

*Greetings*

*Friday, January 12, 2007*

**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

*Friday, January 12, 2007*

The House met at 1.30 p.m.

**PRAYERS**

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

**GREETINGS**

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, I trust that you and your families had a very enjoyable Christmas season and that you have returned here in the New Year to continue to conscientiously and impartially discharge your duties to the people of Trinidad and Tobago doing so particularly in accordance with the Standing Orders.

Hon Members, I have received a letter from the Clerk of the Assembly addressed to the Clerk of the House of Representatives, Parliament Building, Red House, Port of Spain and I wish to read same into the records.

“Dear Madam,

The Tobago House of Assembly (2005-2009) at its Plenary Sitting (Twenty-sixth Meeting) held in the Tobago House of Assembly Chamber on Thursday December 14<sup>th</sup>, 2006, by resolve, directed that Season Greetings for a blessed Christmas and a happy New Year be extended to the Honourable Speaker of the House and his family, the Leader of the Opposition and her family and other Members of the House of Representatives and their families.”

**LEAVE OF ABSENCE**

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, I have received communication from the hon. Nizam Baksh, Member of Parliament for Naparima and the hon. Eric Williams, Member of Parliament for Port of Spain South both of whom have requested leave of absence from today’s sitting of the House. The leave which these Members have requested is granted.

**PAPERS LAID**

1. Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on a special audit of the Community-Based Environmental Protection and Enhancement Programme (CEPEP) implemented by the Ministry of Public Utilities and the Environment and executed by the Trinidad and Tobago Solid Waste Management Company Limited (SWMCOL). [*The Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley)*]

2. Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the statement of receipts and payments of the Intellectual Property Office for the year ended December 31, 2005. [*Hon. K. Valley*]
3. Erratum re the Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the public accounts of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago for the financial year ended September 30, 2005. [*Hon. K. Valley*]

*Papers 1 to 3 to be referred to the Public Accounts Committee.*

4. The Water Pollution (Amdt.) Rules, 2006. [*Hon. K. Valley*]
5. The Companies (Amdt.) Regulations, 2006. [*Hon. K. Valley*]

#### ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

**The Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley):** Mr. Speaker, on behalf of Members on this side of the House, I wish all Members Happy New Year. I want to assure all Members that the Government would do all in its power to ensure that there is timely answering of all questions.

Mr. Speaker, the Government will answer questions 21, 28 and 32 on the Order Paper and request an extension of two weeks for the other questions and I want to give this House the assurance that all of those questions would be answered at that time. [*Desk thumping*]

**Mr. Speaker:** Nos. 21, 28 and 32?

**Hon. K. Valley:** Yes, Mr. Speaker.

#### Forest Fires (Steps taken)

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

Could the Minister state:

- (a) How many hectares of forest on the Northern Range have been destroyed by fire for the years 2005—2006;
- (b) What steps have been taken to deal with the problem of forest fires and do those steps include the purchase of an airplane with firefighting capability?

**The Minister of Public Utilities and the Environment (Hon. Penelope Beckles):** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As it relates to part (a), how many

hectares of forest on the Northern Range have been destroyed by fire for the years 2005—2006; there is no evidence to indicate that any area of forest on the Northern Range was actually destroyed by fire over the last two years since there is no widespread mortality of trees. However, in 2005, 118 hectares of forested lands of the Northern Range were affected by fires; and in 2006, 254 hectares of forested lands on the Northern Range were affected by fires.

- (b) The Forestry Division of the Ministry of Public Utilities and the Environment has adopted a multi-faceted approach to deal with the problem of forest fires. The steps taken involved the following and I list:
  - (i) Implementing outreach and awareness programmes: These programmes are designed to inform citizens of the values and benefits of our forests and the dangers posed by forest fires. The overall goal is to create a change in attitude so that citizens can become more responsive stewards of our natural environment. The strategy involves the mounting of posters in exhibitions in key locations; lectures in schools; and to other social groups, advertisements and advisory bulletins in the various media.
  - (ii) Mounting patrols and surveillance: During the dry season when forest fires are most prevalent, patrols and surveillance are most prevalent. Patrols and surveillance are mounted for the detection and control of these fires. The Ministry of Public Utilities and the Environment has purchased 32 patrol vehicles to assist in this activity. Fire crews from the Forestry Division together with 55 community groups, which are employed under the National Reforestation and Watershed Rehabilitation Programme of the Ministry of Public Utilities and the Environment are involved in fire surveillance. They are frontline fire detectors and suppressors and are provided with basic equipment for fire suppression. Example, backpacks with pumps, spray cans, fire rakes, fire beaters, et cetera. If fires are beyond their capacity to handle, they contact the Forestry Division where heavier equipment, example, slip-on tanks on small pickups or trucks are brought in to extinguish the fire.
  - (iii) Working in collaboration with State agencies and civil societies: The Forestry Division of the Ministry of Public Utilities and the Environment works closely with the Fire Services Division of the Ministry of National Security, in coordinating the work of fire guardians who are usually engaged under the Agriculture Fires Act.

- (iv) Clearing of fire traces: In the early part of the dry season, the Forestry Division places emphasis on clearing the fire traces around sensitive tracks of forest. This is done in an effort to reduce the likelihood of fires spreading onto other forested lands. Participants from the Civilian Conservation Corps. are utilized to keep fire traces clear of flammable materials.
- (v) Operations of the Forest Fire Plan Committee: This committee which comprises representatives of the Forestry Division; the Meteorological Services Division; the EMA; the Fire Services Division; Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources; the Ministry of National Security; and NGOs are responsible for monitoring the fire season and coordinating work with respect to the management of forest fires with other agencies.

On the issue of the purchase of an airplane with fire fighting capacity to deal with forest fires, this is not a recommended course of action for the following reasons. The majority of forest fires in Trinidad and Tobago are surface fires rather than canopy fires, which means that the fires start in the under storey spreading along the ground. In some instances, the fires may reach up to the canopy. The use of airplanes to fight surface fires will be ineffective because the canopy will prevent most of the water from penetrating the under storey. An aircraft slows the rate of spread of a fire but does not extinguish it. The complete suppression of ground fires must be done by ground crews.

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

**Dr. Nanan:** Mr. Speaker, could the Minister advise the House if the fire towers on the Northern Range are functional?

**Hon. P. Beckles:** I cannot give you that answer off the top of my head.

**Piarco Police Station  
(Rebuilding of)**

**28. Mr. Ganga Singh** (*Caroni East*) asked the hon. Minister of National Security to indicate when the Police Station at Piarco will be rebuilt?

**The Minister of State in the Ministry of National Security and Minister of State in the Ministry of Trade and Industry (Hon. Fitzgerald Hinds):** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The Piarco Police Station was vacated in November 2004 due to its dilapidated and unsafe condition. This station was subsequently destroyed by fire in April of 2005. Some of the officers of that station were

accommodated at the Arouca Police Station, while the others were assigned to a Police Mobile Unit at the Piarco International Airport to provide 24-hour service from that facility. In the interim, the Ministry of National Security located a suitable building in the Piarco area for temporary accommodation of the officers and the Ministry is working closely with the Airports Authority to facilitate occupation within the shortest possible time.

Meanwhile, the Piarco Police Station is among the 24 police stations identified under the Ministry of National Security's' Infrastructure Development Programme for fiscal 2007 and there are four categories in which police stations, included in this year's programme, are put. The first category includes five police stations that are already being constructed and which are due to be completed between January and March 2007. These are the Toco, Tunapuna, Gasparillo, Belmont and Mayaro Police Stations. The other category comprises three police stations for which tenders have already been awarded and construction is due to begin in this month, January 2007. This group includes police stations at Manzanilla, Maracas and Matelot. The third category consists of five police stations for which the preliminary works are completed and tenders for construction are to be issued by the end of this month. These are the Old Grange, Roxborough, Maloney, San Fernando and St. Joseph Police Stations.

The final category to which the Piarco Police Station belongs is in the group of 11 stations for which preliminary works, such as designs and drawings will be undertaken during this year. These include, as I stated, the Piarco Police Station, Maracas, St. Joseph, Cumuto, Matura, Oropouche, Besson Street, Moruga, La Brea, Arima, St. Clair and Brasso. It is estimated that the Piarco Police Station will be completed by fiscal 2008.

**Mr. Singh:** A supplemental question. Hon. Minister, has the Ministry of National Security considered utilizing existing facilities in the old Piarco terminal, in order to facilitate a police presence; police station facilities for the community that the Piarco Police Station serves, having regard to the crime wave in Central Trinidad?

**Hon. F. Hinds:** Thank you very much. Not only did the Ministry consider that, but this is precisely what I indicated. A mobile police unit has been established on that compound; a building has been located and action is now on the way to occupy it for the purposes that you have stated.

**Mr. Singh:** I just want to clarify, hon. Speaker. There exist significant facilities at the old Piarco terminal building, facilities that are not being utilized,

physical facilities, and I know of other instances when you are rebuilding a station as in Sangre Grande, you utilized facilities; I want to suggest that you consider that in the interim.

**Hon. F. Hinds:** Well, keeping the open mind and the responsiveness that we always do is a matter that we will give consideration to. Thank you very much.

**Miss Lucky:** Supplemental please, Mr. Speaker. Hon. Minister, could you indicate to us which police station or in which jurisdiction are matters that will normally fall within the purview of what would have been the Piarco Police Station where such matters are being dealt with, please?

**Hon. F. Hinds:** As I indicated earlier, the responsibility is now shared between personnel from the Arouca Police Station and those on site at the mobile unit.

**Miss Lucky:** Is the Minister aware that it is not just limited to the Arouca Police Station, but also includes other police stations, including the Tunapuna Police Station?

**Hon. F. Hinds:** Well, you know the position of the police administration is to provide a comprehensive service to citizens of this country and wherever it is necessary to do this from, it will be and it is being done.

**Miss Lucky:** But is the Minister aware of the level of inconvenience and unfairness that is caused as a result of not knowing which particular police station will be dealing with a matter when persons who are arrested or taken to a police station and need legal counsel?

**Hon. F. Hinds:** While that is obvious, the position of the police administration today is, whenever a citizen goes to a police station, wherever he or she goes, his report will be taken and an investigation will ensue regardless of station district.

**Dr. Nanan:** Is the Minister aware that the Gasparillo Police Station was supposed to be completed in November of last year?

**Hon. F. Hinds:** As I indicated, Mr. Speaker, the Gasparillo Police Station falls within the category of the five police stations that are already being constructed and which are due to be completed between January and March of 2007.

**Mr. Speaker:** Has anybody been asked by the Member for Naparima to depute for him?

**Tonnage Price, transport for sugar cane and status of the SIT**

**(2007 crop)**

**32. Dr. Hamza Rafeeq** (*Caroni Central*) on behalf of Nizam Baksh (*Naparima*) asked the hon. Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources:

Could the Minister indicate:

- (a) the tonnage price that will be paid to farmers for sugar cane for the 2007 crop;
- (b) the arrangements for transportation to cane to the Usine Ste. Madeleine Sugar Factory; and
- (c) the status of the Sugar Industry Team (SIT)?

**The Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources (Hon. Jarrette Narine):** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In answer to (a) part of the question, the tonnage price that will be paid to farmers for sugar cane for the 2007 crop: Under the Act, the miller sets the price for sugarcane supplied. The miller at this point in time is the Sugar Manufacturing Company Limited, also known as SMCL.

(b) The arrangements for transportation for cane to the Usine Ste. Madeleine factor:

In 2006, the sugar industry team contracted a number of cane haulage contractors for the transportation of cane to the Usine Ste. Madeleine factory. Since the sugar industry team has been terminated and SMCL (Sugar Manufacturing Company Limited) has now been given this responsibility, SMCL is responsible for the arrangements for the 2007 crops.

(c) The status of the sugar industry team:

The sugar industry team which was established as an interim support mechanism, the private sugarcane farmers and contractors of the sugar industry after the closure of Caroni (1975) Limited was terminated with effect from October 31, 2006. A small team of the sugar industry team staff had been retained up to December 31, 2006 to facilitate its smooth handover to SMCL.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Dr. Rafeeq:** Mr. Speaker, with all due respect, the Minister has not answered the question. SMCL is a state-owned company and we are asking the Minister what

is the tonnage price that will be paid in 2007 and he has said ask the company. Mr. Speaker, he has not answered the question, we are asking: what is the tonnage price for 2007? [*Crosstalk*]

**Mr. Speaker:** Order!

**Hon. J. Narine:** Mr. Speaker, I did answer the question, in that the miller is SMCL which is now under Trade and Industry. This question was—[*Interruption*]

**Hon. Member:** What is the price? [*Crosstalk*]

**Mr. Speaker:** Order!

**Hon. J. Narine:** SMCL will determine the price for sugarcane and that is a straight and honest answer. SMCL, the Sugar Manufacturing Company Limited which is the miller under the Act will determine the price for sugarcane, not the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources.

**Dr. Rafeeq:** Mr. Speaker, yes, SMCL will determine the price, I am asking the Minister. What is the price that the SMCL has determined?

**Hon. J. Narine:** I will not know at this point in time, Mr. Speaker. A proper question should be placed—[*Interruption*]

**Mr. Speaker:** Please, I am on my feet. The Minister in his own way has answered the question. Now, I understand what Members are saying opposite, but therein lies the answer. There is a supplemental for the Member for Princes Town.

**Mr. Panday:** Mr. Speaker, so the Minister is admitting he does not know what is the price of cane for 2007, is that so?

**Hon. J. Narine:** According to the Act, Production of Cane Chap. 64:01, states clearly that the miller will set the price for sugarcane. Is that so uneasy to answer?

**Mr. Panday:** When can cane farmers expect to have the price for the 2007 cane crop be made known?

**Mr. Speaker:** Could you repeat the question please?

**Mr. Panday:** When can the cane farmers expect to have the announcement of the price for cane for the year 2007?

**Hon. J. Narine:** Of course, that will be announced by the Sugar Manufacturing Company Limited.

**Hon. Member:** When?

**Hon. J. Narine:** I do not know when.

**Mr. Singh:** Mr. Speaker, thank you. Is the Minister aware the SMCL is a state enterprise?

**Hon. J. Narine:** Yes.

**Mr. Singh:** Under whose jurisdiction does SMCL fall?

**Hon. J. Narine:** The Ministry of Trade and Industry, I repeat. [*Crosstalk*]

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please!

**Dr. Rafeeq:** Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to ask the Minister in relation to part (b) of the question, whether cane will be bought at any other outlets or only at Usine Ste. Madeleine?

**Hon. J. Narine:** Mr. Speaker, there is only one sugarcane factory in Trinidad, we all know that. Therefore, SMCL will be purchasing cane from farmers.

**Mr. Speaker:** I am permitting the last supplemental now, please continue.

**Dr. Rafeeq:** Mr. Speaker, I am asking, in the past even though there was one factory, even though there were two factories, there were several outlets outside of these factories for cane to be bought. So I wanted to find out whether the only outlet that canes will be bought will be the factory, or whether there will be other outlets outside of the factory for canes to be bought?

