Colombian women enter the country? Is it through the same pier as guns and cocaine? Is that not part of the crime scene in the country? Maybe these Colombian women are part of the new tourism thrust.

11.00 a.m.

I now turn to what the international community is saying about crime in Trinidad and Tobago. *Business Monitor International (BMI)*, in its September edition, said about Trinidad and Tobago:

“However, crime levels have soared over recent months and this has contributed to a massive drop in consumer confidence, which fell seven points in June to 82, although fears over economic prospects were also a factor. This is related not only to the crime wave but also to the waning confidence in the economic outlook for the medium term.”

This is the *Business Monitor International* speaking. The Prime Minister gave a completely opposite impression in the budget statement.

Mr. Speaker, BMI is a widely read magazine. It has an international clientele. They are reporting the facts as we all know them, but the Prime Minister, with head buried in the sand, says exactly the opposite in the budget statement.

The advisories on Trinidad and Tobago that have been issued by several countries all paint a similar picture. On July 12, 2005, the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs issued an advisory which read in part, and I quote:

“Violent crimes, including assault, murder and kidnapping continue to increase. Armed robbery is prevalent, particularly in the capital Port of Spain and there has been an increase in daylight attacks, some including the use of

firearms, at tourist sites, including Fort George in Port of Spain and in the car parks of supermarkets and shopping malls. Travellers have been nabbed while walking after dark in Port of Spain.

Robberies also occur on the road from Piarco. The risk of robbery when travelling to and from the airport increases at night, particularly on the Beetham Highway. There have been incidents of violent theft by gangs who follow cars travelling from the airport and attack their victims when they reach their destinations.

Petty crime, including bag snatching, pick-pocketing and theft from motor cars is common, especially near tourist attractions and on public transport, and in larger cities on both islands.”

So said the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs.

The Government of Canada issued a similar travel report that was valid as at July 11, 2005. This is what it said:

“Crime continues to be on the increase, particularly in Port of Spain and other urban areas. Gang-related violence, including shooting and kidnapping occur and can affect bystanders. Canadians should avoid Laventille and other known high-crime areas. Canadians should also exercise caution at popular tourist sites such as Fort George and La Brea Pitch Lake, as well as at supermarket and shopping mall car parks in the western part of Port of Spain, since crime targeting foreigners have been reported in these areas.”

So said the Canadians.

Mr. Speaker, even the Commonwealth Office issued a travel advisory on July 11, 2005, which said in summary:

“You should be aware of the global risk of indiscriminate terrorist attacks which could be against civilian targets, including places frequented by foreigners. An Islamist group, the Jamaat al Muslimeen, attempted to overthrow the Government by force in 1990.”

The advisory continues:

“Sensible precautions should be taken against theft, which can be a problem at nights in parts of downtown Port of Spain and in other urban areas. There has also been a worrying increase in robberies and break-ins in all areas and an increase in attacks, some involving the use of firearms, at tourist sites, including Fort George...”

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[MR. B. PANDAY]

Monday, October 03, 2005

You see, they repeat it.

“and also at car parks of supermarkets/shopping malls around Port of Spain and other areas and at business premises. In some cases foreign nationals have been shot, including a German national who was shot dead at his home on January 18 and a British national shot during a robbery at his home on April 21.”

The advisory goes on to say:

“Particular care should be taken when travelling from Piarco Airport as there have been incidents of violent attacks by gangs who follow cars and attack their victims when they reach their destinations.

Kidnappings have been a problem in Trinidad since 2002.”

Mr. Speaker, I want you and this House to take note of the date. The PNM came to office in December 2001 and the advisory here is that kidnapping has been a problem since 2002. The advisory also says:

“Crime against tourists in Tobago is a concern. There has been a spate of serious robberies against tourists in Tobago in 2004. Some of these incidents have been accompanied by violence, including rape, against foreign nationals.”

Mr. Speaker, the US Department of State had similar things to say in their advisory, which was issued on July 12, 2005. In summary, this is what they said:

“Incidents of violent crime have been on the rise on both islands. Visitors should exercise caution and good judgment, as in any large urban area, when visiting Trinidad and Tobago. The US Embassy advises visitors to exercise caution when travelling from Trinidad’s airport, especially after dark, because of incidents involving armed robbers trailing arriving passengers from the airport and then accosting them outside the gates of their residences.

Violent crimes, including kidnapping, murder and assault, have involved foreign nationals and tourists, including US citizens. Burglaries of private residences are common. Robbery is a risk, particularly in urban areas and especially near ATMs and shopping malls. In some cases, robberies against Americans have turned violent when the victims resisted.

In Tobago, the media have reported an increase in the incidence of violent crimes.”

So said the Americans.

Mr. Speaker, it has been noted that the TTMA pointed out to us that this reputation that we are developing as a criminal paradise is costing us heavily in terms of both domestic and foreign investment. The BMI also has told us that consumer confidence has declined sharply. We know that businesses are being closed and that business people are leaving, yet all we get are empty promises while the situation deteriorates daily.

Mr. Speaker, in ordinary circumstances, the population would look to the police for protection. In our case, however, not only are some members of the police, including senior ones, accused of being involved in crime, especially kidnapping, but important issues are continuously being raised about the inadequacy of the resources of the police service and also about the organization and structure of the service.

Before I continue with this subject, I want to make it clear that the UNC is of the view that the majority of police personnel are honest and hard working and are there to protect and serve. The problem is a small group of rogue officers whom the PNM use as their tool to persecute the Opposition and it is of course with the mismanagement of the service.

The Police Social Welfare Division has had some serious concerns about the Special Anti-Crime Unit of Trinidad and Tobago (SAUTT). President Cedric Neptune said that SAUTT was a political tool that was answerable only to the Minister of National Security Martin Joseph. Remember him, Mr. Speaker—relative of Learie and Tommy. He, Mr. Neptune, said that the unit headed by Brigadier Peter Joseph was not a legal entity. This view was echoed by eminent attorneys.

Mr. Neptune said that since 2001 Government had targeted several police stations for construction, but to date no work has been undertaken. He said that what we find happening is that a unit like the Special Anti-Crime Unit of Trinidad and Tobago, for which there is no legal framework for formation, is being outfitted with the latest equipment, no expenditure being spared, and the provision of resources. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Neptune, not the UNC, said that the unit was being used as a political tool and he did not know if the Minister of National Security and the powers that be were of the opinion that they would be occupying the corridors of power for the rest of their lives. He also said that SAUTT was a parallel police force and essentially a unit unto itself and that the Minister of National Security did not even have the courtesy to apprise the Association of SAUTT's activities. We shall see the effect of that.

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[MR. B. PANDAY]

Monday, October 03, 2005

In the days following Mr. Neptune's statement, there were instances when the real police and SAUTT appeared on crime scenes at the same time and there seemed to be some hostility between the two units. It was clear that the two police forces were not communicating. This kind of mismanagement is bound to cause dissension, disharmony and poor morale among the good men and women of the police service.

Why does the Minister of National Security and the Prime Minister want their own Gestapo-type "Mongoose Gang"? Who or what are they protecting? Who are they setting up? What is their real intent with this "Mongoose Gang"? Is it their private force to terrorize their political opponents?

Mr. Speaker, connected with the crime situation is the issue of police brutality, which is also becoming a matter of grave concern to the people of Trinidad and Tobago. The *Express* newspaper of July 22, 2005, commenting on the case of Devon Sookoo, in an editorial entitled "An Enduring Problem", wrote:

"For yet another time, the State has been ordered to pay compensation to a citizen who has been at the receiving end of police brutality."

In fact, Sookoo had not been convicted of a crime even though the police subsequently laid a charge of possession of marijuana against him.

11.15 a.m.

To appearances, it was police brutality for the sake of police brutality and reinforces the argument of defence attorney Mr. Anand Ramlogan, that policemen who abuse citizens should themselves be disciplined. But by whom and by what process? Certainly, not by any so-called Police Complaints Authority, which in any given year only manages to investigate a laughable quantum of the complaints referred to it.

This is a country where between May 2001 and September 2003, there have been 4,062 complaints against the police with only 169 investigated and reported on and where there has been a staggering increase in various categories of complaints. Battery increased by 154 per cent, violence against property increased by 325 per cent, failure to perform duty increased by 48.8 per cent, harassment increased by 56.55 per cent, bad behaviour increased by 40.3 per cent and wrongful arrest increased by 102 per cent. None of this is to suggest that all of these complaints have merit, but all of this suggests that we have an enduring problem.

Mr. Speaker, I said earlier that the word "management" and the PNM should not be mentioned in the same sentence, now you understand what I mean. That is not all, I go further. The *Guardian* report of July 24, 2005, a member of the Firearms Interdiction Unit (FIU) is quoted as having said:

“FIU officers have always been dedicated to the job, even though they did not have sufficient equipment. On many occasions the officers used their private vehicles to go on surveillance duties and to take money out of their won pockets to fund the many operations.”

This, in a country that had a budget of \$30 billion for one financial year and this from a government that has spent more than \$90 billion since it has been in office. The article also mentioned that after the arrest of a Central businessman who has close ties with a member of the police executive, earlier in the year, the FIU had been denied the equipment which was promised to it, such as vehicles.

The police service is suffering a crisis of creditability and it is rooted in the PNM's misplaced sense of priorities and their total mismanagement of everything in this land. They have damaged every institution in the country and now something as basic as security of the nation is compromised to the point that anarchy begins.

The crisis of credibility in the police service has recently been aggravated by another ugly trend. It was highlighted in the *Newsday* article of July 10, 2005 under the headline: "Who really is the Police out there?" One part of the article said that there are many reports that men dressed in police uniforms committed unlawful acts across the country. There were reports last month of men dressed as police were ramming the car of a businesswoman. She sensed that something was wrong and raced to the nearest police station. The officers did not follow her. One knows why. Was it another attempt to kidnap someone by the police, or by people dressed as the police? Some persons kidnapped this year were snatched by persons dressed like police officers. Take for instance, the kidnapping of the Nath brothers recently. They were stopped in a roadblock on the Valencia stretch. Imagine that very lonely spot with very little lighting at night had a roadblock. Gangs are now moving around dressed as police officers.

What are the people supposed to do when they are stopped by someone in police uniform? Why has the Commissioner of Police or the Minister not given some sort of advice or direction to people who find themselves in this kind of position and situation? Mr. Speaker, Mr. Prime Minister, Mr. Commissioner, we have a nation of frightened people. Dealing with criminals in police uniform is as

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[MR. B. PANDAY]

Monday, October 03, 2005

good a place to start as any, but that is not all. Not only are people being kidnapped by men in police uniform, but they are being killed by police guns. In the case of the murder of Uttamdeo Maharaj of Palo Seco, it has been proven that the private firearm that was used to kill him was one of those that went missing from a police station. The population is now asking whether the gun was stolen or was it rented out “to put down a wuk”? What do we get from the Government in all of this; a flash of sheer brilliance.

The Member for San Fernando West, who has unambiguously said that the PNM is failing to deliver, is reported in the *Guardian* of August 2005 to have offered the deeply profound explanation: we are all responsible for crime. She is quoted as having said: "Who failed when you look at the criminals? We cannot cover our eyes. All leaders failed us." Including—[*Mr. B. Panday looks at Mr. Manning*] She forgot that the UNC had brought crime under control when it was in office [*Desk thumping*] She must be referring to only one leader. [*Interruption*] Down boy, down boy. Down Rover. I think I should read that again. This is the profound statement from the rocket scientist from San Fernando West: "Who failed when you look at the criminals? We cannot cover our eyes. All the leaders have failed." I repeat, she forgot that the UNC had brought crime under control during the period that it was in office. Mr. Prime Minister, take note of what your Members think of you when it comes to crime.

Incidentally, her view that the PNM is failing to deliver was comprehensively supported by the Minister of Housing. Once more, the PNM's penchant for misunderstanding the concept of responsibility is apparent. The Member for San Fernando West does not understand that the people put them there to run the country. They have the resources and the power. This responsibility cannot be delegated. The buck stops with the Government and no amount of platitudes will change that.

Dr. Rowley: “Yuh” want power sharing?

Mr. B. Panday: Mr. Speaker, I am totally convinced that there is no particular analysis or set of recommendations that can help us with the fearsome age of crime that the PNM has created. They have ensured that crime is a lucrative business. They have painted criminal activity as a romantic area for career building for the young people in Trinidad and Tobago. By an absence of law enforcement, by dividing the society along ethnic and urban rural lines, by making heroes out of captains of crime and by using URP to provide the economic base for criminal activity, the PNM has succeeded in its tenure in making criminal activity the only area of sustainable economic activity.

Every year, at budget time, the UNC gives its recommendations for solving the crisis of crime in Trinidad and Tobago. This is not rocket science, Member for San Fernando West. Crime has to be fought at two levels: at the level of crime prevention and at the level of crime detection. At the level of crime prevention, the object is to prevent the crime before it is committed. This involves a holistic approach designed to change the culture of lawlessness to an attitude of lawfulness. Its dimensions are economic, social, and cultural. We must deal with things like unemployment and poverty, homelessness and hopelessness. We must dismantle the ghettos, not by giving it a paint job as is proposed in this budget for Laventille and Morvant, not by transferring the ghettos from one place to another, in an attempt to house pad, but by building communities with the facilities for decent human living, for giving people hope.

At the level of crime detection, after the crime has been committed, you must ensure that the police is given the necessary resources to apprehend wrongdoers after they have committed a crime. Resources do not mean only physical resources, such as police stations, vehicles, guns, blimps and other modern equipment, but includes human resources such as a police service recruited on the basis of merit, properly trained; where promotion and advancement are made on the basis of merit, not racism, patronage cronyism and favouritism. Having been arrested and charged by the police, the accused is taken to court. We must do what it takes to make our courts and the criminal justice system efficient, swift and effective. The question of prison reform cannot be over-emphasized if we are to deal with the problem of recidivism. Proper systems of management must be put in place at all levels.

But most of all, there must be the political will. The Government must disassociate itself from crime and the criminals. They cannot use the criminals for their nefarious endeavours and then pretend that they are doing something about crime. Most importantly, do not romanticize criminal careers as the PNM did with Mark Guerra. Do not dignify criminals with lofty titles and stop using criminals to steal elections. Do not use them to terrorize the Opposition at election time or otherwise.

Mr. Speaker, do you remember the “marabuntas” of the 1960s? The PNM has a history of criminalizing the politics of this beloved country.

This Government lacks the will to defeat crime precisely because of its involvement with crime and criminals. The problem is not a shortage of resources; we have the resources. We know that there are 60 gangs that have 500 members out there. What are we waiting for? In whose interest is it to ensure

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[MR. B. PANDAY]

Monday, October 03, 2005

that the criminals grow and prosper? Only the PNM hierarchy and the financiers from the drug mafia are benefitting from crime.

11.30 a.m.

Mr. Speaker, a budget is meaningless unless it can be discussed against the background of the institutions of the country. If we are to deal with crime; if we are to set this country on the road to progress once more, we must strengthen our existing institutions and build new and relevant ones. Last year I warned the Government that if they continued to undermine the institutions of our society, they would be leading us to disaster. In particular, I referred to the Prime Minister's vindictive behaviour towards Marlene Coudray; his discrimination against Devant Maharaj; his discrimination against the Sanatan Dharma Maha Sabha in its application for a radio licence; his interference in the judicial process with request to Bajan fishermen, and his interference with the police when his former driver got into trouble with the Marabella police.

I told the Government that debating a budget can only make sense if we had functioning institutions of our society in place; if our people were not divided and debilitated by racial and other forms of discrimination, and if our democracy was functioning effectively. Since then, nothing has changed. Indeed, things have gotten worse and we continue, as a nation, to spiral downward.

The office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) is a very important institution in our society. Unless the population has the confidence that this office will be fair, fearless and strong, the very foundation of our democracy will be undermined. What is the nation to think when a judge of the International Criminal Court says:

"During my 46 years of practice I have not seen a similar case at the Bar. It is the height of wickedness on the part of evidence. There should never have been a prosecution of Prof. Naraynsingh. I regret I have to speak in such tones, but it should never have happened. I tend to get emotional at these times, but this is a serious matter, and in my view wanton abuse of power. You do not piece together a case. This is the most serious charge we know. You do not do that."

So said a judge of the International Criminal Court. These were the words of Senior Counsel, Mr. Karl Hudson-Phillips, as he summed up his defence of Prof. Naraynsingh. He concluded by saying:

"Narinesingh has no case to answer and he should be discharged forthwith."

[*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. B. Panday: Down, down boy, down!

Dr. Rowley: You are talking stupidity!

Hon. Member: Emile Elias is yours.

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

Mr. B. Panday: It is a good time to have a drink of water, I think. [*Crosstalk*] Mr. Speaker, it is all right, do not stop them, I want people to hear them.

Mr. Speaker, no sooner had the Chief Magistrate discharged Prof. Naraynsingh, the DPP—do not break up the glass—proceeded to send his files to a judge of the High Court, seeking to have the Professor arrested. It is not history that the learned judge wasted no time in throwing out the case. How can anyone continue to have confidence in the office of the Director of Public Prosecutions?

It is common knowledge that the DPP accused the Chief Justice of interfering in the Narinesingh case, but this is now a matter before the court. I will therefore say nothing to prejudice the outcome of the matter. But I must ask: Is there a connection of vindictiveness between the two matters? Are the Prime Minister and the Attorney General connected with this malicious prosecution? I do not know the answers to these questions, but I have been around too long to take things at face value. This budget is about confidence.

After all is said and done, the citizens may view this matter of good grounds for not having confidence in the Director of Public Prosecutions. Remember the DPP was accused of “abuse of power”. As I said earlier, without confidence in this office, our democracy will be seriously undermined. I ask again, how do we debate a budget intelligently when we do not have the basics of our society right? How could such an important institution conduct itself in this way? How can we play with the lives of decent, upstanding citizens in this manner? The professor has an international reputation for excellence in his field. Does the DPP know how many lives the Professor has saved? Does he know how many tears the Professor had dried? Does the DPP have any idea of how much pain the Professor has eased and how much comfort he has given to countless fathers, mothers, sisters and brothers? But he proceeds on the basis of unadulterated spite and vindictiveness to incarcerate the innocent citizen who is contributing in every walk of life in Trinidad and Tobago and internationally.

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[MR. B. PANDAY]

Monday, October 03, 2005

Mr. Speaker, there can be no excuse for this kind of abuse of power, and if the PNM had any decency they would proceed expeditiously to do something about it. And it will be doing something that sends a loud message to all of the personnel of all institutions of the State, that this type of abuse will not be tolerated in any form.

The undermining of the Judiciary does not end with the abuse of power by the office of the DPP and the Prime Minister's persecution of the Chief Justice. This Government is deliberately starving the Judiciary of resources because it does not get along with some of the senior people and because it feels that too many cases have gone against it. Here is an example, Mr. Speaker.

On August 22, 2005, an empty paint bucket had to be placed in front of Deputy Chief Magistrate, Mr. Mark Wellington's desk to collect rainwater at the San Fernando Magistrates' Court, which came down through a leak in the roof. On another occasion, during a heavy downpour, the court recorder at the San Fernando First Court also had to shift her books and the court's records to prevent them from getting wet, as the roof above them began to leak. Attorney Chaitram Sinanan said:

“When the sun is hot, the Magistrates' Court is like a boiler. When it is raining, it is leaking, and when it is raining, in addition to the leaks, it is impossible to hear the evidence as it is being given.”

Mr. Speaker, this is the condition of our courts after four budgets of this Government, and after expenditure of close to \$100 billion.

Last November, health inspectors from the San Fernando City Corporation deemed the existing court building a health hazard. A warning notice was sent to the Judiciary ordering it to clean up the building or face shutdown. Mr. Speaker, I ask, will Scotland Yard and the FBI repair the roofs of these courts? Again, I ask, how can we debate a budget when this is the state of the nation? This Prime Minister can find resources to help all of his Caribbean neighbours, but he cannot find resources for our courts, where the vast majority of the poor and humble people of Trinidad and Tobago go to get justice. All he does when facts like these are brought to his attention is to put on his bullfrog face; his bullfrog look to show that he could not care less.

The budget speaks of many new industries coming on stream in the near future. Will they all follow the same pattern that the Government is following, of ignoring our environment and ignoring our institutions?

The Environmental Management Authority (EMA) has been suffering a similar erosion of authority from this Government. It is now known that the PNM has disregarded everyone, every institution and decided to build the \$850 million stadium at Tarouba. While the population can take solace in the Prime Minister's assurances that with this project we no longer have to worry about tsunamis that may originate from an undersea volcano off the coast of Grenada—and incidentally, a volcano which the experts advise us, shows no sign of erupting in the foreseeable future. The Minister says the project can help us with the tsunamis that may originate from an undersea volcano off Grenada, and that should any other Caribbean country fail in their obligations for the Cricket World Cup 2007, Trinidad and Tobago will fill the void. In spite of all of that, the EMA is now getting a taste of how this PNM governs, and how this PM governs. As if that was not enough, the Prime Minister proceeded to attempt to undermine the very fabric of this society by suggesting that objections to the project were driven by regional considerations. His exact words were:

"I have half a suspicion that if the complex was being built in Mucurapo, there would have been no objection."

In making this statement, the Prime Minister was showing his true colours. Divide and rule is his secret weapon. As a matter of fact, it is not so secret now. Not being content to divide the country along ethnic lines, he is now doing it along regional lines.

The EMA has served their Notice of Violation on UDeCott, the developers of the Tarouba project. The EMA said that upon being served such a notice, developers will usually stop the project and come in to chat with them. In this case though, the EMA has been totally ignored. Is this going to be a case with all the building projects outlined in the recent all-inclusive budget delivered by the Minister a few days ago? Why does the Government set up agencies if it intends to ignore them when it suits its purpose? That is lawlessness. It is an example that others may follow. When the State and its agencies behave in such a manner, what is to be expected of the average citizen? The culture of lawlessness starts with the Government. No wonder there is so much lawlessness in the land.

The EMA has been treated with similar contempt and disdain by the State with respect to the two proposed aluminium smelters. In this regard, I would quote from an article by Prof. Julian Kenny that appeared in the *Express* of August 23, 2005. This, in part, is what the professor said:

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[MR. B. PANDAY]

Monday, October 03, 2005

11.45 a.m.

“First, Mr. Manning was reported to have announced at the post-Cabinet meeting of July 7 that the smelter would go ahead. This is, of course, highly improper, given the fact that the legal body responsible, the EMA, states in its advertisement that no approval has yet been given nor, and this is most important, has the full complement of environmental information necessary for pronouncement on applications for CECs at Union or Cap de Ville.”

been received.

“What is particularly disturbing is that Alcoa's application is either evasive or incomplete, with some boxes in the form answered to be determined. Of particular interest are the answers concerning chemicals used and wastes to be produced. The form asks about the use of hazardous materials. The answer—‘gasoline and diesel’...”

And so it goes on:

“The state company, I assume, being party to the application, thinks that as the Government has already decided that the smelter will go ahead, treats the application with undisguised indifference, if not contempt.”

So said Prof. Kenny.

Mr. Speaker, once more the Prime Minister himself leads the way by undermining the authority and major institutions and sets example for the youth of the country that has the inevitable consequence of worsening the crime situation. He is literally saying to all concerned: “To hell with authority, there are no rules, and I, Patrick Manning, will do as I very well please.” Well, Mr. Prime Minister, the youths of the nation are watching and listening and the example you are setting is surely to find fertile ground among them.

The Prime Minister has recently dug in his “no rules” policy even further with the announcement of the creation of several new State companies that will no longer be subject to some of the strict financial controls that were required by law.

Hon. Member: Who said that?

Mr. B. Panday: These companies will not be required to adhere to the rule that contracts over \$5 million must be approved by the Minister of Finance.

The IMF expressed serious concerns about the removal of these controls during its Article 4 consultation that was held with the Government in late July. But this Government has little regard for the IMF now that the country's financial

position is strong. Let them be reminded that it was following an oil boom that looked exactly like this one we are going through now, that this same PNM had to go to the IMF.

Hon. Members: Really!

Mr. B. Panday: Mr. Speaker, I have spoken extensively about the problem of crime in this society, but I now wish to deal specifically with the issue of creditability of the police service in the context of the whole issue of the creditability of the Government and the State institutions.

In an editorial dated July 28, 2005, the *Newsday* had this to say in its concluding paragraphs:

“But criminals are only one side of the equation. The other side is the crime fighters, which is the second front on which this battle must be waged. It seems reasonable to assume that crime cannot have gotten so bad without the cooperation—or at least the incompetence—of police officers. There have been loud calls for Police Commissioner Trevor Paul to take strong action against errant officers. After all, it is likely that officers who beat prisoners are also corrupt. Getting them out of the Service is therefore crucial to getting an upper hand on criminals. And it is here that the politicians must play their part, since expanding the Police Commissioner's powers, as well as beefing up the Police Complaints Authority, is a political task.

Whatever is done, it's best that it be done quickly. If the people in charge didn't know it before, the 200 murders should have sent them the message loud and clear—this country has reached crisis point.”

Mr. Speaker, if this was the crisis point, what are they going to say now that the figure is 285? The *Guardian* editorial of August 14, 2005 raised similar concerns:

“What continues to strike us, however, is the lack of trust now being voiced in the Police Service by both the high and low in T&T's enduringly troubled society.

And it is not only the Police Service. Indeed it is difficult to find”—
[*Interruption*]

You see you caused me to read it again.

Hon. Member: Let me finish.

Mr. B. Panday: The editor continued:

“But whatever the take by Mr. Manning and admittedly many supporters on the efficacy of more than 30 years of PNM administration the ruling party will do well to ponder the increasing skepticism, cynicism...”

Or is it, Mr. Prime Minister, cynicism—[*Interruption*]

“of Trinbagonians of every race and class and what it portends not only for the troubled present, but what seems to be designed, not only here and elsewhere, but to a tumultuous future.”

An *Express* editorial of August 16, 2005 had its own unique way of stating the facts. In commenting on the Prime Minister's statement on the Grand Stand the editorial concluded with these words:

“Past experience tells us we should not take Manning at his word particularly since, unlike the Tarouba complex, no time frame has been given and certainly, no preliminary work is being done as even now is, reportedly, well underway in Tarouba.”

Mr. Speaker, the Chamber also had this to say in its column which was published in the *Newsday*, August 12, 2005 under the heading “The credibility of the police”. In one paragraph the Chamber said:

“While T&T has earned the reputation for being the land of rumour, and maximum public attention spans of no more than nine days of our local media claim to be relying on ‘credible sources’ which disclose that SAUTT has, via covert operations, uncovered evidence of involvement by a senior officer in kidnapping and ransom collection, as well as extortion racketeering.”

In another paragraph the Chamber said:

“It must really be a question of credibility when a hurriedly summoned three-man press conference of ministers, one Saturday, became necessary to convince their audiences that the construction of the \$850 million sports complex had nothing to do with national priorities or resource allocation to the Ministry of National Security.”

In another paragraph the Chamber said:

“As soon as the PM proclaims that Government has put in place everything necessary to cope with terrorism, and that T&T is ready, off goes a bomb in a dustbin... The suspicious...public has to cope with the continually broken promises of the Commissioner of Police and Minister of National Security...”

Mr. Speaker, where are we going when credibility is being destroyed in this way? Credibility is the conerstone of democracy; without confidence in the State and its institutions, people will be led to take matters into their own hands. This, Mr. Speaker, is where anarchy begins. This PNM has taken us well along this road and it is not far off when total anarchy will reign. What does it say when the captain of a ship finds it necessary to lament the failure of the administration of its own ship? Our citizens are supposed to follow the rules and live in accordance with the traditional norms and values when the captain loses confidence in key institutions?

Well, Mr. Speaker, this is precisely where Trinidad and Tobago finds itself at present. At the inauguration of the 43rd anniversary of our armed forces, this is part of what our President said:

“The war against crime—all patriots must be counted. I get a sense from the things that I am observing that we are on the way to losing our focus, if we have not already lost it.

These may be regarded as harsh words, even unfair, because some of you will say that you are trying hard. But I must say things as I see them. It does no one any good, if instead of facing reality, we continue to delude ourselves in the false comfort of congratulations for minimal performance when the big picture tells us that we have a long way to go...”

He said:

“I am beginning to wonder whether everyone recognizes what his particular duty is, and how his task should be performed. I am not sure that there is not a measure of indulgence permeating the ranks that is tending to permit mediocrity which, in any circumstance, spells disaster, but which in our current circumstances, will do us absolutely no good.”

This is what the President told the army. He said:

“The public sees you as having a critical role to play in reversing the situation that prevails in our country at this time by dealing decisively with the criminal elements that have been assailing the peace and security of our nation.

Do you think you cannot stem the tide? Are your energies diverted to concerns about the dividing of turf in the exercise of combating crime?

It cannot be business as usual. Ways must be found to fight the evil that is striving to bring this country to its knees.”

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[MR. B. PANDAY]

Monday, October 03, 2005

Mr. Speaker, the president sounded an even more ominous note during his address to the Catholic Commission for Social Justice when he said:

“There is a kind of frenzy in society that threatens to catapult the people of this country onto another stage—a stage of war with one another that would do nobody any good.”

He emphasized his point by saying we will be burying our heads in the sand if we pretend to have a cohesive society. The President is echoing what most of us already know and had been saying for a long time. The reason why the extensive promises made in this and past budget statements have not materialized is not because of malice—incompetence, maybe—but because we are a divided people. In order to fulfil promises made in this budget we must be able to mobilize all our human resources; but how can we do that when we divide the people day after day by pseudo-racist policies, discrimination, victimization and cronyism?

The President said a lot more but what I have quoted gives a good picture of how he feels. It is interesting to note that the only comment that the Prime Minister made on the President's words was that the President is entitled to his views, “hem”. But this is entirely in character, he does not care what anyone thinks, as long as he enjoys the trappings of office of Prime Minister and he will divide the people if he thinks it is necessary to do so.

12.00 p.m.

The President, however, recognizes this divide and rule strategy and is warning us against it. It is wrong to ignore the concerns of the President, as the Prime Minister is doing. He is the Head of State and his concerns are well founded. He is not the only one who is concerned; I have already shown where every individual and group in this country is deeply troubled about crime. The President speaks for the entire nation with his statements on crime. The time for urgent action is now, but the PNM has boxed itself into a corner from which it cannot extricate itself. The problem is how to discipline those who put them in power illegally. The fact of the matter is that they cannot, because the monster on which they rode to power will eat them if they try to get off its back.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, once more I ask, “How can we debate a budget intelligently if the Government is unable to manage something as basic and as fundamental as the security of our people?” How can we debate a budget when the PNM and, in particular, the Prime Minister, is undermining every institution in the society?

The budget speaks of an enormous building programme to be executed by the establishment of several State companies, which will bypass the normal tendering procedures so as to open the door to enormous corruption. This is a society already rotting from the head down. Several Ministers are now under investigation by the Integrity Commission and the Prime Minister himself has a lot to answer. In the now infamous Dhansook case, two Ministers were accused of taking bribes. Dhansook in a letter to the Prime Minister admitted to bribing the Ministers and expressed fear for his life. Minister Khan did the decent thing and resigned in order to allow the investigation to proceed, but Minister Williams has retained his position. The Prime Minister accepts both.

The tale of how Dhansook allegedly bribed Minister Williams is one of the most intriguing that I have ever heard. It was reported in the *Sunday Express* of May 15, 2005, by investigative reporter Camini Marajh.

"Dansan Dhansook says he made several pre-arranged money drops, totalling \$75,000 to Energy Minister Eric Williams in the vicinity of Smokey and Bunty's in St. James, always on a Friday evening and always between 7 and 8 p.m.

He claimed Williams hit on him for money at a party function at Baliser House in December 2002 after his trusted friend...let on that Dhansook was providing him kickbacks from seismic exploration contracts.

He said Williams, who complained of having a pile of unpaid bills related to his election campaign, made an up-front demand for a 15 per cent cut of his (Dhansook's) take on the Terra Seis contract but settled on a lower figure after he made clear that the requested sum was completely out of the ball park.

He said that payouts went like clockwork every month. He told *Sunday Express* how he would approach the parked PBR BMW on the Western Main Road in St. James, how Williams would put down the window and reach for the envelope stuffed with hundred-dollar bills and how the Energy Minister would ride out into the night, sometimes without a single word exchanged."

Mr. Speaker, this sordid story raises many questions. Firstly, why did it take the Prime Minister so long to act? He did nothing for almost one year. Does he not know that by failing to act, people would begin to think that he shared in the spoils? Why did the Prime Minister allow Khan to resign, but did not insist that

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[MR. B. PANDAY]

Monday, October 03, 2005

Williams resign also? Why is the investigation of the Integrity Commission taking so long and why did the Prime Minister send the case to the Integrity Commission instead of the Fraud Squad?

In another twist, one Jerry Narace, the PNM's ambassador/plenipotentiary in a recorded telephone conversation assured Dhansook that the PNM "took care of its own". He even told Dhansook, "We have had people who have had their things thrown out." He has not been charged for attempting to pervert the course of justice. This is a further case of the undermining of the Judiciary and once more I must ask, "How can we seriously debate a budget when we have a Government that is destroying every rule and convention of decency?" Clearly it is one set of rules when it comes to the PNM and its supporters and another when it comes to the rest of the population.

Is this part of Vision 2020? Is this how the PNM intends to achieve developed-country status by 2010? This budget will now legitimize the PNM's corruption agenda with the establishment of 15 new state enterprises. Not only have they been dismantling the rules of accountability by forming several new state-owned companies that will not have to put out for tender contracts and projects or account for contracts awarded to their friends and family, they are now giving contracts to Members of this House to make up for loss of ministerial portfolio. Take the case of the Member for La Brea who has benefited from over \$500,000 in contracts from this Government. Is this what is called civilized corruption?