**Hon. J. Narine:** Mr. Speaker, over the last three years that I had the responsibility, all cane was sold to the factory at Usine Ste. Madeleine; we did not purchase cane anywhere outside. There were scales that weighed the cane and carried it to the factory, but the purchasing was done by SMCL.

*The following questions stood on the Order Paper:*

#### **Brian Lara Stadium**

5. (a) With regard to the Brian Lara Stadium, could the Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs advise:
- (i) the status of work being conducted;
  - (ii) the expected completion date; and
  - (iii) the cost overruns to date?
- (b) Could the Minister state what would the stadium be used for in relation to Cricket World Cup 2007? [*Mr. M. Ramsaran*]

**Early Childhood Care and Education Centres  
(Chaguanas)**

7. Could the hon. Minister of Education indicate whether there are plans to construct Early Childhood Care and Education Centres in the constituency of Chaguanas? [*Mr. M. Ramsaran*]

**Disbursement of Moneys**

16. (a) Could the hon. Minister of Education advise how much money was disbursed by the International Development Bank to the Secondary Education Modernization Programme during the period 2005—2006; and  
(b) How much interest has been paid by the Government on the undisbursed amount of the Secondary Education Modernization Programme loan for the said period? [*Dr. A. Nanan*]

**Deshifting of Government Secondary Schools  
(Status of)**

17. Could the hon. Minister of Education advise:  
(a) how many government secondary schools have been deshifted annually from 2005—2006; and  
(b) the time frame for the completion of the said deshifting exercise? [*Dr. A. Nanan*]

**Construction of Schools  
(2005—2006)**

19. (a) Could the hon. Minister of Education list the pre-schools that have been constructed annually for the years 2005—2006;  
(b) If no pre-schools have been constructed, could the Minister outline reasons for the delay in construction? [*Dr. A. Nanan*]

**Aluminium Smelters  
(Emissions from and Water required)**

20. Could the hon. Minister of Public Utilities and the Environment state:  
(a) what is the annual estimated total level of gaseous emissions from the proposed three (3) aluminium smelters; and  
(b) the annual total volume of water required for the operation of the said smelters? [*Dr. A. Nanan*]

**Status of Legislation**

- 22.** Could the hon. Minister of Public Utilities and the Environment advise:
- (a) on the status of the following legislation:
    - i. the Beverage Container Bill;
    - ii. the Air Pollution Rules;
    - iii. the Water Pollution Rules;
    - iv. the Oil and Hazardous Waste Rules; and
  - (b) identify the timeframe for introduction in Parliament? [*Dr. A. Nanan*]

**Biche Presbyterian Primary School  
(Opening of)**

- 25.** Would the hon. Minister of Education state what plans the Ministry of Education has for the opening of the Biche Presbyterian Primary School, now that the Presbyterian School Board has made a formal request for the school to be opened? [*Mr. H. Partap*]

**Evolving Technologies and Enterprise  
Development Company Limited  
(Investments made)**

- 27.** Could the hon. Minister of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education provide this House with a list of the investments made by the Evolving Technologies and Enterprise Development Company Limited (eTecK) for the period January 2005—October 2006? [*Mr. G. Singh*]

**Trinidad and Tobago Electricity Commission  
(Demand for Electricity)**

- 29.** Could the hon. Minister of Public Utilities and the Environment state the following:
- (a) what is the current demand for electricity in Trinidad and Tobago and the projected demand by 2010;
  - (b) what measures are being put in place in order to meet the current and projected demand;
  - (c) what is the current status of the implementation of Trinidad and Tobago Electricity Commission proposed Automated Meter Reading System? [*Mr. G. Singh*]

**Alescon Sporting Facility  
(Information on)**

- 30.** Could the hon. Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs inform this House, with regard to the Alescon Sporting Facility, Charlieville, Chaguanas:
- (a) when will work on the facility begin;
  - (b) what is the scope of work to be done; and
  - (c) when will the work be completed? [*Mr. M. Ramsaran*]

**Lengua Presbyterian School  
(Details of Construction)**

- 31.** Could the hon. Minister of Minister of Education inform this House, with regard to the construction of the new Lengua Presbyterian School:
- (a) the commencement date for construction of the school;
  - (b) the estimated time for completion of construction of the school;
  - (c) the estimated cost of construction; and
  - (d) the name and address of the company that was awarded the contract to construct the school? [*Mr. N. Baksh*]

**National Chutney Foundation  
(Subventions by the Government)**

- 33.** Could the hon. Minister of Community Development, Culture and Gender Affairs indicate whether any subventions have been given by the Government to the National Chutney Foundation of Trinidad and Tobago for the propagation and development of this art forum? [*Mr. N. Baksh*]

**Special Purpose State Enterprise Companies  
(Information re: directors)**

- 34.** Could the hon. Prime Minister and Minister of Finance state:
- (a) the names of all existing Special Purpose State Enterprise Companies; and
  - (b) the names of the directors of these Special Purpose State Enterprise Companies and their respective occupations? [*Mr. G. Singh*]

**Ramleela Groups  
(Funding Received)**

35. Could the hon. Minister of Community Development, Culture and Gender Affairs provide a listing of the Ramleela Groups that received funding in 2006? [*Mr. G. Singh*]

**University of Trinidad and Tobago (UTT)**

36. Could the hon. Minister of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education list:
- (a) all the contracts entered into by the University of Trinidad of Tobago (UTT);
  - (b) all consultants whose services are engaged by UTT and the fees paid to them;
  - (c) all legal fees paid to attorneys-at-law for and on behalf of UTT; and
  - (d) all foreign personnel of UTT and their respective salaries? [*Mr. G. Singh*]

**Installation of streetlights  
(Completion dates)**

40. Could the hon. Minister of Public Utilities and the Environment inform this House of the start and completion dates for installation of streetlights from:
- (i) Ste. Madeline to Debe; and
  - (ii) Philippine to Debe on the SS Erin Road? [*Dr. R. Moonilal*]

*Questions, by leave, deferred.*

**DEFINITE URGENT MATTER  
(LEAVE)**

**Lack of Confidence in Government**

**Mrs. Kamla Persad-Bissessar** (*Siparia*): In accordance with Standing Order 12 of the House, I hereby seek your leave to move the adjournment of this House for the purpose of discussing the following matter as a definite matter of urgent public importance, namely, the demonstrated lack of confidence by large sections of the population in this Government's sincerity, seriousness and political will and commitment to stem the wave of crime that is sweeping the country causing grief and distress to the nation as a whole.

*Definite Urgent Matter (Leave)*  
[MRS. PERSAD-BISSESSAR]

*Friday, January 12, 2007*

The matter is definite as it pertains specifically to the dissatisfaction expressed publicly by several large sections of the national community including 20 business organizations. The matter is urgent because every day that this crime epidemic continues, citizens are losing faith in the ability of the authorities to arrest this epidemic. The matter is of public importance because the public has been saying for quite some time that this issue requires urgent Government action.

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

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, this Motion does not fall squarely under Standing Order 12. However, I would urge the Member for Siparia that she seriously considers bringing a 12-day Motion to be discussed.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar:** We can put crime on hold for 12 days.

**HERITAGE AND STABILISATION FUND (NO. 2) BILL**  
[Sixth Day]

*Order read for resuming adjourned debate on question* [November 10, 2006]:

That the Bill be now read a second time.

*Question again proposed.*

**Mr. Speaker:** On the last occasion we met, the Member for Chaguanas was on his feet. He has 30 minutes left for his contribution. [*Desk thumping*]

**Mr. M. Ramsaran:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Before I continue, let me wish you, Mr. Speaker, and all Members of this honourable House a productive New Year and hope that things will go as planned for all of us in Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Speaker, let me start by saying that over the last few weeks in speaking with different people across Trinidad and Tobago, victims of crime, victims of all the neglect that is taking place by the Government, I would disagree with my Leader that the Government is in retreat to say that the Government has retreated. I believe that you are no longer going into retreat; you have retreated, because nothing in this country seems to be working especially in the interest of the poor people in Trinidad and Tobago. So I think at that time they were retreating and in 10 to 12 days, you have completely retreated. I ask you to wake up because you are still in charge of this country. You have abdicated your responsibility as the Constitution dictates in offering our country national security. You have failed to ensure that we have equal opportunities in this country and you continue to ensure that people out there are suffering.

So I would boldly say the Government has retreated because you are incompetent and you have been incompetent over the last few years. When I say this, this will be no apology really to the family of Vindra Naipaul, a person whom I know personally; I know the entire family. Mr. Sookdai Naipaul is a friend of mine; we discussed how he managed his heritage, where he started from and I am sure as the Government is trying to do today, he stabilized his fund to ensure that his company grew to what it has become today. And what has happened to him? I am sure all his dreams have vanished because we all know fathers would like their daughters—and in this case I know personally that the love he has for Vindra. What is happening with this Government? You hear statement after statement and in a country as small as Trinidad and Tobago, a person cannot be found after 10, 12, 15 days, it is incompetence. So, I am sure now that the Government has retreated and we must not allow you to rest until you could get up and tell us what are you going to do to ensure that our people are protected because if you do not deal with the Constitution of the land which tells us that every citizen must be treated in a particular way and that the national security be given, then you have failed. The Prime Minister talks about a new Constitution and if we cannot keep with our old to deal with it, we are in trouble.

**2.00 pm.**

Mr. Speaker, I read and reread the Prime Minister's contribution to the parliamentary debate on this particular Bill; he took 75 minutes to talk about our leader and what he did and did not do. The Government has failed. You are looking at persons on this side and saying that we are doing this and that, whereas the mantle of leadership lies with you and you have failed; I have to talk about that. [*Desk thumping*] I have the Prime Minister's contribution here; I could read what he said. [*Crosstalk*] I have been saying all along that crime was the issue in this country. The Leader of the Opposition came again today and talked about crime. Everybody is talking about crime. [*Interruption*]

**Mr. Speaker:** I do agree that crime is a major issue in this country; that was why I suggested that the hon. Leader of the Opposition consider bringing a 12-day motion. But right now we are not on crime; we are on the Heritage and Stabilisation Fund Bill.

**Mr. M. Ramsaran:** Mr. Speaker, if you look at the name of the Bill, it is for a Revenue Stabilisation and Heritage Fund. It is for the future of our country. How could we talk about the future if the present is being destroyed? What will Vindra Naipaul's family benefit from a heritage fund? She is dead, some say—I do not know. We hear rumours from the other side. She has been missing for 15 days.

We are asking questions; it is their responsibility to say what has happened to the case; then I will sit and shut up. Mr. Speaker, I will speak about it now, tomorrow and the day after, because it is hurting the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

I go quickly now to what is taking place in the health sector. We have heard about the deaths of certain persons in our country. We talk about heritage; we talk about a stabilisation fund to deal with the future of Trinidad and Tobago, but we have to start here. [*Crosstalk*] If we do not start here, where are we going?

I have some news to share with you, Mr. Speaker. This is something that has been in the domain of the Minister of Health for quite a while and, as far as I am concerned, it has not been made public. It has to do with the snuffing out of the life of a child in this country named Faith Williams. I am going to read a summary of what happened to this child who had no chance of inheriting anything that this Government is putting away for the future of this nation.

I remember that in this debate the Member for St. Augustine talked about putting aside revenue for the children of Trinidad and Tobago, but today when the children's lives are snuffed out because of the uncaring attitude of this Government, we must talk about it:

“The Summary on Findings of Enquiry into the Death of Faith Williams

The following are responsible for the death of Faith Williams at the Eric Medical Sciences Complex:

1. Bio-Medical Department

- Failure to remove the halothane vaporizer from the operating theatre. This vaporizer was known to be noncommissioned and faulty. [*Crosstalk*]
- Non-performance of daily regular checks of anesthetic equipment and supplies.

2. The Senior Anaesthetist

- No pre-anaesthetic assessment of the patient was performed nor of the anaesthetic machine...”

Mr. Speaker, do you believe this?

- “Failure to establish intravenous access
- Failure to connect ECG monitor to the patient
- Failure to activate a gas analyzer

- Failure to recognize impending cardiac arrest of Faith Williams
  - Failure to treat the cardiac arrest according to standard accepted protocol (contraindicated treatment was implemented)
3. Administration
- The theatre still runs on outdated theatre policies and procedures (1986-1988) equipment. No efficient, effective or updated management systems have been put in place.
  - Visiting theatre staff is not oriented formally and thoroughly with the theatre facilities.
  - There is no theatre manager to ensure the proper coordination of theatre activities.

#### Panel Conclusions

- A. The Bio-Medical department has failed Faith Williams by not instituting routine assessment of medical equipment and failed to remove the defective, non-commissioned halothane vaporizer from the operating theatre.”
- This is murder; if you call it by any other name, it is still murder and somebody must be held culpable. I want the Minister of Health to clear this.
- “B. The Senior Anaesthetist has failed in his responsibility to Faith Williams by his inappropriate management that was contrary to sound medical practice and protocol. This has contributed to the death of Faith Williams.”

We all know she did not live to inherit from this Heritage Stabilization Fund we are setting up.

“Therefore the responsibility for the child Faith Williams lies in the hands of the Bio-medical department EWMSC and the senior anaesthetist.”

Mr. Speaker, I do not want to go into personalities, but we all know what happened recently with the doctors in this country. If you do not treat doctors properly, who will be responsible for ensuring the future health of the people now present in this country? You are talking about putting aside funds to deal with them tomorrow. I do not know if my dear friend, the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann’s West, was bluffing or if he was serious when the doctors threatened to resign; he told them to resign and go. He does not care who will suffer. [*Interruption*]

**Mr. Rahael:** This is just to let you know that I was not bluffing. [*Desk thumping*] [*Laughter*]

**Mr. M. Ramsaran:** That is the Government we have: arrogant; they do not care about what is taking place with people in this country. I want the Minister to tell us who is the bargaining agent, the union that represents doctors. [*Interruption*]

**Mr. Rahael:** For your own knowledge—I have repeated it many times, but, apparently, you select what you want to hear; the fact of the matter is that all public officers are represented by the Public Services Association (PSA), including doctors who are employed by the Ministry of Health.

**Mr. M. Ramsaran:** That is another untruth by the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West. If my memory serves me correctly, and I also discussed it with persons who know, there is no representative union for doctors in Trinidad and Tobago. I remember hearing the Minister say that he was going to deal with the Medical Practitioners Association of Trinidad and Tobago (MPATT), then when things went wrong, he went back to PSA, attempting to divide and rule. The fact is there is no representative union for doctors in Trinidad and Tobago. [*Interruption*]

**Mr. Rahael:** You are wrong. All public officers are represented by the PSA, whether they are doctors or nurses. [*Crosstalk*] The only union that is recognized as representing public officers and is the majority union is the PSA. The Medical Practitioners Association of Trinidad and Tobago is not recognized as representing anyone. It is registered as a union, but, as it stands right now, it represents no one.

**Hon. Member:** They represent the UNC!

**Mr. M. Ramsaran:** Thank you for the inaccuracy of that report. I will like someone who may be listening out there to talk with us. I heard a former PSA president on a programme yesterday morning describing what you said as untrue, that doctors have no representative union. The MPATT was formed to deal with the medical doctors in this country and it has been treated, from time to time, as the representative body, once it suits the Minister of Health. If it does not suit him, they are no longer the representatives. What is taking place in this country is wrong. When we get up to debate this Bill and we do not attempt to put this House in order today, we are in trouble. [*Interruption*]

**Mr. Hinds:** Is it the position of the Congress of the People (COP) to support the behaviour of the doctors in recent weeks against the people of Trinidad and Tobago? [*Desk thumping*]

**Mr. M. Ramsaran:** It is amazing that persons could get up and make these statements. [*Crosstalk*] There was an issue with the doctors that impacted on the lives of the people of Trinidad and Tobago. When we hear the Minister of Health in his arrogant manner saying that they could resign and go, I wonder if he understands what it is to become a doctor and what the importance of being a doctor in Trinidad and Tobago is. If they are not important, close down the health institutions.

**Mrs. Job-Davis:** They did not understand that.

**Mr. M. Ramsaran:** I am rather disturbed to hear that question from the hon. Minister, because he is in charge of giving our citizens the security of a crime free country and he has failed, but yet he wants to jump into the Ministry of Health issue. [*Crosstalk*] When the COP comes into Government, we will ensure that this foolishness does not pass as government policy. We are going to ensure that we protect the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago. We will ensure that what is written in our Constitution is adhered to. If you read the Constitution you will see that it is the responsibility of the Government of the day to deal with the problems in this country and not to just jump up and try to make political points asking about our position. Our position is to ensure that does not happen. For three years the Minister could not sign an agreement; this is incompetence. [*Crosstalk*] I want to talk a little about other things. [*Crosstalk*]

**Mr. Speaker:** Order!

**Mr. M. Ramsaran:** There is another issue that has been bothering me. As we stand here and listen to how we are going to spend our money in the future, sometimes I wonder aloud, sometimes quietly, what is happening to the middle class in Trinidad and Tobago; this is a serious question. For the capital of this country to run well you must have strong upper and middle classes and, of course, the others must be competent to earn their livelihood. When one looks at inflation in this country, the middle class is dwindling.

I have a simple example. To buy a house, which is what you need to live in, and a plot of land to build that house on, is out of the reach of the average man in Trinidad and Tobago. Even people who get a monthly salary of a minister would find it difficult to buy a lot of land at today's prices. To build a house to be comfortable, it would cost over \$1 million, sometimes even \$1.5 million for a simple house, especially if you have to buy land. The price of land now is \$500,000 per lot. Where is the middle class? How are they going to afford this? This brings me back to the Minister of Health.

These doctors are working on contract for two years. I understand, I do not know, that they cannot get loans, because banks will not guarantee them, so they are living in the throes of poverty; and then you talk about having a population to enjoy what we are saving. This is something that we have to look at. [*Crosstalk*]

**Mr. Rahael:** You are misleading the House.

**Mr. M. Ramsaran:** Where is the middle class? Every time the public servants come to the bargaining table with the Government of the day, the Chief Personnel Officer (CPO), and things are bad, the Government would say, “You cannot get an increase.” I remember at one time we got, 1, 1, 1, 3 per cent, and then that too was taken away by another administration. When there is plenty, as it is now, and the public service goes back to the table, they would say, “If you get an increase, you will add to the inflationary cost in this country, so you are not getting it.” So every time the public service would come to the table, if there is plenty they say “You are going to cause inflation;” if there is little, “We cannot give you.” So public servants have always been the victims of whether the country has or has not.

I want to make a recommendation to the hon. Ministers of Finance on the other side. I believe the public servants of this country should be the middle class. They should be the ones who can afford a good house or car and the ones to prop up the society. If the Government is fair to them, give them what they are asking for. I am not saying give them cash. I want to believe that you can create some sort of saving mechanism, where their money can be put in and released to them periodically. In the times when these people fall into trouble, they can get their money through early retirement or what have you; but they must be given that sense of comfort, because public servants are the lowest paid persons. When you compare those who have been in office for 20 or 30 years and you look at their salaries, it is shameful, to say the least. If you compare them with the private sector, you will notice that persons with that kind service would be getting three or four times their salary.

Mr. Speaker, we can come up with a mechanism to deal with public servants. If they ask for 30 per cent and you feel you could only afford 20 per cent, and the reason you cannot give 30 per cent is because it would add to inflation in the country, we could do something to release money periodically so that they will feel comfortable. When they do retire, there will be something saved for them; but it is unfair to public servants that when things are bad there is no increase and when things are good you say, “If we give you, it will cause inflation.” [*Desk thumping*]

The public service has always been the loser. I want to make that point sincerely, because I know public servants who retired with less than \$50,000 or \$100,000 after 33 and one-third years. When these persons go home, where is their future? Was anything saved for them? Were they part of this whole scheme of putting things in a Heritage Fund? I make an appeal on behalf of public servants. I have been there and I know what happens. I make a passionate plea for them, so they could get their increase. When their increase is put away in a providence fund type savings, they could retire with something. Inflation is already out of control; as far as I am concerned, there is no turning back. It is added on and on and on. Maybe when public servants retire at 60 years they will have nothing, with the present set up, so I make a plea on behalf of the public servants of Trinidad and Tobago.

When one examines the Bill, it is based on certain things that I am sure the Minister will talk about when he is winding up. I read the BBC news recently and copied something from it which stated:

“Oil in biggest fall in two years

Oil prices saw their sharpest drop in two years, shedding more than \$2 a barrel as mild US weather led consumers to use less petrol and heating oil.

US light crude oil fell...to \$55.59 a barrel in New York, falling by over \$5 in two days. In London...Brent crude fell...to \$55.11.”

We based this present Bill on oil prices being above the budgeted price. If we examine what is happening critically, we will see that Trinidad and Tobago depends on what is happening on the international market, OPEC and so on. They determine what happens to us. I want to let the Prime Minister and Minister of Finance know that there is a possibility that oil prices could fall dramatically whenever world forces mitigate against this. That is why this is commendable.

I listened to something on your Parliament channel, Mr. Speaker. Some 100 years ago they were rebuilding the Canadian Parliament and the Opposition said that the then government was spending money carelessly and that it was the people's money. We should take an example from that. People's money in times of good must be saved and not be spent willy-nilly without results. We come to this Parliament and hear about a \$38 million budget; yet, I must repeat, it does not redound to the benefit of the people out there.

I talked about a dwindling middle class. On the whole question of poverty, the Minister of Social Development has threatened to lay a report in this Parliament.

[*Crosstalk*] Of course, I hear that you will be doing that; there are a lot of things you will be doing. In that report it says that 17.1 per cent of this population is living under the poverty level. Worse than that, as we debate this Bill, as we look at the market conditions out there, we do not know what will happen next year, whether the oil price will drop back to where it was a couple of years ago. We do not know about the reserves; we depend on other people to dictate to us what is taking place.

**Mr. Manning:** It is not rocket science.

**Mr. M. Ramsaran:** We know that, but I have to remind you that 17.1 per cent of the people in this country are living under the poverty line. Do you know what the wicked thing about that report is? The base level of poverty is \$685 per month. I do not know if the Minister could agree or disagree with me. If you use the benchmark of \$685 a month, are you telling me that a person who lives on \$700 per month is a big shot? Is he not in poverty? I believe that level should be in the thousands, not \$600 per person at this time. You could go to the basket of goods and you will see what that would purchase.

That whole report was flawed; no wonder the Minister is not bringing it to the Parliament. In Trinidad and Tobago with the inflationary cost of basic food items, this is happening. If I were you, I would also throw that report in the waste paper basket; \$685 per month to live in Trinidad and Tobago. Ask your colleague next to you if he could survive on that for a day. Can you survive on that for a day? You cannot; that is the reality. So that poverty level is flawed; it is electioneering machinery, as far as I am concerned. Mr. Speaker, they said 17.1 per cent, it moved from 23 per cent; we moved it by 6 per cent. [*Crosstalk*] This is political and we cannot deal with that.

When we talk about diversifying the economy of Trinidad and Tobago, we must do that. Persons on the street are seeing this. I got a note recently signed by Mr. Eric Hercules. He said:

“Politicians have destroyed the foundation of democracy. Pretending to be builders...while they are demolishers and destroyers. Servants of lip service...rather than servants who practice what they preach. Therefore, nothing that they do will ever work until the crumbled foundation of democracy is fixed...”

Without true democracy being practice...there will be no solution to crime and violence, to kidnappings...nor to any of the problems that consistently plague our society. They say knowledge is power. But there is no power without accurate knowledge. There will be no people's power...until the

people first seek to gain accurate political knowledge. The question is...what is true democracy...and who is the government? This is the knowledge that gives power to the people.”

I want to ask this Government to start being honest with us.

You cannot take 1992 as the last year there was a survey to deal with living conditions in this country and 14 years later come up with another that started just a few years ago. With all the equipment and technology we have today, poverty reports should be made annually or, at least, every two years. That would dictate to governments and the population how to deal with poverty. We cannot take a survey done 10 years ago to deal with today's market. Maybe \$685 when that report was commissioned could have worked then, but not today.

The reality in Trinidad and Tobago is that \$685 cannot sustain a family. When you talk about the cost of electricity—Mr. Speaker, I could even go to the smelter project. I want to make a recommendation that I made before. In Trinidad and Tobago we have natural gas. When we look around, we see the multinationals reaping all the benefits of this country. When we look at the poor people in this country, we all have to pay electricity bills at the end of the year. At least, if the Government cares about poor people who have to struggle to live on \$685, when other than that they are poor, let us give the gas to them. If you read the back of an electricity bill, you would see the breakdown. It would say gas, “X” dollars and so on, and value added tax (VAT), 15 per cent. My recommendation to the Government with plenty; rather than giving it away to multinationals—and when the smelter debate starts, we will talk about that—let us say to all the persons who pay electricity bills, no charge on gas to the poor people and remove the VAT from light bills. It would be small, but it could mean something. [*Desk thumping*]

My comment to the Government opposite is that we must not take what is happening lightly in this country. If you look at the conditions which face us, with poverty increasing and salaries being incapable of dealing with the cost of living, we are getting ourselves ready for a revolution that we will not like. I warn you to wake up and deal with the people of Trinidad and Tobago as they truly deserve.

Thank you.

**Mr. Subhas Panday** (*Princes Town*): Mr. Speaker, on this first sitting of the year, I wish all Members a healthy, happy and productive new year, having regard to the fact that we know what will happen in 2007.

I felt extremely sorry for the Member for Chaguanas when he tried to bring the issue of crime into this debate. I shall endeavour to show that the PNM is the

cause of crime; it has contributed to crime and, in particular, has contributed to the kidnapping of Vindra Naipaul. [*Interruption*]

**Mr. Imbert:** What does this have to do with the Heritage Bill?

**Mr. S. Panday:** I will show you exactly how it came from your contribution to the Heritage Bill. I will come to that later.

I enter this debate to make a short contribution. I will come back to the crime issue in a minute. [*Crosstalk*] Just sit and wait; you will enjoy it. I wish to congratulate all the Members on this side of the House for their contributions. [*Desk thumping*] I have read all the contributions of all the Members to this debate, so far. I want to congratulate the Member for Siparia, who opened this debate, for her in-depth study and deep contribution.

When one looks at what happened, not only did the Member for St. Joseph make a sterling contribution, but like other Members on this side of the House, he went beyond the call of duty and went into another place and also made a contribution to this Bill, hence we have this amended version before the House. [*Desk thumping*]

If they had any shame they would look at the Bill and see that almost every section has been amended. They came here with a Bill and it took the Opposition to hold that Bill and shred it; now the situation has changed. Fundamental positions of the Bill have changed; for example, the drawdown process and procedure. [*Interruption*] [*Mr. Valley rises*]

**Mr. Valley:** Will the hon. Member give way?

**Mr. S. Panday:** No, you spoke already. You spoke a set of nonsense. You attacked persons and told them how they were constipated. You must not do that. I will not allow you to do me that. No—

**Mr. Speaker:** No—

**Mr. Imbert:** What did you say? Are you using obscene language? He said, “Shit”.

**Mr. S. Panday:** Sit; oh, no, what he thinks it should be, should be on him. [*Laughter*] As you would observe, Mr. Speaker, the amendments were copious, very relevant and far-reaching. The Member for Fyzabad also made a sterling contribution, and that is no joke, especially when he quoted from the *Review of the Economy*.

**Mr. Imbert:** He could never give a sterling contribution.

**Mr. S. Panday:** At least his contribution was sterling, while yours was worthless, vindictive and wicked. I will show you it in a minute. [*Crosstalk*]

I myself have observed some very fundamental points in the Heritage and Stabilisation Fund (No. 2) Bill on which an energy economist made certain comments. The *Guardian* of December 06, at page 13 read:

“In the face of dry wells and huge finds TT explores energy legislation.”

Mr. Maguire was analyzing the legislation before us. He also said:

“Savings where art thou?”

The article was instructive, because unlike the PNM that believes that our hydrocarbon resources are inexhaustible, they will never diminish and prices would remain buoyant, this economist, Mr. Maguire—[*Interruption*]

**Mr. Imbert:** I was in school with him.

**Mr. S. Panday:**—was endeavouring to wake us up and help us prepare for that possible eventful day when natural resources may diminish, oil prices may collapse or both occurrences may take place.

**Mr. Imbert:** He knows nothing about nothing.

**Mr. S. Panday:** We are speaking here about the Heritage and Stabilisation (No. 2) Bill and he was trying to put us on a footing. He was telling us that we must review this situation about our hydrocarbon resources. In this Bill we are dealing with the excess from the hydrocarbon resources being put in the fund.

He said:

“This year bpTT drilled a dry hole in the Ibis deep. The deepest well ever drilled in T&T at 19,068 feet. The company’s Chairman and CEO, Robert Riley, revealed that due to the failure of this \$500 million well bpTT exploration programme would be derailed in 2007. Mr. Riley announced that the company will not be drilling any new wells for the upcoming year. Experts note that BHP Billiton recent success in the Ruby field might carry us for a while but we must really think as to where our energy resources position is going. BpTT Ibis deep may put a damper on our expectation for huge oil finds in the ultra deep acreage.” [*Interruption*]

**Mr. Imbert:** You are a pessimist or what?

**Mr. S. Panday:** “Talisman Energy shared the same fate as bpTT in its exploration thrust. In June the company announced it had failed to discover either

oil or gas in its first well on the Eastern block despite spending more than US \$20 million in the process of drilling. Talisman also failed in the second well in the Shadon Beni which was drilled at 14,000 feet near to the Navet sink.”