You do not have to fire a gun or break in to commit robbery; you merely have to have the right contacts. The rotting from the head does not end with Khan, Williams or Bereaux; it continues with the now infamous Landate project, which is owned by the wife of the Minister of Housing. It has now been established, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that materials were moved from the Scarborough Hospital project to the Minister's Landate project. We do not know yet if Landate or someone else paid for the materials. We do not know if Landate benefited from other services such as labour and equipment associated with the project. Usually internationally funded projects enjoy a certain amount of forgiveness; for example, the value added tax (VAT). Did Landate benefit from such concessions? Of course, I imagine that it did. We would be told they did not, but I have no intention of falling for that. Because of this and other scams, the people of Tobago are being denied a hospital. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Partap: "Tiefing" sand and gravel!

Mr. B. Panday: A hospital which has already incurred a cost overrun of over \$100 million after only the foundation had been laid. The enquiry into the project unearthed some important collateral evidence of how the PNM does business and how it intends to construct all the projects mentioned in the budget.

It came out during the enquiry from the testimony of Mr. Winston Agard, the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of UDeCott that:

1. NH International Caribbean Limited (NHIC), hereinafter referred to as NHIC, got the award to construct the Customs and Excise Building on Richmond Street, despite to the UDeCott that NHIC's subcontractors lacked expertise and did not follow instructions.
2. NHIC was notified that it was successful in its bid for the Scarborough Hospital in February 2004, but the Articles of Agreement was not signed until March of 2005 and it was not a general practice to sign in this manner.
3. A similar situation arose in the award of the contracts to NHIC for the Siparia Administrative Complex.
4. UDeCott also awarded a contract to Warner Construction and Sanitation Company for the Blenheim housing project in Tobago although Warner's bid should have nullified by the failure to submit a tender bid.

Do you see why the Prime Minister wants to create all these new state enterprises? Their no-rules approach is their way to enrich themselves and their friends.

The Minister of Housing admitted publicly that he is a friend of NHIC's boss, Mr. Emile Elias.

Dr. Rowley: So what?

Mr. B. Panday: Without rules, not only are they only to enrich themselves, they are also able to enrich their friends. These episodes remind us of how Dr. Saith benefited from debt forgiveness of over \$15 million, with First Citizens' Bank carrying the major burden of the cost. It also reminds us of the project PRIDE fiasco in which we spent hundreds of millions of dollars and had nothing to show for it. We are also reminded of the La Brea Industrial Estate and many more. This is the PNM's way of doing business; now they want to legitimize their style with no rules. The head of the PNM is now completely rotten; the rest of the body will soon decay.

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[MR. B. PANDAY]

Monday, October 03, 2005

The Government has blamed the public servant for its failure to deliver on the budget promises, as its justification for the introduction of the new state enterprises. Over the years several hundreds of billions of dollars have been allocated to make maintain the public service. What will become of them? Will the personnel required to staff these new state enterprises come from the public service or will they hire new personnel? If the public servants are to be seconded to these state enterprises, then what difference will it make to performance? If the Government intends to hire new personnel, what will become of the public service? What will they do? The management strategy of this Government has always been that if an institution is not working, it creates a parallel one instead of correcting the shortcomings of the existing one. That is the rationale behind SAUTT and behind these state enterprises and it is a colossal waste of the country's resources.

Mr. Speaker, it is essential that the rules of accountability and financial control be strictly adhered to or else our oil wells would vanish before our very eyes, as was the case with our previous windfall. The rules are there; we do not have to create new ones; we merely have to enforce the existing ones.

I now come to the economy. The Government wants this population to believe that the economy is in good hands and that prosperity will be ours forever, but the people are not fooled and they have made it quite clear that they do not believe the Government's propaganda. In a University of the West Indies/Ansa McAl survey published in the *Sunday Guardian* of July 03, 2005, 71 per cent of the persons surveyed said that they did not support the Government's decision to build the Tarouba Sporting Complex and 58 per cent said that they did not support the Government's decision to increase the national budget by \$3 billion. Asked how they felt about the Government's handling of the economy, 22 per cent said, "Poor," and 20 per cent said, "Very poor"—that is 42 per cent—39 per cent said, "Very fair". Thank God we are dealing with an enlightened population.

Dr. Rowley: How many said, "Good".

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar: None.

Mr. B. Panday: None. All of the Government's multi million dollar public relations campaign have not fooled anyone. This is one case where perception and reality are the same and the reality is that this PNM is doing an absolutely rotten job of managing the economy. This is not merely the view of the general population. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has expressed its share of concern and its views have received wide publicity.

The spirit of the Article 5 Report of the IMF is captured in the following observation:

12.15 p.m.

“There are uncertainties concerning the reserve levels, price projections and extraction rates. But preliminary calculations suggest that if the current level of public expenditure contemplated in the amended budget is maintained over the medium term, the Government may need to start drawing on its savings in just seven years to finance deficits with the savings fully depleted by 2020 and deficits rising sharply thereafter due to the exhaustion of gas reserves.”

Is this what the PNM means by a 2020 vision?

When I spoke on the budget last year, I mentioned several reports from the World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). One consistent theme of all those reports was that Trinidad and Tobago must be careful about its expenditures.

We were warned that this is our last chance to transform the economy and to implement strategies for sustainable growth. It is clear that the advice of all the international institutions and of the Opposition fell on deaf ears even though the advice has had to be repeated. What is even worse is that our problems do not end there. In the IMF Country Report No. 05/6 dated January 2005 they also warned and I quote:

“In the context of the booming energy sector, competitiveness of the non-energy tradable sector has become an issue of concern. Competitiveness of the non-energy tradable sector is of key importance since it is the main source of employment in the economy. In fact, despite strong growth in the energy sector, unemployment still remains high and production and export growth in the non-energy sector have been sluggish.”

You see, Mr. Speaker, they have not been fooled by the fake employment figures, they know that you can reduce unemployment figures by putting everybody on a payroll and giving them money for not doing anything—that is not dealing with unemployment.

The report further warned:

“The real effective exchange rate and the ineffective use of public funds are identified as the main competitive disadvantages of T&T’s macroeconomic environment. Low scores were awarded to real exchange rate developments,

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[MR. B. PANDAY]

Monday, October 03, 2005

governance issues, the large allocation of public funds to subsidies and public enterprises, and high bank spreads.”

The report went on to say:

“Despite T&T’s considerable energy wealth, social and ethnic problems remain, and the political balance continues to be delicate.”

Mr. Speaker, remember the President’s warning!

Another important point that the fund made was—permit me to quote again:

“The fund’s policy advice in recent years has focused on reducing the dependence of the budget on energy-related revenues, strengthening the financial system and enhancing the competitiveness of the non-energy sector. However progress in these areas has been slow, reflecting political factors and the renewed energy boom that has eased pressure to take upfront measures.”

Mr. Speaker, while inadequate infrastructure and the debilitating red tape continue to hamper the competitive advantage that our private sector has over their Caricom counterpart, the budget removes certain allowances which enabled the sector to continue to assist the social and economic development of our youths.

The removal of 50 per cent uplift on expenditure for sponsorship of the arts, culture and sports would deny these groups the sponsorship that is necessary to provide activities away from crime. The removal of the 100 uplift for additional employment and apprentices would have the negative effect on the provision of skilled labour for the proposed industrial expansion. Surely, this is a much better way to absorb and train labour than the criminally oriented CEPEP and URP.

Mr. Speaker, between 2001 and 2005, this Government has spent as I said over \$90 billion of taxpayers’ money and we have nothing substantial to show for it. The experts keep telling us that the economy is very vulnerable and we must control our spending especially on non-productive spending.

In the *Republic Bank’s Economic Newsletter, Vol. 13, No. 3*, in June 2000 we were warned.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: June 2000?

Mr. B. Panday: I quote

“Greater fiscal discipline must be exercised in curbing and redirecting Government expenditure. One consequence of too rapid growth in spending is strong demand pressures which when combined with our tightening labour market and a weak agricultural response can have dire consequences for the overall inflation rate and for non-oil sector competitiveness. The latter experience that characterized the seventies must not be repeated.”

Mr. Speaker, the IMF also made similar observations in its 2004 Article 4, consultation. In its Public Information Notice No. 04/136 published on December 08, 2004, the fund stated in the executive board assessment:

“Directors observed that significant macroeconomic challenges remain, notably to boost non-energy investment and growth in order to reduce the high and persistent unemployment rate and the dependence of the budget on energy-based revenues. This will require determined implementation of a sound policy framework that promotes external competitiveness and economic diversification.”

Mr. Speaker, the economy is not in good hands as the Prime Minister would have us believe, and the good people of Trinidad and Tobago have a lot to be worried about. Properly managed, we can be a wealthy nation indefinitely into the future but with PNM style management, we will start spending the savings in seven years and it will be all spent by 2020.

Last year I pointed out that the Revenue Stabilization Fund which they said would soon be called the Heritage Fund was sheer financial lawlessness. It is another case of the Prime Minister’s “no rules” way of doing things.

The budget says that the Government will transfer \$1.2 billion into the fund, but what they do not say is that the PNM has virtually confiscated these funds and given itself power to spend the money as it very well pleases with absolutely no accountability.

For over two years, the Government has been promising legislation to regulate the fund; to date there has been none. Properly invested and spent with prudence, the fund can make Trinidad and Tobago a rich nation forever. Last year we were again promised that there would be legislation governing the control of the fund; to date, no such legislation has been forthcoming. Why does the PNM refuse to set strict rules for the management of the fund? Why does the Government refuse to be accountable for the fund? This is the people’s patrimony, not theirs. It is illegal, immoral and downright wrong for the Government to treat the people’s wealth in this way.

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[MR. B. PANDAY]

Monday, October 03, 2005

Mr. Speaker, this Government knows how to waste money. It does not have a clue about how to manage the country. The evidence of this is reflected in our fall in the international competitive rankings which explain why some countries are able to grow on a sustained basis for prolonged periods of time, in the process of pulling large segments of the population out of poverty while others remain stagnant, or worse, actually see an erosion of living standards.

Trinidad and Tobago fell in the rankings from 49 to 51 in 2004. We also did not do well in the Growth Competitive Index (GCI) which has three parts: the quality of the macroeconomic environment, the state of the country's public institutions and the country's technological readiness. On the GCI, our overall rank was 51 out of 104 countries. On the technology index, our rank was 54, our neighbour, Jamaica, ranked ahead of us in position No. 49. We ranked 64 in the public institutions index and 44 in the Macroeconomic Environment Index. Having regard to our overflowing revenues, that is nothing of which to be proud.

The World Economic Forum also publishes a business competitiveness index. It evaluates the underlying macroeconomic conditions defining the current sustainable level of productivity, the underlying concept being that, while macroeconomic and industrial factors are critical for national competitiveness, these are necessary but not sufficient factors for creating wealth. Wealth is actually created at the microeconomic level by the companies operating in the economy. The BCI evaluates two areas: the sophistication of the operating practices and strategies of companies and quality of microeconomic business environment in which the companies compete. The idea is that without these microeconomic capabilities, macroeconomic and institutional reforms will not bear full fruit.

On the BCI index, Trinidad and Tobago ranked 59 out of 103 countries. Therein lies the reason for the advice and warnings that Trinidad and Tobago is getting from every quarter.

We must be more disciplined in our financial affairs or we will keep falling further behind and living standards of our people will decline. Signs of decline are already setting in and we must not ignore them. One area of decline is the falling levels of performance of our students in the CXC exams.

In 2003, there was a 16 per cent decline in the number of students who got a full certificate of five subjects and more. In 2002, 64 per cent of the students passed English Language; in 2003, only 56 per cent did. In 2002, 53 per cent passed mathematics; in 2003, 51 per cent did, and while this decline has set in, we are told that two-thirds of the tertiary level graduates leave this country every year.

12.30 p.m.

In the 2005 budget, the Prime Minister said:

“In keeping with our Vision 2020 to position Trinidad and Tobago in the global economy, we are in the process of revamping the entire education system to deliver total quality education. In the new year we will construct 43 new early childhood care and education centres.”

Mr. Speaker, not a single secondary or pre-school has been constructed. Once more the Government has broken its promise. Meanwhile, the Minister of Education, wife of the hon. Prime Minister, who adoringly claims her to be the best Minister of Education this country has ever had, said she is not responsible. When will this government learn what responsibility means? The Minister occupies the office; enjoys the salary and perks; can be seen smiling when pictures are taken as the PNM spends the country's millions on obscene public relations. When there is a failure to perform, though, she says that she is not responsible.

Between 2003 and 2005, the Ministry of Education has spent over \$5 billion to educate and train our youths. Despite what the Prime Minister says, real employment is high in the face of a shortage of skilled labour. While we still have high levels of unemployment, we find it necessary to import labour from our Caricom neighbours, after this Government has spent billions of dollars on education and training.

In calculating the unemployment figures, CEPEP, URP and other make-work programmes must be discounted as they are really handouts in disguise and do not provide permanent, well-paid sustainable jobs. Despite the expenditure of over \$90 billion in four years, many citizens in Trinidad and Tobago are experiencing declining standards of living as a result of unemployment, poverty and rising prices. Inflation is now rampant in many sectors of the economy. The *Central Bank of Trinidad and Tobago Statistical Digest* for 2004 provides the index of retail prices in various sectors for December 2004, using January 2003 as the index base. It showed the following inflation data:

- Food and non-alcoholic beverages increased by 31.8 per cent;
- alcoholic beverages by 4.5 per cent;
- rent by 7.2 per cent;
- furnishings by 7 per cent;
- transport by 7.9 per cent.

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[MR. B. PANDAY]

Monday, October 03, 2005

These figures do not cover post-December 24 data for which inflationary trends are expected to continue and in many sectors to be much higher. Recent data released by the Central Bank confirms inflationary trends with headline inflation rising to 6.9 per cent for the 12-month period ending February 2005. It should be noted that the increase in food prices comes not from higher prices for imports but from inefficiencies at the ports and from the rising cost of doing business in Trinidad and Tobago. Some of it is being generated by the local financial sector. Trinidad and Tobago's stock market in reaching astronomical levels at April 2005 stood at less than 1,500, an increase of roughly 400 per cent in less than three years.

The Government now finds itself in a catch-22 situation. If the Government cannot achieve what it says it is going to do in the budget, then it would have deceived the people; if it can by some miracle achieve all that it says it is going to do, then it will further fuel inflation in the economy. The Opposition is aware that price trends reflect liquidly flows in the investment market. The increasing growth of credit and money has consequences, not only for the prices of industrial and consumer goods, but for prices of investments as well. Needless to say, we are of the opinion that a moderately increasing stock market is a prerequisite to prosperity, as it provides capital to the market and investment returns to the investor. In our view, the cause of inflation in a debt-based economy as Trinidad and Tobago can be attributed directly to the Government-induced trend in creating an expansion of credit by an inappropriate monetary policy.

Since rates of borrowing and lending are related to stock market confidence in the investment market, we can only conclude that the link in the credit growth is an attempt by the Government to inflate the economy to growth and temporary prosperity, thereby producing inflationary pressures in the economy. A stock market rise of 400 per cent in three years can only attest to an economy with flawed spending and monetary policies by the present Government. Further, inflation in the real estate sector has reached almost bubble proportions.

The net effect of this inflation is to reduce purchasing power. Just ask any consumer. Given the resurgence of inflation in our economy, the key question therefore is: Has the present PNM Government adopted an inflationary policy in an attempt to create growth and prosperity in the short run? In our view, the motto of the Government is, "if you cannot produce sustainable non-inflationary growth through sound fiscal policies, then inflate the economy and create an illusion of growth and prosperity in the country."

The Opposition is of the view that real and sustainable prosperity can only be achieved by non-inflationary growth, which in turn is achieved through subdued inflation, fostered by disciplined fiscal monetary policies. In our view, reckless creation and assumption of debt by the Government and its institutions, excessively expansionary monetary policies and rapid rising expenditure of over 30 per cent with a weak agricultural sector, demonstrates flawed fiscal and monetary policies of the Government.

As a consequence of an excessively expansionary monetary policy, interest rates are now at historically low short term levels, with spreads between the TT dollar rates and the US rates between 1.5 per cent and 1.75 per cent when using US treasury rate of return and comparable LIBOR-based security rate of return. The immediate impact of low interest rate differentials provides currency exchange rate pressure on the TT dollar/US dollar exchange rate since these differentials do not reflect TT dollar currency risks. In simple words, to the investor, it is not worth holding TT dollars and the investor is not compensated adequately for risks associated with the TT economy. This is why there is enormous downward pressure on the TT dollar and the Central Bank has had to intervene to support the TT dollar. In other words, capital flight has started. Coupled with the desire of businessmen to flee from the ravages of murders, kidnappings, rapes, robberies and other violent crimes, capital flight is likely to become worse.

In my reply to the last two budget presentations, I outlined principles, strategies and tactics for a new model of economic development for Trinidad and Tobago. I had quoted evidence where the international institutions had all endorsed what I said. So once again I must point out:

1. We need to articulate sector specific development plans;
2. We must foster intense competition among firms;
3. We must develop strong industrial clusters;
4. We must encourage strong consumer groups throughout the country;
5. The Government must provide a facilitating environment for all sectors of the economy. For example, it must not discriminate against agriculture;
6. information technology must be leveraged for competitive advantage;

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[MR. B. PANDAY]

Monday, October 03, 2005

7. Development must be based on the strengthening of the knowledge capabilities of the population rather than the exploitation of natural resources;
8. It is firms that compete, not nations. Therefore we must create an environment where our firms are internationally competitive.

This is the kind of framework in which a UNC government would have conceptualized a budget to take the country forward. What is the probability that the PNM will do any of this? I would say, absolutely zero. They are like a dog in heat when it comes to winning elections and no amount of good economic reasoning will rank ahead of voter-padding, low cost bribery to their supporters, propaganda and political violence.

I now turn briefly to the energy sector which I am sure will be expanded upon by those more knowledgeable in this field than I am. Globally, demand for oil, natural gas, petrochemicals and metals are soaring like never before. The main driver of this demand is the burgeoning Chinese economy and the growing demand from India. Today, the reality is that a number of factors have converged to drive prices to all time highs. High global demand for crude has coincided with a refining bottleneck in the United States which has been exacerbated by the impact of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita on the refining sector in the US Gulf Coast. Added to all of this is the persistent problem of instability in the Middle East.

This demand for energy has pushed prices for oil and natural gas upwards in the last 12 months. Following Hurricane Katrina, the price of crude oil crossed the US \$70 per barrel mark. As of last week Friday, the price of natural gas at the Henry Hub was US \$14.50 per million British thermal unit. While both oil and natural gas have been fetching high prices on the international market, the prices of ammonia and methanol have also been buoyant.

In the last financial year, revenue accruing to the Government from oil and gas was \$11.1 billion. The Minister of Finance has stated that this figure is set to increase to \$18.1 billion in fiscal year 2006. Indeed, revenue from oil and gas increased by some 230 per cent from 2001 to 2004. But as one prominent local economist put it, the problem is not revenue; the problem is expenditure. We may want to expand that to include incompetence and vision.

There can be no doubt that the energy sector is the centre of gravity of Trinidad and Tobago and our economy. For this reason the energy taxation policy is critical. Last July, Government reformed the supplemental petroleum tax regime. Looking at these reforms one finds it difficult to believe that it took the

Government almost two years to come up with these changes. A further examination of the taxation regime reveals that the PNM has not shifted away from the tax-and-spend policies that were a common feature of their economic policy of the 1970s and it really belongs to the old school of economic policy.

With particular reference to land-based operations, the new regime does absolutely nothing to encourage operators to invest or to reinvest in exploration development and production. Hardest hit in this arrangement will be the independent sector of the oil industry which operates mainly on land and is made up of the lease operator and farm-outs. The lease operator/farm-out programme was established by the NAR administration and has been a tremendous success. However, with the decline in rates of production and with operators operating in an increasingly marginal basin, there was need for a tax regime that could stimulate reinvestment.

This new tax regime does exactly the opposite. The sad irony of all this is that the Government constantly mouths that it wants locals to get more involved in the oil industry.

12.45 p.m.

The independent sector is almost exclusively owned and run by nationals of Trinidad and Tobago. If ever you wanted an example of local content and the empowerment of nationals, it is the independent sector. It would seem that this Government is not about local content. It is about local contempt. There is a school of thought that this Government wants to completely destroy the independent sector of the oil industry. Given the sad reality of this new tax regime we can expect that oil production from the Angostura field will decline in 2005. To add insult to injury the length of time between the advertisement bid round and the signing of production sharing contracts is approximately 18 months.

With regard to natural gas the Minister gave little detail about the reform of the natural gas taxation regime, saying only that they will be moving to a system-based fair market value of natural gas prices. Natural gas production is now three times more than oil production on an equivalency basis. The Minister owes a duty to the country to explain how the Government calculates its revenue from natural gas. The Ministers owe a duty to demystifying these revenue figures.

I now turn to the critical issue of natural gas reserves. In last year's budget debate the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries announced that the proven natural gas reserve figures declined from 20.76 trillion cubic feet to 18.1 trillion

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[MR. B. PANDAY]

Monday, October 03, 2005

cubic feet. Thankfully, BP made a significant find of almost 2 trillion cubic feet of gas in late December last year. In analyzing natural gas reserves three fundamental questions must be asked. How much is there? How long will it last? How effectively is it being used? At the end of 2000, natural gas was utilized at the rate of 2.7 billion cubic feet per day. On a yearly basis this works out to approximately 1 trillion cubic feet of natural gas. This figure is expected to increase to approximately 1.5 trillion cubic feet of natural gas a year when one takes into account the fourth LNG train that will consume an additional 800 million cubic feet of gas per day.

There is the M5000 methanol plant and other projects. Added to this there are several other petrochemical and metal plants to which this Government has committed natural gas. More is mentioned in the budget statement. The question that faces this country is: Are we exploiting our natural gas reserves at an unsustainable rate? At the rate we are extracting natural gas we will have 12½ years of proven reserves left. This is something that should cause the population to sit up and take notice.

What is troubling is that the Government continues to run the energy sector without a proper plan. The Government has no guiding policy for natural gas utilization. When we left office we had a natural gas master plan. What has happened to that document? Today, friends and family of the PNM, international gas export task force and the National Energy Corporation continue to sign memorandum of understanding (MOU) after memorandum of understanding with potential investors without much thought about our natural gas scenario. This Government is treating our natural gas assets as though it were a bottomless pit. They believe that the gas belongs to them and as such they will do with it as they please. Over the last four years the Government has run the energy sector particularly the downstream sector with a disregard for openness and transparency. Parliament only hears about proposed new petrochemical plants after the ink has dried on the MOU that has been negotiated in closeted corridors of the National Energy Corporation.

I wish to remind the Government that the hydrocarbon assets of Trinidad and Tobago belong to all the people of this country and not a selected few, PNM board appointees. I wish to remind the Government that it has committed this country to the executive industries transparency initiative and the extractive industries transparency initiative is yet to be implemented in Trinidad and Tobago. That should come as no surprise. The last thing this Government wants for the energy sector is transparency.

One of the biggest issues facing the energy sector is the critical issue of local content. Local content does not merely mean fabricating offshore platforms at the LABIDCO estate. [Interruption] Thank you so much. When we look at the range of services that are needed by the upstream sector we see that the high end services are all sources outside of Trinidad and Tobago. The design and planning of wells, platforms and the high end consultancies are all outsourced to Houston and Dundee. We have to begin the process of moving the industry from the low end of the service pyramid to the high end.

The other aspect of local content that this Government has failed to address is the involvement of local capital in the energy sector. In the last year First Citizens Bank, RBTT and Guardian Holdings Limited launched funds aimed at investing in the energy sector. These financial institutions should be congratulated for their initiative. However, a lot still has to be done.

The one thing standing between the PNM and total repeat of their disastrous economic policies of the '70s and '80s is the Revenue Stabilization Fund which they want to rechristen the Heritage and Stabilization Fund, just as they renamed the Dollar for Dollar Programme as Government Assistance for Tuition Expenses (GATE) programme and therefore, claim paternity as they renamed the University of Trinidad and Tobago (UTT) as College of Science, Technology and Applied Arts of Trinidad and Tobago (COSTAATT) and claimed innovation. This is the same Revenue Stabilization Fund that they openly criticized when they were in Opposition. Back then the Member for San Fernando East described the fund as a hare-brained scheme. I suppose he believes that the tsunami shelter in Tarouba is a better idea.

The Revenue Stabilization Fund was established by the UNC administration to ensure that we saved some of our country's wealth for our children. We make no apologies for establishing this fund. It is an accomplishment of which we are extremely proud. The fund represents a fundamental departure from the slash and burn, cut and thrust economic policies from the 1970s. Those policies led this country straight into the arms of the IMF in the 1980s. After four years of dilly-dallying and with much prodding from international agencies, the PNM has reluctantly endorsed the fund. A horse can be led to water. Will it drink is questionable.

With respect to the proposed strategic investment portfolio of the Revenue Stabilization Fund, who will determine what constitutes a strategic investment? Will strategic investments be made in developing the non oil sector such as manufacturing; information technology and the agriculture sector? Will the

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[MR. B. PANDAY]

Monday, October 03, 2005

strategic investment increase our dependence on an already dominant oil and gas industry or reduce it? Given this Government's incapacity to think outside the oil barrel, we can expect that such investments will involve buying equity in LNG tankers and LNG re-gasification terminals. The Revenue Stabilization Fund was designed to take into account the reality that oil prices are subject to cyclical trends. The problem with the oil price is that it is subject to the law of gravity. What goes up will come down.

One of the most respected energy consultancies in the world, Cambridge Energy Research Associates, has recently stated that globally, supply could exceed demand by as much as 6 million to 7.5 million barrels a day in this decade. In such a scenario they predict that oil prices could be reduced by 2007. Added to this, analysts predict that with more LNG capacity just around the corner and more countries joining the Atlantic Basin LNG trade, the days of high gas prices in the United States may well be numbered. In such a situation the Revenue Stabilization Fund would be the only thing standing between the country and an economic collapse. The Opposition also notes that the Minister neglected to mention anything about the introduction of legislation regarding the fund. We wish to caution the Government that this fund must be insulated from political intrusion and that all investments must be subject to parliamentary scrutiny.

There is a school of thought among energy economists that hydrocarbon wealth can be an obstacle to productivity and competitiveness. In extreme cases, this is called the "resource curse" or the "curse of oil". One only has to look at many of the oil rich countries in the world to see that there is some merit in this thinking. In his latest book, *The World Is Flat*, New York Times columnist, Thomas Friedman, notes that:

"As long as monarchs and dictators who run these oil states can get rich by drilling their natural resources—as opposed to drilling the natural talents of their people—they can stay in office forever. They can use oil money to monopolize all the instruments of power—army, police and intelligence and never have to introduce transparency or power sharing."

Thomas Friedman may well be describing the unravelling of Trinidad and Tobago over the past four years under this PNM administration.

1.00 p.m.

The main reason for the onset of a resource-curse scenario is poor governance, an obvious consequence of which is economic mismanagement.

Mr. Speaker, for as long as I can remember successive governments have been talking about diversification of the economy away from its dependence on oil. This huge oil windfall that we are experiencing provides us with the best opportunity we have ever had for doing so for a long time.

The manufacturing sector is fairly well advanced and, in the circumstances, I would have expected to hear and see more done for agriculture, especially in the light of rising food prices.

In the budget speech the Prime Minister mouths the usual clichés that he has mouthed for the past four years. The PNM totally misunderstands the potential for agriculture and the culture that is associated with the sector. Only the most ignorant would not know that two acres of land is not a viable agricultural holding. [*Desk thumping*] But that is exactly what he and Putna have done to thousands of workers of Caroni.

How can any of these peasant farmers—for that is what they have created—benefit from a budget proposal that said that there will be a subsidy of 50 per cent of the purchase price of machinery and irrigation equipment? Mr. Speaker, machinery and irrigation equipment for two acres of land? Will they buy tractors and other equipment to cultivate two acres of land? What will they grow, cabbage and tomatoes? How much, with a measly two acres? They will not be able to afford a donkey cart. They have to till the soil with their bare hands; with hand forks and spades, hoes and shovels as peasant farmers do!

You have condemned these people and their generation to be the hewers of wood and the drawers of water. But then, maybe that is the PNM's intention. With no security of tenure, remoteness of the holding from the residence of the holder, no protection against praedial larceny, no infrastructure, no continuity of holdings, no roads, no traces, no water, no irrigation, this scheme may be described as "Putna's poison". You know the story of Putna; do you not, Mr. Prime Minister? [*Crosstalk*] If you do not then one day when you are old and grey and rocking away your sins in an old rocking chair, I shall tell you. [*Laughter*] [*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker, this may very well be the last budget reply I shall deliver to this honourable House in this capacity. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: Order, please!

Mr. B. Panday: The time has come for me to move on to other things and other places, where the world is not collapsing around me, where the air is rare, where men can hold their heads high, where duty is pure and its performance is

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[MR. B. PANDAY]

Monday, October 03, 2005

not hindered by the desire for the trappings of office, where the desire for worldly things gives way to peace and bliss. That is my wish. And, Mr. Speaker, finally, a word of warning. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: Order, please!

Mr. B. Panday: May I add that I hope that this simple peroration will not be misunderstood as I so often am.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. [*Desk thumping*] [*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: Order, please! Hon. Members, the sitting of the House is suspended for lunch and would resume at 2.15 p.m.

1.06 p.m.: *Sitting suspended.*

2.15 p.m.: *Sitting resumed.*

The Minister of National Security (Sen. The Hon. Martin Joseph): Mr. Speaker, last Wednesday, Prime Minister, the hon. Patrick Manning, in his budget presentation identified the escalation of violent crimes and anti-social behaviour as the most fundamental threat to the economic and social development of our country and the well-being of our people. An immediate reduction of the present level of criminal violence is, therefore, the highest priority of the people and the Government of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

As Minister of National Security, I share the deep pain and anguish felt by all our law-abiding citizens as a result of the current crime situation in the country. I fully recognize my responsibility and I am totally committed to implementing the measures necessary to deal effectively with the growing challenge to law and order.

Today, Mr. Speaker, I want to share with you the steps that this Government intends to take in the short term, as well as in the medium and long term, to deal effectively with this threat of criminal violence.

Mr. Speaker, this morning we also listened to three hours of the Leader of the Opposition as he made his contribution for which—I did not keep tabs—he spent a considerable amount of time dealing with the issue of crime. I am advised as much as 90 percent, I do not know.

He talked about the fact that crime is a PNM-inspired scourge on this country. He talked about it being the most critical situation since the PNM came into power. He talked about what others have said, including the newspapers, the international

community and the business sector. He also said that this Government's response to crime is to bury its head in the sand or to turn a blind eye to the drug trade and principles.

I thought it was unfortunate, in the sense that the hon. Leader of the Opposition was at one time the Minister of National Security. He has indicated that it was only under PNM's watch that crime escalated. Just for the record, as early as 1999, the Prime Minister started to recognize the escalation in crime and made these comments. I am quoting from the *Express* of December 27, 1999:

“Our opinion: No new solutions to stop criminals.

We couldn't agree more with Prime Minister Basdeo Panday, who noted among other things in his Christmas message that criminal violence in this country has reached 'shocking extremes'.

It seems that hardly a day or night goes by now without some fresh act of criminal violence and other depravity and this murderous violence is being compounded by explosive instances of domestic violence. It should not go without notice that Mr. Panday offered no new solutions to the criminal crime spree. Instead, he suggested we offer thanks and praise for 'the blessings we enjoy, no matter how limited we might consider them to be.'”

This is the “Opinion” of December 27, 1999.

Mr. Speaker, I quote from the *Express* again. I am not as fortunate to determine whether or not at that time the *Express* supported or not, because when the Member quoted the *Guardian* and other newspapers, he claimed this morning that perhaps these were not supporters of the PNM. The *Express* dated Friday, November 30, 2001—before I do that, let me keep it in a chronological order. The *Newsday* of Wednesday, November 28, 2001:

“Increase in murders, rape, robberies, firearms—PM headlined: We will never win this battle.”

Hon. Member: Who said that?

Sen. The Hon. M. Joseph: This was by Francis Joseph.

2.20 p.m.

"Prime Minister, Basdeo Panday admitted yesterday that 'Government will never win the battle to crime.'

But he asked that the battle continue against criminal and drug traffickers whom he described as persons with a lot of resources despite the public's perception that crime was on the increase, Panday said otherwise—"

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[SEN. THE HON. M. JOSEPH]

Monday, October 03, 2005

Permit me. I am not being disrespectful, I am just reading from the article. He said:

“Crime was down 9 per cent according to the latest statistics although he painted the following gloomy picture. Murder occurs at the rate of three per week; serious crime takes place at a rate of 43 per day, rape and sexual offences increased by 96 per cent, robberies occurred at a rate of 24 per week, firearms used by criminals occur at a rate of 38 per week; wounding and shooting are up by 27 per cent.”

And this was followed by the editorial of *Express* Friday, November 30, 2001, “Deal with crime at the top first”.

“Six years after coming into office promising to wage a better battle than the preceding administration against crime, Prime Minister Basdeo Panday has concluded that the battle cannot be won. The figure certainly confirmed that things remained grim.”

Mr. Speaker, I am putting it into its context because crime is a major challenge in every society today—both developed and developing. Only those who are ignorant of the extent to which crime is now embraced globally as a vocation can express the idealism that there exists some quick-fix for solving it. We in Trinidad and Tobago can afford no such illusion. I intend to be frank with you and on this basis secure your support for the sustained effort that it will require to significantly reduce crime and violence. I will begin by outlining the nature of the challenge that we face in order for us to have a shared understanding of the problem which would allow for the mobilization of the entire national community in the fight against crime, and notwithstanding the comments made by the hon. Leader of the Opposition against me personally. I take it in stride. I do not normally take his advice, but I am taking his advice this time around because it is an advice, I understand, he gave to some persons in the recently past election campaign where he said you must be made of substance because when you are criticized personally you must be able to withstand that and if you are too young in the thing and wet behind the ears, you would not be able to withstand that this is for men of substance. I take all his advice, whether I should be in a different profession and my brothers—I never know that the two Josephs were related, but I take it all in stride hon. Leader of the Opposition. [*Desk thumping*]

The nature of the criminal challenge. Mr. Speaker, this is too important but—the challenge to law and order is led and coordinated by a criminal element in our country which is an integral part of an international criminal network. It finances

its activities from the massive revenues collected from the illegal trade in cocaine. This illegal wealth in turn is used to recruit ordinary citizens particularly the urban poor and the unemployed to a life of crime by offering them far more than they could obtain from legal employment.

It is primarily in communities which have developed in close proximity to major commercial centres which are specially targeted for recruits. In return for welfare services, the people in these communities provide storage for firearms and ammunitions. Many of these communities are unplanned which make them generally inaccessible but they are close enough to the commercial centres to provide cover for kidnappers and extortionists. The criminal elite also finances the acquisition of sophisticated arsenals which, in the hands of criminal gangs, fuel the murder rate and expand the range of criminal enterprises to include kidnapping and extortion. The illegal fortunes accumulated are used to finance extravagant lifestyles, to corrupt public institutions and officials and to compete with legal businesses in acquiring professional services for their criminal enterprises. It is not only people at the bottom of the social ladder who are part of this criminal network but those at the top of the society as well. This emerging broad-base criminal alliance undermines the stability and integrity of the entire society and makes the work of law enforcement much more difficult.

Mr. Speaker, in discussions with our international partners, it was indicated that the southern and eastern Caribbean including Trinidad and Tobago, could expect to see increased levels of drug transshipment. This is due to the effects of Pan Colombia and a joint UK-Jamaica programme referred to in Jamaica as Operation King Fish of anti-trafficking which has resulted in increased displacements and redirection of drug trafficking.

Mr. Speaker, just for the information of Members of this honourable House, between 26 and 28 July 2005, to be precise, a delegation from the Ministry of National Security visited my counterparts in Venezuela to deal with the transshipment of drugs from Venezuela through Trinidad, up North.

Mr. Speaker, we were extremely concerned because of the three bordering states that were being used as transshipment facilities: Sucre State, Delta Amacuro, Guiria. What was interesting was when we met with my counterpart the Minister of the Interior, Jose Chacon, he had indicated to me that it was only a month before that they were able to seize 100 tonnes of cocaine in that region of Venezuela. He was saying that three countries were contributing to the transshipment: Colombia, Bolivia, Equador so that we were discussing with them efforts that can be made to stem the flow out of Venezuela—later on we would

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[SEN. THE HON. M. JOSEPH]

Monday, October 03, 2005

talk about what it is that we are doing as it relates to assisting the country, because we cannot be asking other countries to do things that we are expected to do as a nation—we would come to that just now. As a result of that meeting, a subsequent meeting took place on September 09, 2005 with the technical people and the governors of those three states and also the competent persons—and we expect that there would be some developments coming out from that.

Let me just say something before I continue. We also find ourselves in a situation in National Security where you have to strike a balance. How do you balance the need for the citizens to know as opposed to the need for not providing so much information that the very people whom you are going after are not now seized with the information so that they could take certain kind of counteractive measures. That is always the challenge that faces law enforcement. It was interesting—because this was a conversation I indicated that took place in July followed by technical meetings in September.

Since that time some three tonnes of cocaine were seized outside of Trinidad waters from the *Don Matilda*. Let me just indicate something about that seizure. Interestingly enough—I can say this now because that activity has been completed—the ship was in our waters. Our *T&T Nelson* tried to run it down. The top speed of our *T&T Nelson* is about 16 to 18 knots. The *Don Matilda* went into international waters and the French Navy intercepted and some three tonnes of cocaine were seized.

Subsequently, we know about 1.7 tonnes of cocaine on Monos Island. So that the extent of this drug trade which is enormous—just recently the head of the South Com visited us and South Com, that is part of the southern command of the United States that is responsible for the Caribbean, indicated to us that some 120 million tonnes of cocaine are being transshipped through the Caribbean waters. Let me repeat that—some 120 million tonnes of cocaine are being transshipped through the Caribbean waters, of course, to North America and so forth.

Mr. Speaker, we have recognized that it is the cocaine trade that is fuelling many of the criminal activities in this country. While a large amount of it comes into Trinidad and is transshipped, what we are now seeing is that there is a new development and that new development is that it is coming with guns. The guns stay because the guns—we do not manufacture guns—the majority of the cocaine goes up north, and it is what is fuelling many of the criminal activities in this country.

It is safe to say that a major portion of the increased flow of illegal drugs and guns is finding its way here and constitutes an additional challenge for law enforcement. This development can be expected to exacerbate the problem of

illegal arms and ammunition because, though most of the drugs are transshipped, the guns, as I said, remain. These are the challenges that we are currently addressing. Our strategy is multifaceted involving short, medium and long term measures. Later on in my contribution, I will address the question raised by the hon. Leader of the Opposition as it relates to what he believes are some of the criminal elements in some of the state-run programmes; I will deal with that subsequently. I just wanted him to know that I am not missing any of the issues that he has raised and we will address them.

2.35 p.m.

Central to our crime reduction strategy is the continuing transformation of the police service to improve its capacity for effective action and accountability. While this transformation cannot be achieved in the short term, the initiatives which have begun will be accelerated even as more fundamental programmes of transformation come on stream. The following measures within the transformation programme have been accelerated.

Three critical aspects of the Mastrofski and Partners Transformation of the Police Service Programme have been accelerated and are now being implemented. These are:

- The strengthening of the Police Complaints Division;
- The new performance system; and
- The introduction of problem-oriented policing.

The strengthening of the Police Complaints Division is already being translated into increased and timely investigation of police misconduct. We keep hearing talk about rogue elements in the police service. Mr. Speaker, as it stands now, it is the Police Complaints Division that has the authority and responsibility to deal with police misconduct, whether triggered from the Police Complaints Authority or whether it is misconduct as a result of the observations of police.

For some reason, the Police Complaints Division over the years has not been allowed to function at the level necessary and not been provided with sufficient resources in terms of the personnel assigned to it. One of the things we are doing right now is increasing the capability of the Police Complaints Division.

The strength of the Unit has been increased from 16 to 55 officers to address the severe backlog of public complaints about police officers. [*Desk thumping*] The Unit has also received additional data inputting staff and new computers.

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[SEN. THE HON. M. JOSEPH]

Monday, October 03, 2005

Since June, some 3,000 complaints have been input and an additional five are to be input. Investigators who are currently distributed in the north, south and east of Trinidad and also in Tobago are investigating cases. Police Complaints Tribunal officers are being trained in the conducting of tribunals in their geographical locations. Police Complaints Prosecutors are also receiving training.

We are determined to rid the police service of persons who, for one reason or the other, demonstrate their unsuitability to hold the post of officer of the State with responsibility for protecting and serving our citizenry.

The Police Service Commission will not protect or facilitate slackers or those with criminal tendencies. It has a duty in these matters and we are confident that it will discharge it. I also commend the good officers of the police service who put their lives on the line daily and are a credit to the service. [*Desk thumping*]

A modern merit-based performance management system is also being implemented. This will move the police service away from the inefficient seniority-based system to one which recognizes high performance officers. This will ensure a higher quality of competent officers in leadership positions, which is desperately needed in the service. A new manual and a performance management form has been completed and sent to the Chief Personnel Officer for review and comment. The CPO's comments are currently being addressed.

Problem-oriented, evidence-based policing calls for ethical and accountable policing. It also calls for officers to emulate professional people by adopting an informed, analytical approach to defining problems and working out what to do about them. Community policing is but one of the many aspects that the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service is currently utilizing in the fight against the upsurge of crime.

Extensive training in modern oriented evidence-based policing, supervisory and executive management is currently being provided for police officers. The emphasis on increased training is to ensure that the best element of the police is up-to-date with both modern technologies and strategies to deal with the criminals now emerging.

The Police Training College is receiving a \$14.3 million refurbishment and upgrade. New classrooms will have modern multi-media and audiovisual capabilities and air-conditioning. New dormitory and library areas are also being constructed. All police stations, except those earmarked for reconstruction, are being repaired and refurbished. We believe that officers must have a working environment that is conducive to increased employee morale and effectiveness.

One key aspect in the overall improvement in the performance is the police officer's work environment. The Ministry of National Security established a five-man team to ensure the repair and refurbishment of all police stations and posts in the country, as I said, not targeted for immediate reconstruction. Work is currently under way at some 56 police stations. The improved work environment for police officers will impact favourably on their morale and provide a source of motivation.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition spoke about our poor performance in the construction of police stations. We indicated that we intended to construct 12 police stations. As we speak now, construction is being done on five police stations—Belmont, Tunapuna, Gasparillo, Mayaro and Toco. We admit that we would have preferred to be much further afield with respect to the construction of new police stations, but, unfortunately, as a result of the failure of the implementing agencies designed to do the construction, the hon. Prime Minister took the decision to establish purpose companies so that we can improve the delivery and implementation on these projects. Mr. Speaker, we are well on the way for that.

Let me take the opportunity to compliment the hon. Prime Minister for an excellent budget statement presented to this Parliament and to the community last Wednesday. Contrary to what has been said, it was well thought out and it will take us one step closer to Vision 2020, developed society status for the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago.

A modern curriculum will be introduced to the Police Training College, to the incoming 225 recruits. Again, the Member for Couva North talked about recruitment. The new recruits are currently undergoing psychometric analysis, polygraph testing and background checks. The intent is that the new Trinidad and Tobago police officer will commence duty with a much better understanding of modern policing technique, a fundamental understanding as to his or her role and responsibility to the community and a good understanding of the applicable laws and the need for improved customer relations.

Other initiatives being implemented in the short term include the introduction of a stricter enforcement of all laws as they relate to the infringement of public order in Port of Spain, in order to clear the city of existing clutter and allow for more effective policing. The heightened presence of police officers supported by the City Police will provide increased safety and security in the downtown area.

The Member for Couva North raised concerns about three incidents of explosives, what some people refer to as bombs, in Port of Spain. He alluded to the fact that we have been tardy in terms of the response. The Government has

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[SEN. THE HON. M. JOSEPH]

Monday, October 03, 2005

been treating the investigations relating to the three recent bombings in Port of Spain with the greatest sense of urgency. Immediately following the first bombing incident, the Government sought the assistance of the FBI, one of the most renowned law enforcement agencies worldwide in conducting investigations into such activity.

To date, samples of the first two bombings have been sent to the FBI crime lab for analysis. The samples of the third bombing have been processed by the Forensic Science Centre for submission to the FBI. However, the FBI crime lab has been giving priority to the analysis of samples from the London bombings. As a result, there have been some delays in completing the analysis on samples from the Port of Spain incidents. Additionally, the police, working in close collaboration with the FBI, is continuing investigation into the bombings. That is where we are now.

The intention, as it relates to Port of Spain, is to reduce the extent to which there is congestion—the amount of vending, et cetera, that is taking place. We now have to control that to a larger extent. Secondly, there is the whole question of garbage disposal and collection because we may need to move to the whole question of bins. There is a committee that is currently looking at that. For example, when London had its spate of bombings, there were certain activities that they implemented to ensure that the possibilities were reduced.

The reason I am saying that is that, as we start to implement restrictions on vending in Port of Spain, we will get a reaction from vendors, but there are some other measures that will have to be put in place. *[Interruption]* Here is the conclusion he draws: “You are saying that the bombers are vendors.” We are trying to clean up the city and look at how he is trivializing everything that is said in this place. *[Interruption]* I am guided.

Mr. Speaker, the work of the police service will also be enhanced by two CCTV experts, who are in Port of Spain to provide us with the details and required architecture for the extensive CCTV network in Port of Spain, San Fernando and the environs. *[Desk thumping]*

Mr. Speaker, you would recall that Cabinet mandated the Ministry of National Security to have closed-circuit TV surveillance cameras for downtown Port of Spain and we have made a commitment to have those, on a pilot basis in the first instance, for Port of Spain and San Fernando. The intention is to make sure that our two major cities are properly provided with the closed-circuit TV. With respect to the other urban areas, for example, Chaguanas, Princes Town, Arima, et

cetera, because of the fact that these are almost like ribbon-type developments, the intention is to make sure that there are proper surveillance cameras both in entry and exit of these major areas. [*Interruption*] Do not worry about the blimp. We will get to the blimp just now.

Mr. Speaker, we are confident that the combination of public and private CCTV networks in our city area will provide much needed surveillance security. The combination of these two initiatives would greatly enhance security in our city centres.

Mr. Speaker, 235 police officers were recalled from vacation leave to strengthen the police service in the fight against crime. The additional officers will extend the reach and visibility of the Trinidad and Tobago police.

2.50 p.m.

The Trinidad and Tobago Police Service has also expanded its canine capabilities to include bomb and drug detection. Three hundred and fifty (350) police officers will soon be reassigned from desk jobs to undertake core police duties. These officers will be deployed to shore up various units and station strength. The intention is to put more police officers on the beat or on patrol. At the end of the day, we want to make sure that there is sufficient presence of police officers in the various areas; not just in the hot spot areas, but in the other parts of the country, so that there could be a reduction. The Member for Couva North talked about what we are doing with respect to crime prevention. Unfortunately, we are now causing our law enforcement to shift gears towards more prevention. Later on we will talk about some of the challenges that we face with respect to detection and also the question of court matters and some of the delays that are experienced there.

The Member for Couva North made a comment this morning about the Maxi Taxi Association complaining about the situation that currently exists, as it relates to police assistance in that regard. Obviously, somebody did not provide the Leader of the Opposition with up-to-date information, because as late as last week the newly established Transit Police Unit came into being; designed to provide increased and dedicated enforcement along the Priority Bus Route, City Gate, Route One Maxi-Taxi stand on Independence Square South and the Arima Maxi-Taxi Stand. The establishment of the unit will also allow elements of the Traffic Branch to increase its focus on currently unacceptable levels of road carnage. Again, this initiative was approved by the Cabinet sometime in July. The Government and myself were criticized when we took a decision about bringing

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[SEN. THE HON. M. JOSEPH]

Monday, October 03, 2005

back some recently retired members of the police service, the defence force, prisons and fire services to undertake this responsibility. Approximately 70 persons came on board and the intention is to provide this specialized type of policing. Depending on the success of this pilot, the expectation is to expand the area of responsibility for this transit unit.

We continue to get feedback from our international partners as to what equipment is needed by various units to allow them to better increase their service delivery. Of critical importance in the fight against crime is the improved interoperability within the police service and among the various agencies in the Ministry of National Security. This facilitates improved sharing of information and the development of more effective tasking. Perhaps the most critical components of the immediate programme are the measures to establish a partnership with the community for law enforcement.

We face a situation where criminal gangs now operate with the support of community members who provide safe houses for their guns, hiding them in neighbours' houses, in yards and in abandoned vehicles. In many instances, these neighbours are intimidated or bullied into storing these weapons or may not even be aware that their properties are being utilized as a repository for weapons. It is within the communities also that criminals identify allies who keep them informed sometimes of movements of the police.

Mr. Speaker, a key component of the Mastrofski and Partners Programme is the reduction of crime. To this end, several programmes are working and are now being instituted. These include the Homicide Prevention Working Group, which will focus on the reduction of homicides. There is no gainsaying that the challenge—the Member for Couva North talked about it this morning—is that there are two major concerns causing unease in the population at this time: one is the homicides and the unacceptable level of homicides. The second is kidnappings. The hon. Member mentioned it. It is a fact that the level of homicides—

Dr. Rowley: Use the word murder.

Sen. The Hon. M. Joseph: Use the word murder. It just sounds so—murder.

Mr. B. Panday: Correct. Homicide is not necessarily murder.

Sen. The Hon. M. Joseph: The number of murders is at an unacceptable level at this time. What is also very frightening is that at the same time the level of detection is also unacceptable. There is no hiding in that. When you look at it—let me just, because people accuse us of burying our heads in the sand and not

accepting what exists. I was looking at statistics with respect to the detection rates by police station districts between January 01, 2004 and August 24, 2005 for police stations with 10 murders or more: Chaguanas Police Station District. Of course, you understand the police station district has a responsibility for some kind of a geographic area. Remember I am quoting between the period January 01, 2004 to August 24, 2005:

AREA	NO. OF HOMICIDES	NO. DETECTED	PERCENTAGE (DETECTION RATE)
Chaguanas	17	4	23.5
Northeast Morvant	46	9	19.6
Arima	24	8	33.3
Arouca	13	7	53.8
St. Joseph	10	3	30
Tunapuna	11	4	36.4
Belmont	29	5	17.2
Besson Street	125	12	9.6
Carenage	16	3	1.8
St. James	19	2	10.5
West End	34	1	2.9
TOTAL	344	58	16.9

Mr. Singh: You do not have the conviction rate as yet?

Sen. The Hon. M. Joseph: Exactly. That is just detection. Acceptable!

Mr. Speaker, this has nothing to do with conviction, that is just detection. It is unacceptable. As a result, the Homicide Prevention Working Group has been established. The intention of the Homicide Prevention Working Group—
[*Interruption*]

Mr. Singh: Tell us the reasons why there is low detection.

Sen. The Hon. M. Joseph: No, I am not. That is arrest. The hon. Member is asking what are some of the reasons for this. According to the report—why low

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[SEN. THE HON. M. JOSEPH]

Monday, October 03, 2005

detection and low arrest rates? They are as follows: lack of structural and operational clarity, lack of dedicated resources, processing delays, lack of homicide investigator experience and training, lack of investigator and managerial accountability. Mr. Speaker, I am sorry I cannot go into all of the details. One of the things that is frightening is when you look at the experience level, the number of persons—first of all there is dire need for an increase in the number of persons who are assigned to the homicide bureau. There is also the need for other things which we are going to be addressing to make sure that—let me indicate what are some of the recommendations associated with this. There is a reason why I am taking a little time because after all, this is the number one issue: Create a full service homicide unit, establish a new organizational structure for the homicide unit, increase the number of homicide investigators, assign homicide investigators to teams, assign homicide investigators to time periods when they are needed the most.

Let me repeat that, because that is a challenge that we are facing as it relates to part of modern policing. The last time I made that statement I got attacked. I indicated that problem-oriented policing requires police to recognize law enforcement, to recognize when the crimes are occurring, where they are occurring and assign people there. I made the comment. I was told that I must not say it but I will say it again; if crime in this particular police station district is occurring between 10.00 p.m. and 2.00 a.m. you cannot not have police officers on the beat then. I was accused of saying police sleeping when crime taking place.

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. [*Dr. K. Rowley*]

Question put and agreed to.

Sen. The Hon. M. Joseph: Thank you very much, hon. Members, for giving me the additional time. We were talking about the recommendations. Mr. Speaker, I felt that this is important enough to provide the details. It continues: assign homicide investigators to time periods when they are needed most, because like anything else, crime is not the same across time nor across space; careful attention to the selection and assignment of homicide investigator; establish a Cold Case Squad. Do you know what a Cold Case Squad is? That is a group of persons who would be responsible for investigating murders that have happened some time ago and not just dropped; increase accountability and employ

performance standards. Interestingly enough, this is the challenge after they have made recommendations, as it relates to the structure and to the increase in numbers.

3.05 p.m.

But more importantly the increase in training as it relates to the whole question about investigation. Here is what is the suggested increase accountability and employ performance standards. They are suggesting—this is Mastrofski and Partners—that between November 2005 and January 2006 we should increase our detection rate; that we should be up by 30 per cent. [*Desk thumping*] Remember what I said we are at now? Somewhere like about 16.5 per cent. Between February 2006 and April 2006 we should go up by another 35 per cent, but they have established a road map—clearly.

Mr. B. Panday: May I ask kindly who were the personnel? What you are saying is fine, it is correct. Where are the personnel coming from? Do they exist in the system or do you have to bring them from abroad?

Sen. The Hon. M. Joseph: Excellent question. In recommending there are a couple of things. One, it is possible that we can identify competent persons who currently exist and who are assigned in other areas and get them to be trained in homicide. But there is also a suggestion, a recommendation that I would have to take to Cabinet. There is also a recommendation that just retired competent homicide detectives ought to be brought back into the system, and that is something that we are going to be seriously looking at.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar: Who is going to do it?

Sen. The Hon. M. Joseph: I beg your pardon, I did not hear you. The homicide prevention working group will focus on the reduction of homicide. We have a team that is looking at the whole question of homicide, of which the homicide prevention working group is just one of the activities. There is also the Gonzales initiative, which incorporates members of the clergy, the police and community representatives and receives financial support from the Ministry of National Security. This was an initiative that came out of the community which we are supporting. Our young citizens must be provided an alternative to crime. While the police would be required to take certain kinds of actions, in order for the actions to be sustained the communities and members of the communities must be provided with alternatives, and this Gonzales initiative is one of those things.

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[SEN. THE HON. M. JOSEPH]

Monday, October 03, 2005

The crime and problem analysis unit would provide other units in the service with statistics on data analysis to allow for improved deployment and placement of officers. Interestingly enough, I was going through my notes and in the *Express*, Thursday, October 03:

"The UNC has an effective crime reduction plan and the right man..."

But interestingly enough, some of what is being recommended by the UNC has already been implemented and also, some of which we are implementing. I must mention—I am not playing politics, I am not doing that at all—in the first 45 days we would begin implementation of a crime reduction plan that includes these measures: Appoint as Minister of National Security, a proven leader of acknowledged stature. I guess in his mind I would not qualify. [*Interruption*] No, no, no, clearly it is not me, I know that. On your team it would not be me, I do not expect it to be. Listen, listen, listen: Give the Commissioner of Police the genuine authority to manage the force that he leads—and I hope I have enough time to reach to the point where ultimately, the Police Reform Bill is what is going to provide us with the best opportunity. [*Desk thumping*] The Member for Couva North is laughing because he knows that and I would say just now. So he says:

"Set up a crime reduction task force, increase the penalty..."

Listen!

"for rape, kidnapping and armed robbery."

You hear, increase the penalty for rape, kidnapping and armed robbery. They come here and we could not get a proper bill to deal with kidnapping.

"A dedicated highway patrol unit, closed-circuit television systems at peak traffic points in the crime commercial areas;

We are doing that—

"Initiate implementation of the Sir Ellis Clarke report".

What is that? What is the Sir Ellis Clarke report? [*Interruption*] Well, I cannot answer that. I am not going to touch that.

A major factor in winning the support of the community, is the conduct of the police themselves. It is the responsibility of the police to earn the trust of the people they serve by their exemplary conduct; their professionalism and their integrity. This Government, for its part, will be taking every step to improve relations with the community and to build the trust that would facilitate the fullest cooperation. Without this cooperation the police would not be able to prosecute the war against the criminals with the precision and efficiency that the situation requires.

Notwithstanding all that we have done and are doing, there is still the need for cooperation with our international policing partners. In this regard, the Government intends to strengthen our relationship with international law enforcement agencies, such as Scotland Yard and the FBI as announced by the hon. Prime Minister in his budget presentation on Wednesday. The Government is currently exploring the most effective ways for these international agencies to assist the police service and SAUTT in the fight against crime. These organizations will assist our law enforcement agencies in the fight with the drug trade, homicide, kidnappings and bombings.

Let me indicate, because you are hearing some comments being made in the community; some comments being alluded to police like say, this is going to interfere with police morale, if you bring in people from the FBI and Scotland Yard. Nothing could be further from the truth. We recognize that some initiatives which we are talking about, will take some time. The population wants some action now! [*Desk thumping*] What the Scotland Yard and FBI would do is to provide us with that opportunity. As the hon. Prime Minister indicated, we expect them to come, not with just personnel, they would be coming with kit, resources, et cetera.

So it is not—and I just want to make it abundantly clear to all of those who have concerns as to what it is that Scotland Yard and the FBI would be doing—demoralizing the police service, et cetera, et cetera. That could not be further from the truth. The expectation is to provide immediate assistance so that we can get a better handle on what is currently taking place in this country, and we will not be acting illegally, because I heard the Member for Couva North talk about “Mongoose Gang”. I know he was just—but the intention is certainly to provide needed assistance to our law enforcement so that we can manage these things. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, let me touch on another issue, because this is very, very important and the Member for Couva North continues to make these comments. He continues to say that the PNM cannot fight crime and deal effectively with crime because we are in bed with the criminals. There is a claim that URP and CEPEP are used as a haven to these criminals, et cetera. I do not have enough time—

Mr. Singh: We would extend your time.

Sen. The Hon. M. Joseph: I do not have enough time to deal with the situation with respect to URP and what emerged under the UNC during the period 1996 to 2002. [*Interruption*] They say, read the headlines, this is 1998:

"URP man on robbery and firearm charges. Muslimeen arrested in URP office.

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[SEN. THE HON. M. JOSEPH]

Monday, October 03, 2005

The man who claimed the right to run the San Juan/Laventille Regional Corporation's Unemployment Relief Programme was yesterday arrested by police on six robbery and firearm charges. Sean Francis, 29 of Vegas Second Caledonia and his bodyguard Gabriel Joseph, alias whatever. 'Is politics boy, politics', Francis told supporters yesterday as he emerged from the Morvant station handcuffed...et cetera."

This is the 8th of May, 1998.

Mr. Valley: They were in their heyday then.

Sen. The Hon. M. Joseph: The gang leader and the politician. An insight into the battle. Laventille 1996. Underworld source 'dis' PM Muslimeen link. UNC man behind Erin arms cache."

This one is the *Mirror* and you should know something about the *Mirror*. You should know something about the *Mirror* especially now.

Dr. Rowley: "Eh heh"?"

Sen. The Hon. M. Joseph: Yeah, yeah.

Dr. Rowley: Tell us.

Sen. The Hon. M. Joseph: And it has nothing to do with no intelligence. It has to do—he knows, he knows, he knows.

"UNC Government about bandits producing bandits, former insider lashes out at destruction of youth camps system."

If we understand the genesis of the Unemployment Relief Programme, which went all the way back to Special Works, it is designed to provide assistance to persons who would not otherwise be able to get employment. And some of those persons approached the Government to indicate that they wanted an alternative to a life of crime. They are saying that in seeking that alternative, they could not go to the private sector who will hire them because of their checkered past. But they indicated they wanted to give up their life of crime.

As a result they were provided an opportunity. The only place in which that opportunity could have been provided is the Unemployment Relief Programme. However, some of them decided to abuse, notwithstanding the fact that they indicated they wanted an alternative to a life of crime. We recognize that some of them—and I think it is so unfair to tarnish all—utilized the Unemployment Relief Programme and continue in their criminal ways, and we are taking action to deal with them. [*Desk thumping*]

I want us, once and for all, to put a lie to this thing, that we are ineffective and afraid of dealing because of the fact that we are in bed with the criminals. You know what is frightening about that? You know what is unfortunate, Mr. Speaker? We are dealing with people who occupied Government office already. We are dealing with someone, as I indicated, who was one time the Minister of National Security. I do not know if they realize when they make some of these statements here, these statements do not just end here you know, they find their way in the newspapers and as a result, international government—I think sometimes they deliberately; no, I would hate to think that they are deliberately doing it, I would not say that. As a result you have to answer questions about this belief that this is a Government that encourages criminals and that we are in bed with criminals. I think we need to be careful with some of the statements that we make. *[Interruption]*
[Laughter]

3.20 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, our short-term programme is intended to bring immediate relief to the crime situation, even as we tackle the fundamental and structural weakness of our law enforcement agencies which require a longer time frame for implementation.

Mr. Speaker, over the medium to long-term, the Government will be seeking to better integrate Trinidad and Tobago's security objective, policies and activities into a cohesive whole in order to provide the environment free of fear of crime in which our people can realize their full potential. *[Interruption]*

Central to the success of the medium to long-term programme is the transformation of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service. This programme of transformation is well under way and incorporates several meaningful measures which will improve the capacity and effectiveness of the police service. Private attorneys will be used to supplement police prosecutors which will lead to the timely hearing of cases and increased convictions.

Mr. Speaker, hon. Members, on June 03, 2005, 21 police officers completed a Strategic Crime Control seminar. The seminar was designed to support and strengthen the TTPS-COMSTAT programme to act more effectively against crime. The course exposed Trinidad and Tobago Police Service senior officers to scientific knowledge about what works and what does not in police interventions to control crime.

It reviewed cutting-edge police interventions as well as standard law enforcement techniques. Officers were exposed to using evidence-based strategic approach to

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[SEN. THE HON. M. JOSEPH]

Monday, October 03, 2005

crime solving. They received a fundamental grounding in problem-oriented policing. Additionally, 36 police officers also received a crash course crime control seminar; these officers are being assigned to stations where they can implement the expertise developed in this seminar.

Mr. Speaker, notwithstanding all of the measures we have identified and our confidence in their outcome, we recognized that to ensure success in the fight against crime our law enforcement agencies require the material support and cooperation of countries with the experience and technical competence.

Mr. Speaker, the Ministry entered into an attachment with the United Kingdom to train officers in modern policing techniques. Six police officers have completed a three-month attachment and another six are about to complete the three-month attachment, in the United Kingdom. These officers were assigned to the following police organizations: Hampshire, Nottingham Chelsea, Metropolitan, Greater Manchester and West Midlands. The intent is to have these officers serve in leadership positions, where they can impart the skills learnt in the United Kingdom here in Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

Some 1,000 officers and 75 police academy trainers will receive training from the Pennsylvania State University. The courses being offered are:

A high impact supervisory training—119 supervisors and senior officers have been beneficiaries of the Pennsylvania State's course; 800 officers will eventually benefit from this supervisory training. Topics covered include Principles of Management, Theories of Motivation, Manpower Planning, Managing Organizational Change, Customer Relations and Quality Service, Emotional Management Performance Appraisal, Managing Stress and Difficult Employees and Ethics.

Train the Trainer and Customer Services—37 police trainees were beneficiaries of the initial course. Pennsylvania State University will provide Train the Trainer for up to 75 Trinidad and Tobago police service personnel. This course will improve the delivery of courses and training at the Police Training College. In December, 2005, 200 officers will participate in the Police Executive Training which is designed for First Division ranks or those who are being prepared for those ranks.

During the period August 15—19, 2005, 30 officers from the Anti Kidnapping Unit participated in an FBI crisis negotiating training. This training introduced officers to the techniques utilized in kidnap negotiations, and has proven to be an invaluable asset to those officers, some of whom have since received commendations

from the family of a kidnapped victim. [*Desk thumping*] Other members of the AKU just completed a two-week FBI-sponsored crisis management seminar.

Let me hasten to add at this point, because I do not know whether time will permit. We have also established what we call an Incident Coordinating Centre which brings together various intelligence agencies and, also, various law enforcements.

We recognize that the Anti Kidnapping Unit by itself cannot deal with kidnappings that are currently taking place. We have taken a page from other entities also. The reason I am saying that is because too often you hear somebody saying that the Anti Kidnapping Unit is not being provided with resources, et cetera.

Mr. B. Panday: That is the experience of the people!

Sen. The Hon. M. Joseph: That is not strictly correct, Mr. Speaker. It is not the experience of the people. It is some police officers who claimed that the Anti Kidnapping Unit is not provided—

Mr. Speaker, we have a situation where—let us face it, technology and new technology is not embraced as readily as we would like. I have to be careful, because I do not want it to seem as if I am criticizing any arm of law enforcement. I maintain a position and I say it over and over, for which I get criticized—I praise in public and I criticize in private. There are some people who want the Minister of National Security to come and say the police this, this agency this, that agency—

You do not do that for morale, you cannot publicly criticize institutions, no matter what limitations they may now have and still expect them to perform.

Hon. Member: Talk to Enill.

Sen. The Hon. M. Joseph: It is in that context that in some instances the new technology resides in certain areas where the ability to use it is better. But at the same time the intention, the only way we are going to get the kind of protection and the kind of security that this country needs, is that the police service has to be a high performing organization. [*Desk thumping*] There is no question about that.

You could have accused the Government—if you saw the Government building up other institutions. I am responding to some concerns being raised

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[SEN. THE HON. M. JOSEPH]

Monday, October 03, 2005

about "we are setting up a parallel police organization and SAUTT only getting that". Those are ridiculous comments—

Hon. Members: It is true.

Sen. The Hon. M. Joseph:—because notwithstanding all of your specialist agencies, at the end of the day it is your police officer, your individual police officer on the beat on patrol who understands his or her responsibility, that is what is expected.

Mr. Speaker, for some reason or the other, our police have not been able to understand and at the same time live up to what is being expected. I was making the point about kidnappings, because that is the second major issue and I have indicated that the Incident Coordinating Centre has been established to deal with kidnappings. If we are concerned with reducing and eliminating kidnappings, we cannot just come into being when a kidnapping takes place.

If it is that we have to stop kidnappings it is necessary for us to be able to put mechanism in place to deal with that. And as a result we are restructuring, we are reviewing the whole question about the way in which it is that we are currently treating with kidnappings.*[Interruption]* Forensic.

Mr. Speaker, to address delays in the criminal justice system, especially, in the areas of firearms and narcotics possession and ensure that the crime fighting technologies are utilized, the Forensic Science Centre's operational capacity is being modernized. An agreement was signed with the UK Forensic Science for the provision of scientific support to Trinidad and Tobago Forensic Centre in September, 2005. *[Desk thumping]* Only this morning I met with the team because they arrived yesterday.