**Mr. Manning:** What is the conclusion?

**Mr. Imbert:** What is the point you are trying to make?

**Mr. S. Panday:** He was saying that the way we were spending, we must be careful.

**Mr. Imbert:** “It go run out?”

**Mr. S. Panday:** No, hold on. He is saying that we must be careful with the massive spending taking place, merely for the sake of spending. We must take our resources at this point in time and organize them in such a way that the economy will be buoyant and self-sustainable in the event that these—[*Crosstalk*] [*Interruption*]

**Mr. Manning:** That is a whole economic argument you just brought up.

**Mr. S. Panday:** You spoke for 75 minutes, [*Crosstalk*] and you spoke about only one thing: regression. You attacked people personally. [*Crosstalk*] I read your speech; all you did was attack persons; there was no depth at all in your argument. [*Crosstalk*]

**Mr. S. Panday:** The Member for Diego Martin East asked if I thought the oil would finish. I do not know if he is like the hon. Member for San Fernando East who once said in this House that he went to some apparatus called the Hive and he knew exactly what the situation was with our hydrocarbon resources.

**Mr. Manning:** Who said that?

**Mr. S. Panday:** You!

**Mr. Manning:** I did not say that. Why did you say that?

**Mr. S. Panday:** What did you say then?

Mr. Speaker, I ask the hon. Prime Minister then: Why did 12 companies purchase a large amount of geological data at very exorbitant prices and when the bids went out, although they paid so much to obtain that data, there was only one bid?

**Mr. Manning:** I thank the hon. Member for Princes Town for giving way. Part of the reason for that was the data quality. The quality of the data was not of the requisite standard to enable the companies to make the kind of geological

determinations they wanted to make. In those circumstances, the Standing Committee of Energy of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago is reviewing its approach to this entire matter and, indeed, an amended approach is forthcoming. It will be coming out not too long from now, but we understood clearly what happened.

**Mr. S. Panday:** If you say so. The Member for Couva South will deal with that later on.

What Mr. Maguire was really saying was that we must be careful and that we must watch this fund in such a way and protect it in such a way that in the event that prices drop we must not just jump into the fund and draw it out.

The hon. Minister stated that the Government wanted to diversify within the energy sector. Nobody could object to the Government or anybody diversifying in the energy sector, but at the same time we must be careful. That was the point we were making all the time. When you spend a lot of money in diversification in the energy sector, suppose our hydrocarbon resources are depleted, what would be the situation of the downstream and diversification—*[Interruption]*

**Mr. Manning:** Suppose they are not depleted? “We tired answer that.”

**Mr. S. Panday:** So you are saying, suppose it was not depleted, but it is a case of a half empty glass or a half full glass.

**Mr. Manning:** It is not a half empty glass and it is not a half full glass. It is not rocket science, you know. *[Crosstalk]* We are in a petroleum province. There is a science associated with the exploration of oil and gas. Therefore, an assessment is made by those in authority as to what the potential of the basin is and on that basis we make our projections for the future. It is not a guess or happenstance, as the Member for Princes Town suggested to us. It is not that at all. If he does not understand it, I want to assure him that the Government does.

**Mr. Singh:** But the Ibis well was dry.

**Mr. Manning:** So what?

**Mr. S. Panday:** Mr. Speaker, \$500 million went. All the geological data you had, all the hives you went into, like a honey bee—*[Crosstalk]*

**Mr. Manning:** I have no doubt that more exploration wells in this country will be dry in the future, as, indeed, exploration wells are dry around the world. What is the success ratio for exploration activity in Trinidad and Tobago versus the rest of the world? All around the world it is very low; that is the very nature of

the industry and everything in the industry is high priced. Do you know what it costs to rent one of those drilling rigs for a day? It is over US \$200,000 a day; that is the nature of the industry. But in the same way that the costs are high, so are the potential profits and so, indeed, are the returns. It is one of the most lucrative industries in the world and, therefore, when we talk we have to understand the context in which we speak. The hon. Member for Princes Town clearly does not understand what he is saying.

**Mr. S. Panday:** I am talking from facts. You have the resources; you have the technological data; you have the hive and still just in 2006, \$500 million went down the drain and nothing was found. [*Desk thumping*] Talisman spent \$50 million and nothing was found. [*Desk thumping*]

**Mr. Rahael:** Whose money was it? [*Crosstalk*]

**Mr. Speaker:** Order!

**Mr. S. Panday:** You are sure they have and that is why you have embarked upon that heavy diversification. [*Interruption*]

**Mr. Manning:** I thank the Member for Princes Town for giving way again. I just wanted to remind him that subsequent to the Second World War, [*Laughter*] [*Crosstalk*] Texaco had an opportunity to purchase acreage on the East Coast and they turned it down on the grounds that it was not prospective enough in their judgment. Three oil companies then did a lot of exploration on the East Coast from about 1967 to about 1971 and when they did not find anything, they decided to pull out. One of them, Pan American, decided to stay the course and the very next well was a discovery well. It opened up all the production that is now taking place on the East Coast; multimillion barrel fields. That is the nature of the business. Understand that of which you are speaking. You do not understand what you are saying.

**Mr. Rahael:** Move on to something else Subhas!

**Mr. S. Panday:** I know you are a geologist who is accustomed playing with stones, but I am speaking about the recommendation. [*Crosstalk*] I know that you are a geologist accustomed to speaking about stones, but I am speaking here about an energy economist, Mr. Maguire.

**Mr. Imbert:** Who says that he is an energy economist; because you say so? [*Crosstalk*]

**Mr. S. Panday:** You may say that I do not understand it, but the conclusion to the argument is this—[*Interruption*] [*Crosstalk*] [*Laughter*]—Member for San

Fernando East, are you listening? [*Crosstalk*] Maguire said that given the Government's drive to expand downstream into metals and petrochemicals, concerns have been raised about whether gas supply could meet demand. That is the argument I was making. Therefore, when you put these aluminium smelters, these gas guzzlers, what would be the situation with our hydrocarbon resources as it relates to natural gas in the future?

**Mr. Imbert:** Gas guzzlers? Two per cent is the smelter.

**Mr. S. Panday:** The Member for San Fernando East said that if that is the case, it will run out and we will remain high and dry. [*Crosstalk*] No, no; therefore, using your same argument—[*Interruption*]

**Mr. Manning:** Do you think that we are so dotish?

**Mr. S. Panday:** Assuming that you are really dotish, taking the same argument, why do we not try to diversify the economy heavily outside the energy industry? [*Interruption*] If you diversify outside the energy industry and your diversification is not heavily dependent upon your hydrocarbon resources, then in the event there is a reduction in the supply or the price of your natural gas and oil, the economy will be able to sustain itself. [*Interruption*]

**Mr. Manning:** Mr. Speaker, this is the last time that I propose to rise in this debate. [*Crosstalk*] I am not interrupting; the Member for Princes Town has been kind enough to give way; he has been very gracious this afternoon, unlike my good friend from Couva South.

I want to remind the very distinguished Member for Princes Town that in the budget for fiscal year 2007 much was said about the Government's thrust in economic diversification outside the energy sector. For example, one of the things we spoke about was the fact that seven new industries have already started. Work is going apace in respect of the development of seven new areas of industrial activity, none of which is energy related. The Member for Princes Town is seeking in his contribution to give an impression that is just not correct and he is giving that impression on a matter that we have discussed *ad nauseam* in this Parliament before.

**Mr. S. Panday:** It seems to me that the hon. Member for San Fernando East is not in sync with the Members for Diego Martin West and East. It seems he was sleeping when their contributions were being made.

**Mr. Manning:** What did they say?

**Mr. S. Panday:** I will come to it in a minute.

Mr. Speaker, in any event, look at inflation and the price of food at this time. [Laughter] Now in 2007, they are talking about diversification. They have been there for six years and did nothing to diversify the economy in such a way, as the Member for Chaguanas said, so that poor people would benefit. [Crosstalk] [Desk thumping]

He said that they diversified away from sugar. That was not diversification from sugar. The closing of Caroni (1975) Limited was not to diversify from sugar; it was to destroy a people. [Desk thumping] It was spite; that is what it was about. For you as the Member for San Fernando East and Prime Minister, Caroni (1975) Limited did not mean sugar alone. That is why you did not do the research. You did not think about what you were doing; you merely closed it down.

For example, Mr. Speaker, did you know that Caroni (1975) Limited had one of the best beef herds in Trinidad and Tobago; that with their research and development they had developed a strain called the buffalypso? [Crosstalk] The buffalypso was such a fast growing animal and produced so well that when Caroni (1975) Limited was in its hey day, there was a gentleman named Dr. Bennett who helped them and they were exporting buffalypso to South and Latin America. [Desk thumping] Caroni (1975) Limited was making money; it was the leader in research.

**Mr. Manning:** Caroni (1975) Limited was not making money.

**Mr. S. Panday:** When you closed Caroni (1975) Limited, you thought that sugar workers resembled a certain kind of people and since the company only had sugar workers, you decided to "bus their throat"; not thinking how you damaged the economy. [Crosstalk] Where are the buffalypsoes now? You closed the company down. Caroni (1975) Limited had their own buffalypsoes; where are they?

**Mr. Rahael:** Caroni (1975) Limited never sold a buffalypso.

**Mr. S. Panday:** What about citrus? Did you know that Caroni (1975) Limited was into citrus also? It was the largest producer of citrus; the whole of Longdenville. [Interruption]

**Mr. Manning:** Profitably? [Crosstalk]

**Mr. S. Panday:** Those areas of Caroni were profitable. There were hundreds of acres in Longdenville where you had citrus. If even it was not profitable, poor people in Trinidad and Tobago were able to buy oranges for 50 cents. [Crosstalk]

**Mr. Speaker:** Order!

**Mr. S. Panday:** Assuming that it was not profitable, poor people could stop on the Solomon Hochoy Highway and buy an orange for 50 cents. How much for an orange today? Orange is now Mr. Orange. You cannot get oranges now, because the Government destroyed Caroni (1975) Limited and destroyed a part of the citrus industry in that regard. [*Desk thumping*] How many acres of land in La Gloria were under citrus cultivation? How many trees are producing, both in La Gloria and Longdenville? None; you closed down the industry and we are importing concentrate from the British and people have to pay high prices. Have you ever gone to the market and found out the price of juice? Orchard juice is \$11.99 for a litre and it is more water than juice. This PNM Government caused that. Young children and poor people could buy oranges all along the highway and suck them; this PNM Government dealt with that.

Mr. Speaker, do you know what they are saying now? They are going to make a deal with the Citrus Growers' Association (CGA). They are going to give CGA the lands in Longdenville to resuscitate the citrus industry and CGA would give up their property here. They do not care about the industry. The East Port of Spain Development Programme is what they are interested in and the high priced real estate that CGA has in Laventille. They are mamaguying the country by saying that they are giving the CGA land in Longdenville so that the citrus industry would be resuscitated.

Why you allowed it to die in the first place is the question we must ask? If you did not allow it to die and you said that you were handing them something that was producing, then we could say that your intentions were bona fide, but we cannot trust you. You waited until the East Port of Spain Development Programme got on stream to say, "We are going to make a deal with you all." You do not care about any citrus or agriculture. All you want is that real property in Port of Spain to develop.

The Member said, "We closed down Caroni (1975) Limited"; jumping and beating his chest and crowing like a peacock. "We diversified from sugar." "We closed down Caroni (1975) Limited, in order to diversify from sugar." Caroni (1975) Limited was involved in rice. The PNM did not know that. They never thought about that; the rice in Guayamare. In Picton they were developing a new programme called "rain fed rice", where you did not have to dam or have irrigation, but you took the rain and produced rice. Caroni (1975) Limited was doing that; it was doing research. You never thought when you went to close down Caroni (1975) Limited, that you

could close down only the sugar areas and keep the other areas to help the economy? Where is the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources? You never thought about that?

In the process, do you know what they did? They graded the rice in such a way that they drove all the small farmers out of the production of food for this country; for the production of rice. They were paying the small farmers very low prices for rice, but the boys who they employed in the rice mill “getting, big, big salary”. They killed the industry. That is what the PNM did.

What do they do now? The Minister of Agriculture, Lands and Marine Resources comes here and says, “Oh, we are developing rice; in Guayamare we have given out certain acreages to certain farmers.” Are those the same farmers the Member for Diego Martin West hounded down in the Nariva Swamp? But in any event, that will hardly make any dent in our food import bill, because they went at agriculture with venom; they went at agriculture with spite, because they believed that the people who were in agriculture resemble the people who were in cane.

Then you go to your constituency and talk about the two principles of interracial solidarity—[*Interruption*—What were they? He said that the two founding principles of the PNM were integrity and some interracial solidarity. [*Crosstalk*] We ask the question: When you try to “lick up” a people like this, can we believe a single word you say? Can we believe a single word that falls from your lips? No; never.

What about tilapia? You know there is black tilapia. Caroni (1975) Limited had embarked upon a research project and they produced something called the red tilapia fresh water fish; so if there were oil spills in the gulf or in the ocean and there was contamination to the environment, so that “yuh eating” fish with mercury in it, if we wanted to move away from the marine resources, we would have had fresh water fish. We could have obtained our protein from inland. We were cultivating tilapia. The red tilapia was very high in protein.

**Mr. Manning:** So because we stopped it, we are wicked?

**Mr. S. Panday:** I always knew that; I am happy to hear it from your mouth. [*Desk thumping*] You did it because you are wicked. [*Laughter*] Today, “what a pound for fish”? When you go to the market, buying fish now is like Good Friday all year round. The price is so high that people cannot afford to have their protein. You never thought when you were closing Caroni (1975) Limited that you were going to destroy an industry which would have been an integral part of the agricultural process.

Remember in Orange Grove there were duck ponds. I think Prof. Kenny carried on a project there and we had some of the best prawns you could ever find. As you pass by Bamboo Village, there are ponds there where they used to produce fish; tilapia. Where are the ponds today? Dry like the brains of the PNM. [*Desk thumping*] [*Crosstalk*]

Caroni (1975) Limited had one of the best research and development centres in the Caribbean. They had the best entomologists and scientists. They were doing research, not only for Caroni, but for other areas and they were doing very well. Today, the banana industry is being attacked by a fungus, the black Saratoga.

**Hon. Member:** I thought it was Jarrette. [*Laughter*]

**Mr. S. Panday:** Mark my words, since no genuine research and development is taking place in agriculture, just now we may not have bananas produced in Trinidad and Tobago to eat. Caroni (1975) Limited had a research station which could have been developed. They closed down the research station, sent home everybody and the buildings there are now in ruins. All the research projects have gone down the drain. That was the way you dealt with agriculture. That was the way you closed down Caroni (1975) Limited and you came here to boast that you diversified from sugar cane. You come here to boast; you said that it was an economic decision; maybe for cane, but what about the other things that we could have produce?