Mr. Speaker, hon. Members, because of the increasing levels of crime forensic scientists are in great demand. Nonetheless, the Government was able to obtain the services of experienced scientists from the United Kingdom. I would like to publicly—I do not know if you normally do his—thank the United Kingdom High Commissioner to Trinidad and Tobago for its assistance in this regard. *[Desk thumping]*

Mr. Speaker, the international development director and a programme manager from Forensic Science Service arrived last night. I told you I met them this morning. Also arriving was a DNA legislation expert from the UK home office. The legislation expert will work with attorneys from the Ministry of National Security and the Office of the Attorney General. Later tonight an

electronic forensic expert will arrive to hold discussions with forensic and police personnel. These discussions are aimed at the introduction of digital evidence analysis in criminal investigations.

Mr. Speaker, the Integrated Ballistic Identification System, normally referred to as IBIS, procured at the end of the last fiscal year, is fully operational. This machine would allow for the match of bullets with the gun from which they were fired. Two more persons have been trained on the use of the equipment and another two are scheduled to begin training on October 10, 2005. This will bring to the number of personnel required to make sure that this area is fully operational.

Mr. Speaker, in February 2005, I reported that there was a backlog of 1,004 narcotic cases awaiting processing at the forensic centre. I am pleased to inform you that as September 30, 2005 there are less than 50 cases awaiting processing. [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Member: From how much?

Sen. The Hon. M. Joseph: From 1,004 to 50. [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Member: That is not true.

Sen. The Hon. M. Joseph: The appointment of three additional narcotic analysts contributed to this significant reduction. Mr. Speaker, there are two additional persons undergoing training in narcotic analysis in Canada. They are expected to return on October 10, 2005. In addition to training in narcotics, two persons were trained in counterfeit currency detection in the United Kingdom.

Hon. Member: That is for Ganga Singh.

Sen. The Hon. M. Joseph: Two persons were trained in fire investigation and one person attended a firearms and tool-marking training seminar in the United States. Four scholarships in forensic science have been awarded to nationals of Trinidad and Tobago; two in the area of DNA typing, and two in document examination. [*Desk thumping*] These scholars are currently in the United Kingdom and are expected to return in September, 2006. Additionally, two persons are currently at the centre undergoing training in firearm and tool-mark examination. This training will be completed by July 2006.

Mr. Speaker, I hate to end on this note, but the current DNA legislation has substantial flaws in no less than six specific areas; these being: inadequate definition of samples to be taken, procedure for obtaining samples; taking of

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[SEN. THE HON. M. JOSEPH]

Monday, October 03, 2005

samples, application to court for consent—the court order; clear guidelines for DNA matching and statute of limitations for the destruction of samples.

Mr. Speaker, the previous government rushed the passage of this legislation without conducting proper analysis and due diligence. During the process to finalize the regulations to provide for these documents and forms required by the Act, significant concerns were raised regarding the substantive provisions of the Act. During initial consultation last year with forensic experts from the United Kingdom, it was suggested that aspects of the present legislation mirrored UK law which failed miserably in the application.

The United Kingdom learnt from their inexperience and modernized and upgraded its legal framework. It is worthy to note that our DNA Act is a combined manifestation of DNA law which was in effect in Australia and New Zealand at the time of drafting.

Mr. Speaker, I realize that my time has come to an end. I want to thank hon. Members for giving me an opportunity to participate in this debate.

I thank you. [*Desk thumping*] [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. B. Panday: “Cockroach ain't have no place in fowl business.” [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker: Order! Order! [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Gerald Yetming (*St. Joseph*): Mr. Speaker, I listened to the Minister of National Security very carefully for the past 75 minutes, and if you ask me if I feel more secure and if I feel better after having listened for 75 minutes, the answer is no.

3.35 p.m.

If these proceedings had been broadcast live and the national population had the benefit of listening to the Minister of National Security for 75 minutes and they were asked after whether they felt better or more secure, the answer would have been no. I think that the Minister of National Security spent a little too much time responding rather than reassuring. Why would he have taken all this time to read newspaper articles from 1998 to 2001? What is the relevance in the context of the security of the people today?

Mr. Speaker: Order! Order! [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. G. Yetming: I am only making the point that if he had spent a little more time reassuring the population and less in responding, he might have done a better

job. Two budgets ago, the Prime Minister started off his budget statement by talking about the creation of the anticrime unit and the heading of that unit by Peter Joseph. After two years, are we any better off? The point is that year after year we keep hearing from the Government about all its plans for crime. Sometimes we hear about it; sometimes we see things after the fact, as in the case of the blimp and what have you, but after four years, we are in a worse position in Trinidad and Tobago than we ever have been.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: He is making the same speech as the Chairman.

Mr. G. Yetming: The Minister's contribution, like the presentation by the Minister of Finance in his budget statement, would have been better at a PNM convention. [*Desk thumping*] How else could the Minister of Finance explain opening his budget statement, apart from the customary congratulations to the public servants and so on, with a statement that says:

“...we approach a new financial year with a great sense of optimism in the future of Trinidad and Tobago.”

The Prime Minister and Minister of Finance could only say that at a PNM convention. Approaching the new year with a great sense of optimism, when everybody else in Trinidad and Tobago is living in fear, [*Desk thumping*] deeply concerned with statements coming from high places of the country being in crisis, on the brink and what have you and leading to the situation where a lot of our graduating students are leaving Trinidad and Tobago. A lot of our entrepreneurs are leaving. The entrepreneurs who create the sustainable jobs are leaving. We are talking about developing the intellectual capital of Trinidad and Tobago with the Government Assisted Tertiary Education (GATE), dollar-for-dollar and the University of Trinidad and Tobago, while at the same time, because of our inaction on crime, we are chasing all those students away.

Mr. Hinds: You are being chased out of the UNC.

Mr. G. Yetming: This budget statement with this optimism, at the PNM convention the membership would applaud when they hear about Vision 2020, developed country status. It is a cliché. We just heard it from the Minister of National Security; everybody is referring to Vision 2020, developed country status, but I will come back to that.

Mr. Manning: It is a vision, not a cliché.

Mr. G. Yetming: The whole convention would applaud when they hear for the third time in three years about offshore patrol boats, fast patrol boats, attack

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[MR. YETMING]

Monday, October 03, 2005

helicopters, 360 degree radars and 12 police stations. They will not question the fact that they would be hearing it for the third time. They will not question whether they got the police stations, but they would applaud. That is not for here; that is for there. They would applaud when they would have heard about FBI and Scotland Yard. They will not question when they are coming; how many coming; what it is going to cost; what they are going to do. The printed budget statement said that Scotland Yard would be coming to work with the police service. I am sure I heard it right when the Prime Minister and Minister of Finance read the budget statement here. He referred to Scotland Yard going to the Special Anticrime Unit. Which is it?

Mr. Manning: You are right.

Mr. G. Yetming: There is conflict.

Mr. Manning: There is no conflict. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. G. Yetming: When the PNM convention hears this budget statement, they would applaud. They would applaud when they hear about the 6,000 houses that have been built, because in their minds they would be the major beneficiaries. The PNM membership would wonder why the Prime Minister and Minister of Finance would make reference to a municipal waste water treatment facility as a major achievement to broadcast to the nation at the time of the budget statement. It is on page 18 that the municipal waste water treatment, sewage treatment, was completed.

Hon. Member: You have something against waste?

Mr. G. Yetming: The fact that the contract was awarded by the UNC government for the installation at that facility does not matter. If the Prime Minister wishes to take credit for cleaning up the mess from Port of Spain and from Diego Martin to Mount Hope, that is fine. My question is, "Who will clean up the mess that they are creating throughout Trinidad and Tobago?" [*Interruption*]

Mr. Manning: I thank the hon. Member for St. Joseph for giving way. I just want to remind him that the proceedings of the House are recorded in *Hansard* and it is to the *Hansard* record that he should turn his attention in treating with the contribution of the Minister of Finance in this budget debate.

Mr. G. Yetming: Mr. Speaker, who will clean up the mess that they are creating throughout the length and breadth of Trinidad and Tobago?

The membership at the convention would be impressed when they hear about the 600 early childhood centres. They will not question that in 2004 he had announced that 200 would have been built in four years. They will not question that in 2005 he announced that 43 would be built, but they would applaud when they hear that 600 will be built and 50 will be built this year.

Mr. Manning: You watch and see.

Mr. G. Yetming: They will applaud when they hear about the East Port of Spain Special Development Zone. They would not question why, after 40 years of neglect, this major announcement of the East Port of Spain development zone; though they would have not a clue about what the role of that company would be, who will run it, what kind of funding they would get from the Infrastructure Development Fund. They will not stop to think that this is a response to a call made by a radio talk show host for a certain independence in the candidacy of three Laventille constituencies. [*Desk thumping*] But the point is, "What about the other 75 per cent of the population?" What about us? We do not share the optimism that the Prime Minister made reference to in the opening of his budget.

I will start with Vision 2020. It is not the first time I am raising the question, "What is Vision 2020?" Recently, we saw something about the Chairman of the team preparing this National Strategic Plan, Arthur Lok Jack. There was a photo opportunity and he was presenting this report to the Prime Minister several weeks ago. Where is that report? I thought that the report was intended to be a national report that would be shared with the entire population, including the Opposition; a report that all of us would buy into; a report where we would all understand what clearly is Vision 2020. Why is it a secret? There is no need to sanitize it, because if you have an independent body with 600 of the best minds in Trinidad and Tobago developing an independent report, if the report is not intended to be political, why do you need to sanitize it? Bring the report.

Mr. Manning: It is not being sanitized.

Mr. G. Yetming: The Social and Economic Policy Framework document says that the draft National Strategic Plan articulates an agenda for phased development to the year 2020. It defines a strategic road map and details an implementation agenda in the context of time bound targets and measurable indicators for the achievement of specific goals and objectives. This means that we would all follow that road map. We would all recognize, through the specific goals, objectives and measurable indicators, those milestones that we could

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[MR. YETMING]

Monday, October 03, 2005

celebrate along the way. We would know in 2020 where we would have reached and when we would have reached.

I remember raising this matter before and the Member for Ortoire/Mayaro said, at the time, "Wha yuh worried about?" "If you went away and you came back and landed in the airport in 2020, you will see the difference." Meaning that you would see a lot of big buildings. Quite frankly, that was not a frivolous comment, if you judge by the activities of the Government with respect to these 24-storey buildings. Over the past three or four years, we spent \$80 billion. If you ask, "What do you have to show for it?" The last time I asked that question here, the Prime Minister answered by saying, "What are you worried about? Every time you drive up Edward Street, you would see massive steel structures." He did not respond to what he did with the \$80 billion by telling us what he did, but he was saying that you would see the evidence of the \$80 billion when you drive up Edward Street and see steel going up in the air.

I also said that if we asked the 30 Ministers of Government, "What, in your view, does Vision 2020 mean; what is your idea of what Trinidad would be like in 2020?" you would get 30 different answers, because we do not have a sense of this plan with this road map. More importantly, the average man in the street, the man in Laventille or the man in Barrackpore, when we keep bombarding them with Vision 2020, developed country status, what is in it for them? What could they expect? I went searching, because the Government does not want to tell us. I went to the Social and Economic Policy Framework document and this is what it says:

"Trinidad and Tobago has as its primary development goal "Vision 2020", which is a vision for the economic, social and political development of the country, whereby Trinidad and Tobago will attain developed country status by the year 2020."

We still do not know what developed country status is.

3.50 p.m.

We could hear about GDP going from US \$7,000 to US \$24,000 and we must grow by 10 per cent per annum to get there, but do you think the man from Laventille or Barrackpore understands what that means?

It goes on to say—and this is where maybe he can get a clue:

“The Vision is that of a country which is economically wealthy and one in which every member of society will experience a standard of living that is comparable to the highest in the world.”

Now every member of society would mean the same person in Laventille and Barrackpore “would experience a standard of living comparable to the highest in the world.” Well, that is such a false promise I think the Ahamads would be happy to hear that, because then everybody in Trinidad and Tobago would be driving Audis. That is what is meant by the highest standard of living comparable to the best in the world.

Mr. Speaker, I want to know, and I ask again, what is meant by Vision 2020 developed country status? I want it spelt out in accord with your policy document. [*Desk thumping*] I want to know when we are going to reach it. I want to see the road map. I want to see the milestones along the way so that five years down the road we would know whether we have advanced.

To tell you about the confusion in my mind, I would also point out that we heard about a draft document, but in the Public Sector Investment Programme (PSIP) document which came with all the budget documents, on page 10, paragraph 4, it says:

“With the finalisation of the National Strategic Development Plan for 2020, the 2006 PSIP has incorporated some of the recommendations of the plan.”

So on one hand we are reading about a draft plan and in the PSIP document, they speak about the plan having been finalized and the 2006 PSIP incorporated some recommendations. There is confusion galore, and if there is confusion galore in Parliament, one can imagine there is confusion in the streets.

Mr. Valley: There is confusion over there. Keep it in your party.

Mr. G. Yetming: The point is that this budget was prepared with no vision, without Vision 2020, because there is no sense of long-term planning in this budget.

Mr. Speaker, the economic fundamentals in Trinidad and Tobago today are sound, whether we talk about the rate of growth, gross international reserves, unemployment, or inflation. Inflation is single digit but it is increasing. I think the Central Bank had to say in its April 2005 Monetary Report that rising inflation could put a spoke in the growth wheel. Central Bank has been warning since April, but nonetheless, inflation is single digit but increasing.

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[MR. YETMING]

Monday, October 03, 2005

The exchange rate is stable, but under pressure; and I am sure that my colleague from St. Augustine will speak about that. The point is the Government inherited a sound economic platform when it came into office in 2002, and also the fact that we are simply blessed with oil and gas.

The energy sector continues to be the main driver of the economy and I was impressed last year by their third budget because for the first time in three budgets they spoke with some emphasis on the diversification of the economy and announced in that budget six sectors.

Mr. Manning: Seven.

Mr. G. Yetming: Six sectors for the diversification. I will tell you what you mean by seven in a minute. Manufacturing, technology-based industries, tourism, financial services, agriculture and the small business sector, the six sectors. For the first time last year, they spoke with some emphasis on the diversification of the economy and I was relieved by that because we had been talking about diversification for years.

I am disappointed, however, that this year the language in the Budget Statement and the other documents with respect to diversification regrettably is a little subdued. And followers follow their leaders by not just what they say, but how they say it. That attitude to diversification is reflected in the debates we have in this House every time we speak about the depleting oil and gas. We had it last week when we spoke about the Revenue Stabilization Supplementary Appropriation and I will make reference again to it today.

We go on what is public knowledge, on the proven, probable and possible reserves. We go on current rates of consumption and projected on the basis of things to come on stream: Train 4, now we are talking about Train 5, aluminium and what have you. We keep warning about the depleting nature of that asset. The President in his address to the opening of the Parliament made reference to it also, but in the context of developing the intellectual capital.

The Prime Minister speaks about the BP Hive system to which he is privy and he talks about the vast unexplored areas going into deeper areas and so forth and that is great. The point is, it is not whether we have reserves for 15 years, or that the oil and gas are going to run out in 15, 25 or 50 years. That is not the point.

Mr. Speaker, at a petroleum conference organized by the South Trinidad Chamber of Industry and Commerce, Prof. Ken Julien said that we are lucky because effectively, we have 15 years to anticipate the possibility of “what if” and

do something about it. Not to plan for it, but to do something about it. This is Prof. Julien, a major advisor to the Government and he was talking about 15 years. It does not matter whether it is 15 or 50 years. The point is for purposes of diversification and the Revenue Stabilization Fund is a depleting, wasting asset, and the more time we have the better, and we simply cannot become comfortable and complacent because of a BP Hive system that may be telling us something that we do not know.

When we speak about diversification, I am not talking about diversification downstream oil and gas because sometimes when we hear about diversification and we talk about going lower down the value chain and this is where melamine and all those things are coming into play and that is fine. All of that is great but the more critical matter is that the aluminium smelter will not exist once the oil and gas run out and, therefore, when we talk about diversification, we are talking about critical action for the diversification of the economy outside of oil and gas.

Like I said, all that you are doing by going further downstream gas is great because you want to get into industry to generate the employment. So when we get into plastics and aluminium and the entire stock of raw material used to manufacture things, all that is great. Nobody is going to argue with that, but there is not sufficient attention or emphasis on diversification outside of oil and gas.

Mr. Valley: If I may ask one question. In my little stupid mind, if oil and gas run out then we are not going to have electricity unless we get it from some other source. How then are we going to diversify?

Mr. G. Yetming: When the oil and gas run out, we are going to have to generate electricity just like the little islands up the Caribbean and we would not have it at the cheap rate to be able to sustain aluminium plants. That is the point, or you would not have the gas to produce ammonia, or methanol or what have you, so these industries would disappear. The point is, what will drive the economy of Trinidad and Tobago 50 years from now when it is done? If it is not going to be oil and gas and we would not have ammonia, methanol and melamine or whatever, let it be something else and the something else would be driven by something we have spoken about before and for which you have taken action, and that is the intellectual capital.

That is why we created dollar for dollar even when our budget was based on \$22.00 a barrel for oil and when our budget was \$16 billion, we were still able to come up with a creative dollar for dollar. Now that you are going with a \$34

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[MR. YETMING]

Monday, October 03, 2005

billion budget, well, of course, you can go to free university education, and there can be implications we can talk about, but that is not the point.

Mr. Imbert: “Yuh jealous.”

Mr. G. Yetming: I am glad you are following what we started [*Desk thumping*]. I am only going to make reference to two comments: the IMF in its Article 4, 2004 Report spoke about the need for the determined implementation of accelerated economic diversification. I do not know whether you would listen to them more than you listen to us, but the Government boasts about the upgrades that it got from the international rating agencies Standard and Poors' and Moody's and that is great.

Whether there was a PNM or UNC Government we would get the upgrades because just how you inherited a sound, economic platform for the six years we were in office and you built on it, we would have continued where we were with that. So we both would have benefited.

Standard and Poors' warned that the reason for downgrading our outlook—because that is what it did. Our outlook was downgraded from positive to stable and it made reference to the growing contingent liabilities in the government state enterprise sector.

The second point they raised was the slow development of labour-intensive non-energy industries. So we were told why we were downgraded from positive to stable and it is saying to watch those contingent liabilities, and you are not going as fast as you ought to with respect to developing labour-intensive industries. They are concerned about the make-work programmes that we are spending hundreds of millions of dollars on. That is the point.

Mr. Speaker, the manufacturing sector, which has developed to be a leader in the Caribbean, we would argue that it started in the days of the NAR. The Prime Minister made a statement the other day and made reference to something that George Chambers did prior to the NAR to give credit to that manufacturing state.

4.05 p.m.

But the point is, whenever it started, the manufacturing sector, we acknowledge, is a leader in the Caribbean. But I am saying that much more could be done to help and develop the manufacturing sector in Trinidad and Tobago than is being done today.

In the budget statement the Prime Minister made reference to a number of things that they are doing, one of which is that they intend to deal with the

improvement in customs, port facilities and other institutions facilitating business. The point is that the delays at customs and at the port continue to add to the increasing cost of living in Trinidad and Tobago and they are making our locally produced good less competitive locally, regionally and internationally. I am saying that for three years in successive budgets, talking about the port and the restructuring of the port and nothing is happening, I do not know that our manufacturers—forget the locally imported food and what have you, for which the cost is increasing because of inefficiencies in customs and on the port, but our manufacturers, with respect to their raw material and the export of their goods, are having considerable difficulty.

The answer to the problem of the port cannot wait on a \$1.5 billion new port at Sea Lots. Somewhere along the line there is always the impression given by the Government that when they cannot fix something—NBN as an example—break it up and start something new. I am suggesting that the manufacturers in Trinidad and Tobago cannot wait for the new port because by the time the new port comes on stream, all of them could be shut down with the considerable implications of loss of jobs. I am further suggesting that the manufacturing sector should be given specific and focused assistance, including consideration of new fiscal incentives. We could always talk about what they might and could be, but we would leave it at that.

I am coming to the seven areas for further commercial expansion. The Prime Minister made the announcement that strategic plans had been completed for all seven—film making, yachting and what have you—and for three of those, strategic plans were in the course of implementation. These areas for commercial expansion should not be kept secret. We know about the seven, but we do not know that seven strategic plans had been completed; we do not know that three of them are in the course of implementation. So how can we interest the local entrepreneurs in those sectors unless you make those things public?

Mr. Valley: But they are public.

Mr. G. Yetming: So that in terms of further diversification, these things are critical.

Agriculture: The UNC government had identified agriculture as a major plank for diversification; the Government has also. But I do not know that after four years of a declining agricultural sector that what you are saying now is any different from what you said last year and the year before. I know that you are going to put more money this year, but you know you are going to have an

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[MR. YETMING]

Monday, October 03, 2005

implementation problem. The problem has never been money; the problem is implementation. So that if we have 15 state enterprises facilitating implementation, next week we are going to hear about a 16th to deal with agriculture because the Member cannot do what you want him to do.

Furthermore, I think the Leader of the Opposition made reference to it in his contribution when he alluded to the fact that the fiscal incentives announced in the budget are not appropriate for what you have developing on the ground right now. You cannot talk about trying to develop agriculture using the 7,000 two-acre plots that you have handed out and not provide the right type of incentives to those farmers; therefore, there is a disconnect. I draw that because all we are dealing with here right now, as we have been dealing with over the past three years, are words.

I want to talk about the state enterprise sector for a while. Since Caroni (1975) Limited and NBN, we have heard nothing further about the state enterprise sector from the Government, with the exception of BWIA which has come to the fore under duress. [*Interruption*] Well, they are ready to go under, so you had to rush and do something about it. That is my point.

Mr. Manning: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. Member for St. Joseph for giving way again. It is not a question of rush, we have identified certain critical areas of economic activity that need to be addressed and we are addressing them seriatim. In fact, Caroni (1975) Limited was the first one we have addressed; BWIA was the second. NBN has been addressed; the port is being addressed and also the Water and Sewerage Authority. That is the last one.

Mr. G. Yetming: So we now have in the budget your proposal, in a sense, for BWIA. BWIA will call for recapitalization to the tune of US \$250 million—TT\$1.6 billion. I want to deal with BWIA as a unit but I also want to deal with a complementary issue and that is the substantial amount of money that we are now investing in different areas. BWIA is going to cost us TT \$1.6 billion. The Government has been talking about strategic investments in a new LNG plant and investing in the LNG value chain, shipping, reclassification, distribution, and so on. We are talking substantial financial investment. I want to make the point that this Government—any government—should not be allowed to make these investments directly or through state enterprises, or from the Stabilization and Heritage Fund without parliamentary approval; whether it be this Government or any government.

I will give you a case in point. They are talking about the mass transit system to cost \$15 billion. In 2001 when the budget was \$16 billion, we spent four days debating it here and four days debating it elsewhere so that Parliament could give approval for that \$16 billion, but now they could talk about investing \$15 billion in a mass transit system because, as the Prime Minister said in his budget speech, he believes the expenditure is justified and required. Should we not be privy to how come he came to believe that? You just do not wake up in the morning and believe that that expenditure is justified and just go ahead and spend the \$15 billion through mechanisms that are outside the oversight of Parliament. That is my point. So whether we are talking about BWIA, the LNG value chain or a fifth plant, substantial investment should not be done without parliamentary approval.

Mr. Valley: Mr. Speaker, I thank the Member for giving way. Given the fact that funding for these projects must be appropriated, I wonder whether the Member for St. Joseph could tell us how we can go ahead with such a project without parliamentary approval.

Mr. G. Yetming: What is the investment that Petrotrin will have to make for the plant upgrade? That is another \$1.-odd billion. [*Interruption*] You see, Petrotrin is a state enterprise and a government politically-appointed board is making decisions costing the taxpayer billions of dollars, which decisions could be wrong decisions or bad decisions, without parliamentary oversight.

Mr. Valley: Let me ask again, you are saying that it is costing the taxpayers money, therefore it suggests to me that some funding has to come from the Consolidated Fund—

Hon. Member: No. It does not matter.

Mr. Valley: If it is not coming from the Consolidated Fund, if the company is doing it on its own, via its own balance sheet, then that is for the company.

Mr. G. Yetming: Petrotrin is making money now; National Gas is making money and rather than pay the money back into the Government coffers as dividend, they are keeping the money because the Ministry of Finance says: “Hold that”, and then they go ahead and make board decisions for investments in ventures that could be risky. That is my point. I do not think we need to argue the point, you know, the fact is—

Mr. Manning: Mr. Speaker, I really thank the hon. Member for St. Joseph for giving way and I do not wish to unnecessarily interject in his contribution; I think he is going quite well, but he has raised an issue about incurring expenditure in

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[MR. MANNING]

Monday, October 03, 2005

state enterprises without, as he puts it, parliamentary approval. He takes it one step further when he says that even if a company owned by the State is able on the basis of its balance sheet to take decisions in pursuance of its legitimate business, that it should come to Parliament for approval. That is an issue, incidentally, that has led in Latin American countries to a situation where the President cannot leave the country without parliamentary approval, or you cannot borrow one cent without parliamentary approval.

If you want to take it to its logical extension, since this is a democratic society, then no decision you take you ought to take without some kind of consultation with the public or approval of Parliament. In other words, the Member for St. Joseph is putting the widest possible construction on our democracy and in so doing is seeking to use democratic principles to subvert the democracy itself. That is what he is doing.

Hon. Member: No, no—

Mr. G. Yetming: That subject is a subject for a debate of its own. I just want to make the point and I would leave it right there, because there is a lot more I would like to cover with respect to the budget. I am dealing with a principle, one being that Government should not be allowed, either directly or through state enterprises, to make substantial investments. We could agree or disagree on the cap.

In the case of BWIA, in the budget statement the Prime Minister said that there would be significant change in management; some conditions for the recapitalization; improved corporate governance; protection from charter flights; restoration of maintenance capability and fundamental changes in work rules and culture of the airline.

4.20 p.m.

Is that sufficient for us to agree on injecting \$1.6 billion into BWIA? Is that sufficient for us to feel comfortable that we will not be pouring another \$1.6 billion down the drain? Will those five things that you called out make BWIA viable? Where are the numbers? Where are your projections? Have you seen them? I imagine that the committee will not make recommendations unless they produce something for you to make the decision. We in Parliament are being called upon to say yes on the basis of a word that if they make changes to corporate governance, it would be fine.

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

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

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. Valley: Mr. Speaker, I wanted to make the point that all these state companies fall under some Joint Select Committee of Parliament. It seems to me that if one wants to get the information that the Member is talking about with respect to BWIA, one can ask BWIA to come before the committee. The same thing with Petrotrin.

Mr. G. Yetming: In the first place, I do not know that BWIA will come on invitation of the committee to deal with a proposal to invest and not with accounts two years after the fact.

Mr. Valley: Those committees are not limited to accounts. That is the difference. The PAC and PA(E)C are limited to accounts. These committees can do anything.

Mr. G. Yetming: The relevant committee will take note of that.

I will be concerned about flights to Costa Rica and Cuba. When the Government took the decision to ask BWIA to move into those areas there might have been a good basis for it, but it was not financially viable. The Government may have made a commitment to BWIA to fund the loss on those routes. Whether the Government continues the funding as they had promised is the area for question. My information is that it did not.

Another question on BWIA is that the Prime Minister has made it a point to say here and abroad that the new BWIA will be a regional carrier. Let me state my position on BWIA. I have stated it here before. The air link to the major centres of the world is a critical part of the economic infrastructure of Trinidad and Tobago and should be governed by a Trinidad and Tobago airline. If we have to fly to the major centres of the world as Miami, New York, London and Toronto, what I will call create major highways, then we must do that. Quite frankly, if we cannot do that at a profit then, I have no problem in subsidizing that operation.

I have a problem with outside of the highways we want to build side roads to these little islands. Unless we can be satisfied about the viability—why is the company American Airlines charging Grenada and St. Lucia to fly into those islands? Because it is not economical. The investment, restructuring and recapitalization of BWIA, we have no problem with it. The problem I have is firstly, whether the \$1.6 billion on the basis of the information that you have and we do not have would be protected.

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[MR. YETMING]

Monday, October 03, 2005

The second thing is that I am deeply concerned about the policy position of the Government with respect to that airline particularly when you use the term “regional carrier” and the cost implications of that.

I made reference to this example in the context of these investments. I used this example before in Parliament and I will repeat because it is important in the context of the point I just made about investment. When the Caribbean News Media Group was being created and we were asked to spend \$71.5 million, the Minister of Public Administration was quoted as saying when he was told that he dismantled NBN; he wanted to create this new thing, and asked: How do you know that it will work? His answer was that if in two or three years it is still not commercially viable and cannot work, then we are free to look at something else. That suggests that the decision to go with this new Caribbean media group at the cost of \$71.5 million was almost frivolous. If after three years it does not work we would try something else. This is why I raised the point with respect to the hundreds of millions that we may wish to invest with respect to other ventures. There ought to be some other review outside of the Government. I say Parliament. You say that will be restricting.

Mr. Manning: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. Member for St. Joseph for giving way. I just want to remind that we have on the table a proposal from the Government to engage with the Opposition in discussions on energy policy. If the mechanism works we are prepared to give it a parliamentary complexion. In other words, it is a system of parliamentary committees for critical areas like energy policies, foreign affairs and whatever else depending on the size and ability of the Parliament in terms of numbers to sustain that committee system.

Mr. G. Yetming: I made reference earlier to the \$15 billion proposed investment in this mass transit system. When you understand that in 2004 an announcement was made about a national transportation study to cover 20 years and in 2005, we hear about a contract being awarded to Trintoplan extended to 30 years and the report of that study will not be due until July 2006, you wonder on what basis a decision was made or is being considered for a mass transit system outside the completion of that study at the cost of \$15 billion. It is worrying.

Mr. Manning: It is a good question and we will answer it.

Mr. G. Yetming: Under the state enterprise sector, this is not necessarily state enterprise but I wanted to bring Unit Trust into that discussion. In the 2003 budget statement, you made reference to converting Unit Trust to a public liability company. That has been on the cards and the legislation for vesting had already

been prepared. The intention was that Unit Trust would become a public company. Partly in my view, not in your view, to take Unit Trust out of the clutches of the Government for them to go out with their initial public offering; provide greater opportunities for wealth creation publicly and to develop our financial and capital markets. We have heard nothing further and I do not know whether that has dropped off the radar.

The 15 new state enterprises, these special purpose companies are a major cause for concern. I know what the explanation is. The Prime Minister has provided that explanation and we have heard it from the Minister in the Ministry of Finance on the need for those 15 state enterprises. I do not necessarily share the view. You have developing rapidly a parallel public service just as you have a rapidly growing parallel police service with the Special Anti Crime Unit.

Mr. Speaker: The sitting of the House is suspended and we will resume at 5 o'clock.

4.30 p.m.: *Sitting suspended.*

5.00 p.m.: *Sitting resumed*

Mr. G. Yetming: Mr. Speaker, just before we broke I was speaking about the 15 new special purposes state enterprises. I was saying that we have a major cause for concern about the establishment of these state enterprises instead of moving away from or reducing the number of state enterprises by divestment, we are increasing them by the day. While we have heard the explanation provided by the Prime Minister and Minister of Finance on the reasons he believes those state enterprises are necessary, we wonder whether there is that need for so many of them covering so many different areas and whether the public service has become that bad.

The problem as I indicated is that hundreds of millions of dollars are now being removed from parliamentary oversight for these state enterprises to do what they have to do. And these state enterprises are being run by and large by political appointed boards, party activists if you may.

In 2001, the UNC government had created a central audit committee in the Ministry of Finance. The Cabinet took the decision in September 2001 and up to the time when we left office the Ministry of Finance was in the process of advertising for positions to be filled.

The mandate of that audit committee was very clear. One was to review the operations of these state enterprises with the right to go into them without notice

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[MR. YETMING]

Monday, October 03, 2005

to do surprise audits, not audits of their books, but audits of their procedures particularly with respect to tendering and the award of contracts. I do not know if that central committee still exists within the Ministry of Finance and if their mandate continues to be what it was when it was established in 2001. We are not comforted by the assurances that these enterprises are being established, as we are being told by the Minister in the Ministry of Finance, with the appropriate guidelines and systems of accountability. Appropriate to whom? Even the IMF in their visit for the Article IV consultation expressed concern about the establishment of these enterprises. If there is no more work for the divestment secretariat you could disband it.

Mr. Valley: You know who set up the divestment secretariat?

Mr. G. Yetming: I know who set it up. If there is no more work for them to do disband it. Will you look at divesting FCB or Flour Mills? There are a number of enterprises that do not fit your criteria of strategic importance. We are not hearing anything.

On the fiscal side, the budget of \$34 billion is a record budget. For comparison purposes, four years ago the last budget of the UNC came to \$16 billion. In the six years of the UNC government with the exception of 2000 and 2001 when the budget was predicated on an oil price of \$22 a barrel, for all the other years the budget was predicated on a price below \$20. In 1998, the budget was predicated on \$14 a barrel. The reason for saying that is that one of the best performing governments this country has ever seen had been the United National Congress government between 1995 and 2001.

The best performing, with small budgets at low oil prices. *[Interruption]* That is a commercial. *[Laughter]* The new UNC will take care of the mess that you are creating. *[Interruption]*

5.05 p.m.

We now have oil at \$70 per barrel. After three years, and let us say \$80 billion to be approximate, things have gotten worse in this country. Why has there been such discontent being expressed in the population, not just about crime? *[Interruption]* But you know it! You know that you are going to have a fight on your hands the next time around because of lack of performance in spite of the amount of money that you have.

On the revenue side, we are not hearing anymore about the revenue authority. I think it dropped off the landscape—*[Interruption]*—I do not know, about a year or two ago. We keep hearing about leakage in the tax system. We keep hearing

that Government is not collecting its fair share of tax. We keep hearing about trying to force a higher level of compliance. At one time the revenue authority was supposed to be the instrument for dealing with that. We are not hearing about that anymore.

I think if you are going to drop it, we should be told that you are dropping it and what options you are pursuing. We are not hearing about the comprehensive review of VAT, which was announced last year or the year before. We were told a committee had been formed to perform this comprehensive review of VAT. *[Interruption]* No, we were told about a committee for the comprehensive review of VAT because the Government recognized that there was evasion and fraud. Those were your words in one of your budget statements.

We have known for the last couple years that VAT to GDP had been declining since 19-whatever, so it is underperforming. We would like to know if there is still evasion and fraud; if it is still underperforming, what steps is the Government taking to correct it? But I will also add, I think it was last year that I made the suggestion that instead of reducing the rate of tax, you should consider reducing the rate of VAT. You chose the former. You have reduced the rate of tax and you have left VAT and you have more excluded items. *[Interruption]* Get up and say that!

[Mr. Yetming takes his seat] [Laughter]

Mr. Valley: No, no. *[Laughter]*

Mr. G. Yetming: We need to hear about this review of VAT. Not directly related to the revenue side but we were hearing—and this process started a long time ago—about pension reform. We have heard nothing further about pension reform. They know, Mr. Speaker, and we know that that issue of pension is a massive—call it—accident waiting to happen and until we can come to grips with it, and the expectation is the pension reform process will deal with that, but we have not heard anything further.

Mr. Speaker, this budget was in essence a spending spree, \$34 billion. The theme of the budget was “Addressing Basic Needs” and it came across as if the basic need of every group and member of the society was money and therefore with the \$34 billion, you throw a bit here; throw a bit there and make everybody happy; a lot of money; no thought; no prioritizing; no prudence. Mr. Speaker, there are a number of concerns.

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[MR. YETMING]

Monday, October 03, 2005

The first concern is that the Government had raised the expenditure programme on an oil price of \$35 per barrel versus \$25 last year. I think that a more prudent approach would have been increasing the oil price for expenditure to \$30 rather than \$35. It should have been raised to \$30 from \$25 rather than to \$35 from \$25, considering that you are increasing your expenditure year over year by more than 25 per cent. The question of sustainability is of deep concern and in an effort to share the volume of money around you have moved the spending price of oil from \$25 to \$35 and I would submit that a more prudent approach would have been \$30 to put more money into Stabilization and Heritage Fund. I know you do not want to hear that.

We are concerned about the sustainability of that level of expenditure. We are concerned about the danger of overheating the economy. Everyone is expressing that concern, and we are expressing that concern. Apart from the possible result of the fiscal measures, the number and volume of these major projects, which you claim you will time to suit, I do not know that you will time these major projects to suit, because when these special state enterprises have to report to different ministries and each ministry tries to outperform each other, there is no way, I think, that you are going to be able to control those enterprises from doing what you have mandated them to do. Therefore all these projects will come on stream at the same time and put pressure on the economy.

Concern also has to do with the shortage of labour. We are already hearing about importing labour from Jamaica. There are already problems with the shortage of labour in construction, agriculture, manufacturing; in every sector. Businessmen are complaining about the shortage of labour because they cannot get people.

Notwithstanding your announcement of reducing URP, you are continuing almost unlimited spending on welfare employment. So you are going to scale back URP. Why are you not scaling back the Community-based Environmental Protection and Enhancement Programme (CEPEP)? You want to introduce a training component but you must begin to scale the thing back from now. In fact, you can scale CEPEP to the point where a lot of what these people are doing, manually, could be mechanized to reduce labour into market; train them for proper sustainable jobs without necessarily affecting the throughput of CEPEP.

Mr. Speaker, social spending is up; major construction projects are under way, including massive buildings. There is little hope for improvements in basic services, whether it is in health, security, education or water. We still have, every week, communities protesting for water, with all the money. Little has been put

to productive and wealth-creating endeavours. The money is just being spent and it disappears. We have \$34 billion more this year, no hope; nobody in the country is excited. A feel-good budget but nobody is feeling good.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Minister of Social Development and Minister in the Ministry of Housing (Hon. Anthony Roberts): Mr. Speaker, indeed it is a pleasure for me to participate in this year's budget debate. It is not just the participation but for us in the PNM a budget exercise is like a journey; a journey with a purpose. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, you have had the opportunity to sit there when the hon. Prime Minister and Minister of Finance was making the presentation of this year's budget. I am sure you, too, could have felt the rhythm as we moved from one year to another. It is really an honour to be part of a Government with a vision for the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

You will recall that the Minister of Finance told this House in his budget presentation last year that no one would be left behind. No citizen of this country, as we journey to developed nation status, would be left behind. And so the hon. Prime Minister and Minister of Finance on this occasion decided to go the next rung of the ladder when he indicated the focus in this year's budget is addressing the basic needs of the community as he zeroed onto the family.

I really want to congratulate the hon. Prime Minister for his foresight and astute leadership. [*Desk thumping*] As well, Mr. Speaker, I must congratulate him on the presentation of a budget which focuses on people and the improvement of their standards of living. As I sat here and I listened to my colleagues on the other side, I could understand the predicament in which my friends on the other side have found themselves.

As I look at the Member for St. Joseph, on this occasion, he appeared to be labouring in an effort to make a contribution as he tried to respond.

5.20 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, you can see the difficulty that he was having even to try to criticize the budget. He indicated that he was really having some confusion, and I want to sympathize with him because the mere fact that you are a member of the United National Congress is sufficient confusion as far as I am concerned. Being a member of the UNC you are clothed in confusion. The Member mentioned a while ago in the absence of—and I am a bit confused here—I was going to say in

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

Monday, October 03, 2005

the absence of his leader—I am not sure which one. He was talking about the new UNC, but I want to tell my friend there is no new UNC, the players are the same, and the only thing that the Member can do to save himself is to get out.

Mr. Speaker, I listened to the representative for Couva North as he responded in his capacity as Opposition Leader to the budget, and I wondered if there was not a crime situation in this country whether he would have had a response to the budget. He talked about credibility. I do not know whether he had the moral authority to talk about credibility because he gave the impression that everybody else in the country has a credibility problem, save and except himself and members of the UNC. But the thing about that is this country knows the UNC. I do not think I have to say anything else on that issue. So the decision to focus this year's budget on addressing the basic needs of the community is a clear indication that this Government, not only understands challenges confronting the society, but it is also well prepared to tackle the issues from the root.

The Government is stating in no uncertain terms that it is not about quick-fix, it is not about just putting a plaster on a sore, it is not about trying to deal with things merely for political expediency, it is about finding tangible and long-term solutions to the problems which currently afflict this country. And so the Prime Minister, when he focused his budget on addressing the needs of the family, is right. He is focusing in the right direction. The family is considered to be the core social unit of the society, and I am sure you would agree with me when I say that the family is a major pillar in the society.

The institution that we refer to as family is a unit which is supposed to provide the kind of environment for its members to relate and to interact with each other in various capacities and where the problems of everyday life are worked out. It is the unit where norms and values are inculcated. But what we witnessed over the past few years—and it has been a growing source of concern nationally—is the increasing incidence of juvenile delinquency, youth, crime and violence, drug and alcohol abuse, homelessness, child neglect and abuse resulting from a decline in good parenting. We are witnessing in our society today a growing culture of intolerance, indiscipline and aggression among, not only the young people in the society, but what is amazing, the adults, the older members of society, an increasing inability to peacefully deal with conflict. That is what we are seeing in the society today and this has been the situation for some time.

When I listen to my friends on the other side, sometimes I get the impression that they are living in denial, the question of passing blame, it is not us, it is you. That is what I gather and this worrying trend we are witnessing in the society

today I am saying that it warranted some kind of study and so the Ministry of Social Development has completed a thorough study on the status of the family in Trinidad and Tobago.

The data coming out of that study has revealed some startling facts, and I want to just mention a few. During the period 1980—2000, there has been a decrease by 15 per cent in marriages in the country. But what is worse, is the divorce rate has increased by 67 per cent, so you could understand the kind of problems we are having in the society in terms of the family. The report shows there is a high incidence of domestic violence and family dispute. We see emerging the woman as the sole breadwinner in the family and as representatives—and I am certain that it is the experience of my colleagues on the other side that a number of women would come to them and now talk in terms of being a single parent—is the new line—I am a single parent, the question of male absenteeism.

The Bible tells us that the male, the father, the husband whichever one, is the head of the household and that suggests that he is supposed to provide some kind of leadership. He is supposed to be the provider. He is supposed to provide the kind of stability, the protector. The father is supposed to provide the kind of love in the family which is supposed to be like glue to hold the thing together. [Interruption] Not even crazy glue, but the problem we have, he is absent and as a result of his absence, we are seeing the kinds of difficulties, the kind of breakdown in the whole structure of the family. The question of male marginalization is an issue that we have to look at.

I am saying to you if the basic social institution of the family is under threat or is in a state of disintegration, then the social and economic capacity of the society to engage in productive and developmental activities are seriously compromised. As far as I am concerned families are engines of economic and social process and the Government should only be the facilitator of that process. It is for this reason that the Government is saying that the family has to be singled out on this occasion for special treatment, and we on this side are convinced about that approach. We are a Government of and for the people and we have that feel for the pulse of the people. We understand the problems in the society and that is why I am saying, focusing on the family for us is like hitting the nail on the head. They say that we possess political will and the commitment to the people of Trinidad and Tobago to confront those challenges and so our focus has inevitably turned on the institution of family.

I recall in a previous debate in this honourable House my friend, from St. Augustine, and I am prepared to remind him every time we meet, he cannot help

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

Monday, October 03, 2005

it. He had the opportunity immediately after being elected or selected as leader of his party, to make an after-budget comment and I recall hearing him say that it is a populist budget. I do not know whether he said it positively or not; but what is wrong with a budget for the people? [*Desk thumping*] But he is consistent in his thinking because I recall him criticizing the PNM in this House for making significant investment in people of Trinidad and Tobago. I recall him saying that he considers it to be a waste of resources. He does not have the feel for people and what is frightening about it is, he wants to be a political leader and an alternative prime minister. I want to tell him politics is about people so he does not have what it takes to lead this beautiful nation. At least, his colleague from Couva North, if you listened to him this morning, he has a keen sense of humour.

Mr. Speaker, in all circumstances, whether it is the victim or the perpetrator of social ills that you find today in the country, each one of them belongs to some family unit, believe it or not. The perpetrator did not fall from Mars. They are the children of this beautiful nation. They were the little babies at some point in time that we hugged, cuddled and kissed, and as a father you would say daddy's son, a chip off the old block, same babies. But in some cases, they were neglected, abused, raised without love and you only have to go to the nation's prison to hear them say time and time again that they do not know anything about love.

You would hear them say: "All yuh doh care 'bout nobody." If you interact with them, you would hear that because of the absence of caring, attention and love.

5.35 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, another grey area is the absence of understanding of and fear of God. I recall that there was a time when the only thing you could associate Sundays with was going to church. As children, your parents ensured that you went to church and Sunday School, but it is totally absent in our society today. I think that we should revert to it. That is why we are seeing such beastly acts being performed in our society today. There is no fear of God.

How could you behead another human being? How could you look at another human being, put a gun to his head and let out a dozen shots to destroy that life? How could you, as well, betray the public trust and interfere with state resources that do not belong to you? It is equally bad.

This Government, undoubtedly, recognizes the invaluable role of the family in the development of well-rounded individuals who contribute positively to the development of Trinidad and Tobago. It is also cognizant of the fact that the

structure and nature of the family has changed significantly over time and will continue to change. It is, therefore, important for the Government continuously to monitor change in family dynamics and relations within the context of their relationship with other social institutions and the reality of the wider society.

The family's ability to perform its function of primary socialization and emotional support are often dependent on a complex matrix of socio-economic and socio-cultural realities. In some cases, families are unable to fulfil these roles effectively and in such situations, this Government firmly believes that it is duty bound to intervene to ensure that the values and choices adopted by family members are consistent with long-term objectives towards the sustainable development of human and social capital.

The United Nations Human Development Report, 2005 advocates that human development is about freedom. It is about building human capabilities—the range of things that people can do and what they can be. However, we cannot close our eyes to the fact that people are restricted in what they can do and what they can be if they are illiterate, poor, ill, without life skills, discriminated against or constantly faced with abusive and threatening situations.

I assure this honourable House that the Ministry of Social Development will continue to be a key catalyst in this administration's goal to re-engineer social values with the particular focus on healthy functioning families. The Ministry of Social Development is well poised efficiently, effectively and successfully to shoulder this challenge.

As you are aware, Mr. Speaker, in May of this year, the Division of Social Services Delivery of the Office of the Prime Minister was reintegrated into the Ministry of Social Development and this strategically-timed move has facilitated the alignment of the social research policy formulation and monitoring and evaluating machinery with the implementation and service delivery units within the Ministry. The Ministry is now charged with the responsibility for developing partnerships and strengthening relationships with civil society in order to ensure the successful delivery of social services, collaborating with other social sector ministries towards the fulfilment of the sector's objective and fostering peace and harmony within the society.

Essentially, the Ministry of Social Development is focused on people, specifically those members of our community who are most vulnerable. I refer to our nation's children, the elderly, persons with disabilities, the disadvantaged and the dispossessed. The Ministry is mandated to help those persons who are unable

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

Monday, October 03, 2005

to cope with the economic and social challenges of daily living. We constantly seek to empower our clientele through rehabilitative and skill-enhancement programmes which develop their capabilities to play an active role in transforming their own lives and that of their families and communities.

I would like to take a little time to highlight some of the achievements of the Ministry of Social Development. I begin with persons with disabilities. This Government firmly believes that persons with disabilities must be treated as equal citizens of this nation with respect to rights and responsibilities and to enjoying equal access to the services available to each and every citizen.

Mr. Speaker, I do not know whether you have had the opportunity to read a letter I had sent you, but I am sure that after the debate you would have more time to turn your attention to issues like that. This has to do with access to the Red House for persons with disabilities.

During the presentation of the budget statement by the hon. Prime Minister, I saw Mr. George Daniel sitting in the gallery and I wondered how difficult it was for him to access the Chamber. More than that, we now have a Member of this honourable House who has joined the ranks of persons with disabilities. I urge you, Mr. Speaker, to take the appropriate action, as urgently as possible, to make the necessary adjustment so that our colleague and persons with disabilities would have free and easy access to the Parliament. [*Desk thumping*]

You see, it is in our commitment to a holistic development of persons with disabilities that the Government has enthusiastically embraced the human rights model of treating with persons with disabilities. As well, the Ministry of Social Development has completed a review of the national policy on persons with disabilities. The revision involved organizations representing persons with disabilities in extensive debate and discussion; always ensuring their widest participation.

This new policy aims to promote the participation of persons with disabilities in the country's socio-economic development, eliminating marginalization and discrimination of the differently abled and to provide wide opportunities for a better quality of life. The policy document is completed and will be submitted to Cabinet for consideration.

Over the last fiscal year the Ministry of Social Development awarded over \$20 million in subventions and other one-off grants to non-governmental organizations providing services to persons with disabilities, to enable the optimum functioning of these organizations, provide emergency assistance when necessary and facilitate participation in international conferences and competitions.

I wish to highlight that, with the support of the Ministry of Social Development, the Para-Olympic Association of Trinidad and Tobago was able successfully to participate in the prestigious Spitfire Wheelchair Basketball Tournament in Toronto, Canada. Proudly flying our national colours, the team returned home as second place winners in their category at the finals of the competition.

It was a first time that a Caribbean country had both played and won a place in their category in this international tournament. This is the kind of talent we have in the country among persons with disabilities. This Government will continue to make every effort to assist our disabled brothers and sisters to realize their full potential.

Permit me to move to another category of citizens in the national community—the socially displaced. The issue of socially displaced persons roaming the streets of Trinidad and Tobago is of major concern to this Government. It is definitely unacceptable in the context of this Government's vision for Trinidad and Tobago.

The issue of homelessness speaks to the deterioration in the institution of the family. These unfortunate persons, I assure you, are members of some family unit in Trinidad and Tobago, who have either refused or are unable to take care of the less fortunate among them, who are unable to cope with the stresses of life. What is distasteful is that some families, while refusing to take care of their own, are intent on benefiting from the possessions of the homeless and sometimes they attempt to collect these persons' old age pension benefits on their behalf, yet not utilizing those resources in the interest of the recipient.

Mr. Speaker, the Social Welfare Division has been instructed to take the appropriate action, whenever these situations are discovered.

5.50 p.m.

Our investigations have further revealed that there are those among the socially-displaced who have comfortable homes but prefer to live on the streets. We have held discussions with the Port of Spain City Corporation and the police of the City Corporation, as well as members of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service, who have agreed to enforce the laws, as it relates to loitering, in order to make the streets a bit more unfriendly for those street dwellers.

While the issue of homeless is a worldwide phenomenon, this Government will not shirk its responsibilities to assist those persons who have found themselves in that unfortunate position. The Ministry of Social Development has

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

Monday, October 03, 2005

completed a detailed study on the issue of socially-displaced persons in Trinidad and Tobago, which will be submitted to Cabinet for its consideration, together with a short-term and long-term plan for housing rehabilitation where possible and reintegration into the society. The Ministry of Social Development, through its social displacement unit, has identified the need to build a continuum of care for socially-displaced persons, that is, a solid network of outreach assessment, treatment and rehabilitation services and programmes, all geared to providing a viable alternative to street dwelling. This network will need to have the capacity to service the needs of substance abusers, the mentally ill, deportees, the elderly and the terminally ill.

The hon. Prime Minister, in his budget presentation, pointed to work in progress in this regard; the construction of a reception and referral centre. The Ministry has also acquired a parcel of land at Aripo and is pursuing the construction of facilities to house the aged homeless. There will be extensive expansion of facilities and that will take place at Piparo to house and to treat persons. At present, refurbishment is taking place on two buildings in Arima, as we speak, to house socially-displaced persons. As well, discussions are ongoing with various NGOs to assist with the housing of these unfortunate persons in our society.

I wish to advise this honourable House that in collaboration with the Ministry of Health, as space is created at the St. Ann's Hospital.—over the last three weeks we have begun to remove mentally-ill persons from the streets of Port of Spain. No big fanfare about it, but quite quietly we have begun to remove them. The public is just supposed to miss them from the streets. As well, we have begun a process of relocating persons from the Nipdec car park, which is close to Riverside Plaza. The intention is to relocate all persons residing there over time and return the facility to Nipdec.

Mr. Speaker, permit me to proceed to a more distinguished grouping in the family, that of our elderly. The need for prioritizing the projects geared towards the elderly, is brought more sharply into focus. If we consider that according to population growth figures from the Central Statistical Office (CSO) for the period 1998 to 2004, the 60-year-old and over register the fastest growing group in the society. At present it is estimated that there are approximately 130,000 senior citizens in this country and this figure is expected to double by 2020, when this country is expected to achieve developed nation status. I know my friends on the

other side have a difficulty hearing that but they will have to live with it. At that time, I am proud to say, I, too, would have joined that elite group of distinguished citizens. [*Interruption*] I will enjoy it.

Mr. Speaker, with the establishment of the Division of Aging, in 2003, the Government has devoted resources to developing a national policy on aging, monitoring, regulating and licensing homes for the older persons, ensuring the provision of care for older persons, with the inclusion of greater access to recreational facilities and the training and placement of caregivers.

In August, the Ministry of Social Development launched its first Older Persons Information Centre. This centre will provide older persons, NGOs and the general public, with information on programmes and projects, as well as products and services, available to older persons in the society.

In support of the work of the Ministry, a public education programme on aging was initiated during the last fiscal year, with a variety of governmental, nongovernmental organizations and schools. This programme, which involves the hosting of sensitization workshops, will be extended to include the private sector, special interest groups and academic institutions throughout Trinidad and Tobago. The primary aim of this project is to present a positive image of aging, raise public awareness of aging issues and provide an enabling environment that will foster a society for all ages. This programme will continue in fiscal 2006.

In this financial year, the Ministry will continue to raise the bar on the social support services offered to our senior citizens, with the establishment of senior centres for older persons, as you have heard by the hon. Prime Minister in the presentation of this year's budget. The establishment of senior centres will be multi-service facilities for the older persons to come together for recreational and educational activities that support their independence and encourage their involvement in and with the community. Activities to be accessed at the centre will also include lectures on health and nutrition, computer literacy, creative arts and fitness and exercise sessions.

I also wish to emphasize that the centres will create the opportunity for cross-generational interaction, as visits will be encouraged from students in schools situated in the vicinity of the centres. In this fiscal year, five centres will be launched: two in the East-West Corridor, one in central Trinidad, one in south Trinidad and one in the northwestern peninsula. As well, Tobago will not be left out as discussions are being held at this time with a soroptimist club to establish the Tobago centre.

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

Monday, October 03, 2005

Mr. Speaker, you may ask about those persons who are plagued with chronic illness or disability and who are unable to move about freely. I am pleased to inform this House that in fiscal 2006, the Ministry will pilot its meals-on-wheels programme. Home-delivered nutritious meals will be provided to older persons aged 55 and over. This programme will promote a sense of self-worth and dignity among older persons who are limited by finances, disability and illness. The Ministry expects that this project will reduce the social isolation sometimes experienced by the elderly, by encouraging social interaction between volunteers and beneficiaries.

The programme is but one of the means adopted by the Ministry to supplement the role of the family in instances in which family support is nonexistent or insufficient to meet the needs of vulnerable individuals. For the purpose of executing this programme, the country is divided into four districts, mainly north, south, central and Tobago. Our research has identified clusters of senior citizens which include homes for the aged. Discussions are being held with NGOs, which will facilitate the execution of this programme and we expect, will commence in the second quarter of this financial year.

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. A. Roberts: I thank hon. Members for extending my time. Mr. Speaker, do you really understand what distinguishes the PNM from all other political groupings in this country? I know he knows. We understand what the responsibility of government is. We understand that our responsibility is to all the people of Trinidad and Tobago. This Government will take all appropriate steps to ensure that the services that Government provides reach every community in Trinidad and Tobago. All government social programmes will be under constant monitoring and evaluation, to ensure that they reach where they are intended to reach. More than that, we are prepared to leave nothing to chance when it comes to addressing the basic needs of the people of this country.

6.05 p.m.

The Ministry, through the European Union sponsored Poverty Reduction Programme is at present conducting a survey on living conditions in Trinidad and

Tobago. This survey is a recognized mechanism for determining living conditions and measuring poverty. It provides a comprehensive investigation of how people live, and so it takes into account consumption patterns and the kinds of things households can afford; the kind of economic activity they engage in; the quality of health care they access and their attitude to health issues, for instance, like immunization; the types of illnesses with which they may be afflicted and disabilities they experience. As well, the gamut of issues relating to education and the expenditure on education.

Information from this survey will allow the Government to determine where we are in terms of the level of poverty as it exists in Trinidad and Tobago; the impact of Government's social programmes and the area we need to target as we strive to alleviate poverty in this society.

As this Government proceeds along the path to developed nation status; the eradication of poverty is a major objective, and so we are pursuing several approaches to achieving this objective.

First, by implementing a government initiative funded by the European Union, which is geared towards a decentralized approach to addressing poverty and to provide current data and information on poverty and poverty reduction programmes. Through this programme, Government has established 15 regional, social and human development councils (RSHDCs), as well as facilitated the establishment of 15 networks of civil society organizations. Government understands the need for community participation in the fight to eradicate poverty in our society, and so setting up the RSHDCs and conducting the survey of living conditions becomes a critical tool in assessing the true levels of poverty in Trinidad and Tobago.

The Social Welfare Division of the Ministry also plays an important role in the fight against poverty. We understand that among us there are persons who will require some form of Government assistance, and as a caring Government, we have ensured that provision is made through the Social Welfare Division to assist. We have found that there are still too many persons in our society who, when accessing these facilities, experience difficulties. We are reviewing all the criteria with respect to eligibility to receive old age pension.

For instance, where a citizen having worked all his life in Trinidad and Tobago and for some reason spent a couple years outside of Trinidad and Tobago, finds himself in a position where he does not qualify for pension, and I am saying to you that this has to change. So it is for this reason that at the Ministry of Social

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

Monday, October 03, 2005

Development we have begun the computerization and streamlining of the operations of the Social Welfare Division to shorten the process involved in disbursing cheques to old age pensioners, as well as to facilitate the smooth and easy access to Government's services. Where we have detected areas of dishonesty, we have referred those matters to the police for appropriate action. We want to indicate here, fraud will not be tolerated in the Ministry of Social Development. [*Desk thumping*]

In the budget presentation of 2004/2005 the hon. Prime Minister increased the disability assistance grant to \$800 and made the grant accessible to a larger number of persons with disabilities by lowering the age from 40 to 18, you would recall. However, the income criteria of \$3,600 annually, which is actually \$300 a month, debarred a number of persons with disabilities from accessing the grant, therefore in this fiscal year the income criteria will increase to \$12,000 annually, which is \$1,000 a month. All we have done is raise the bar so as to allow more persons with disabilities to be able to access the facility.

There are a number of other emergency grants at the Ministry of Social Development, in our attempt to bring relief and to assist persons who have experienced distress in our society. Grants for example, like the household help for disaster. Persons who have experienced flooding and so forth, and have lost their household items, there is a grant at the Ministry to assist. A grant for minor repairs to homes. If you have a little difficulty, maybe with your roof, there is a small grant at the Ministry that you would be able to access. Grant for medical equipment; for example, wheelchairs, we provide that kind of assistance. Any one of our senior citizens who is unable to care for himself or herself and requires a trained helper, that you may be able to access from persons who were trained under the Geriatric Adolescent Partnership Programme, the Ministry is prepared to provide a stipend to that caregiver for a period of time that would be determined by the Ministry.

Additionally, we provide assistance in the form of a small grant to senior citizens who, for instance, may be diabetic and have dietary constraints and will have to purchase certain types of food to satisfy that need. We can provide you with a small grant to assist you to meet that need. In the case of children with disabilities under the age of 18, consideration has been given to increase the grant in this fiscal year. I wish to advise this House that in fiscal year 2006, the Children's Authority will be established to serve as the guardian of children in Trinidad and Tobago, as effected by the Children's Authority Act.

Also on the horizon in 2006, a host of activities emanating from the National Plan of Action for Children. Several projects will be initiated to improve the situation of children in the home and in the national community as a whole. An education and promotion programme on the national plan of action and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, will be conducted to create public awareness on the national and international protocol that must be observed on issues pertaining to children. In keeping with these efforts, the Government in collaboration with UNICEF, will host a summit on HIV/AIDS and its effect on young children. This summit will be held from November 14—16, 2005, and is expected to achieve the following objectives:

- Assessing the progress of both Government and civil society organizations, based upon commitments made at the 2004 Summit;
- the strengthening of the regional children forum in order to discuss the HIV/AIDS pandemic;
- partnership and solidification amongst Caribbean stakeholders in the fight against HIV/AIDS.
- Finally, an increase in the participation rate of young people in HIV/AIDS intervention.

Mr. Speaker, as we seek to address the basic needs of the people, we would be instituting the necessary structures to rebuild the institution of the family. I did indicate that the Ministry of Social Development commissioned and completed a detailed study on the status of the family in Trinidad and Tobago. In fiscal year 2006, the Ministry will implement the following programmes with a view to rebuilding the family structures in Trinidad and Tobago.

First, we need to build capacity and put mechanisms in place to facilitate the work of the Ministry. And so the National Family Services Division of the Ministry will be restructured and completely upgraded to be able to discharge the following responsibilities:

- the monitoring of the status of the institution of the family in Trinidad and Tobago on an ongoing basis;
- the design and implementation of appropriate strategies and solutions in collaboration with civil society that would promote healthy family life in the nation;

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

Monday, October 03, 2005

- the promotion of the implementation of family sensitive policies in the sphere of public life;
- the coordination of state programmes pertaining to the family;
- the monitoring of agencies which addresses issues pertaining to the family.

In order to address the problems of this serious undersupply of trained social workers, psychologists, psychiatrists and the counsellors in the country, Government in collaboration with the relevant tertiary institutions will immediately introduce new measures and strengthen existing approaches to ensure there is an adequate supply of these skilled professionals.

Mr. Speaker, families today appear to be unable to cope with the many challenges life presents, and therefore members of family units react in different ways, which may not be consistent with our plan for social development. In this regard, the Ministry will significantly expand its counselling programmes to involve NGOs and professionals to provide this service to all nationals who require the support. The Ministry of Social Development has developed proposals and in a limited way has started implementing family and parenting programmes. These programmes are now being fine-tuned and will be expanded to the national community.

The main aim of the programmes will be to promote the maintenance of healthy family functioning and to strengthen the relationship between the family and the community by providing parents and children with opportunities to share experience, learn best practices and gain peer support.

6.20 p.m.

The programme will address parenting skills and techniques, communication skills, family planning, conflict resolution, youth development, interpersonal relationships, family responsibilities, pre- and post-marital counselling and fatherhood, among other family issues.

The programme, Mr. Speaker, will be available in all communities and to all parents, parents to be and out of school youths. Family centres are to be established and operated by NGOs.

Earlier in my discourse I identified as a major problem in the family today the issue of male marginalization. And in this fiscal year the Ministry proposes to commence programmes to address this major weakness. One such programme is

the male mentorship programme. This programme focuses on empowerment, family functions and responsibilities, conflict resolution and anger management. This programme will serve to facilitate a positive participation of males in all sphere of community life, as we strive to reduce the levels of male marginalization and underachievement observed in the society.

Mr. Speaker, I did mention as well, that another major concern of the Government was the erosion of societal values; values which are summarized in the watchwords of our nation: Discipline, Tolerance and Production. This deterioration in values is evidenced by the growing disrespect for others; increase in the levels of crime, violence and child neglect, as well as the increase in incidents of HIV/AIDS. The Ministry intends to mount sustained multimedia campaign that would promote positive societal values and family life. We intend to bombard the national community with this programme. So, I therefore make a stirring appeal to our friends in the media, to give full support to this programme as we strive to make every effort to re-engineer positive values in our families.

Mr. Speaker, this Government through the Ministry of Social Development has also implemented the new community mediation programme to empower individuals, groups and communities to resolve disputes by communication and negotiation in a non-threatening environment with the assistance and facilitation of a third-party mediator.

So, Mr. Speaker, I have given only an insight into the facets of the work of the Ministry of Social Development. As a core social sector Ministry we are charged with the primary function of preventing and redressing social ills while fostering social progress. In the coming year our attention will focus on rejuvenating, strengthening and repositioning the family as the primary unit of socialization in Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Speaker, as I close, I want to beg your indulgence just to relate a brief story. As I was browsing through my library at home, I stumbled on a book which was probably used by the children. I do not know how many of you would remember the book "*My Land Trinidad and Tobago*" by Gloria Pollard—I do not know if it is the same Gloria Pollard who was involved in politics at sometime—and Elton Nelson. It is a book of patriotic verses. As I quickly scanned the pages, this verse remained with me and I quote:

“Mother, father, niece, nephew, brother, sister, aunt, uncle say it, shout it loud and clear with a joy exultant that the world might hear, this land belongs to me and you; today and to eternity.”

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

Monday, October 03, 2005

Mr. Speaker, this land belongs to you and me and we cannot allow this land to slip through our fingers; we cannot allow our people, our children to fall by the wayside. There is absolutely no room for civil disobedience; there is no room for subtle support of crime and criminal activities.

Hon. Member: Talk to the PNM.

Hon. A. Roberts: Or quietly revel in the prevalence of crime in society; harbouring a thought that this will eliminate the hon. Patrick Manning and the PNM. We must be responsible leaders, because we must work together to ensure that family members are provided with the basic value, so that they can emerge as civic-minded individuals of integrity and sound character, ready to play positive roles in our part to achieve developed nation status and to become the Trinidad and Tobago of which we will all be proud.

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

Mr. Manohar Ramsaran (Chaguanas): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have listened to three budget statements delivered by the Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and cannot help but believe that they were nothing but acts of public relations. However, what is disturbing is the fact that billions of dollars are frittered away and no real positive development takes place.

Mr. Speaker, it is Government's responsibility to use Government's resources, financial and otherwise, to improve the quality of life of its citizens; programmes to assist the financially challenged as the poor, the physically challenged and the disabled as well. In time of plenty and maybe other times, I believe if you are really interested in that segment of the population that is in need of assistance, money should be put away, whether it is 20 per cent of the budget or 10 per cent or 5 per cent or whatever and this must remain constant over time to deal with the problems that these people face.

For example, today we have heard so much, and I just want to touch on what the hon. Minister said about family life. I understand the role of a father in a family; I understand and I know, when I was Minister, 40 per cent of our households were headed by females. This is indeed something that when I found out, it was alarming but what caused this—this is important to know, the causal factors. Why did this happen? Because I heard you did investigation, but it is important to come and tell us what caused that problem and how is this problem going to be solved.

To find out the problem is one thing, to get to the root of the problem is another. I have said it many times that a strong family is the bedrock of a strong

community; which is the bedrock of a strong nation. We must understand that to solve this problem is not an easy one. I would not say immediately that it is an easy one, but, how do we correct the problem. Should we as Members of Parliament set examples? Should we, the leaders of this society, understand that we cannot preach one thing and do another; especially, when we treat with our families? We have to share with our families love, as was said by the hon. Minister, caring, togetherness, spend quality time with our families, and when we do this then we could say that we are responsible.