If even we had to subsidize it, as the Member for Chaguanas said, so we could help the poor people, let it trickle down, but instead of that—the money you are spending on the Community-based Environmental Enhancement and Protection Programme (CEPEP) is more than the moneys you used to give to Caroni (1975) Limited in subsidies. [*Desk thumping*] Although Caroni used to bring in foreign exchange, employ a lot of people and produce food and goods for the people, but that was an economic situation. To make the people as though you kicked them in their faces, on closing Caroni, your counteraction was that CEPEP opened immediately.

If you watch them, they went hand in hand. We know that those CEPEP contractors are PNM supporters. As the Member for St. Augustine said, they were creating clients of the State, so that when the election comes this year “dem fellas will give back all yuh money”. You are going to make them back, because they never went for tendering. How did they get contracts? We have many people who have genuine companies and when they went, they said, “No, no, no; we hear you are not PNM so no contract for you.” [*Crosstalk*] If you are not a PNM, no CEPEP for you.

As a matter of fact, what they will do is use those funds for the election. I will talk to the business about that in a few minutes; [*Interruption*] and the Jamaat for a few minutes. They are creating clients of the State and they do not care whether they destroy the industry or not or destroy the majority of poor people in Trinidad and Tobago. They do not care; they are feeding their boys. [*Desk thumping*] That is all they care about. When you talk about this Bill, look at the wastage taking place.

**3.00 p.m.**

Mr. Speaker, when we look at Dubai we see that it is preparing for the day that energy may run out and has decided to embark upon massive tourism. Dubai built an island somewhere and there are investors all over Europe and England lining up to invest with them, so when the day comes that resources from energy are reduced, they will have a diversified economy not based on energy. Those countries are desert countries and they are trying to diversify.

We in Trinidad and Tobago are more fortunate than most countries in the world in that we have good climate, we are strategically placed, we have good weather and everything in our favour and yet we have not really gone into that aggressive mode.

Mr. Speaker, we would say for example—and we do not have to reinvent the wheel—why do we not develop a tourism industry which would be fed by an agricultural base? Why do we not develop such a system so that instead of developing a tourist industry where you have to import everything to satisfy the tourist industry that we could produce those same goods? But no, they do not want to do it. Instead they have a programme called YAPA with people who have no experience whatsoever in agriculture, and I ask the Minister now: How many have graduated and have gone into agricultural production?

**Mr. Narine:** I will answer you in my winding up.

**Mr. S. Panday:** Mr. Speaker, the Member for San Fernando East says that they are diversifying, and want to distribute lands to the farmers. They closed Caroni (1975) Limited since 2002 and in 2007 how many plots have they given out? How much infrastructure have they put in place? None. How many persons have they trained for agriculture? We want to find out if they have decided what our needs are and having done that, have they done a soil capability survey to say it will produce more here, produce this here, and produce that there? Have they put anything in place?

**Hon. Members:** Yes.

**Mr. Partap:** Not on paper.

**Mr. S. Panday:** Instead you know what they do? They tell the farmers to register and when they did, they told them once they are on Caroni (1975) Limited lands they cannot get any subsidy.

**Hon. Member:** Wicked!

**Mr. Narine:** Nonsense! Who said that?

**Mr. S. Panday:** Farmers have told us that. But in any event, where is the infrastructure for the farmers? What training have you given them? You are sending farmers out to produce, what is the state of the praedial larceny squad? How many vehicles do you all have? How can farmers feel safe and know when they plant the produce they will be able to reap it? Is there anything in place? So when you talk about how much money you have allocated in the budget, money is not the answer, you have to have something here between your two ears. You must have something there—

**Dr. Moonilal:** “They dry.”

**Mr. S. Panday:** You must have something there and when you have that, then you can move forward.

Mr. Speaker, the Member for Chaguanas had indicated that all the stabilization legislation, all the grandiose plans we have could never get off the ground, we can go nowhere unless we tackle the issue of crime. [*Desk thumping*] I want to say that this PNM Government is a rogue Government and this Government sponsors crime, it encourages crime and then when we have the crime they throw their hands up in the air and say it is a global issue.

Mr. Speaker, that was raised in this debate when they spoke about inflation which leads to high prices. This is what the hon. Minister stated in his contribution about inflation. He said:

“We accept the fact that the present rate of inflation is cause for concern and we acknowledge that the developmental expenditure in both the public and private sector has contributed to this situation.”

He went on to say:

“Let me assure this honourable House and the entire country that steps are already on the way for our intervention for increased food production...”

I ask when, where, and how? What have you put in place?

“...and a reprioritization... to bring inflation down to acceptable levels.”

The Governor of the Central Bank indicated that Government must watch spending to prevent the economy from overheating because if it reaches double figures we will find ourselves on a slippery slope. So he admits that Government's public sector spending has led to the increased inflation. But hear what the rogue element in the PNM, the Member for Diego Martin East said in his contribution.

"I am going to tell you. I read it myself in commentaries. I hear it on the radio, I see it all over the place. I hear it in this Parliament that it is the Government's spending that is driving inflation."

Completely contrary to what the hon. Member said. And he says in his typical, fraught, arrogance:

"To use one of my favourite phrases, 'that is arrant nonsense'."

As though he is kicking black people.

**Hon. Members:** Oooh!

**Mr. S. Panday:** He goes on:

"It is about time people do the intellectual work that is required. Do your homework; do the research and find out what is really going on in this country..."

**Mr. Ramnath:** He is attacking the Prime Minister.

**Mr. S. Panday:** Mr. Speaker, core inflation was 3.8 per cent but when you bring food into it, it went up to 10 per cent.

**Hon. Member:** Breadfruit.

**Mr. S. Panday:** "Ah coming to de breadfruit. When ah finish with him he will be like a breadfruit." [*Laughter*]

"—well the previous years were 11 per cent, 7.5 per cent... Inside of the food prices we need to understand what is going on, because within the food prices the cost of vegetables went up by an average of 48 per cent per year."

And he is trying to take away from the argument that public sector spending is not the cause.

"You see you all do not know what is going on in this country, you know."

I am sure he is attacking business people, and I will show you how.

He continues.

"Core inflation is a measure of national inflation excluding food prices. So what the Central Bank document is telling you, that if you take food prices out of the inflationary figures, core inflation in Trinidad and Tobago is 3.9 per cent."

It goes on.

“How can you, knowing that core inflation in Trinidad and Tobago is 3.9 per cent, and say that it is Government spending that is driving inflation in this country?”

I do not know if the hon. Minister ever spoke to him or if he tried to speak to him and his head is so hard that he cannot understand. But they are singing from different hymn books.

“That is why I am saying people in this country and people in this Parliament need to do their homework; do your homework.”

Well, we have done our homework. And the attack to show where the inflation has sprung from he says let us take the case of the breadfruit from Toco.

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, the speaking time of the hon. Member for Princes Town 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. S. Panday:** I saw him wince like a mouse; he could not get up to say no.

Mr. Speaker, coming to the breadfruit argument, hear how they are attacking the business people. I want them to listen and I want the business community to know what is happening.

“**Hon. C. Imbert:** Breadfruit leaving Toco at what price?”

**Sen. Enill:** \$1.50 a pound.

**Hon. C. Imbert:** \$1.50 a pound and when it arrives in Port of Spain how much is it?

**Sen. Enill:** \$21.50.

**Hon. C. Imbert:** \$21.50. Breadfruit leaving Toco at \$1.50 a pound and arriving in the market at \$21.50 a pound.”

Hear how they are driving the wedge and putting the vagabonds and community leaders to lick up business people.

**Hon. Member:** “Leh we hear.”

**Mr. S. Panday:** “The man from Toco does not get the \$21 he is selling the breadfruit in Toco for \$1.00.”

**Hon. Member:** What!

**Mr. S. Panday:** And members of the business community; big, small, big in size, listen to this:

“It is a series of middlemen coming down the road, each one adding their mark up as they go along that leads to the \$21...”

**Mr. Imbert:** That is true.

**Mr. S. Panday:** “...I have to repeat that the problem is not the farmers; the farmers are not ripping off anybody.” So when you tie it up, what he is saying as it went along the price was added, and he went on to say that farmers are not ripping off anybody. If the farmers are not ripping off anybody, tell me who is ripping them off.

**Mr. Imbert:** The middlemen.

**Mr. S. Panday:** The businessmen.

**Dr. Moonilal:** So kidnap them.

**Mr. S. Panday:** Mr. Speaker, I have never seen a Government catapult under an argument so easily, and I am going to read it so every business person in this country must hear.

“If I have to repeat that the problem is not the farmers; the farmers are not ripping off anybody, it is the series of middle men, the marketers, the wholesalers who are inflating the prices as they go along...”

So if they are taking your money underhand, kidnap them and take it back. That is the subliminal message they are sending. [*Desk thumping*] That is the message this PNM Government is sending, that is why it is justifying the crime by saying it is a global problem and not dealing with it and that is why the business community is saying that they do not have crime high on the priority list. That is what the PNM is about and we want to inform the people.

Mr. Speaker, he went on to say, and he is so shameless he says:

“...I will also do that 20 times. Because these are things that people need to understand in this country.”

Who are the people he is talking to? Not the businessmen, not the hard workers, he is not speaking to them. He says: -

“...these are the things that people need to understand in this country. People need to understand what is going on in this country.”

It is almost like a two-fist attack on the business community in this country whether you are a vendor at the Port of Spain Wholesale Market, whether they rob you at 3 o'clock in the morning and take all your money, or you are the biggest conglomerate.

Mr. Speaker, as if that is not enough, it seems to me that if one idiot of the PNM could have said it, we would have said it is okay let us go, but when you hear the leader of the black caucus in the PNM speak about those things—

**Hon. Member:** Who is that?

**Mr. S. Panday:** Mr. Speaker, hear how they are aggravating the society, the criminals, and the people who they have outside there and I quote from the Member for Diego Martin West.

“Consumers in this country are taking the position that we cannot eat the money, so whatever price anybody asks just pay it and blame the Government.”

You hear what they are saying? Whatever price they ask you are paying it and blaming the Government, insinuating to boycott them, hit them with hurts. If chicken price goes up—

**Mr. Imbert:** Whose side are you on, the rich side?

**Mr. S. Panday:**—do not buy chicken, import chicken.

**Mr. Imbert:** You are on the side of the rich or the poor?

**Mr. S. Panday:** It is not the rich, I am talking about the farmer, the small vendors in the Central Market who your boys rob and take away their money when they go to the market.

Mr. Speaker, hear what the Member for Diego Martin West said and he also alluded to the breadfruit statement that Minister Enill spoke about and the breadfruit from Toco that the Member for Diego Martin East spoke about. The honourable and distinguished Member for Diego Martin West, and I will not call him here today the leader of the black caucus. I will not do that.

**Hon. Member:** “Yuh did it already.”

**Mr. S. Panday:** Do not forget when the PNM had brought a policy paper into this Parliament during the 2003 budget when they said that this Government will discriminate and when we attacked them on it, the hon. Member for San Fernando West said it was a typographical error done by technocrats and even though after the Member tried to play it down those same two Members who are here today said: Yes, we doing it, if you do not like it do what you want.

He said:

“And we do have our share of unscrupulous businessmen—”*[Interruption]*

I am not lying man, I do not lie. It is wrong in the setting where they have so many people kidnapping businessmen PNM style. *[Desk thumping]* It is wrong to make statements like that in a society where crime is so high and so many businessmen have been kidnapped. That is wrong.

**Hon. Member:** And no Syrian businessmen.

**Mr. S. Panday:** Mr. Speaker, that Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West, when he said there were only a certain kind of people being kidnapped, he said no, it is not ethnic, it is not racial, it is because they have. Do you remember he said that? They are going after the people who have money. That is what the PNM is about, so that is the thinking of the PNM and I go back to the quote.

“...we do have our share of unscrupulous businessmen...”

Channel 11 played that. Hear the venom and vitriol coming now.

“and they will do whatever they can do to make an extra buck.”

You are telling people that? You are putting that into *Hansard*? You are putting that into the public record having regard to the fact that crime is so high in this country, where people have been killed, and robbed? That is the kind of thing you will say. He goes on to say:

“It matters not from whom they take it...”

He is talking to the bandits. They are speaking to the bandits, Mr. Speaker. I am talking on behalf of my PNM supporters you know, and he tells them that it matters not from whom they take. What is the subliminal message? The Member for Diego Martin West said that, Mr. Speaker. I did my homework, did you not say to do your homework?

**Hon. Member:** You have to go back to school.

**Mr. S. Panday:** When he says it matters not from whom they take, he is actually calling them thieves, calling the business community thieves. Could you explain then why the crime rate is so high with so many robberies all over the country? Why the smallest store in Chaguanas is being robbed? Why the smallest businessman in the Princes Town Market is being held up at gunpoint?

**Mr. Imbert:** Is that the reason?

**Mr. S. Panday:** If you do not believe that, then you are patently foolish.

He says:

“whether it is pensioner in CDAP...”

He is trying to draw a class line now.

“whether it is the smart card, there are people out there who will try to take as much as they can get from the system...”

When you read the speech in its totality, you will see that is the subliminal message the PNM is sending to the bandits. That is why we say the PNM is a rogue Government. [*Desk thumping*]

**Dr. Moonilal:** Get them out. [*Interruption*]

**Mr. S. Panday:** Incompetent means that they are negligent, but we feel they have gone from more than being negligent to a deliberate effort and thinking, that is why we call them the rogue Government. It is not negligence or incompetence anymore.

**Dr. Rowley:** You are more stupid than I thought.

**Mr. S. Panday:** You never knew other people would have read your contribution and bring it to the eyes of the public and the business community.

“Business groups slam PM’s remarks”

Do you see why everybody is viewing them as insensitive?

“Twenty of the country’s business associations have condemned Prime Minister Patrick Manning for remarks made in St. Augustine last Saturday.”

**Mr. Imbert:** That is their right, what is your point?

**Mr. S. Panday:** I would not allow a little imp to disturb me.

“The groups, which include powerful members...”

[*Mr. Speaker stands*]

I apologize, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Speaker:** Yes, I think you ought to apologize for that.

**Mr. S. Panday:** Mr. Speaker, the jamming I am giving him, I will apologize for everything.

**Mr. Speaker:** No, no, you cannot call a Member a “little imp”; that is abusive and insulting language.

**Mr. S. Panday:** Mr. Speaker, for the process of parliamentary etiquette I do, but that is a rogue Government and he belongs to the rogue gallery. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, they sent me a little note about what Sharon Gopaul said about some Member, but I did not hear or see the news, and I do not want to hear what Sharon Gopaul said. Other Members will speak about that, I want to talk about this. These are the people whom he attacked:

“The groups, which include powerful members such as the Bankers’ Association, American Chamber of Commerce of Trinidad and Tobago, Downtown Owners and Merchants Association and the Trinidad and Tobago Chamber of Industry and Commerce, said Manning’s remarks on crime at a People’s National Movement (PNM) walkabout on Saturday were ‘insensitive.’”

That is what we are saying. When they make those kinds of statements here and they go out there and it is said to be insensitive, I want to tell the business community that it is not insensitive, but well planned and orchestrated.