I want to talk about fathers. I know that there is this visiting father syndrome that we have if we go to some of these building apartments. I do not want to pinpoint any area, you would see on a Friday evening a number of motor cars. Every home would have a motor car, but these cars would not be there between Monday and Sunday, except Fridays, of course. I believe that this is something that we as the caring fathers should look at and how do we deal with our families.

We must get to the root of it. For example, I was told that somebody would travel to Guaico, Tamana sometimes on the weekends to look at some roads, but it is important that we set an example. We set examples of how could we improve our families. We must do that. We must not just talk the talk; we must walk the talk. We must look at our children; how do we want them to be.

As we talk about children, I want to mention this for another time in this Parliament. For people who listen to me, we have a scourge in this country that is called incest and I have a simple solution that I have been saying over the last four years—I did not realize it—the solution came to me one evening when I was just thinking about it. We have children in this country who are mothers before they reach age 14 and they would go to hospitals and clinics and give birth. Why is it the police officers do not investigate who the fathers are and they would be charged for carnal knowledge or what have you and deal with it?

Hon. Member: Statutory rape.

Mr. M. Ramsaran: And it is statutory rape. Is this so difficult to do in this country? We must start somewhere! We just cannot come and talk about family life and hope that you will get some gift from God and things would be put in place. We have to do certain things, we have to understand that when you are dealing with a family, you have to deal with that family. We have extended families in Trinidad and Tobago. In homes we have grandmothers and grandfathers still living with families, and inculcating in their grandchildren and children the value of a family.

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[MR. RAMSARAN]

Monday, October 03, 2005

We must encourage that. Not that I am against giving care to elders in a home and in an enabling environment, but why not encourage families to live at home and give incentives for the children to take care of their parents in their old age? We could do that, rather than putting them in a home for years and when they die they go and cry. You put your father or mother in a home for 10 or 15 years and all that person would do is sit in a room, walk outside, no love and attention and if this vicious cycle continues we cannot talk about building families. We have to understand that we must have the caring side too, not only the Government to throw money at all the problems; that would not solve these problems at all.

The Minister mentioned a decrease in marriage and an increase in divorce. Again, we have to find the root cause of this problem, it is a serious one, but we have to deal with it. When I was Minister, we introduced the concept of parenting; teaching young adults to understand what is parenting, before they go into having children. Another good programme that I remembered was the CHOICES programme, and it is important that we do this. I want to remind this Parliament and the country that these things were already there in the Ministry. The Minister was talking this evening as if everything was now done; they are now rediscovered.

For example, CHOICES, a child would grow up from single digits into teenage years and between the ages of 15 and 18, that period, a child should be weaned to understand that there are choices in his or her life. I remember once I mentioned that, and some journalist asked if I did not know that girls at 14 years would have developed and so on. Yes, they would have developed physically, but mentally they are children and these things must be taught, it must be mentioned to our children again and again. Yes, they have a big boy's body or a big girl's body, they have moustache and they have other features, but one must understand that they are children.

That is why when the United Nations influenced us to raise the age of a child to 18, it was because we were doing that. So that at 18 that child would now turn into a young adult and then maybe he or she could move on. But between the ages of 14 and 18 or 12 and 18, children must be treated as children. I want to revisit that CHOICES programme, have another look at the parenting programme to see how we could get our children and our young people to understand what is a family. I want to maybe congratulate the Minister for awakening to the fact that there were these programmes in the Ministry and to continue to work with them.

He went on to persons with disabilities; \$800 allowance for people with disabilities in my mind is atrocious. That is why I mentioned at the beginning of

my talk this evening that money should be put aside to deal with these people. Eight hundred dollars in today's world to deal with people with disabilities, I do not know how these people manage. It was introduced a few years ago and it was on par with old age pension and even that is another story.

6.35 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, \$800; I had \$3,600 as the ceiling; I am glad the Minister raised the idea of increasing it to \$10,000, which I recommended in my last budget contribution. So we are increasing the ceiling; opening more people to it, but \$800 is not the figure we should talk about. As the hon. Prime Minister said, in a time of plenty we should deal with the less fortunate in society, not give gifts to the middle class and the rich. This is a rich, middle class budget. This is not a budget for poor people. I cannot understand it at all, because in this country we have the cost of living increasing every day. We are normally a country with plenty money, so to speak, from the oil; increase in the cost of living and the rich being given tax breaks and so on, but I believe that the poor people who are disabled, our old aged pensioners, their lot should be raised.

I wrote the hon. Prime Minister asking him to consider it in his budget, because I think it is needed at this time. It is not only at election time that you have a little increase in old age pension. Look at their lives. You talk about senior citizens and how we care about them, but do we understand what \$1,000 could do today? You could say, "Well, yeh, we raised it," this, that and the other, but we are here now today. We are talking about today, what could \$1,000 do to help?

Mr. Manning: What should it be?

Mr. M. Ramsaran: I am not saying that you should pull a figure out of a hat. We should examine the cost of living index. We should look at their needs and requirements and I am sure you will agree with me that \$1,000 is not enough.

Mr. Imbert: How much?

Mr. M. Ramsaran: Maybe it could be \$5,000, \$1,500, \$2,000; I do not know. Let us do it scientifically. [*Crosstalk*] The number of surveys I saw in this budget, we might only be doing surveys for the next five years.

As minister I signed that poverty reduction programme with the European Union; it has been five years since. I have not seen anything tangible to deal with poverty reduction. For example, you talked about telecentres, they were established when I was minister, but it is as if everything was forgotten. I am glad that you have reexamined that. I thought these programmes were dead; I am happy they are being given some life.

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[MR. RAMSARAN]

Monday, October 03, 2005

Socially displaced—the last couple weeks we saw many features on television about socially displaced people in Port of Spain and San Fernando. Coming to the end of my term, this problem was being attacked and everything you talked about Minister was there. I do not know why your predecessor put it in abeyance. Indeed, we must deal with socially displaced people or vagrants as we know them, all over Port of Spain. The programmes are there; you mentioned them. [Crosstalk] We had all that. If you ask your Permanent Secretary (PS) to bring what Minister Ramsaran has in the files, you would see all the work. You do not need to reinvent the wheel. You do not have to do surveys.

For example, we had a Social Displacement Board. If I remember correctly, it was made up of the Ministry of Community Development, the Ministry of Health and, of course, three members from civil society and local government. This was a board to deal with vagrancy. Why was this board disbanded? I do not know. The Chairman was not reappointed; the board was not functional; now we have the problem coming back up again, and we will have to reinvent the wheel. This is what I find hard, when a government comes into office and tries to put everything aside from the previous government.

I am sure we are almost the same ideologically. Why do you put aside what was done before? Why not let them continue. This is the problem I have; four years later you come back to start what was already there. The whole question of the Social Displacement Unit was there in the Ministry. It was staffed and you could have continued that work rather than shut it down. I am happy that the Minister raised these things. I feel good about them.

Then the Prime Minister spoke about meals on wheels. I want to say immediately that this does not fit into the whole question of empowering our people. This could be another area of creating a dependency syndrome and we have to be careful that we do not have wheel on meals, SHARE—which I will talk about in a while—and other programmes that have people just sitting there and existing. It is something we have to rethink. That proposal came to me when I was minister and I shelved it, because meals on wheels could be very dangerous. It is almost like the soup kitchen concept. We have to empower our people. Empowering our people is not giving handouts. It is having an enabling environment, to use your term, to get people to be productive; train people.

I am sure in today's world, most 55-year olds would have some skill or the other; encourage them to do something, rather than sit at home and get meals on wheels. So is it one meal per day or three meals per day? Would a car be coming

at 8 o'clock for breakfast, lunch, dinner? What is the concept? Or do you expect that one meal per day would suffice? [*Crosstalk*]

Another issue the Prime Minister raised was people who live abroad for a couple years receiving a pension. It is already there in the statute; I think it was the Member for Arouca North, if I remember correctly, when I was minister who recommended that if somebody stayed away, from two years we add that time to his or her age. So instead of getting a pension at 65 years, you would get it at 67 years. I will support fully that we do away with that. Once somebody reaches 65 years old and is a Trinidadian and he qualifies, he should be given his old age pension. I expect you to come with legislation as quickly as possible to deal with that and to deal with increasing the ceiling. Let us look at it; we have no problem in supporting that, hon. Minister.

I want to talk a little more on social development. Again, I recommend that you look at the whole question of sustainable development; look at programmes that will assist people to become better human beings. Let us not continue this process of giving handouts, because I always warn that if this country, for some reason, should lose its riches—from rags to riches and vice versa—if something were to happen five years from now and we suddenly could not afford to give handouts, what would happen to our people? Would there be anarchy? Would there be a social revolution? Understand that and let us prepare for it.

You talk about the Children's Authority. Again, in 2000, the UNC government passed the Children's Authority Act and I am disappointed that up to today we have not put that in place. If you want to assist our children, you have got to protect them. The Children's Authority Act is the mechanism through which our children will be protected. Remember these pieces of legislation were approved by the UNC to deal specifically with children to ensure that they are protected, as far as their rights are concerned; rights to education and so forth.

As I talk about education, I want to mention that I heard the hon. Prime Minister speak about free tertiary education. I applaud him. We have no problem with that; at least, I have no problem with that. But in my constituency in Chaguanas—and I have been raising this for a while—there are four new secondary schools built. As I know it, to enter the University of the West Indies you must have A' levels, unless you lower the entry requirements. These were new schools opened by the UNC administration in 2000. In 2005 the students wrote CXC for the first time.

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[MR. RAMSARAN]

Monday, October 03, 2005

Mr. Speaker, what has happened from then to now is appalling. In the Cunupia Government High School, six students passed eight subjects at CXC; 35 passed seven subjects; 33 passed six subjects and 43 passed five subjects. For the children to have written exams for the first time in a new high school—and, of course, we were criticized for putting them in an area that was not yet completed—these children fought against all odds and 120 students ended with full passes.

The principal assured me that he applied in time to have A' level classes. Do you know what the reply was from the Ministry of Education? Apply again next year. Could you believe that? There were school places; teachers; everything was ready for these children to do A' levels and the Ministry of Education said, under the hapless Minister, "Apply next year." What would these 120 students do? Should they join the line to commit crimes? Should they take up guns? And this is the caring Government that talked about free tertiary education. You beat your chest and here you are denying the rights of the children to go to school. That is what the Children's Authority is about: to protect the children from the atrocities of the Government.

Mr. Speaker, ASJA Boys College for the first time got extremely good results. They applied to the Ministry of Education and the answer was the same. The ASJA Girls' College had 103 students with full certificates, willing to do A' levels. When we opened the ASJA school in 2000, there was only one form. These children were brought in and they struggled against dust and so on; up to now they still struggle with the dust. The place is not yet paved, but they did extremely well. The school applied to do A' levels and the answer was the same, "Reapply next year." Can you believe that, Mr. Speaker? Throw off the political cap. Could you believe that in today's world and this Prime Minister is boasting about education? It does not add up, to me.

Mr. Manning: I missed the point.

Mr. M. Ramsaran: In the Vishnu Boys' College, 53 students got full certificates. The principal was ready; there were places in the school and they were not allowed. To repeat for the Prime Minister: In the constituency of Chaguanas, four new secondary schools were built. The children did extremely well; 300-odd children got excellent CXC results. The principal, the Parent Teachers Association (PTA) and the school board, in the case of the Cunupia High School, applied to the Ministry of Education to have A' level places and this was not allowed.

Appropriation Bill (Budget)

Monday, October 03, 2005

We met with the Ministry's officials. I wrote the Minister of Education. Let me read the letter into the record, so you will understand how caring this Government is:

"The Hon. Mrs. Hazel Manning

Minister of Education

Dear Minister,

I have a meeting with residents and parents who are concerned with the failure of students to obtain A' level places. This resulted from the CXC 2005 examinations."

My colleague, Mr. Ganga Singh, and a couple of others were with me.

"At these meetings, the decision was to seek an urgent meeting with you to discuss this very serious situation that if not addressed will have a negative effect on students involved. I am, therefore, requesting a meeting with you within two weeks..."

I gave the Minister two weeks.

"...of the date of this correspondence at a venue in Chaguanas. Representatives of the PTA would be present. All parents and children are very concerned and I am asking that you treat this situation with urgency."

This letter was dated September 06, 2005.

6.50 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, I got a reply a few days ago saying that the meeting is sometime in late October and we have to come to the Minister's office in Port of Spain. When I spoke with teachers, principals and the students, they say: "Minister, dat is mamaguy, October we meeting and A'Level classes starting, you fall for dat stupidness?"

When I called them, I quoted their response, which I do not have today, but each principal to whom I spoke had no respect for the ministry and how it dealt with this. This is what is called caring.

Mr. Speaker, if I had the letters I would have read them into the record, but the principals of these schools all wrote the Minister of Education, it is on record, and there was no resolution.

Mr. Boynes: When was that?

Mr. M. Ramsaran: To answer you Member for Toco/Manzanilla, these letters were written in May, or before, when the principals were expecting good results. They found physical places and applied to the Ministry of Education to get these school places. If this is not uncaring, I do not know what is. That is why when I come to this Parliament and try to discuss the budget and the Government talks about caring, vision, and addressing our basic needs, I am confused.

It has foodstuff and so forth on the negative list and it says it is removing VAT. The reality is that VAT has been removed from almost all basic foodstuff in our country and when you go through the list of exemptions, I checked it and goods are already duty free, but the hon. Prime Minister was ill-advised to announce that duty and VAT would be removed from these goods. They are already VAT free and duty free.

I ask the Prime Minister to look at it again. For example, it has geometry sets free of duty. Geometry sets are already free of duty and VAT has already been removed. So Mr. Speaker, it shows the incompetence. I remember a Senator saying that he can do better than zero-rated. I do not want to go into all the details, but just to say that the Minister should be advised by people who know.

Mr. Speaker, a case should be made for serious economic transformation to broaden the bases of our economic dependence using oil wells to finance the process forward in time of plenty. As a person who grew up in a poor area, when one has money one invests, does things for people, saves, and improves the quality of life.

For example the Caroni (1975) Limited issue of two acres of land. What is there for the people? Are there any infrastructural developments? Are there roads? Will there be water? Can they get the crops from the field? Tell us.

Mr. Speaker, this is the nonsense we have for Government. It gives people two acres of land. I know people living in Caroni Village who were given two acres of land in Ste. Madeleine, and there are many people like them. I cannot understand for the life of me somebody living in Caroni Village, in the north of Chaguanas getting two acres of land in Ste. Madeleine.

Mr. Imbert: What is wrong with that?

Mr. M. Ramsaran: For two acres of land? [*Crosstalk*] To give somebody two acres of land on a piece of paper; no deed, no lease, two acres of land miles apart, that does not work. If this is done properly and the people have the infrastructure and the support from the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Affairs, I would applaud it.

There are agriculturists in my constituency without access roads, and irrigation for years and Chaguanas is the food basket of Trinidad and the Minister knows this. In the Bejucal area when it floods crops die, when it is hot, the crops die. We are asking for irrigation. I call the Minister; he knows, and he cooperates. He listens to me from time to time but the effect does not really last. He is good at listening, but there is no action.

I remember once leading a demonstration of farmers for open irrigation. I broke the law. I could have been arrested because the farmers' crops were dying. We are just paid lip service to the improvement in our constituency.

Turning to the hon. Minister of Works and Transport, I read in the Public Sector Investment Programme (PSIP) about bridges, roads, and infrastructure development all over the place but they are taking 18 months and over to build a simple bridge in Guayamare, and the people are suffering in the meantime.

There was a single lane, now they have built a dirt bridge. Mr. Speaker, this is on the Southern Main Road which links Chaguanas with Curepe. There is so much traffic and this hopeless Minister can only talk in Parliament. As I heard recently, there are people who can talk in Parliament and those who can work. Eighteen months, Mr. Speaker, and I am still counting.

I told the former Minister of Works and Transport that he has to finish it before the rainy season starts and that was last year. He promised me in this Parliament as well as on the corridor. He said, no problem, at the end of May, your bridge would be completed. That was last year. Do you know what happened? He went instead. I do not want to be too unkind, but that is the reality of the situation.

We talk about performance. All that is in this budget is public relations exercise and there is no implementation. I give zero mark for implementation. What is the excuse? Do not blame me, blame my public servants, and blame my support staff. I am going to set up companies.

Mr. Imbert: I will take it back.

Mr. M. Ramsaran: Mr. Speaker, a classic example is my good friend from Toco/Manzanilla. A sports company is set up and I heard that the CEO got fired before the company was opened. Tell us why. It is public funds you are playing with. [*Interruption*] He is so efficient that he is fired before he starts. I think it is Ken Butcher, he was hired and fired, the sports company did not even get off the ground.

I heard that the launch is going to cost around \$300,000, and I stand corrected, Minister. You are spending \$300,000 to launch the company and the CEO is stillbirth. That is performance!

I went to Guyana recently and the pace with which they are moving to welcome the 2007 Cricket Tournament; they are not only building the stadium which is about 50 per cent completed already, but infrastructure around and a couple miles away with houses, and guest houses. They are moving the economy forward, but what are we doing in Trinidad?

Mr. Speaker, I spoke with the Trinidad and Tobago Cricket Board President and all they wanted were about four practise pitches for the teams to practise. They already took the brown paper bag; which is nothing as we all know. I do not want to remind you of the brown paper bag; I know for the Member for Diego Martin West, a brown paper bag means something else, but to this Minister, a brown paper bag means a packaged deal and he said that Tendulka will be facing Lara at the oval but Lara is playing in Jamaica and Tendulka is playing in Trinidad, so that will be a long-distance ball. I remember these things, once it is sports I will remember.

Mr. Speaker, they wanted a practise pitch and they are spending \$815 million to build a practise pitch.

Dr. Rowley: Stop talking stupidity.

Mr. M. Ramsaran: That is what it is. That is the requirement of the board, and to make matters worse, I heard the hon. Prime Minister describing it as a tsunami relief centre.

Dr. Rowley: You too?

Mr. M. Ramsaran: I heard it! Mr. Speaker, this is the wastage I am talking about in Trinidad and Tobago when the money available should be spent to improve the quality of life of our people. Our money should not be frittered away and wasted; we should look to see how we can save for the future.

The anomaly of the current environment in Trinidad in which this budget is presented, is that there is high liquidity, low interest rate, rising inflation, rising food prices and labour shortage, material shortage and, of course, increased prices, and we heard of the shortage of US currency. This is confusion. Trinidad is confusing the world. We have money yet we have everything that is negative about our growth.

Mr. Speaker, if you divide \$34 billion by the population of 1.3 million you would see the budget per capita expenditure per person. The GDP today is about 90. That is extremely high and he is boasting about it. Do the people of this country enjoy anything? We have money, we do not know what to do with it so we are going to build a monorail and a road to Tobago for \$15 billion. Government is about people, it is about improving the people's quality of life.

Dr. Rowley: You spend four hours in traffic every morning that is why we have monorail.

Mr. M. Ramsaran: Building infrastructure is good, but we have to also improve the quality of life for the people and this is not happening. We talk about high consumer spending and this is why I make the case for old age pensioners to have an increase in their pensions.

I make a plea on behalf of these people. Let us help the less fortunate in our country. Look at the United Nations request that 20 per cent of our budget be given to the social development sector. We must not only address basic needs, this talk does not make sense. We have to improve the quality of our life, bring people to the mainstay in our development. Do not just leave them.

Mr. Speaker, I can go on and on showing examples of inefficiency by this Government. They say money is no problem and Munroe Road Hindu School was supposed to be built in 2001, money was approved in the budget, we left office and up to today 2005, the Ministry of Education—and I always like to say the incompetent Minister of Education—maybe she does not understand the role of a Minister. Maybe she sits there and hopes that somebody will do the job for her and she will take the praise.

Mr. Speaker, do you know what they did over the holidays? This school is over 50 years old and there are about 300 students and these children enjoy good SEA results for the best schools in Trinidad.

7.05 p.m.

How do you treat our people like this? Is it because they are living in Central Trinidad, in an East Indian community? Is that it?

Dr. Rowley: Hello! The Diego Martin School was not built and I am not taking no race talk.

Mr. M. Ramsaran: And you made noise about that. You used to come here every Friday raising it, and I was not vexed with you.

Dr. Rowley: Do not go there.

Mr. M. Ramsaran: I believe that we should really be careful of what we do in our country. No one must be left behind. That is why we passed the Bill to deal with equal opportunities. You must not be discriminated against because of race, gender or disability. We have to help to bring this country up and we must not perceive to discriminate against people.

I am disappointed that that school was not built. Everything was put in place. Land was bought. The Ministry of Education's planning division approved everything and it was just to start. Chaguanas is the biggest borough in Trinidad and Tobago. Right now it is bigger than the two cities. Its population is over 50,000; Port of Spain is 34,000; San Fernando is 38,000. If you go into your records you would see that. It has been laid in this Parliament. The population of Chaguanas is growing rapidly.

We applied for a library. I read the list today. *[Interruption]* That is the point I am making. Our citizenry is large and growing. I have a library in my office but we do not need that. We need something modern, so that the people from Chaguanas where we have the Naipaul's or the Capildeo's, could go there and study. We want equal treatment. I saw the list of libraries. I do not want to read it because I do not want to sound as if I am discriminating against anybody. We must get what we want and deserve.

The Minister came here and made some fancy story about Nalis; reorganizing the Ministry, and so on. It is discrimination against the people from central Trinidad. I would say it again. I do not want to go into the Mamoral Dam issue or the flooding which was alluded to this morning. We have some incompetent Ministers. I want them to wake up and start to do some work. Get up and lead your ministries! Do not sit there and blame the public servants. Do not set up companies to do your work. This is what is, in effect, happening, you know. You are setting up companies to do your work. You have got to lead the ministry from in front.

When I went into the Ministry, it was in shambles and we put systems in place to deal with things and we had things happening. But you cannot just go in there and allow things to happen. We know we have hardworking public servants and it pains me sometimes, because I was a public servant for 26 years, to come into this Parliament and hear Ministers, or to read in the newspapers Ministers blaming public servants. It does not make sense. You have got to get the public servants to work with you, not against you. This is exactly what is taking place in this country. For your failure you blame the public servants.

This is the position in which we find ourselves in this country, and we have got to get up and face the reality. When you come here to debate a budget and you hear the public relations speech given by the Prime Minister for three hours, and you come to reply, it is as though you are repeating yourself. A member of the TTMA, Mr. Stuart Dagleish, said that they wrote the response to the current budget by looking at last year's and previous budgets. This is very instructive because nothing has changed fundamentally. Promises; pie in the sky: "I am going to build this; I am going to build that." Three years now you are building a runway at the Piarco Airport.

If I examine the budget page by page, ministry by ministry, I would see that you have failed as a government. You have done nothing for the last four years. [*Desk thumping*] All you hear in this Parliament is election. "The UNC is in shambles; we are going to call an election." Everything is election! When you are in government, be governors of this country. All you are interested in is winning an election and shouting at people. That is all you are famous for, and talk and talk! Get down to some work!

The Minister of Housing is looking at me. The hon. Member for Diego Martin East answered a question. They promised me—I did not ask them—that they were going to give land deeds in my constituency and the date was December 15, 2004. I asked again and again and the Minister said, yes. From December 2004 to today, many months have past and nothing has happened. The people want to know what kind of craziness this is. But, again, they do not have the courtesy to call or write you and say: "Look, we have problems and we want to put off the date of handing over the deeds"—nothing! This is how they run a country, without any sort of conscience or without even thinking about the people.

My good friend, the Minister of Health—I know he has some problems and I do not want to be unkind to him, but the Prime Minister announced gleefully in this Parliament that "we are going to build a hospital in Chaguanas". It was in last year's budget. "I am going to turn the sod on August 15, 2005", he boasted in this Parliament, in response to a question I asked. August 15, 2005 is gone and the Minister never even called to say: "Look, we have problems; I did not get my drawings as yet" or "I was busy dealing with some family problems". He could have told me something, but there was no correspondence. I was waiting to turn the sod on August 15, where he said: "I will invite you". August 15 has come and gone. Maybe the Minister might go too, as the former Minister of Works and Transport. This is the incompetence that we have to deal with.

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.

Mr. M. Ramsaran: Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned before my time expired, debating this budget is like repeating myself and I use the views of the TTMA to attest to that. But as the Member of Parliament for Chaguanas, I took the opportunity to write the Minister of Planning and Development well in advance of any year's budget. I am sure the former Minister of Planning and Development, the Member for Diego Martin West, will agree with me. His reply was a classic public servant reply, although I think he signed it; that it would be forwarded to the other ministries. Of course, not a single request was included in the budget.

This year again, in May 2005, I wrote the hon. Minister of Planning and Development, Camille Robinson-Regis, and I included what I would like to see in the Public Sector Investment Programme (PSIP). I believe when we come in this Parliament to spend the country's resources and as 36 Members of Parliament, at least when something is requested, some attention should be paid. I did this on behalf of my constituency. I made some requests that dealt with flooding. I would just name a few quickly: the widening of all bridges along the Southern Main Road from Chaguanas to Caroni; footpaths; a regional sporting complex; building of a Chaguanas library; the relocating and rebuilding of Durham Village Hindu School. Again, there were elections at that school yesterday and they put a shed over it. I have been asking for a new school, but they put a shed over it. I do not know why they put a shed over everything.

I continue: building of the Chaguanas Hospital and building of an administrative centre in Chaguanas. This time I did not have the courtesy of a reply from the Minister of Planning and Development, and then you come to this Parliament and when they talk about passing the police reform bills, they are banging their desks. They do not cooperate with us; they do not accede to any request we make.

Mr. Manning: That is not true.

Mr. M. Ramsaran: Tell me of one. I will give way; I know you like to jump up. This is what this Government is about, uncaring. It all adds up to incompetence. The Ministry of Planning and Development never replied.

We had recently two kidnappings in Chaguanas. I took the opportunity to write Minister Martin Joseph.

“Let’s put PR aside, how am I to deal with this situation? How can I console or assist this family? I feel as if the entire nation is living in jail.

The buck stops with you. Could you also explain why...”

this kidnapping. Chaguanas residents are especially targeted.

The reply was the classic reply from the Minister, about how much crime has dropped. I was talking about a kidnapping, where people were crying, but he wrote:

“I wish to differ from you, however, in your assessment of the effectiveness of the Ministry and its officers...Please allow me to draw to your attention, that between 2003 and 2004, there was a noticeable 27% decline in the number of reported kidnappings, with figures dropping from 236 reported...to 173.”

What kind of solace is that to a Member of Parliament who is writing on behalf of his kidnapped constituent, to tell me that kidnappings dropped by 1 per cent between 2003 to 2004? This is 2005 and this is what is taking place with this Government. They do not seem to understand that they have a responsibility to the people of Trinidad and Tobago. It was like a nightmare, a murder a day, but now it is more murders than the days, and yet when you come to this Parliament you want to blame somebody.

I want to make a point here. The same police reform bills, to show the public relations of the PNM, the politics and the mamaguy, they laid the police bills last term. It was a grand charge, you know. Big statement by Ministers; television all over the place: “Let us see what the Opposition would do.” Because of their laziness they allowed the Bills to lapse.

Mr. Manning: All right.

Mr. M. Ramsaran: You come back again to make another big speech? You all are not tired of the public relations? The FBI and CIA are coming to Trinidad. Somebody who understands international relations called me—and maybe the head of the National Security Council would reply to this; I will give way. Maybe this person is a bit facetious, but I have to ask the question because I raised in this honourable House about a certain Pier in Chaguaramas where people told me that there was this excursion—I said it about a year or two ago but I want to repeat

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[MR. RAMSARAN]

Monday, October 03, 2005

it—from Pier 1 into the Gulf, and this person took a nap and when he awoke he saw that the place was strange. He was alongside Venezuela. When they were returning, there were—in his words—pretty Spanish girls coming to Trinidad.

Dr. Rowley: That sounds like a dream.

Mr. M. Ramsaran: It was a dream, yes. [*Crosstalk*] I just want to ask the Prime Minister, the talk is that Trinidad and Tobago is going to be used by the CIA to get at Chavez. I do not know, but this is what I was told. They want a base here to deal with Chavez. Somebody talked to me about that, that the CIA is here to deal with Chavez under the guise of helping with crime. I am bemused that after 43 years of Independence, this Government cannot get the police service right; they do not have the political will to deal with crime in the country. Bringing in the CIA and FBI to help us with crime—if I was told they were coming to train officers in the country, I would accept that, but to come to a country without knowledge of our territory and to deal with solving crime, I find it hard to believe.

7.20 p.m.

Do you remember the last time? We must remind the country because we tend to forget and we hope that people will forget. Do you remember the *O'Dowd Report* on the presence of a rogue element in the police service and it concluded that the illicit drug trade can be eradicated. This report is languishing somewhere on Minister Joseph's shelf.

I was not Minister of National Security. I got this in my mailbox and I am reading it to you. When these people come to our country and they make recommendations they are allowed to languish somewhere. I am afraid of the cost to the people of our country. It is public relations. When these people come here our whole bureaucracy and red tape will tie up these poor police officers because they will not have the moral or legal authority to deal with it. We are fooling somebody. This is the pie in the sky kind of thinking. We have to come to reality.

I wish somebody could start to talk to the people in this land. Do not just have ideas—Vision 2020. This should come from the people, not a big shot committee. You are coming with Vision 2020 and pushing it down the throats of people. Modern politics will tell you that you have to come from the bottom to the top. You have to get people's views; marry both and then come with a consensus to move a country forward. You cannot have the big shots in the land dealing with Vision 2020. The budget is about big shot people. People who have money will be given more money in the budget and the poor people will get poorer.

The Prime Minister boasted that they will remove tax but that is for the big shot people in the country. The small man will get a little respite but they are not paying taxes anyhow. They have to go to the grocery and pay the same prices. People with \$10,000 or \$15,000 disposable income will have to pay the same prices as people receiving \$1,000 as old age pensioners or sometimes less. CEPEP and URP workers are other examples. Their take home for the fortnight is \$774. Could that buy anything, Mr. Prime Minister?

When you talk about building a country you have to equalize and make people want to live here. We want to live here too and buy a motor car. Maybe, we want to ride a good bicycle but you might get knocked down on the road. We want to share the wealth. Let us do it now! Do not promise people with a big pie in the sky that you are going to develop Port of Spain. We might leave this world and it would never happen. It is public relations.

Laventille, I care about you. Here I come! After 30 or 40 years nothing was done for them by this Government. [*Interruption*] I could give you a record of what I did. That is not for the debate now. I am talking about you. Now you come to develop Port of Spain East and Laventille. Tell us the plans. Are you going to paint the houses; empower the people; improve their lives or campaign for the next election?

When we heard about three independent candidates fighting, everybody got busy. I would like to see something done in Pleasantville, San Fernando East to ease the poverty. These are promises that are not keeping with reality. Why do we continue to fool our people? When we come back next year some Ministers will then blame the companies they have formed. They will say that the companies did not work so they did not achieve anything. Tell me which ministry did what over the last four years. Tell me what you have done that is substantial over the last five years. Do not tell me that you painted a steelband yard. Tell me what you did! Did you build a school? You painted over ITT and named it UTT.

Your incompetence is showing. We can go through each ministry. People are asking the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources for access road. It is four years now. There are millions of dollars in the Public Sector Investment Programme (PSIP). They cannot organize their ministries. Blame the UNC for the little that they did not do. They did nothing to add to the improvement of the country.

Everybody is just talk, talk, talk. The Prime Minister wants to move in the Red House. That is ambition. I am moving in the Red House; I do not care who vex. I am going to build a stadium that we do not need. When we come to

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[MR. RAMSARAN]

Monday, October 03, 2005

Parliament and he talks about \$34 billion, I have to be concerned. I have not seen the rural and urban people who are under a certain class structure getting anything from this Government.

With regard to poverty when we left office according to the Social Sector Investment Programme page 11:

“Moreover, with the exception of Barbados, the majority of the poor live in the rural areas. In terms of Trinidad and Tobago, an independent analysis of the poverty situation, utilizing data from the Household Budgetary Survey conducted in 1997—1998, estimated the incidence of poverty to be 24.1 %...”

In six short years poverty has increased to 40 per cent. Yet they boast that unemployment has gone down. It does not make sense. Unemployment is down and poverty is up. Could you explain that to me? Somebody said the working poor. What foolishness is that? [*Interruption*] If you were competent I would not be talking here.

If you could build a bridge in three months I will sit. You cannot do anything. You are the most incompetent Minister in Trinidad and Tobago; the worst Minister of Works and Transport even on the second attempt. Mr. Prime Minister, I see that you have work under this Minister. Please change your Minister if you want anything done. You are just sitting there and being arrogant. I get word from your officers. I do not want to say whom but you are not a good leader. You are arrogant. Be careful!

I am coming to the end of my contribution. I could have said a lot more. When you talk in this Parliament it is like words wasted. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker: The Member for Chaguanas is entitled to make his contribution. I am asking you to listen to him, please. There is too much crosstalk. Continue hon. Member.

Mr. M. Ramsaran: Mr. Speaker, this is another example of how this Government thinks. It is going to cost \$850 million to build one stadium. If you look at sports in Trinidad and Tobago, I would have applauded the Minister of Sports or the Prime Minister if that money could have been spent to develop grounds across the country. I want to remind the public that when we were in government preparing for World Cup 2001, football was given the shot in the arm. Had the UNC been in office and waiting for 2007, cricket in this country

would have been way up. We would have been preparing for 2007 with a sort of energy that would have encouraged young people to play cricket. Upgrade grounds in the country.