**Mr. Ramnath:** And it is white people saying that.

**Mr. S. Panday:** Yes. So I want to tell them if they did not have that information, they have it today. The information we are giving the business community today is what they have said in the Parliament. So when you heard what he said in St. Augustine and it was said to be insensitive, review your situation and see if it is not a bunch of rogues speaking.

It says:

“Manning, speaking to supporters during the event, reportedly said...”

I apologize, Mr. Speaker, I am quoting from the *Daily Express* of Tuesday, January 09, 2007:

“that while crime was a serious problem in this country, it is also a global problem.”

Instead of dealing with it, he is running from it, do you know why? Because crime is sponsored by the PNM, it is PNM-sponsored crime. [*Desk thumping*]

“The groups, who have come together in a super organisation—”

And I hope they use their super muscle on you.

“Organisations representative of the private sector of Trinidad and Tobago—said in a media release yesterday: ‘This implies that the Government still does not view crime as the priority.’”

I wish to concur with those business organizations and tell them today to read the *Hansard* and they will know why. [*Desk thumping*]

“We feel strongly that a greater sense of urgency is needed at the highest levels of Government if we are to have any chance of saving ourselves from the dangers of lawlessness.”

What they are saying is that they feel that the PNM is spending a lot of money and telling the population it is dealing with crime by spending money, but in truth and in fact, it is not putting the measures in place to really deal with crime.

It seems, Mr. Speaker, that the police are now taking a cue from the Government. The police have realized that the PNM is a rogue Government and sponsoring crime so they are saying if PNM is sponsoring crime; “What dey want me to do?”

It continues:

“The group also said recent remarks by acting Commissioner of Police Glenroy Roach that he ‘claimed to be unaware of the high levels of crime in Central Trinidad...’

Where is he living? Is it that the PNM has him in its back pocket so much that he intends to support its position on crime?

The *Daily Express* of Thursday, January 11 is trying to deal with the issue and it says:

“While it is true that crime, as Prime Minister Patrick Manning said on the weekend, is both regional and global, that can hardly be used as an executive cop out...”

Hear what the people are saying about you, the PNM. It does not want to deal with the crime; it is an executive cop out.

“...since the kind and level of crime is particular to each country...”

I want to tell the PNM that the United States of America had 9/11 but yesterday, Trinidad and Tobago had 11/11: Eleven persons were killed in 11 days. So while America had 9/11, under the PNM the crime today is 11 murders in 11 days; 11/11.

**Mr. Ramnath:** There is probably one more today.

**Mr. S. Panday:** It continues, Mr. Speaker:

“...the spate of kidnapping in Trinidad and Tobago, for example, not reflected in Barbados or even Jamaica and certainly not in Britain or the United States.”

What it is actually saying is that the PNM has surrendered to the criminals. We are saying it has not surrendered but is in bed with them. It has surrendered to the criminals and using an excuse that it is global so, therefore, do not take it on.

We ask the people of Trinidad and Tobago, not the business people now: All this money that the Government is spending, all the big buildings that are going up all over the country, do you feel safer today in Trinidad and Tobago under the PNM than before it came into office? The answer will be a resounding no. Do you fear for your life today? There is the Heritage and Stabilization Fund coming to provide for future generations, but ask anybody: Do you feel you will be killed by the bandits today under this Government? And the answer will be yes.

If you had asked Councillor Alette that just before he got shot, he would have said yes, I feel I will lose my life under this PNM Government.

**Hon. Member:** “Talk ‘bout Sumairsingh.”

**Mr. S. Panday:** “Talk ‘bout Alette.”

**Dr. Moonilal:** The Mayor needs a bodyguard.

**Mr. S. Panday:** It continues:

“In fact, the crime of kidnapping may be a good vantage point from which to view Mr. Manning’s regionalization and globalization of the problem.”

They say take kidnapping because that is one of the most traumatic crimes one could ever effect on somebody. The Member for Pointe-a-Pierre said that when people are kidnapped they are being brutalized and maimed.

**3.30 p.m.**

Today, I pray to God for the safety of Vindra Naipaul. I hope to God that she would be saved but I have no hope and faith in this PNM for any favourable results because they are part of the kidnapping.

“In fact, the crime of kidnapping may be a good vantage point from which to view Mr. Manning’s regionalisation and globalization of the problem.”

PNM hear what they say!

“Kidnapping was unheard of in Trinidad and Tobago until four or five years ago...”

When did the PNM come into power? Four or five years ago. PNM has been in power for six years and they took a year or so to train the kidnappers and the bandits. That is why the paper is saying kidnapping was unheard of in Trinidad and Tobago until four or five years ago.

**Mr. Hinds:** Prime Minister going to jail was unheard of too.

**Mr. S. Panday:** That is why the paper is saying:

“Kidnapping was unheard of in Trinidad and Tobago until four or five years ago, with more than one international observer commenting on the rate with which it has been allowed to take hold in this small place.”

People are commenting. How did the PNM Government allow kidnapping to take place at the rate at which it is taking place in such a small country? Because the PNM is protecting the kidnappers! PNM is protecting the bandits! PNM does not want to make an effort to deal with the bandits! “Tell me how Allette get kill and what was the motive for killing Allette.” [*Interruption*] Mr. Speaker, I hope you are hearing him now because when I called him I apologized. I hope you heard him.

**Mr. Speaker:** I did not hear him but if you tell me what he said I would certainly deal with it.

**Mr. S. Panday:** I will deal with him. The newspaper says that the PNM allowed it.

“We say ‘allowed’ because it stands to reason that had there been decisive action at the very outset this dastardly crime with the potential of murder could conceivably have been reined in or even obliterated instead of which it not only persists but persists, in instances, through the compliance of members of the Police Service and Defence Force.”

**Mr. Hinds:** What are you quoting? The *Bhagwat Gita*?

**Dr. Moonilal:** Ignore him. Subhas, ignore him. He start back smoking.

**Mr. S. Panday:** No, no, no, no. I will not tell you today that your brain has been fried and you cannot listen because the Speaker would put me down and I would not apologize. I am reading from Thursday, January 11, 2007, yesterday’s *Daily Express*. It is current.

**Mr. Hinds:** That is an opinion.

**Mr. S. Panday:** That is the arrogance of the PNM. That is an opinion. It means nothing more. That is the way the PNM behaves. That is an opinion. An opinion of people does not matter. That is the arrogant PNM. The rogue gallery is speaking. [*Desk thumping*] This is frightening. The nearly-to-be Minister of National Security got annoyed when he heard

“with the potential of murder could conceivably have been reined in or even obliterated instead of which it not only persists but persists, in instances, through the compliance of members of the Police Service and Defence Force.”

When we argued to be careful of how they were recruiting people they never took us on. You brought the Police Bills. We would deal with that when the time comes. Do not cry and throw your hands in the air and say that it is a global or regional problem. It goes on to say:

“From this particular position we can make a more general one which is that the accelerated rate of crime in Trinidad and Tobago is relatively new...”

The PNM is synonymous with crime.

“and not as entrenched a scourge as it has been in say, Jamaica, Haiti, Brazil and even the most Mafia-plagued years of the United States.”

That is where PNM has this country.

“This means that an alert, responsible elite should have picked up the disturbing signals from early and moved long before now to make a definite difference.”

They have operation Baghdad, operation this and that and all went to nothing. More operation, Ministry of Hell. Whatever stabilization fund for the future, be that as it may, we want to think of the present. The PNM is a part of the problem with crime. If people do not feel safe today under the PNM they could do something about it soon. We are not saying to use bullets. We are not like the PNM who walk around with henchmen in Couva to terrorize people. The time will come. If you are frightened; if you are afraid of being kidnapped, robbed; if your house has become a jail, that is because of the PNM! The time is right now.

Mr. Cadiz, the man from Chaguanas said that they wanted the “fellas” to run wild. Maybe, in the next few months they might try to rein them in. We let the people know that if they allowed them to run wild for so long and they rein them in for a few months, when they go back it would be worse. All the right thinking people of Trinidad and Tobago must come together to deal with this crime and get rid of the PNM. We must get rid of the PNM! All our differences must go aside because the greatest enemy of the people is the PNM.

Thank you.

**The Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources (Hon. Jarrette Narine):** Mr. Speaker, I add my support to the Heritage and Stabilisation Fund (No. 2) Bill. This Bill is to establish the Heritage and Stabilisation Fund and outlines the purpose of the fund. It is to save and invest surplus petroleum revenue derived from the production business, in order to cushion the impact on our sustained public expenditure capacity during periods of revenue downturn, caused by the fall of oil prices, crude oil or natural gas. I will be very relevant to this Bill and not try to confuse people and speak about something in the first instance and then contradict myself lower down in the debate.

Many Members on the other side have targeted crime in this Bill. They are trying to tell the community of Trinidad and Tobago that with this Bill we have borrowed the future of our grandchildren and we are the persons to see to it that our grandchildren and future generations have a stabilisation fund so that when there is any downturn it would be taken care of, to generate the alternate stream of income to support public expenditure capacity as a result of revenue downturn caused by the depletion of petroleum resources and to provide savings for future generations. In other words, the Heritage and Stabilisation Fund is meant to provide sustainability to the public expenditure capacity and to make provisions for the future generations of Trinidad and Tobago.

I wish to remind this honourable House that the resources that are being used in the current development efforts have been borrowed from our future generations. These include our renewable resources as fisheries, land and forestry as well as non-renewable resources as oil, gas and other resources including minerals. We cannot afford to use these resources in a manner that will compromise future development and the livelihood of future generations of Trinidad and Tobago. We have a responsibility and in fact a duty to make provisions for future development in Trinidad and Tobago. In other words, we have to save, invest and make provisions for the present as well as the future. While people are speaking in Parliament we are responsible for the present as well as the future. That is what the PNM is about.

This philosophy underpins the concept of the Heritage and Stabilisation Fund. This is the nature of our public policy that would lead to future development in Trinidad and Tobago. Sustainable development allows the enjoyment of a good quality of life by the present population without compromising future development and the livelihood of future generations. By creating the stabilisation fund we would be able to sustain our expenditure capacity even when the prices of oil and gas reduce in the future or should these resources become depleted. By having a

heritage component of this fund we are making provisions for the future development and the livelihood of future generations of citizens. The excess revenue from the sale of our petroleum products would be used to enhance the Heritage and Stabilisation Fund.

This Government has been putting into the interim stabilization fund almost 100 per cent of the surplus as defined by this Bill. This is why the fund now holds a balance of TT \$8.5 billion. You would recall that during this debate the record showed that in 1999/2000, the UNC placed \$415.3 million into this fund. At the same time they borrowed \$2,360 million. It is like being in the credit union, a share is \$5; you put two shares and borrow \$2,000. You put \$10 but borrow \$2,000. They put some money in the stabilisation fund but they borrowed 10 times as much. Today, they come to fool the people of Trinidad and Tobago by telling them that they were the best government. This afternoon, the Member for Chaguanas talked about the middle income bracket of Trinidad and Tobago.

I remind him and the community of Trinidad and Tobago that his present leader was the minister of finance when they cut public servants' salaries by 10 per cent; cut out the cost of living and increments from public servants. You were a public servant at the time. You come here today to make the nation feel that the PNM is undemocratic like you were, to cut public servants' salaries and put money in a fund. A concept that I do not know where you got it from. In your time your leader who was the minister of finance put public servants under pressure. I know public servants who had to sell their cars to maintain their families and children at university and they cannot survive up to today. The PNM had restored the 10 per cent; paid part of the cost of living allowance in back pay. I received a back pay. I will tell you what happened at that time. The 1990 coup was blamed for that situation that you found yourselves in. Today you talk about stabilisation fund.

The Member for Princes Town talked about the fish farms in Bamboo. Who gave away the fish farm in Bamboo? The UNC gave it away to one man. Under no conditions—we are fighting to get back that farm to start the production of fingerlings in the tilapia industry and we cannot touch it because the man has a lease for the land. There were four ministers of agriculture; one called the ministry of bhagi and pumpkin; he did nothing for six years and come here today to talk about the fish farm at bamboo. What did you do with Orange Grove? It was destroyed even before that. They brought people here to grow sesame seeds and they are still here. They have a contract. There was no fish in that tilapia pond he talked about. Red tilapia is not the tilapia you need for the industry. We have

done much research and we have crossbreeds. We now have an industry that we are putting \$1.3 million in this year to get the industry off the ground because nothing was done.

He would make the general public believe that the research centre at Carapichaima was growing tilapia. The research centre at Carapichaima was a sugarcane research centre that the PNM had put money into and created to have better varieties of sugarcane. That never went to the poor farmers that you are talking about today. It remained with Caroni (1975) Limited.

**Mr. Singh:** You did not have a research station.

**Hon. J. Narine:** We still have a research station. Dr. Williams saved the country when Tate and Lyle wanted to walk away from Trinidad and Tobago. *[Interruption]* It was the PNM that saved Caroni in 1975 and the PNM that has saved Caroni and their workers again. In the discourse of my debate I would show you what happened. When we wrote off \$2 billion in 1993, by the time you came back into office, Caroni owed \$5 billion again. Ninety per cent of the money that was given to agriculture during that period went to Caroni and they said that they were spending money in agriculture. An elite bunch of people who were the party supporters and groups and all that. Today, they are annoyed because the fall of Caroni is the fall of the UNC and the fall of any corpse that you may have in Trinidad. *[Interruption]* Caroni is the corpse. I am telling you.

I will tell you again that the best decision that was ever taken in Trinidad and Tobago—the European Union is now telling Trinidad that they did not know that three years ago we had done what the islands like Jamaica are fighting to do now and we do not need their funeral grant. This PNM Government made sure that we did something about the sugar industry because at this point in time it is 39 per cent less for sugar. You are talking about foreign exchange where you were buying canefarmers' cane for \$150 in your time; the cost of production was almost \$500 and you were selling to the European Union for \$400 a tonne or something like that. Good economics! Your political leader knows that type of economics. As a matter of fact, he did a study on Caroni (1975) Limited and he said. "Close it down now." That was years ago. Twenty-six years of studies from the Frank Rampersad Report and all the reports indicated to close down Caroni, even the UNC report during your tenure of office, the advice was to close down Caroni. Do you know what happened? Election was in the air so they said let them hold on because they wanted the 10,000 activists in Caroni. I understand what is happening. *[Interruption]* You want me to give way?

**Mr. Dookeran:** Yes.

**Hon. J. Narine:** All right.

**Mr. Dookeran:** I must respond to the preposterous statement made by the hon. Member and Minister. I do not think that he is informed about the development of Caroni with the directional plan which was not to close it down but to open it up. [*Desk thumping*] Further, the negotiations that took place between the then Government and the World Bank were to inject \$100 million to open up Caroni (1975) Limited. I do not think that he is informed and as the Minister he should correct the statement.

**Hon. J. Narine:** Mr. Speaker, it seems as though he did not even read his writing and today he is a leader of some substance. There is no substance in what they did. All the studies that were done on Caroni (1975) Limited from Mr. Frank Rampersad was to shut down Caroni. All the time the money that was given to agriculture was going into a slush fund in Caroni. Now we are able to see that this year if we get \$1.5 billion to spend on agriculture—I will indicate that during this debate—that we have been able to get money for mainstream agriculture. Caroni was taking all the money while all the other farmers that they are crying about today, suffered. There was nothing left for the farmers. The PNM had written off the debts of \$2 billion of the NAR and by the time we came back into office, the debt was another \$5 billion. They did that. The mismanagement went on all that time.

You talk about 10,000 workers gone on the breadline, but yet, we have 5.9 per cent unemployment. Let me say this, no worker had it as nice as Caroni. I wish that when I was in the trade union movement we could have negotiated what Caroni negotiated for. They are getting housing and serviced lots subsidized by \$95 million. Let me say this. They are allowed to get the better treatment of our housing project in Trinidad. Why? The infrastructure, the electricity lines and the telephone system are underground. Caroni never saw a sewer treatment plan. In those days when I spent my vacation in Caroni, there were outhouses and the water level was so high.

Now, they are getting modern facilities and the PNM has done that for the workers of Caroni. I will come to the two-acre agricultural plots and 30 to 50 per cent enhanced payment to go. The sum of \$25 million has been spent on Caroni for training. The workers of Caroni who were cutlassing the canefields did not know about agriculture. They were given the privilege by this PNM Government to be trained. Over 7,000 persons were trained. The Member for Princes Town

wanted to find out how many persons were trained. Apart from the 6,000 a year that the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources trained, the Member for Princes Town did not know that we had allocated \$25 million to Caroni. Some of them took 10 and 12 courses.

You are talking about tilapia. Where was tilapia? Last year, I heard Otaheite said that when Petro Canada did the research in the Gulf it would have run all the fish out of the Gulf. The fishermen in that area had to be compensated. Why? Because they had to put sophisticated equipment in the Gulf and they quarantined a certain area. In Otaheite, they had a problem in that they could not have gone in certain areas when the research was being done to fish. They got compensation for that. By this time we should have no fish in the Gulf, according to the propaganda that you in opposition have told the people in Otaheite and the fishermen in this country. All of a sudden [*Interruption*] last year, you told them that this research would run all the fish out of the Gulf.

Because we are talking about smelter I am seeing a fish market with endless fishes. They are saying, “De amount ah fish we catching in Otaheite, look at what will happen if you come and put a smelter plant.” Last year we did research and all the fishes would have gone. This year you are telling me that you have a surplus in catching, so we should not put a smelter plant there. Double standard! If the Member for Princes Town had any research done or read anything on fishery, he would have known that worldwide, fishery is in a difficult situation because of many reasons that would take a whole debate to say. We can have a whole debate on world fishery. I get reports every month and I read them. We do not have some of the problems that other countries have because our catch has been sustained for a number of years. In some cases you get an increase; it fluctuates from one year to the other. No facilities for the UNC for six years. They did absolutely nothing in fishery.

What is happening now? We are going to build a proper fishing facility for the people of Moruga after so long they have been asking for it. You talk about fishery and you cannot buy fish. Fish is being sold every day at the Central Market in Port of Spain. Every day fisherfolk come here and there is that problem where they have to use different devices because of world negotiation with the world fisheries people.

**Miss Lucky:** Thank you hon. Minister for giving way. You are speaking about what your Government intends to do with respect to Moruga and setting up a fishing industry. You must be aware that right now the present problem is that the Moruga fishermen are complaining that they have been victims of acts of

piracy; are the subjects of real intense criminal activity and nothing has been done. The simple point is that you are talking about building industry, plants and providing, but the basic problem comes back to dealing with crime. What are you doing about that? You will set it up and they would have their boats, engines and catches stolen.

**Hon. J. Narine:** I am certain that the Member for Pointe-a-Pierre as a legal person has other information that she is not giving us here. There are fishermen out there without any nets. They do not go to fish for a fish. Those are the people who come to you to defend them in court.

I am talking about genuine fishermen; I am talking about genuine fisherfolks. I am not speaking about the fishermen who go out there like St. Peter to fish for other things.

**4.00 p.m.**

**Mr. Speaker:** Please hon. Members, not because the hon. Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources has a powerful voice that you all would attempt to match it. Do not match his volume at all. Let us hear him.

**Hon. J. Narine:** Mr. Speaker, politicians on that side have a way of saying things that please their community but one has to put the other side too. I am certain that persons who you defend came to you and tell you the truth. You cannot say that in the court. That is why she has some work because she is also on the defence team. I am certain that the Member for Pointe-a-Pierre will do an excellent job, and we are hoping that it will happen soon to clear the name of somebody who is not convicted. Let us not raise that here.

We are talking about your former political leader. We are not talking about anybody else here. We are talking about persons who have been convicted. And when we talk about Councillor Allette, we forget Sumairsingh. Why it is we do not remember these things. How unfortunate. The information that is coming out is that his people did it, you all. You cannot accuse the PNM for Councillor Allette, for anything. Because that matter has already been said in court, the evidence was given and we have read it in the newspapers. So I do not have to give way to you for anything concerning Sumairsingh because you all hit from the funeral and all after it happened. You abandoned Sumairsingh after that. You too! You are the one that created the problem, if you would recall. Sumairsingh was to take that seat up Nariva and I will tell you there is information that is still there when you speak to people in Rio Claro and other areas that is pointing fingers. I am not pointing fingers at the Member for Nariva, but I am just saying if he talks to the people he will understand it differently. [*Crosstalk*]

The record will show the amount of money that was borrowed and the amount of money that was placed into this fund. This is not a new concept that was started for a stabilization fund. No way! It was never a new concept. Other countries did it. You tried to start it but it was the PNM that has the \$8.5 billion into the fund now and we are going to continue to put money into that fund. We are going to continue to put money in that fund because I will tell you something, Mr. Speaker.

My great grandparents left India and came here as indentured labourers, Kunge Beharry and Dwarika Maharaj. Instead of going back to India after five years, they were given the privilege in Trinidad and Tobago to take lands in lieu. My great grandparents got 100 acres of land in Cumuto. Kunge Beharry was my grandfather and great grandfather, Dwarika was a pundit. He never married. Kunge Beharry had six boys and four girls, two are alive, the last Pundit, is still alive and a sister is still living at Ragoonanan Road. She is 93 years old.

I am sorry I did not bring certain things here today. I have inherited lands but what happened at the time, they were in Pasea. They took up their bull cart the morning and went into the forest in Cumuto and developed 100 acres of land. If your grandparents did not do that, or they sold the land then you cannot complain today. They got the lands, we still have it. We have never sold it. But it was divided into 20-acre plots of which I have received a 20-acre plot and I gave my brother 10 acres. [*Interruption*] I am telling you, that was my heritage. I remember these things because I belong to a family that came through greatness.

The first Dharmachar who died two years ago, Pundit Krishna, my father's first cousin so when you come and talk about these types of things—and one of these days I will bring the Kharaaw that came here. A Kharaaw is what they call a sapat in those days, a sandals/ shoes. But the point is that nowhere in Trinidad when I take this they ever see anything like that. So that we inherited those things and we are proud of that, and we have created a situation where our future generations can survive.

This is compared to the People's National Movement, this is compared to this Government that is trying to do its best to ensure that future generations survive because we have now reached a stage—and you all forget quickly or, you do not have to say it. But it is our business to say that tertiary education in Trinidad and Tobago is now free. The PNM created that. Housing in Trinidad—while you talk about \$500,000 for a plot of land, HDC is providing fully developed lands at \$20,000 a lot. Is that not part of providing for the future generation and taking the money that we are earning now from the oil revenues and putting it for the people of Trinidad and Tobago, not only in education, but in housing and all the other areas?

Apart from putting the surplus into the Stabilization Fund, in the meantime, we are spending for the future now; we are investing, we are doing infrastructural development in Trinidad and Tobago that you have never done in six years, you would not even dream to do; not a road in agriculture was built, not a bridge. Go back in the records. I have it here. They were giving \$2 million for infrastructural development when they were in office up to 2001. Ask the Minister of Health, he met that when he went there. One million dollars for water management. What can that do? That is why you did nothing. The point is we have spent last year alone over \$100 million on infrastructural development.

As a matter of fact, the Nariva constituency has benefited more than any other area in Trinidad. About 25 roads were built in the Member's area. We spent money in Plum Mitan and put in six pumps. We met three that were not working and he is the representative for that area, Nariva, for about 15 years now. According to his constituents very few people in Trinidad know who the Member of Parliament for Nariva is. That is something different. But I can tell you that the Biche people, the Cumuto, Guaico and Manzanilla people within the Nariva constituency have never seen progress under this PNM Government in a matter of three years while he was there nearly 15 years and did nothing, piggybacking now everywhere that the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources is building roads and he sees it is happening, he is writing a letter to me saying he wants that road fix so he could keep it on his records. Those are tricks in politics that I do not even entertain. Why must I give way when you did nothing and the people do not want to see you and they do not know you? Ask people in Cumuto, who is your MP, I do not know. Show them a picture and they would say this picture looking like Jimmy Swaggert or somebody. That is what is happening. They did not even know that was their MP.

**Mr. Speaker:** I have again to appeal to hon. Members to let the Member make his contribution. Do not forget we have the Hansard reporter who must take down everything that he says. So please. Continue Minister.

**Hon. J. Narine:** The only reason I stayed quiet, Mr. Speaker, while others were trying to extend their voice in the Parliament and said nothing for a whole 75 minutes—Member for Princes Town—is that I would have my time to speak, I must have my time to speak.

My grandmother used to tell me: “When ants ready to dead they get more wings”, so I do not worry about these things. [*Interruption*] I am talking about your political organization. I am not speaking about you personally. Your party

that nobody knows, nobody wants to get back; and another party that is just recycling old politicians. That is what they are doing.

I can tell you performance beats “ol’ talk” any time, and we are performers. So that there were problems in agriculture when we came into office the second time. Praedial larceny is a big problem in Trinidad. The former government tried to correct it. They brought up legislation that we opposed because it was no good legislation with registering people who do not have land who had to have a receipt to walk with if they were having any produce being taken to the market and so forth. That is obsolete legislation. We need to do better legislation than that. Let me say an allocation was made during the last budget—we are looking at the areas that are mostly affected from the praedial larceny because there are areas that are not affected where we do not have large agricultural plots on stream. And we are going to do something about it because it is already on stream, to get vehicles, to get personnel, to get the farming communities involved because they have a great part to play in protecting their areas.

Recently, I spoke about praedial larceny in Central Trinidad where the Member for Chaguanas does not even go and speak to the people. Mr. Speaker, you will recall he asked a question to supply 10 roads in agriculture and he did not know that we did six of them already. It was when I told him that we did it, then he went to check and it was most surprising that one of the roads was Ramsaran Trace nearby him so you understand what is happening here.

When I had the meeting with those farmers, they were saying that there are farmers in the area who have small pots but they are selling more produce in the market than they can sell. What does that tell you? Of course, from themselves, from their colleagues, from their neighbours so that they, too, have a great part to play in the praedial larceny problems. In Ragoonanan Road we are going to build the roads inside there. It is on stream already. The tenders were closed and I think on Tuesday this week they were awarded and so forth. The whole of Mc Nair. As a matter of fact, we have placed about 12 ponds in Mc Nair that people are now able to produce all year round. They were six months farmers. They are now able to produce all year round. That is money being spent by this Government to make sure that our future generation have something to inherit, that they can go and plant the fields and produce and they are well educated.

They spoke about the YAPA programme. At the end of last year there were 7,852 YAPA students trained and about 30 per cent of them went to their own family holdings. They came into the YAPA programme, they took phases one and two of the programme, they got the nine-month training programme and when we

told some of them that they can apply for lands under the phase three programme, and 30 per cent actually said that they came from a farming family and were going back to help their parents.

There was a young lady that graduated in San Fernando at Mon Repos recently. She and her husband came to the programme but they had a 10-acre plot where they were doing agriculture, but they came through the system that their parents were doing it and they did not know if they were doing it right or wrong so they came for the training. The young lady who was less than 25 years, because they were married and having children already, was able to say at the graduation that she benefited from that nine-month programme. She is now able to go on the computer, keep her records, get better products, how to plan, how to do drip irrigation, because they were wasting water all the time. Now they can do drip irrigation and they can conserve the water. So that you have the YAPA students, 7,852 at the end of last year. The Member for Princes Town wanted to tell the national community how many persons.

There are two students who went to Venezuela to further their studies. They are doing a BSc in Agriculture. There are also students with COSTAATT, the University of the West Indies. They wanted to close down the agricultural section of UWI; they wanted to send it to Mona, Jamaica. Do you recall that Member for Barataria/San Juan? There are certain decisions that were taken and fortunately for the people of Trinidad and Tobago the PNM came back into office over the last five years. We do have problems with that. There is an ageing farming population, 65 years, 60 years average but those persons we are training now and who are able to take charge and control of the lands they are 17 to 25 years old, so that we are in a situation now where our young people are getting involved. We should have started that years ago but because of the UNC bankruptcy of ideas and all the COPs, and all of them very bankrupt of ideas, it took the PNM to start a training programme for the youth in agriculture, and that is what we did. [*Desk thumping*] That is what we did. You did nothing!

With respect to the inadequate research in agriculture, I would come to that in a while because when we talk about Black Sigatoga, years ago Black Sigatoga in Jamaica wiped out the entire industry. It came in Trinidad and I reported here in a previous budget and because I was not given the opportunity in the last budget debate, Mr. Speaker, because the debate closed. None of the Members stood up in the front to speak. Nobody in the back stood up so that the debate closed, unfortunately.

When you all were in office and one would recall the Minister at the time was Minister Mohammed, Black Sigatoga was reported in the South West peninsula.

And those were plants that were brought from the Mainland in South America. They thought that they were going to develop the lands and put plantain and bananas and so forth and what happened, they brought disease in because they came through the back door. In 2003 the area was quarantined. There were advertisements in the newspaper. We did put out the regulations we had to follow through the Act. We have stipulated the areas. It is spreading, there is some control on it but the research department at Centeno is actively treating with the farmers. We are telling them that they can identify the disease; we will take the specimens, carry them to Centeno and check them. The only way to get rid of it on their estates is to destroy the plant.

So that there are countries in the West Indies that have suffered before and they will continue to suffer if we import plants from outside through the back door and it did not come through the Plant Quarantine at Piarco Airport and the Port Authority and so forth. Although there is a port and officers down at Icacos, it did not come through that port. Because in Icacos we know how that area operates. While persons are going legally into Venezuela and getting their passports and visitors' visas and so on, in certain instances they do not do it. So that they bring plants, they bring birds and other things that can bring disease into the country.