Do you know what amazed me when the Prime Minister announced grounds to be fixed? He mentioned Eddie Hart ground. That is the PNM venue for fetes. “If Mr. Manning eh wining with somebody, somebody is wining with somebody.” No sports! There are cricket grounds in this country that are used for national league cricket and football grounds that are used for TTFF football games. There is no upgrade. Colleges now have to use the stadium. Their grounds are in deplorable conditions. There is no infrastructure in the primary schools but yet we are fixing Eddie Hart ground. Think about it! Every time they have big political rally the PNM goes to Eddie Hart ground. If they have a PNM family day it is Eddie Hart ground. Football ground and fetes cannot go hand in hand.

As I am on that point, the Minister knows that the policy of the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs is not to rent the stadia for any fetes. Recently I went to Movie Towne—the stadium had cost \$20 million to repair the Mundo track for international games and there was a fete with thousands of people trampling on the ground of the stadium. *[Interruption]* You do not know what is going on in your ministry; I thought you knew. We spent \$2 million or \$3 million to repair the surface of the Jean Pierre Complex. With the attitude, “wine and jam”, you destroy everything.

I call on the Minister to look at the priorities in sports. Help those who help themselves. Fix the small community grounds and they would be the ones to throw out sportsmen in the country. You want to get away from deviant behaviour; give the children something to do. Do not come as the Minister of Social Development to talk and plead about helping families and what causes the break down in family. Give them infrastructure! When you do that they can use it.

I am very disappointed as I speak here this evening because of the wanton waste by this Government. They are not spending the money where they are supposed to spend it. They are not doing things that the people and I will like to see done. Let us get our people to work together. Maybe, the Minister of Social Development did not go to that ministry for too long. When he read that speech this evening I remembered what was taking place in the ministry. Suddenly, it is as if he or the ministry has now awakened from slumber, I feel very disappointed. When you ask people who are associated with places as Piparo nothing is happening. This is terrible.

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[MR. RAMSARAN]

Monday, October 03, 2005

I warn again and maybe the public servants are listening to me, when governments change policies should not change. If the new government wants to change the policies let them do it. The public servants must understand that there was a real vision not a make belief one. If I remember the motto of the Ministry of Social Development, it was to improve the quality of life of the people of Trinidad and Tobago. It is not to go in and grand charge. We have to understand that we have to move people forward. I urge this Government to see how we can help the less fortunate in this country. How can we take that 20 per cent who live at the bottom of the ladder whether they are physically or mentally disabled; vagrants or poor and assist them?

One of the ways that I know is to get them into schools. Start to educate them. Do not have it on paper that you will do this or that. All the education seminars you go to they will tell you this. You have to spend money on the young people. Spend money on the less fortunate. The world is crying out that there must not be division between the rich and poor. This budget is a recipe for making the rich richer and the poor poorer.

Thank you.

7.35 p.m.

The Minister of State in the Ministry of Community Development and Culture (Hon. Eulalie James): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and permit me to quote from the Bible:

“I can do all things through Christ, who strengtheneth me.”

[*Desk thumping*] I happily accept this privilege to make my contribution to the debate on the budget proposal for 2005/2006 with a sense of pride and relief.

I am extremely proud because the hon. Prime Minister and Minister of Finance has presented to this honourable House a budget, which directly or indirectly, touches the lives of all citizens and all sectors of our society in a positive way. [*Desk thumping*]

I am also proud to be a resident and the parliamentary representative of Laventille West, a constituency which has been targeted for special attention in the budget. My presence here today to speak on behalf of my constituents and the Government, which I proudly represent, brings great relief to me, and I am sure to the many well-wishers who supported and comforted me during the period of my incapacity through my illness from which I am still recuperating.

I take this opportunity to thank Members on both sides of this honourable House for their concerns and the good wishes which they unhesitatingly continue to convey to me.

Mr. Speaker, in my moments of peace and quietness, I was able to reflect on the contents of the budget as I prepared for this contribution. While my thoughts spanned the full gamut of national life, the focus of my contribution will be, to a large extent, on the constituency of Laventille West.

Laventille is, perhaps, the best known constituency, although it is for the wrong reason. Mr. Speaker, wherever a profile of Laventille is being discussed, crime is featured. This leads to negative stereotyping and the overgeneralization that nothing good either takes place or comes out of Laventille. But if you take the time to look below the dark cloud of discomfort created by a small percentage of the population, you will discover a Laventille with creative and resilient people—*[Desk thumping]*—many of whom are quietly working with Government and governmental agencies to overcome the social discomfort and to improve their quality of life. *[Desk thumping]*

This is a constituency which produced many unheralded scholars: our pan genius, Rudolph Charles, our national steel band champion, Witco Desperadoes, and former calypso monarch, the Mighty Bomber.

This is also the constituency which overcame gang warfare in the 1960s, and which will continue to work with Government and other social partners to resolve the current crime situation. It is against this background that the constituency of Laventille deserves to be given the special treatment as outlined in the budget, for my constituents are special in a positive and negative way. They possess tremendous talent, skills and abilities, but they are unable to develop their full potential and access opportunities because of negative social labelling and inadequate physical or material resources. In other words, Laventille could rival constituencies in the southwest peninsula or in Caroni in human resources but lags far behind in wealth, creating physical resources and the goodwill of the society at large.

Mr. Speaker, the focused attention which will be given to Laventille will, therefore, stimulate a drastic turnaround and a new outlook in the constituency where every resident will have an equal place just as the residents of any other part of our nation.

The regeneration and uplift would include both physical improvements and the provision of adequate and reliable services to enrich the lives of residents.

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

Monday, October 03, 2005

This includes new and improved housing, sporting and recreational facilities, community centres and an expanded and coordinated programme of social services delivery system, which will include input from NGOs, CBOs and faith-based organizations.

The budget proposal for the introduction of a smart card points to the new direction in the social services delivery system. The use of the card will allow the needy and disadvantaged to obtain their basic needs supply in a dignified and efficient manner. The transfer from an office-led system to the use of smart cards will also minimize complaints about difficulties to access supplies.

It is quite clear that in this budget everyone is catered for. Besides providing basic needs—support for needy persons—the family as the basic group in the society will be given increased attention and, Mr. Speaker, this is a welcome change.

As mentioned by the hon. Minister in his budget speech, the family exists in a community context. This is evident by the widely embraced and extremely relevant principle that it takes a community to raise a child. As parliamentarians with the interest of the nation at heart, we must do our part to reinforce this tried and tested principle of harmonious community living.

If communities take responsibility for assisting in shaping the character of our boy children and young men, in particular, there will be less deviant behaviour and greater participation by males in the mainstream activities in our society.

The Ministry of Community Development, Culture and Gender Affairs has already taken up this challenge in our Defining Masculine Excellence Programme, a programme of which I am proud. Through this programme, males are trained to understand and reexamine themselves and their relationship with women and other men. They are exposed to workshops which encourage discussions on conflict and conflict resolutions, self-esteem and confidence building, and gender equity among other topics.

In fiscal year 2004 and 2005, eight workshops were held. Complementing the workshops were a series of street theatre which allowed social work practitioners to meet men where they are—at the street corners, under a shop or in the basketball court—and to engage them in discussions on issues affecting their lives. These male-focused projects will be increased in the new fiscal year.

Education is another tool which will continue to transform the lives of our youth population, especially those who are vulnerable and could be easily led

astray. Last year the Laventille Technological Institute was formally opened and has already created a favourable impression among both our youth and adult population. In the budget there are additional opportunities for the pursuit of education and training.

There are many students in Laventille who, against all odds, have done well in their advanced level examination and who would not have been able to pursue tertiary education because of the lack of finance. These high achievers now have the opportunity to enter the doors of our tertiary institutions because they do not have to worry about paying fees; [*Desk thumping*] Government will take care of that expense.

I share the joy and good feeling of my constituents, who will be the beneficiaries of this measure and other initiatives in the budget, aimed at transforming the face of my constituency and, as a result, allowing the true beauty of its human capital to unfold. [*Desk thumping*]

I speak with confidence on behalf of my constituents because I represent the spirit of Laventille: the inner feelings of the majority, the strong and unwavering resilience and their will to survive and to overcome challenges and difficulties. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, previously, I experienced that spirit of survival and natural instinct to triumph over the vicissitudes of life by being a resident who walked and talked with the people, and as their parliamentary representative who is at their disposal 24 hours a day; seven days a week.

Mr. Speaker, now that I am physically challenged, I have a more intimate and experimental understanding of the social challenges which my constituents face daily. I can empathize more than before with so many of our youth who are either desirous to remain on the straight and narrow road, or who strive for self-improvement but are hindered by necessary obstacles. These young people are our future and our hope for a better Laventille.

Figuratively, they may be struggling for survival in the muddy pool of negative stereotyping and blocked opportunities, but I am confident that with the measures in the budget to transform and revive community and family life in my constituency, the enabling environment will be created for our youthful flowers to bloom and to reveal the inner beauty and strength of a new and dynamic Laventille, which will be a model of transformation worthy of emulation.

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

Monday, October 03, 2005

Mr. Speaker, my faith is strong and I remain confident that Laventille will turn around and to that end we are ensuring that our little ones are trained to take a different direction.

In addition, we are proud, again, of those persons who have done well in the recent examinations. The daughter of one of my constituents, a single parent, has certainly made her family and Laventille proud coming fifth in the world in geography. [*Desk thumping*]

7.50 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, Laventille continues to give this blessed country of ours people of high intellect, skills and profession, who are able to hold their own as lawyers, doctors, and their own in other areas of great responsibility. In addition, one of these persons whom the Minister of National Security alluded to earlier was given a scholarship to study Forensic Science in London. That person is from my constituency of Laventille.

Yes, we have our share of negative activity, and the people who refer to Laventille very often seek to align it with the bad but, indeed, there is a lot of good and certainly it outweighs the bad.

Mr. Speaker, I close by saying, God bless our Prime Minister, the Government and the nation, as we seek to grapple with the problems, and I am certain we shall overcome.

Dr. Adesh Nanan (*Tabaquite*): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to enter this debate on a Bill entitled an “Act to provide for the Service of Trinidad and Tobago for the financial year ending on the 30th day of September, 2006”.

Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the Leader of the Opposition on an excellent reply to the budget speech. The theme from the Leader of the Opposition was “A Lack of Credibility”, and I will demonstrate this evening in my contribution this lack of credibility throughout the documents produced by the Ministry of Finance.

The budget statement of the Prime Minister on page 28, and I quote: “In terms of our infrastructure development programme four new secondary schools will be constructed in Malabar, Mt. Hope, Barataria and Curepe.”

Mr. Speaker, I have looked through all the documents and I have not seen any allocation for these four new secondary schools, and I will show with respect to the development programme, that there are loopholes within the documents. Malabar, Mt. Hope and Curepe, but before I deal with the secondary school system, I need to put into perspective the education system as it should be in 2005.

I remind the Government that the IDB loan that is driving the expansion of the secondary school sector is coming to an end in 2006. It was signed in 1999 and it is a seven-year loan.

Mr. Speaker, I do not know if they are going to revise in terms of the years for the particular loan—it may be necessary because the documents are showing that we are seeing with respect to the information technology aspect of the curriculum, a situation where there is a great delay, and I will show later on in terms of the allocation that it has not been utilized. We are seeing an allocation of \$1.5 million that was used last year and when I looked through the documents it was pointing to tours in Dallas and other parts of the world, with respect to this particular information technology upgrade. I ask the question: What has happened in 2005 to the budgeting with respect to that component of the education sector, an important information technology component that has been left out? And if you look at the development programme you would see, and I will quote just for reference; on page 90 of the *Draft Estimates of the Development Programme* for the financial year 2006, under special education, and in the *Public Sector Investment Programme, Vision 2020*—I did not want to say that but it was in the document. The document points to a high priority in special education. We saw an allocation on page 90 in the 2005 Estimates and on page 67 of the *Public Sector Investment Programme* document, at 263, it reads and I quote:

“The upgrade of special schools continues to be of high priority. The sum of \$12.1 million being allocated for the finalization of briefs and designs, construction and equipping of ten special schools in Trinidad and one in Tobago.”

In 2005, the allocations are as follows: the development of a school for special education at Pointe-a-Pierre, an allocation of \$1.5 million; 2005 revised estimates—blank; refurbishment of schools for the Blind in Santa Cruz, allocation \$1.5 million; revised estimates—blank, refurbishment of Schools for the Deaf Cascade—\$1.5 million; revised estimates—blank; Refurbishment of the Princes Elizabeth Centre, allocation, \$1.5 million, revised estimates, blank. Refurbishment of the Lady Hochoy Centre in Cocorite, allocation \$1.5 revised estimates—blank. Refurbishment of the Lady Hochoy Centre in Gasparillo, allocation \$1.5 million; revised estimates—blank.

Mr. Speaker, these are the figures coming from the documents provided by the Prime Minister, and Minister of Finance and we are seeing here in the special education sector, zero performance. And the document is pointing to 2006 with

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[DR. NANAN]

Monday, October 03, 2005

an allocation of over \$12 million and placing a high priority on special education. If I go back to the document I am sure in 2005 it would have been pointing to a similar allocation—an allocation of \$15 million as a priority for special education, and there is no allocation on the revised estimates; there is no use of that allocation for the revised estimates of 2005. So how can we have any credibility in the Minister of Finance in his Budget Statement? Not only in special education, but there is a very important primary school building exercise under way. On page 88 of the *Draft Estimates of the Development Programme for the Financial Year 2006*, provided by the Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, the construction of the St. Paul's Anglican, allocation \$2 million; revised estimates—blank; construction of Fanny Village Government—\$125,000; revised estimates—blank. Construction of Harmony Hall Presbyterian, \$2 million allocation in 2005, revised estimates—blank.

Mr. Speaker, construction of La Sieva R.C.; allocation \$2 million in 2005; revised estimates—blank. I am pointing to the Ministry of Finance with respect to the Ministry of Education and the Minister of Finance and Prime Minister, if he had read the document, he would have put a little indication probably in the column for 2005, Revised Estimates of a little figure, probably \$100,000.

Mr. Manning: I thank the hon. Member for giving way. I think that the hon. Member for Tabaquite misunderstood the moneys that have been allocated in this budget, indeed, for projects that are already under way in the Ministry of Education which is the Ministry under consideration. Provision would have been made in the Draft Estimates otherwise for projects that have not yet started, they will be done by the Education Facilities Company Limited and they are provided for in the Infrastructure Development Fund in which, incidentally, we put \$500 million last year and we are capitalizing on \$2.3 million this year.

Dr. A. Nanan: Mr. Speaker, I heard the hon. Prime Minister but in terms of the 2006 allocation—I was speaking about the 2005 allocation and I am saying the documents that have been provided are pointing to a lack of performance. Is the Prime Minister also saying that on page 90 of this same document, *Draft of the Estimates of the Development Programme*, that an allocation of \$37.1 million for the school upgrade, establishment of labs and multimedia learning centres, revised estimates of \$1.7 million spent, is he denying that there was no labs upgrade in the Ministry of Education? Is he saying that? Because, the document is saying there is nothing taking place in that ministry in information technology. He would have his chance to reply, Mr. Speaker.

I will also show in the other parts of the document that there are loopholes. The Prime Minister probably is not even aware that these documents are showing that the Ministry of Education is non-performing in almost every sector. We have seen and we have been told that the Minister is not to be blamed. It is the bureaucracy that is to be blamed but when a school repair programme has failed in 2002—2005, the Minister has to take responsibility. The buck stops with the Minister of Education. And it is in the Constitution, the Minister, any Minister is given general direction and control of the ministry so a minister cannot be absolved from blame.

When a Prime Minister comes in this House to present these documents and he says the education ministry is performing and we are seeing nothing on the ground, we see 43 Early Childhood Care Education Centres to be built in 2005. The Prime Minister must say how many have been built. Not one! And what is very sad in this situation is when the UNC government used the basic education loan to build pre-schools in almost every single area of Government constituencies, [*Interruption*] I would not engage myself because I still have a lot of time. I want to point out \$1.2 million allocation—they have to know. They probably do not read their Cabinet Notes. The Early Childhood Care Centres, the UNC Government—\$250,000 was the allocation per centre. The Minister went to Cabinet and they said no, that is too small. They were going to \$400,000 for the Early Childhood Care and Education Centres. They have not built one in 2005 and they have now carried it to \$1.2 million, for one centre for 50 children. What message are they sending? Waste of money! Is it that they have so much money that they do not know what to do with it?

8.05 p.m.

That particular sector, the Early Childhood Care and Education Centres, is being left behind. They are not building the centres. In fact, under the basic education loan, they were to build 50 centres. I wonder how many they built. If you look around in Trinidad, you would see the centres that have been constructed under the UNC. They have all been designed differently. It hurts me when I see an allocation that has not been utilized and the children have been suffering. The children have been suffering under the PNM administration since 2002.

I just happened to be looking through my document and I saw that I raised a matter of urgent public importance not too long ago with respect to the school programme when thousands of children remained home. The Minister said she

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[DR. NANAN]

Monday, October 03, 2005

was sorry. Mr. Speaker, you know what? That Minister should be called Hazel “I am sorry” Manning. Every single time there is a problem, she says that she is sorry. I am sorry I had to call her name, but it really upsets me, especially in that Ministry.

I said before that the education sector loan comes to an end in 2006 and the former Minister of Planning and Development said that that loan was not performing under the UNC and that money was being wasted. I ask the former Minister of Planning and Development, the Member for Diego Martin West, and the Prime Minister: What is the amount of money drawn down on the IDB loan? The country must know how much money they have drawn down on the IDB loan for the Secondary Education Programme. The loan was U.S. \$105 million. Let them tell us how much has been drawn down. It is government revenue that has been funding that particular programme and it was not supposed to be so. They are paying interest on that loan and they are not drawing down any money.

That loan had a consultancy for six sub-components, an allocation of \$3.6 million in 2005 and they have not done any consultancies. Obviously, if they do not do the consultancies, they would not be able to fulfil the conditionalities of that loan. I see that the Member for Diego Martin East is agreeing with me. So, for that particular loan, they are giving \$30 million to the Secondary Modernization Programme Coordinating Unit. What is that unit doing in the Ministry of Education?

There was an Education Facilities Management Unit responsible for the construction of primary, secondary and special education schools and, to some extent, technical and vocational centres. The unit at that time was not staffed with the right personnel, so it was expanded to include engineers, surveyors and architects, so that it would have the capability for that particular programme. The building exercise was secondary and primary schools.

What did that Minister do when she came into office? She fired everyone from that particular unit. All the personnel from that unit were fired and now we are seeing zero performance in that Ministry. They hired Kenrick Burgess, paid him \$90,000 per month and the repair programme was a complete disaster.

On the School Intervention Strategies, the Minister came and said that it was going on in all the various components—candle light all over the place. There was no allocation and no money in that programme, so how can there be any positive effect, Mr. Speaker? So the matter with respect to the School Intervention Strategies—no money, no allocation; the Early Childhood Sector—dormant. The

Facilities Management Unit collapsed, now they are bringing in the company, and I am informed that not a single meeting has been called for that particular company and they have allocated 103 projects. In the next budget speech, the Prime Minister will come, give us the documents and there will be nothing taking place, Mr. Speaker.

There is an acquisition of land and building on Sutton Street, San Fernando, that is in the allocation on page 93 of the *Draft Estimates of Development Programme Expenditure, 2006* and the revised estimates—blank, blank, blank. What is the actual cost? The Prime Minister must tell us if the Ministry has acquired the building and what is the actual cost. That Ministry is getting into real estate and we will expose that Ministry soon. They have lost their moorings and the Minister is adrift.

Mr. Speaker, a simple exercise in that Ministry, the Textbook Rental Programme, they cannot get right. They promised the children the textbooks; school has been opened and there are no textbooks. They have been distributed, but where? No one knows. Simple things in that Ministry they cannot get right. How can there be a situation where human capital is relying on the Ministry of Education performing and the whole global outlook is depending on the education sector. Your 2020 vision is no longer even going to be in focus with a non-performing Minister and Ministry of Education.

What about the deshifting exercise? There is a \$100 million allocation for the deshifting exercise. There are four new secondary schools to be built; no allocation. The Prime Minister stands here; he did not even read the document, and talks about the Infrastructure Development Fund. I would not come to this Parliament without checking these documents. I would not come here and accuse anybody of not having the allocation, when it is there. I looked through all the documents. I did the research even though I was sleepy.

The technology lab is a very important component. They may laugh because they do not know better. Every time I get up to debate, I always talk about that particular area because we sat with the IDB and said we wanted that in the curriculum as part of the loan component. That is the magnet schools. They went on tour. I saw a \$1.4 million allocation. They travelled to Dallas to see other magnet schools, but we are seeing nothing here. They travelled to Dallas. Did they go to Point Lisas? I think not.

Part of the Magnet School Programme was to look at the engineering capability, even the industries at Point Lisas, and see whether they could bring it

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[DR. NANAN]

Monday, October 03, 2005

into the school curriculum. The technocrats were quite competent at getting that information, but they have marginalized the public servants. They have brought in their own cadre of persons, so they have to start from scratch.

As I say, “start from scratch”, I must make mention of the shortage of A’level places. The Member for Chaguanas asked a question in this House, under Definite Matters of Urgent Public Importance, about the shortage of A’level places. One of our first Cabinet Notes from the Ministry of Education was to have more A’level places. It is in the Prime Minister’s budget statement that they would have A’level colleges. They would expand the polytechnic schools. They would expand the Corinth Teachers’ College. They are not following their own policy. They have forgotten. They are on another dimension.

The Member for Laventille West/Morvant comes time after time and reminds us of the history of the White Paper of the PNM. I want to tell them that the White Paper of the PNM was accepted by the UNC as policy. There is no need to throw it out. It is their policy that we accepted. To come here in 2005 with A’level places, expansion of the Teachers’ Training College, you are going to have polytechnics and A’level colleges; that is part of the White Paper. That should have been done in 2002. There should have been universal A’level places in 2005.

Everything is there. So to see that in this budget statement on page 28 —I will read it, if you do not think I am speaking the truth:

“To support the demands for A’Level places, the Government intends to upgrade and expand facilities at a number of existing government and assisted secondary schools including Polytechnic Sixth Form and Corinth Sixth Form Schools; construct four new A’Level Colleges and where necessary purchase A’level places at private institutions.”

That was already implemented under the UNC when they got into power in 2002; when they were given the government. The UNC government was already purchasing A’level places, but what happened from 2002 to present? Did they not buy any more A’level places?

Mr. Speaker, you will recall not long ago that they did not pay their bills. The Minister was not even aware that they were supposed to pay the private schools for the students’ places and the students were being thrown out and they were crying. The Cabinet has said categorically that the Minister of Education is performing. A categorical *carte blanche* acceptance of failure, Mr. Speaker! Major cover up! It will be exposed. The documents are here and the technocrats that they have been blaming since they got into government are now producing

the documents. They are not going to hide anything. They are all here; not only in the Ministry of Education, but in the Ministry of the Environment, and I will come to that later, Mr. Speaker.

What hurts me even more is that the School Repair Programme failed. There is a school in my constituency, the Tabaquite Primary RC School. *[Interruption]* They repaired the roof. They continued to paint the school and the Standard 5 students were the only ones to be accommodated, not in the school, but in the parish hall of the church. They sent a release stating that after one week the school would be reopened. I am not making up this story. That is not a story; this is fact: I will quote the *Newsday* of Tuesday, September 13, 2005.

“Concerned parents of the Tabaquite RC School told *Newsday* yesterday that the roof of the school was changed, but painting and other structural works are still ongoing making it impossible for the students to return to school. They said the Standard Five students are the only ones attending classes at the parish hall of the nearby RC church. They also complained that there has been no word from the ministry regarding a starting date for other students to attend classes at the school building.”

Children are being deprived of an education, under the Minister of Education of the PNM government. And they say that she is a good performer. We heard from the Leader of the Opposition with respect to the hon. Minister of National Security and his family, in terms of performance.

8.20 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, the IDB loan that comes to an end in 2006 is supposed to be driving the education curriculum at this point in time but the haphazard approach to the decentralization exercise is mind-boggling. At this in point in 2005, I said it before; it is not tedious repetition, we should be the model for the Caribbean in terms of utilizing this particular loan because there are a number of Caricom countries that are looking at us, with respect to this particular programme. When this loan was signed it was one of the best developments for secondary education in the Caricom region. We are supposed to be the ones who did the pilot. We are the ones who are supposed to be ahead and they are supposed to look upon us as the model on which to build. Sadly, we are in a situation where we are behind and other countries are ahead of us. That is because the Government has not utilized what the UNC government gave them, which is the right platform for the education revolution. *[Interruption]* Mr. Speaker, I will not get distracted,

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[DR. NANAN]

Monday, October 03, 2005

because I want the country and especially those on the opposite side to know that in terms of the education sector, it must hurt them. It is not only hurting them, it is hurting all the students in the various constituencies: pre-school, primary and secondary. Because of that lack of performance, the secondary schools are not going to be built in Malabar, Mount Hope, Barataria and Curepe. There is no allocation, probably it is an oversight by the Minister of Finance but I did not see any allocation. *[Interruption]* I said the haphazard approach to the decentralization exercise, with respect to the secondary school deshifting.

When the loan was being negotiated and discussed with the IDB personnel, a number of new secondary schools were to be constructed, so that we would be able to move from a shift system to a five-year and seven-year system. Have you seen any construction with respect to these new secondary schools? None! How can we have any deshifting? What is happening is that we have the expansion of the existing plant infrastructure. We are seeing an allocation for existing blocks in secondary schools. Has this plan been thought out properly? The initial planning of the secondary school plant was for five-year and seven-year schools of certain sizes. Remember the mammoth structures of the senior comprehensives? That is what we were moving away from, in terms of the number of children and the ratio of teacher to student. *[Interruption]* You know I heard something about you over the weekend but I would not say it in Parliament. I would probably say it outside when I meet you.

Mr. Speaker, what we are seeing, in terms of the deshifting mechanism, is that this haphazard arrangement will definitely interfere with the education curriculum and the delivery of education for the next few years. I urge the Government. I do not normally urge the Government because I just attacked the Government. This particular programme was designed properly and with a timeframe. We are now behind. It is not too late to catch up. It was designed with a timeframe and a programme of structural work that will make the deshifting exercise simple, not rushed. There is still time, with respect to the building of the secondary schools. The sites were already identified.

There is an allocation for the identification of land in the budget document. To be honest, the only thing that I can see is this identification of land probably for the building of four new secondary schools. It is an allocation of \$3 million. That is all I saw in the document. You may have seen something else if you looked in the document. The building of these secondary schools will facilitate the deshifting exercise, not the expansion of existing secondary schools with respect to putting in more blocks, because we will have a situation of an

administration nightmare. With these large schools, it is very difficult for a principal to stay where the office is and command a view of the entire school. The architects' briefs for these secondary schools took this into consideration.

As I speak of the architects' briefs, indiscipline and violence in secondary schools have been on the rise under the PNM Government. All of this, the architects' brief would take into consideration: the size and design of the school, so that the principal would be able to look around and have some kind on focus on the teachers as well as the students. When I looked into the allocation and I saw that kind of allocation of \$100 million for the existing secondary schools and the upgrade, we have to ask the question: Why is the Government going in that direction? Why are they pushing for this? Is it that the 103 projects—I want to read that from page 29 of the Budget Statement. I quote:

“Mr. Speaker, to support our Education Construction Programme, we have established the Educational Facilities Company Limited which has already been given 103 projects to be addressed in the short-term.”

Is it a rush to distribute money for the friends and family of the PNM? Is it why this company has been materialized? This company was not necessary. As I said before, the Education Facilities Management Unit was expanded and they had the capability within that unit to do exactly what this company will do. As was said by the Leader of the Opposition with respect to the Education Facilities Company Limited, there are very little checks and balances. There is no accountability. Is it the reason, because of the lack of accountability that this company has been set up? We are seeing 103 projects. The Minister must come to the House and say what these 103 projects are and give us an outline. The Minister does not have to say exactly which one is what; just outline which group of projects is being handled by this company. That Ministry, in terms of its potential—

I saw in a release that the Minister of Education said that the Ministry cannot handle all the schools. I could read it if you want, but to save time I will go on. In fact, in a televised Government programme, the Minister was speaking with respect to the recent scholarships which were given by the Ministry of Education. The Minister made reference to government schools, government-assisted schools and senior comprehensive schools. Is the Minister saying that senior comprehensive schools are orphans? Are not senior comprehensive schools not government schools, or is it a policy by the Ministry of Education to marginalize senior comprehensives and that they are no longer under Government? Is it a plan to have a private company take over the senior comprehensive schools? We are

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[DR. NANAN]

Monday, October 03, 2005

getting mixed signals. The Minister of Education is saying that they cannot handle all the schools and the allocations point to that.

I want to make reference to the deshifting, because it is in the budget speech. It is not irrelevant. It is here on page 27. I quote:

“At the secondary level, the major initiative is the de-shifting and conversion of junior secondary schools to 5 and 7 year schools as well as the conversion of Senior Secondary Comprehensive Schools to 7 year schools. At present, two-thirds of our secondary school population attend 5 and 7 year schools.

We have already started with the de-shifting and conversion of 10 junior secondary schools to 5-year schools...In fiscal 2006, an additional 10 schools—five junior secondary and five senior secondary—will be de-shifted allowing an additional 3,200 students to benefit from full day schooling during this academic year.”

In the *Public Sector Investment Programme* document, on page 32—the Ministry of Education would have supplied this information, but this is what the document reads:

“The Ministry of Education also carried out structural upgrade and infrastructure works as follows:

- tendering for design consultants for work on Egypt Village, New Grant, Enterprise, Buenos Ayres, Chatam, La Pastora...”

Is this tendering for design consultants really structural upgrade and infrastructure works? Is that what the Ministry is sending to the Prime Minister to put in these documents? We have to get it right. The Ministry of Education must set the benchmark for all other Ministries, with respect to what is going to be in these documents.

Mr. Speaker, page 32 states that the designs were completed.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, before you go on, may I interrupt you? Take your seat.

Dr. A. Nanan: Sorry.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the sitting of the House is suspended for dinner and we would be resuming at 9.15 p.m. I am sorry, we would come back at 9.00 p.m.

8.34 p.m.: *Sitting suspended.*

9.00 p.m.: *Sitting resumed.*

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.

Mr. Speaker: Before I call upon the hon. Member to continue with his reply, let me urge both the Leader of Government Business and the Chief Whip to impress upon their Members that when we suspend to a particular time, to make sure their Members return at that time.

Dr. A. Nanan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you Members for extending my time. On page 91 of this document, the *Draft Estimates Development Programme*, there is an allocation for Computer Management Software and Development of Asset Register for all Schools, Early Childhood Care and Education Centres (ECCE) and Buildings of the Ministry of Education. The allocation for 2005 was \$2 million; 2005 revised estimate, blank; 2006, \$5 million.

Once again, we have seen in terms of the information technology aspect of the ministry, zero performance. The treasurer of the PNM is the chairman of this company: the Education Facilities Management Company and where will be the accountability? Is this company being set up so that it will fund the PNM campaign? We have to ask the question when we see the lack of accountability and transparency. Not only in education is there non-performance.

I turn now to another aspect, which is the Ministry of Public Utilities and the Environment. From time to time I come to this House and speak about the Doppler radar, the weather radar that is being installed in my constituency in Brasso Venado. I am reporting here today, and it is very sad, that for over a two-year period they have been constructing a road in Brasso Venado going to this particular site for the Doppler weather radar station and all they have done right now is that they have built the road to some extent and they have graded the site. But in so doing they have destroyed the Telemaque Road that is leading to a major village—the Brasso Venado Village. It is almost impassable and you would have seen the people protesting in that area because of the condition of the Telemaque Road.

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[DR. NANAN]

Monday, October 03, 2005

I know that the Minister of Public Utilities and the Environment was having discussions with the Minister of Works and Transport with respect to that particular situation. The Minister visited the road; but visiting is only one aspect. I am not blaming the Minister. The allocation was there for the road, but what I am saying is that the Minister visited and nothing is happening; we are not seeing anything on the ground. Not a pebble has been placed on that Telemaque Road. They have not spent a penny on that road. Soon Brasso Venado Village would be cut off from the rest of the constituency, because that is the only access road. The other road, the Brasso Tamana Road, that leads to the other side of the village is riddled with landslips, and I have asked the Minister of Works and Transport—in fact there was an allocation in the budget of 2004 going to 2005, but nothing took place on that particular road.

We came here, we passed the money and I do not know where it went from there; nothing has happened. The contractor went on site and just disappeared. That is why I raise it here. It is here in the document, it is not irrelevant because I could point to it in the document if you want me to do so. *[Interruption]* I understand that, but if in building a road to the site you have destroyed the Telemaque Road, and if I have to wait—if in terms of the time frame it took two years to build the road going to the site and destroying the Telemaque Road, how long would you take before you complete that radar? That village will be completely cut off, Mr. Speaker.

So, what we are saying is that you must have a plan, you cannot just say: “I am going to put the Doppler radar in Brasso Venado on the hill and just forget everything else with respect to the village, and the Telemaque Road.” There was no plan. When we left that particular programme there was a plan in place but we are seeing a haphazard approach to that particular Doppler weather radar. It is my information that it is going to take two years more for that particular programme. I came here in the last budget debate; I spoke about it in terms of the importance of that Doppler radar that is going to be installed in Brasso Venado because of the hurricanes that are approaching from the African coast. I do not want to go into meteorology this evening because I am going back to that particular ministry with respect to, not only the Doppler weather radar—

The Prime Minister came here and fumbled again, just like he did in the last budget presentation when he came upon the Beverage Container Bill. I thought he would have learnt from his last budget statement and here it is again. They are still drafting the legislation with respect to this Beverage Container Bill—the

EMA. Probably the Prime Minister is not aware, but from time to time it is appearing in almost every budget statement. I am sure in 2006 you would have the same thing on your document again. The Prime Minister must get it right.

The Prime Minister, in his budget presentation talked about the Environmental Management Agency. I am sure he is not aware that that does not exist; it is the Environmental Management Authority under the Act. We have to get it right in the document. The allocation was \$4.8 million to the Environmental Management Authority in fiscal year 2005. But if you look on page 23 of the *Public Sector Investment Programme* document, what are they doing?

“Celebration of World Environment Day 2005 and the Tenth Anniversary of the EMA comprising an Environmental Conference and Exhibition, Green Leaf Awards...”

What is their mandate? We heard here in terms of the EMA giving a notice and nobody is complying. What is the mandate of the EMA? When I made that point the Prime Minister stood here and said: "No, that is an independent body, the Government cannot interfere." But the Government is putting its hands directly on the control of the EMA. You are stopping every single aspect of pollution control in this country. Water pollution rules are not coming. The Attorney General is not bringing any legislation. We should be in air pollution and hazardous waste rules by now, but nothing is coming to the House. In 2002, that was on the desk of the Minister of the Environment.

Here again, what they are doing? It is just like the Member for Toco/Manzanilla, the Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs, reviewing another policy. They are reviewing the national parks and wildlife policy. Big consultation. Why are they doing this? That was already done in 2002. Did they hide it from the Minister of Public Utilities and the Environment? It was already drafted—the Wildlife Bill and the National Parks Bill. What are they setting up? Every budget you are seeing the National Parks and Wildlife Conservation Authority coming forward, money being allocated and nothing is happening. Is it that the bureaucrats are blocking this authority? If it is, well tell the Prime Minister and get rid of this particular approach. But you come here, in every budget document an authority is supposed to be set up.

The Ministry of Public Utilities and the Environment had a whole programme—\$90 million was the entire programme. They were supposed to get Global Environment Funding (GEF) to match a particular Government injection of capital. But nothing is happening. National parks and wildlife, absolutely nothing. They

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[DR. NANAN]

Monday, October 03, 2005

are having a new national policy on parks. So every time there is a problem, new policy. We heard that from the Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs. A new sport policy he comes flashing in everybody's face. Blame the Member for Chaguanas, who never introduced that. Change two lines in every page; new sport policy. Lay it on the table, yes. That is the performance of the PNM Government.
[Interruption]

Hon. Member: Millions spent on consultancy.

Dr. A. Nanan: Exactly! Everything is consultancy. Give Burgess a consultancy. No performance. When they have to give consultancy for the loan programme, six consultants, nothing done.

So you are seeing that national parks, and the EMA—non-performance. This particular Doppler weather radar in Brasso Venado, nothing is taking place there. I get upset when I read the documents and the documents do not give the actual performance. It does not state what is on the ground. Here it is, if you think I was just making up the story. On page 31 of the *Public Sector Investment Programme*, the Ministry went on tours to Dallas and the United Kingdom to assess the Magnet School System and Technology Education.

Of course the Prime Minister should be aware because he would have been signing those Cabinet notes for travel, or if they have cut that out and the Minister just automatically, *carte blanche*, signs off the overseas travel. Just for the record, because I do not want you all to say that I am accusing all of you of non-performance and the record does show that. On page 105 of the *Public Sector Investment Programme*, \$1.76 million allocation for the completion of construction of 100-metre access road and bridge of the Brasso Venado site of the Doppler weather radar.

That is what they are going to do for the whole of 2006. Destroy all the roads in my constituency in that area to build this. Then when I ask the Minister of Works and Transport to fix the roads, no allocation for that road, so, they are not fixing anything there. It was not in the budget so you are not getting it fixed. Even if it is in the budget, they are moving the money. That is the whole performance in that sector.

Even in tourism we are seeing a situation where the Minister of Tourism is saying arrivals are going up. We have to ask the question: Is it because of a combination of legal/illegal arrivals that the arrivals are going up?

Before I wind up, I want to deal with a matter, because apparently the Prime Minister is not aware of it. There is an allocation here on page 91 of the *Public Sector Investment Programme*, that is the Learning Resource Centre in McBean Couva: additional works, furniture and equipment, \$2 million allocation, \$100 spent; and they have been given another \$2 million allocation by the poor public servants.

9.15 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, they got back their \$2 million allocation, and what they should have done in 2005—at the Learning Resource Centre, Couva, is one of the state-of-the-art audio and television producing stations. When we left that particular centre, high-tech audio and video equipment was already installed. That particular centre was supposed to be designed as a modern centre. I do not know if it is being used properly because it has the facility to expand the education system through the information technology aspect.

Part of the multimedia learning centres is that kind of introduction into the school system of the kind of electronic equipment in Mc Bean, Couva. All that is happening there is that they are training teachers, but there is a component of that centre—almost \$16 million of TV and audio equipment down there.

Again, when I saw that—I also saw the allocation for the construction works at Corinth Teacher’s College. I know the Prime Minister would say that they probably transferred it to the Infrastructure Development Fund, but there is \$3.5 million allocation there and \$50,000 was spent. And, of course, the public servants got it right this time. They did not give them back \$3.5 million, but they gave them \$500,000. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker, on page 67 the Prime Minister talked about the Green Fund and I quote:

“Moreover, Mr. Speaker, community groups and organizations will be encouraged to access the resources of the Green Fund in fiscal 2006. We are now in the process of finalising the Regulations for submission to the Parliament and will launch a promotional campaign on the procedures for applying for grants from the Fund.”

Based on the non-performance of the Attorney General, this regulation would take at least two years. So in 2008 this might come before the House for the Green Fund, because we have seen that the Attorney General—with respect to the water pollution rules, the air pollution rules, I am absolutely sure that it is sitting

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[DR. NANAN]

Monday, October 03, 2005

on the Attorney General's desk and it is not coming to Parliament, because of some strong lobby. But they must get it right. There must be some control on pollution in the environment.

How much is the Green Fund? Did the Prime Minister tell us that? I am sure there is over \$480 million in the Green Fund. [*Interruption*]

Are you going to set up a company to run the Green Fund? Is it now company No. 15 to be established?

Hon. Member: What?

Dr. A. Nanan: Company No. 15.

Mr. Manning: Sixteen.

Dr. A. Nanan: Well, company No. 16 to run the Green Fund. Will the chairman be a member of the PNM party?

Hon. Members: Yes! [*Interruption*]

Dr. A. Nanan: Mr. Speaker, I will conclude with the National Reforestation and Water Shed Rehabilitation Programme. Again, I am sure the Minister will agree that I have the country's interest at heart. I am a true "patriot". [*Desk thumping*] Every year, there are fires on the Northern Range and a continual cycle of planting and burning. The trees are never allowed to reach their full maturity. It is always a burning cycle taking place. So we have a situation where I pray and hope that a storm really does not threaten this country and heavy rainfalls on the Northern Range, because you will have massive flooding on the flood plains. The entire Diego Martin valley would be wiped out. I will not pray for that, but we have to be careful. If you continue with the deforestation that is taking place on the Northern Range, you will have that massive flooding that could destroy the population of that particular area.

Mr. Speaker, there was an approach for these particular fires on the Northern Range, because it is very difficult to access. What you are asking people to do is to put a tank on their backs with a hose and go and out these fires. The fire trucks cannot even get to the fires to make some difference. So there was a proposal for a plane, outfitted with tanks on the wings that would skim along the water, fill the tanks and then fly over the area and drop the water to put out the fire.

Mr. Speaker, we have to be revolutionary in our approach. [*Interruption*] I know that, but you have to take the country's interest at hand and forget the

direction that the Forestry Division wants to go. The Forestry Division must be controlled by the Minister of the Environment—giving direction and control—because it is a division of the Ministry. That is the kind of approach, new direction. What we saw from the Minister of National Security is a blimp in the sky on Independence Day and we never saw it again.

Hon. Member: And nobody did.

Dr. A. Nanan: In fact, they would have been better off putting an advertisement on the blimp and get more mileage from that—[*Laughter*] [*Interruption*]—because that is what they do in big football stadiums. I am giving this proposal of the plane; that is the only thing that I am going to tell the Government that they could do in my contribution, because in every single Ministry we are seeing non-performance. But this is for the benefit of the country and to prevent that massive flooding on the flood plain of the Northern Range.

Mr. Valley: I beg to move.

Dr. A. Nanan: I have given the House an insight into the lack of credibility in this particular budget. I have gone through all the documents that we have been supplied with by the Minister of Finance, with respect to the various areas and I have pointed out significant loopholes and significant errors. I even pointed out to the Minister of Finance, discrepancies, even in his words. So, Mr. Speaker, I cannot support this budget because of the lack of credibility.

I thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

The Minister of Sports and Youth Affairs (Hon. Roger Boynes): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for recognizing me and thank you for the opportunity to contribute to the debate on the fourth budget of this term of governance of the People's National Movement.

I wish, immediately, Sir, to congratulate the Member for San Fernando East, the hon. Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, for a budget that shows that this Government is mindful of putting the country's resources in the hands of the people, and not like the other side, who were accused at some point of vacuuming the Treasury and putting the moneys in the hands of a few. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, just allow me to digress for a moment and deal with some of the points raised by the Member for Tabaquite. The Member for Tabaquite mentioned that there are four secondary schools to be built and he is not seeing it. The hon. Member for San Fernando East explained it fully. There are about 103 projects

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[HON. R. BOYNES]

Monday, October 03, 2005

that are under the Infrastructure Development Fund. There are funds under there that would speak to the development of those schools—

Hon. Member: We looked, it is not there. Ask the Prime Minister.

Hon. R. Boynes:—and that is a fact. The Member also spoke to repairs—“and doh run you know”—and he said that one Mr. Burgess did not do repairs and they were worst repairs that were ever done to the school. Mr. Speaker, let me say that, out of approximately 202 schools, the hon. Minister of Education and her team were able to repair 190 schools before the vacation period ended. [*Desk thumping*] That was tremendous, and then in the first week of school they did 10 schools. So, only two schools that were outstanding and that is performance. The Minister of Education has performed.

Let me also say this, Sir: under her watch, the School Feeding Programme has gone to another height. She has done tremendous work for this nation. Where we operate at the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs, there is a seamless approach to sport and physical education. Physical education is now on the curriculum in our schools. [*Desk thumping*] And I can go on and on. But let me also just deal with the Member for Chaguanas very briefly, because I know the Minister of Education will be here first thing in the morning, to deal with some of the comments that were made.

Mr. Speaker, allow me to just simply indicate to the Member my concern with one of the points that he has raised. He said in his contribution that—I believe it is Cunupia High School—the principal wanted to get A’level classes conducted at that school and, as such, he wrote a letter to the Minister of Education on September 06, 2005 asking for A’level classes to be conducted for this particular term, but school started on September 05, 2005. So I cannot see how he can be in a position where—[*Interruption*] I have the facts here; I asked him the date of the letter. [*Interruption*]

9.30 p.m.

Mr. Ramsaran: The letter from the school was written well before the end of the term, April, May; the letter I wrote to the Minister.

Hon. R. Boynes: I would strongly advise you, as a representative of the people, that you do not wait until school has begun before you start to take action on behalf of your constituency. [*Desk thumping*] You should have been tackling this matter in April or May.

Mr. Ramsaran: You all do not respond to the letters; you are a total waste of time.

Hon. R. Boynes: I have listened to the Member for Chaguanas and even the Member for Couva North speaking about the special projects companies, the state companies that the Government has established in order to implement projects that have been sent to them by the various ministries. I want to just indicate that out of these 15 companies, the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs has one of them, the Sport Company of Trinidad and Tobago. The whole arrangement is that all the respective ministries would enter into a memoranda of understanding (MOU) with all these companies. This MOU will dictate exactly the projects that we want to conduct, to develop, to implement on behalf of the respective ministries and establish time lines for the delivery of these projects. It also gives these companies the ability also to even hire project managers. They can retain project managers locally, regionally or internationally. The idea is to implement the programmes with the assistance of the ministry as quickly as possible.

If I have to take an analogy of what we have done and compare it with what you on the other side have done—let me just focus on one set of projects you have done; that speaks to the construction of the four stadia and the upgrade of the Hasely Crawford Stadium. I am making a comparison.

We have set up companies that are wholly owned by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago to implement the Government's projects. On the other hand, Mr. Speaker, when you look at what the other side did, rather than give the contract to build the stadium to a company that is wholly owned by the State, like UDeCott or the National Insurance Property Development Company Limited (Nipdec) for instance, they gave the contract to a private organization. Let me just explain to you that this matter went to the Chief State Solicitor's Office and these are the findings. Allow me to read this out for the benefit of the Parliament. This was sent to the Permanent Secretary (PS) from the Chief State Solicitor, dated May 28, 2002.

“Request for advice.

Re: legal authority for the award of BOLT contracts as it relates to the four stadia.”

I will get straight to the conclusion:

“From an examination of the existing laws, it therefore can be seen that the power to award a contract for the procurement of articles, the undertaking of works and services, which legally vests with the Central

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[HON. R. BOYNES]

Monday, October 03, 2005

Tenders Board, is separate and apart from the power to enter into financial and loan arrangements, which legally vests in the Minister of Finance, as Corporation Sole. The Government through its Executive Arm, Cabinet, can award BOLT contracts where the financing has been approved by the Minister of Finance, Corporation Sole, and with the necessary parliamentary approval if needed, to wholly owned State companies and National Insurance Property Development Company Limited (Nipdec) under section 20(a)(1)(c), but it is not authorized to authorize to award BOLT or any type of contract to private sector companies.”

Like what you did. You gave that contract to RGM, a private sector company, and that was deemed illegal by the Chief State Solicitor's Office. It gets very interesting as well. It was not simply that they awarded the contract. What lead me in this direction was when the brouhaha broke out between the two sides, the Patriots and the Progressives and we started listening very carefully to some of the sentiments that came out from each of the camps and they pointed us in that direction. When we examined some of the information at the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs, we detected that Concacaf had received a total of \$34,476,000 comprised of the following payments: one, \$6 million received under the teaming agreement for services provided to RGM Limited in the development of the stadia project and \$28,000,476 received either directly or indirectly through payments made as part of the development agreement as reimbursement for work done. I want to find out, is Concacaf doing work on the stadia?

Hon. Member: Who was that Minister?

Hon. R. Boynes: Minister Brian Kuei Tung.

Dr. Rowley: Who is Concacaf?

Hon. R. Boynes: We wanted to find out exactly how it was that Concacaf started work on the stadia and then we realized that Concacaf went to the First Citizens Bank (FCB) and borrowed \$30 million; started the construction of the four stadia. Thereafter, RGM, which was illegally hired by that government, paid Concacaf \$24 million for reimbursement of work and the government subsequently paid an additional \$4 million for reimbursement of work.

Mr. Speaker, we cannot find any accountability for the work done. We are trying to find out what Concacaf did? Where were the skills, in terms of construction and project management? What are their skills to be reimbursed \$28 million? That is the type of structure that we are alarmed and concerned about. That must never again happen in the history of Trinidad and Tobago. That is why

we have done the right thing, the legal thing, and ensured that we established wholly owned companies by the State in order to have the projects of the ministries, the Government and the people implemented. That is the whole rationale behind these companies. I just wanted to put that on the record.

The Member for Chaguanas keeps talking about \$850 million to build one stadium.

Mr. Ramsaran: Tsunami relief centres.

Hon. R. Boynes: He continues to attempt to mislead the population. What is taking place in Tarouba is the construction of the Brian Lara Stadium at a cost of \$275 million. We keep saying that over and over again. We also have a conceptual master plan for further development in the Tarouba area, but yet he keeps telling this population that one stadium costing \$850 million, and it is propaganda. He knows that, but he cannot help himself. [*Laughter*] [*Crosstalk*] We have made a commitment. When Brian Lara scored 400 runs we said that we would build the Brian Lara Sporting Academy and, true to our word, we are delivering. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Ramsaran: I hope I "doh" have to open it.

Hon. R. Boynes: As we continue in our development; as we continue ensuring that we have sporting facilities upgraded throughout the length of breadth of this country, we will be in a position to move in a certain direction.

I listened to the Member indicating to this honourable House that rather than focus on building an \$850 million stadium, we should be focusing on building sporting facilities throughout the length and breadth of this country. Firstly, it is not one stadium. The second thing is that if the Member had listened very carefully to the presentation by the Member for San Fernando East, the hon. Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, he would have heard when the Prime Minister announced that over \$100 million would be utilized to upgrade and establish sporting facilities throughout the length and breadth of this country. [*Desk thumping*] But he comes here saying that he does not know why we do not do that; we are doing that; moneys have been allocated for that purpose. It is part and parcel of the sport policy, our plan.

Hon. Member: No implementation! Talk is cheap!

Hon. R. Boynes: I realized that none of them prepared for this budget. They were busy campaigning last night and checking votes; they did not have time at all to prepare for this budget. If he had time to prepare for the budget, he would

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[HON. R. BOYNES]

Monday, October 03, 2005

see the allocation of funds to upgrade and establish community facilities throughout the length and breadth of this country. He would have appreciated that, but he did not have time.

Mr. Speaker: Order!

Hon. R. Boynes: I hear the Member for Nariva talking about when I would start. You know that it is only the Member for Tabaquite who sent a list of some of the sporting facilities he wants upgraded.

Mr. Ramsaran: I sent my list.

Hon. R. Boynes: The Member for Tabaquite was extremely comprehensive; I have to commend him for that.

Mr. Ramsaran: You have my list; "doh" try that, Roger. [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. R. Boynes: What I do not understand is that "dey sending list and dey doh believe we doing anything". What is that?

Hon. Member: "We setting yuh up". You are not doing anything.

Hon. R. Boynes: You know we could perform and we have been performing; that is why you send your lists. [*Desk thumping*] When I also listen to the Member for Couva North's contribution, it is apparent that this war is really deep. The friction on the two sides, the Progressives and the Patriots, is really deep; even from the way they sit, you can see the body language. [*Crosstalk*] They are really and truly under some pressure with that battle. I realize that the Member for Couva North did not get any assistance from the Members for St. Augustine and St. Joseph for his contribution, because it had to be the worst I have ever heard in the history of my being in this Parliament. It was the worst.

Mr. Partap: I thought you said so last year?

Hon. R. Boynes: I realize that after he said what he did, he left the Parliament, because he really and truly could not stay around after he did what he did here today.

Hon. Member: You are sounding like the new leader of the PNM!

Hon. R. Boynes: When the Member for Couva North gave his contribution, you could have only seen a few of them thumping the desks. He got no support from them and that is a fact. The infighting keeps going on with their side. If they cannot behave themselves within their own organization, how will they run a government? But the whole aspect is that the Member for Couva North is the

type of person that is prepared to mash up the party if he cannot have his way. Some of you have told me that. [*Laughter*] He is prepared to mash up the party, if he cannot have his way. He is also the type of person that is prepared to mash up the country if he cannot have his way as well. If he cannot be in government, is civil disobedience. If he cannot be in government it is, "Bring your cars in Port of Spain and block de road." That is the type of individual we are dealing with. I know some of you on that side want me to say it. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker, we say that we care about the country, but the Member for Couva North is prepared to ensure that there is civil disobedience; no support for the Police Bills; no support for the bill to deny bail to kidnappers. He has said something about all those Members. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Ramsaran: Is that in the budget?

Hon. R. Boynes: I listened to the Member for Couva North. Confession is good for the soul. I heard him say that he could not debate this budget intelligently and so said so done. [*Desk thumping*] He said that. But how can you attack this budget when it speaks to free tertiary education? How can you attack this budget when it speaks to support for small business? When it speaks to support for the family? We have put about \$5 odd billion into the stabilization fund for a rainy day. I beg to say that this is a solid budget; it is one we firmly believe will redound to the benefit of the people of Trinidad and Tobago. It is putting funds and resources in the hands of all the people of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Ramsaran: How could they put the leader of the PNM to talk at this hour?

9.45 p.m.

Hon. R. Boynes: As we have heard from the hon. Minister of Finance and the hon. Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, this budget is appropriately themed "Addressing Basic Needs" and speaks to putting people at the centre of development by focusing on the family. This is not by accident, in fact, it narrates a basic orientation for the new fiscal year and promotes the view that we can build a secure nation only when we build a secure family. It is a fact.

Mr. Speaker, promoting the family as an institution is what this budget is about and since the family is made up of several units like you and I, including the Member for Chaguanas and several of the Members on the opposite side, and all the other lovely people of this land who have varying basic needs, this budget

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[HON. R. BOYNES]

Monday, October 03, 2005

is for all of us—as a nation, as a people, as a rainbow country—with a vision of attaining developed nation status in a few years.

In my capacity as the Minister and as a Member of this caring Government—that instinctively puts developmental and security needs of the citizenry first. This Government has managed in 2005 to change the landscape in which the physical recreation and sport product is being delivered, and significantly advance the process of employing our youth through implementation of key strategies outlined in the National Youth Policy.

In the area of sport, last year I made my contribution to the 2005 budget debate in this honourable House and reference was made to the transitory role of my ministry as it shifted from policy implementer to policy formulator, a strategy occasioned by the implementation process of our national policy instruments. Reference was also made to the United Nations policy 2005 as the year of “Physical Recreation and Sport”, and our ministry’s plans to celebrate this international calendar year.

The year 2005 was also one of planning. We planned activities for our legislative agenda and the overall development of sports so that all segments of our population could benefit either through a healthy lifestyle regime, or learning motor skills, or by the spectacular performances of high performance athletes on the international stage, or through the use of our well-maintained sport plan, or as a result of the technical and financial support given to our community-based and national sporting organizations.

In this context, permit me to elaborate on the sporting achievements of the Government over the past year. Based on the current revised version of the National Sport Policy of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, the key responsibility of the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs is that of formulating, monitoring and evaluating policies relating to sport and physical recreation.

As a policy-making implementing body, we were guided in 2005 by implementing those supporting activities that were considered critical to addressing the societal ills that have reared their heads in recent times. As we pursue the implementation of our National Sport Policy which mantra is: “To enrich our lives through total participation, quality training and excellence in sports”, in 2005, we saw the expansion and heightening of the delivery of the ministry’s sport programmes to reach a wider geographical area.

Previously, the sport programme delivery process was an activity conducted by the ministry’s in-house coaches, sport officers, and some community coaches,

and was subjected to constraints of available resources, both human and financial, which have been on the decline for quite sometime.

However, as our sport policy implementation process kicked in, I am pleased to say that the strategies we have employed to achieve our objectives have begun to bear fruit. Central to our programme delivery process, is a restructuring of our service delivery system that involves the management of sport through the Sport Company of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Speaker, in the one year that the sport company has been operating, we have been able to expand the geographic spread of programmes to districts that are frequently outside our reach. In this regard, the role of the sport company was instrumental in attracting the attention of hundreds of unoccupied, young citizens in urban and rural communities and facilitating their participation in sport-related activities.

The company organized programmes and sent trained coaches into a number of previously unserved areas to develop the sport of football, cricket, netball and basketball to participants. In this way, a key element of this intervention was the fostering of a competitive spirit and engendering unity through the participation of communities by the introduction of a competition format into the programmes. In this way, not only were beneficiaries involved in healthy sporting activities by learning and practising their skills, but they were encouraged as well by the healthy, competitive nature of the programme and the opportunity to win prizes.

You see, Mr. Speaker, this incentive to win brought with it the added prospects of instilling camaraderie, discipline, sacrifice, commitment and a no time for crime approach to the programme and this is an example of how this Government builds strong, healthy communities and contributes to the holistic development of the society.

So in terms of performances this year, we have taken developmental sport to another level with a prevalence of community sporting activities throughout Trinidad and Tobago. Through the efforts of the sport company, the sports of netball, cricket, basketball, amateur boxing, football, volleyball, track and field, cycling and rugby have benefited from financial support for programmes to hundreds of communities where thousands of participants have benefited from guidance and training.

We have enabled teams, leagues, clubs, administrators and athletes to pursue their dreams and plans to build and develop sports, enhance their performance, attract new entrants to sport and physical recreation; in short, to improve their

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[HON. R. BOYNES]

Monday, October 03, 2005

holistic well-being to develop the concept of sport participation as a regular, stable regime on the weekly calendar of every citizen.

We are indeed on a roll as we seek to make our programmes available to every community of Trinidad and Tobago. Mr. Speaker, it is reactions like these that inspire us and bring relevance to the ministry's mission and I quote:

“To deliver quality support services to the citizenry for the development of youth and sport.”

The year 2005 was designated “International Year of Sport and Physical Education” by the United Nations, and this was the fillip that steered our celebrations and activities to prominence.

A major focus was the expansion and heightening of the sector-based programmes such as sports festival for women and girls in sport. We had an actual participant—not checking the spectators—of approximately 380 women and girls in this particular programme—the district sport festival.

In this programme which took place throughout Trinidad and Tobago—in Trinidad communities in particular, we had approximately 7,487 participants and in terms of the Sport Training and Enhancing Programme (STEP), there were approximately 600 participants in that, mostly young people.

The National Sport Festival that we established at the Eddie Hart Ground, there were over 1,500 participants. [*Desk thumping*] It used to be called MILO, but really it is the Government's programme, that is why it is now called the National Sport Festival. MILO is no longer a part of that, it had taken a small sponsorship and the ministry had always put out substantial funding for that particular project. It is a wonderful project which takes into consideration schools, and children from schools throughout the length and breadth of this country participated in this major sporting event.

We also took part in the community sport programme consisting of sports of swimming, cricket, volleyball, hockey, track and field, baseball and football and there were approximately 300,000 participants in these programmes. [*Desk thumping*]

The inaugural Festival of Women and Girls in Sport on March 05, 2005 was held in commemoration of International Women's Day and in accordance with the Brighton Declaration on Women and Girls in Sporting Activities. The festival sought to facilitate the advancement of women and girls through the promotion of equal opportunity, personal development, and high-performance sport, as well as

to encourage greater participation of women and girls in sport in a healthy, competitive environment.

Other sporting programmes at the district and national levels along with the Sport Training and Enhancement Programme and community sporting programme continue to attract significant levels of participation. Quite apart from these programmes being conducted by the in-house staff, the Government supported the following international events:

1. The Carifta Games held for the first time at the Dwight Yorke Stadium, on March 26 and it was a tremendous success.
2. The International Volleyball Tournament for men and women. This was held in May and again recently in September at Mausica.
3. The International Optimist Sailing Championship for kids under 15 years, which took place from June 24 to July 03, 2005 in Tobago. I must say there is a young man who actually represented Trinidad and Tobago recently abroad in a world championship in optimist sailing and placed second.

Mr. Speaker, we supported Southern Games; Spiritual Baptist 5K, March 26; Southern Games, March 12 to 13; Hampton Games in May; Point Fortin Games, July 17; Golf Youth Outreach Programme, July to August; Mannie Ramjohn Games, April 02; Tobago Games, July 03; Cycling, West Indies vs the Rest of the World, March to April. Mr. Speaker, the list goes on and on and on.

Sport—I wish to remind the listening public of four quotes which have inspired many at all levels of sport. It was once said that sport is imposing order on what is here—that is Anthony Star. It was also said that sport is a preserver of health; it was also said that I do not know of anything that builds the will to win better than competitive sport, that was Richard Nixon, President; and it was also said that people who work together will win whether it be against complex football defences, or the problems of modern society.

To these, Mr. Speaker, I wish to add my own quote which is: Sport is the beacon through which society can transcend all [*Desk thumping*] So that buying into these themes of imposing order, preserving health, building the will to win and working together to win can indeed lead us out of adversity as we develop and deliver programmes to an increasingly anxious and restless society.

Mr. Speaker, I hinted earlier that sport is the beacon that can transcend the society, but we all must play a part. As a responsible Government, we play our

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[HON. R. BOYNES]

Monday, October 03, 2005

role by responding to and accommodating the request of others. I wish to encourage corporations to adopt a sport, an athlete, or a sporting event per year or two as their contribution to the development of sport and as their demonstration of their corporate responsibility.

10.00 p.m.

You see, I will tell you something in terms of what we do. The Government has been doing tremendous work in assisting sporting clubs. What we are saying is that we need to get the support also of corporate Trinidad and Tobago. We have been calling for that at every single opportunity we get. The job is for all of us to come on board and help our sportsmen and women. There are now 57 sports to choose from and most of these sporting organizations conduct annual development programmes, so there will be no question in getting the plans that they have in order to help them. So I am asking you all, gentlemen, to understand the importance that sport plays in dealing with and promoting a healthy lifestyle among our nation's youth and positioning our country to the next level.

In 2005, our subvention and grants to the national sporting bodies totalled over \$14 million, which was given to the national sporting organizations for their involvement in sport at international levels and towards development of their own sporting programmes. In addition, this Government disbursed grants to outstanding high performance athletes to support their preparation for and participation in international competition. This is in keeping with Government's decision to offer financial assistance to a maximum of \$250,000 per athlete annually for a period of four years, as preparation towards the next Olympics which takes place in China.

In 2005, our expenditure totalled approximately \$1.2 million. Gone are the days when we celebrate an athlete after he has won a medal. This administration has taken the bull by the horns and has said: "We care about our athletes; we want our athletes to develop, so much so that we have decided to fund and give them that level of support so they can be in a position to use the funds as they develop and train."

May I take this opportunity to extend congratulations to some of our top sporting achievers in 2005? We have had in karate, Mr. Brendan Strong. He won Silver at the Pan American Senior Championships. In track and field, we have had Keston Bledman, Bronze, 100 metres in the World Junior Athletic Championships. Marc Burns recently got Gold at Monaco. Do you remember when the Jamaican raised his hands, thinking that he had won the race and he got burnt by Marc Burns? He was victorious, taking on the rest of the world.

I want to indicate at the World Championships recently our 4x100m relay team came second to France, and it was only because Mr. Jacey Harper ran that third leg so quickly that Darrel Brown was so surprised that he came on him so quickly, and that was the reason we did not get the gold medal. [*Crosstalk*]

We have been having discussions and working with all these athletes and they get their \$250,000 as they train. One of the things that we have asked them to do is that every quarter, wherever they are, a pool of approximately eight of them must come together and train as a unit in handing over the baton. When you looked at that race you would have seen that France, for instance, was flawless—totally flawless in the handing over of the baton. [*Crosstalk*] And you were the Minister of Sport? I cannot understand the Member for Chaguanas who was the Minister of Sport and he does not understand exactly what I am saying.

You see, one has to be in a position to appreciate the need for handing over and training as a team, as a unit, in terms of the 4x100m relay teams. When young Armstrong was injured, they did not know exactly how that would work. So what we are saying is that if they can train, the eight of them in a pool, then each can train differently so you would know exactly how the other person would be running.

So, basically, we do have a pool of approximately eight and even more of these athletes and I feel very confident with the type of funding and support that this Government has been giving and will continue to give, the athletes of our country will continue to grow from strength to strength and do well. [*Desk thumping*] I can go on and on. In gymnastics, recently, Thema Williams got Silver at the uneven bars at the Pan American Interclub Championships. She is nine years old and she performed extremely well. A few months ago young Thema Williams went to Miami and at the age of nine, competed against 53 of the best and placed first. [*Desk thumping*]

I wish also, in terms of boxing, to congratulate Iva Western, Giselle Salandy, Ria Ramnarine and Lisa Brown. They have all done extremely well and made their country proud. [*Desk thumping*] As I mentioned recently, in sailing, young Matthew Scott got the Silver Medal at the World Optimist Championship, and the Optimist Association, from day one, has got tremendous support from this Government. In volleyball, the junior women's team won the Caribbean Junior Volley Ball Championship. The senior men's team placed fourth at the World Cup Qualifying Tournament. In cricket, the women's senior team won the Double Caribbean Championship; the men under-19, Double Caribbean Championships and the men's senior team did extremely well in 2004. [*Desk thumping*]

In furtherance of this measure, Cabinet will soon be invited to consider new policy in terms of how we look at financial assistance to more of our elite athletes.

Appropriation Bill (Budget)
[HON. R. BOYNES]

Monday, October 03, 2005

We would be working with the other NSOs and the Trinidad and Tobago Olympic Committee to come up with a criterion; as you achieve the qualifying times, we would then put you on a programme, so we will be in a position to help you in your training between now and the next Olympics.

Mr. Singh: Thank you, hon. Minister, for giving way. I want to personally thank you for assisting a constituent of mine, Mr. Justin Siew, who is a national badminton champion. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Hinds: Very nice of you, man; very nice of you.

Hon. R. Boynes: Mr. Speaker, quite apart from the financial assistance rendered to these sporting organizations by the Ministry, we also had the sport company assisting in the sum of approximately \$5.4 million, \$3.5 million of which was given to national sporting organizations to assist them with their development programmes.

We have seen the emergence of world class elite athletes as a natural outcome of all of our programmes. If I may say so, what we have basically established with the National Sport Company of Trinidad and Tobago is that we have set the policy for them. They have approved community programmes; they have an approved development programme. The Cabinet has approved approximately \$85 million that speaks to community programmes throughout the length and breadth of this country, and development programmes that speak to coaches—[*Desk thumping*—training the young man and woman throughout Trinidad and Tobago. We have had coaches, for instance, who have actually started their development programme by training other coaches. We have a programme where many coaches have been trained so that there would be sufficient coaches to go throughout Trinidad and Tobago and continue the development and coaching of our young ones.

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.

Motion made and question proposed, That the House do now adjourn to Tuesday, October 04, 2005, at 1.30 p.m. [*Hon. K. Valley*]

Question put and agreed to.

House adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 10.10 p.m.