Technology in agriculture has been improving but let me say in the 2002 budget \$249 million was given to agriculture, and I am not speaking about recurrent because recurrent is recurrent. We are talking about development. That \$249 million went to Caroni (1975) Limited. It did not go for the rest of agriculture. What has happened, in 2003, \$391 million was given; in 2004, \$420 million; in 2005, \$468 million and this is for development. Last year we received \$582,994, almost \$583 million. This year, apart from the other areas that we have, we have received \$750,187 million so that this will go towards a lot of things that I will say.

Mr. Speaker, you would recall, and I have said that the \$2 billion was paid off and we met \$5 billion in arrears. The subventions deficit recorded between 1996 and 2003 for Caroni (1975) Limited, I would like to put to rest the "ol' talk" that every time we get up here we have to talk about any type of agricultural matters, we talk about Caroni (1975) Limited. Let me say this: in 1996 to 2003 the deficits were as follows: in 1996, \$175 million; in 1997, \$246 million; in 1998, \$305 million—and that is the period that they were in government—in 1999, \$340 million; 1991, \$349 million; in 1992, \$367 million; 1993, \$418 million and then 1994, \$597 million. That was what Caroni (1975) Limited was losing from year to

year and that is what we are now using. We have saved that and we have also saved the millions that were placed into the industry and are now available to other farmers in Trinidad through the incentive programme, through the building of roads, bridges and drainage and so forth and doing water management. Caroni (1975) Limited was producing cane for \$400 to \$500, and that is history.

The improvement and the distribution of agricultural lands, Mr. Speaker—  
[*Interruption*]

**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. C. Imbert*]

*Question put and agreed to.*

**Hon. J. Narine:** Mr. President, I would just like to recall years ago when I came here, the first time I became the Minister of Agriculture, my record showed that there was an average of land distribution by the UNC government of 40 or 50 plots per year. There was no commissioner of state lands. They came here and tried to put in a commissioner of state lands and they did not know that our permanent establishment for the ministry did not cater for a commissioner of state lands. So the first thing we had to do was to get the CPO to put that into the establishment of the Ministry before we could have done interviews or anything for a commissioner of state lands. So you would release it was only when we came in, that after 23 years of trying we now have a commissioner of state lands.

We are now restructuring that department but the same people that were there and the UNC was doing 40 leases per year, are now doing over 450 per year so that in the last three years we have done over 1,400 leases and there is a backlog. I am not saying that everything is okay because tomorrow morning you will get up and read in the newspaper that some farmers are saying they asked to get their leases renewed 15 or 20 years ago and it did not happen. We have a backlog. We are dealing with the backlog but in the meantime, we need to upgrade and staff our department properly so that the poor people in Trinidad they are talking about who do not have a lease, who are using lands and cannot access the incentives programmes of the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources, that is, if they buy a vehicle they will not be allowed those incentives or if they buy tools or if they lose crops and so forth, that is dependent on your registration as a farmer in Trinidad, and your registration is dependent on if you own lands or lease lands or you are renting lands from private owners.

But when we have the rental of lands from private owners they must have an agreement that will take them for a five-year period because remember, the Agricultural Development Bank is the only bank in the Western Hemisphere throughout the Caribbean that is targeting agriculture, and Trinidad is proud to have an Agricultural Development Bank. Ninety-one per cent of loans in agriculture are done by the ADB. The commercial banks do 3 per cent. And what you normally have to face at the commercial banks is that the value of your property must be approximately twice time the amount you really want as a loan.

I am proud. The last government wanted to close down the ADB, and that is a fact. They may not but they wanted to close down the ADB because loans were given out that people could not pay back and so forth, and while it is that we do not squeeze an agriculturist because if you take a loan for agriculture from the ADB, you do not have to pay any interest for that period of gestation. If you take a cocoa revitalizer loan and we know that the gestation period is five years, then you do not pay for five years. When you start harvesting then you start paying so that is a different bank and I am proud to stand here today after three years in the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources, and say that the last report coming from the Auditor General's Department, shows that the ADB has turned completely around. And the chairman of that board, a young man who is an economist, they have done so well that they have now started to show an increase of funding that can be made available to other farmers.

One would recall in the last budget that the Government of Trinidad and Tobago placed \$30 million in additional funds to the ADB and the ADB is using that funding because we are expecting Avian influenza to come to Trinidad based on the weather patterns this year. I reported on the last occasion that the FAO was saying that when the birds migrated North for the summer last year it meant that they will go forward onto Alaska through the Bering Strait and as the weather pattern changed, they would start coming back down. So they would have carried the bird flu disease with them. What has happened is because of the weather pattern we are having now, birds are still very much North into the Alaska area. It is warm—they do not know—they are worried because they may not have sufficient time when the weather just changed to get down far South. We are on top of this, we have a committee, we have allocated funding for that Avian Influenza Committee, we have an area where the funds are made available now through the ADB to get our poultry farmers some additional funding to protect themselves from an outbreak of Avian Influenza. The last reported death was at Jakarta last week when somebody died of pathogenic H5N1 as related to be.

So the improved distribution of agricultural lands and agricultural access roads, over the period that I am the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources, Mr. Speaker, I can tell you 250 kilometres of roads were done. And that is telling you that we are putting money into the future farmers of Trinidad and Tobago. Areas where there were no roads, tracks [*Interruption*] I have no lands there. My lands are on the main road in Guatapajaro. You know that fully well.

Let me say this.

**Mr. Speaker:** I think this is a good point where we could take the tea break. Hon. Members, the sitting of the House is suspended and will resume at 5.00 p.m.

**4.30 p.m.:** *Sitting suspended.*

**5.00 p.m.:** *Sitting resumed.*

**Hon. J. Narine:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Before the tea break, I indicated that when we came into office the development fund that the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources got was \$250 million. That was the 2001 budgetary allocation. We had no choice but to utilize that fund. There was an increase to \$1.7 billion, which means that since that time we have increased the spending for development of agricultural access roads and other programmes by 680 per cent. This is commendable because the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources, under the PNM, has always increased funding for agriculture. We had a lull for that six-year period when most of the funding went to Caroni (1975) Limited, but we have resurrected the agricultural sector.

We have improved health and safety systems in agriculture providing adequate HACCP-ready facilities for fish landing sites and wholesale fish markets during this period. We have established a National Agricultural Health and Food Safety Agency (NAHFSA), which is a mandate of the Jagdeo's initiative. The Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources has now the NAHFSA facility, the agency that will deal with the health and safety aspects of agriculture. We have established a Poultry Surveillance Unit because of the Avian influenza and because of the aspergillosis that we had recently and the lorengo trachitis problems that we had in the poultry industry.

There is the establishment and promoting of good agricultural practices, the GAP Programme done by NAMDEVCO and the development of the Citrus Budwood Certification Programme. When we came into office this time, we met the Citrus Budwood Certification Programme was not certified and there was diseased bud wood going to farmers to produce citrus plants. We now have a good programme

for that. Apart from that, we have done research and development throughout and, as the Member for Princes Town said, we did all the soil surveys for the 17 areas that we will provide the 7,250 persons coming to Caroni. Already about 2,500 persons have been allocated their areas.

Once the PNM is in office, you can depend on them to provide additional funding for the agricultural sector. We are now in a position to take off because we have put 4,000 acres of Caroni land into rice production. We have increased rice production threefold over the last three years. So agriculture is in good hands under the PNM and we are certain that in the next 10 to 15 years progress will be made in agriculture.

I thank you.

**Miss Gillian Lucky (Pointe-a-Pierre):** Mr. Speaker, I join the debate that deals with a very important issue and that is the provision of savings for future generations of Trinbagonians.

Let me say from the outset that I will not pretend to be a financial expert, nor will I give views over and above what the lay person would know in the arena of the economy. I think one of the major problems we have in this country is that there are some square pegs operating in round holes and some people, believing themselves experts in a particular field, give views on areas of expertise when clearly they are not speaking from platforms of knowledge.

I listened very carefully to the Member for Arouca North. One would remember that during his contribution he made the point that his Government was going to deal with the establishment of fishing plants in Moruga. I interjected to make the point that while that is commendable, the fact—

**Mr. Narine:** Thank you for giving way. I did not say we were going to deal with it. I said we are dealing with it.

**Miss G. Lucky:** Okay. Let us not get caught up in the semantics and technicalities. You are dealing with the establishment, but that was not my point. I ask you to listen carefully to the point I am making. *[Interruption]* Member for Diego Martin Central, one thing you would be assured of in my contribution today is that I am dealing with every Member, on whichever side, with respect. I am making suggestions and, if they are not taken, so be it. At least let me make the suggestions and if at the end of the day they meet with your approval, so be it. If they do not, the *Hansard* has it recorded.

Member for Arouca North, before I chose rudely to interrupt myself to answer the Member for Diego Martin Central, I was making the point that it was commendable that your Government has undertaken to do that or, to make you happy, is doing that. My point is that it makes little sense to embark on these projects without taking a holistic approach when you are trying to provide for people.

In Moruga, where there is still a problem with the Moruga Police Station and there have been several reports of fishermen being victims of crime and piracy that is not being properly addressed by your Government, perhaps you would want to take on board the proper provision. At the end of the day, it makes little sense to spend money establishing a plant or industry knowing that at the end of the day the fishermen, the villagers and the community that you intend would benefit from this very laudable action would be the victims of crimes. That was my point.

It was not meant to embarrass you or to score some kind of political point. We in this House talk about being mature, but the level of maturity must also show itself when a Member rises—at least when I stand as Member for Pointe-a-Pierre, I am trying to see how we can get it right. I recognize that you are in government and that you will be establishing policy. I do not ever adhere to the principle that the purpose of an Opposition is only to oppose. It is to oppose, expose and give solutions.

**Mr. Manning:** Propose!

**Miss G. Lucky:** I will use my own words if that is okay, Member for San Fernando East.

Therefore, when the Member for Princes Town was speaking, he spent some time speaking about crime and it was important because crime is really on the front burner. There is no need to worry because I am not going into the whole issue of crime. The Member for Princes Town gave us a comprehensive appreciation of what is taking place and it worries people.

When you are talking about future investment and catering for generations to come, there is the presumption that there will be a population of persons who will be the beneficiaries. The way it is going right now we have a continuing mass exodus of persons who are literally very afraid of living in Trinidad and Tobago and, therefore, providing for generations financially is important. One has to make sure, at the same time, that there is provision with respect to the entire infrastructure and especially the provision of national security.

The hon. Minister said, when he was piloting this legislation—one of the important things that he mentioned—that the fund would be managed properly and in an effective and transparent manner. I would like those who sit on that side to understand that the track record of their Government is very bad and because it is so bad with respect to management that has become mismanagement, there is a level of distrust; not just from persons sitting on the Opposition Benches, but the country. Right now, the country wants to know, not only that you will be banking its money, but that you will be using that money in such a way that would stand the highest form of scrutiny.

This afternoon, I read a document that I will make sure is placed on the *Hansard*. All I can say is that I was outraged; I was upset. I could not believe that in this day and age when a government is boasting about transparency and accountability, there is a report from the Auditor General on a specific matter, to which I will refer, in which clearly this Government is mismanaging the State funds.

In the contribution of the Member for Arouca North, he highlighted my profession as an attorney-at-law. Of course, when I walk into the Parliament, I cannot forget who I am, where I come from or one of the professions I practise. But what is important to any attorney is evidence and when I read certain extracts, Mr. Speaker—I know your position with respect to reading—I will not read everything in the report, but I want, as I read the parts I have highlighted, this honourable House and the nation to hear the excerpts that I read and phrases that will be like a mantra in this report—evidence not seen; evidence not found. That is very worrying because the evidence not seen and the evidence not found all go toward the conclusion that there were no systems in place for proper management, transparency and accountability.

Perhaps it is not luck, but fate that this document was given to me by the Member for Barataria/San Juan. It was distributed this afternoon. It is the Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on a Special Audit of the Community-Based Environmental Protection and Enhancement Programme (CEPEP), Implemented by the Ministry of Public Utilities and the Environment and Executed by the Trinidad and Tobago Solid Waste Management Company Limited (SWMCOL).

Paragraph 5 on page viii gives the background of this particular subject matter being investigated. It says:

“On 2002 June 12, the Board of Directors of SWMCOL agreed to SWMCOL’s full participation in the CEPEP. On 2002 July 29, the CEPEP was

officially launched in Moruga, Trinidad. In 2002 September, the CEPEP field operations began with a phased roll out of contracts.”

That is what we call the history. The stage is being set. In the next paragraph:

“6. As at 2003 September 30, funds amounting to \$155,432,976.00 were provided by way of commercial loans to operate the CEPEP. As at 2004 September 30, total funds provided by way of loans and government funding amounted to \$378,744,697.00 comprising loans...and government grants...”

The amounts are stated. The reason I am not quoting the amounts is that they do not faze me. One expects that CEPEP would involve hundreds of millions of dollars. Over the years, when the PNM had established the programme, we have heard all the great things about it and we know there would be money spent. So I am not getting carried away with the numbers. I am outraged that this kind of money is being spent by the Government, a government that wants us to believe that it could monitor properly and manage an investment fund for generations and it cannot even manage the money spent on CEPEP. That worries me.

Hon. Minister, I want to pre-empt the defence you will give me. Just yesterday at a parliamentary conference we were making the point that we have lost the art of debate in the House. One of the things I was trained as a debater to do is to predict the defence or the counter argument of the other side. I imagine what the hon. Minister would say. I imagine that at the close he would stand and say that the Member for Pointe-a-Pierre is either exaggerating the situation or she has nothing to fear because the legislation contains inherent systems for transparency and accountability. This is not good enough because actions speak louder than words. It is time this Government shows by its action that it is prepared to be transparent and accountable. This is one of the major problems that we face right now in this country. This is what really worries me. Under “Roles and Responsibilities” is where the mantra begins.

“11. Evidence was not seen in the Minutes of the Board Meetings of SWMCOL that the Board of Directors took decisions with respect to the following:”

There was no evidence for:

- “the process for the selection of the project teams with Environmental Work Areas...;
- the process for the selection of the contractors;
- the process to select the other main service providers namely: uniform, equipment and haulage providers, and

- the process for the management of the financial system of the Programme.”

Evidence was not seen.

Member for Caroni East, you too pointed out certain sections to me. It gets worse. Under “Chapter 3—Selection of Contractors”, there was the phrase again:

“13. Evidence was not seen that the Board of Directors of SWMCOL had established, prior to commencement of the Programme, a tender policy for the CEPEP in respect of the selection of contractors and other service providers.”

It goes on to say, in fairness, because I like to read everything to put it in context:

“A document entitled ‘CEPEP Standard Policy and Operating Procedures’ dated 2003 May was prepared by SWMCOL and forwarded to Cabinet by the Minister of Public Utilities and the Environment. This document provided the ‘contractor policy’ for the selection of the CEPEP contractors and the ‘waste removal policy’ for the selection of trucking contractors.”

Sounds good, but hear this sentence.

“However, detailed procedures were not produced.”

It is either they are not giving or when they give, they give no details. Member for Caroni East, it gets worse.

“14. Evidence was seen that the process for the selection of the contractors at the commencement of the Programme included the following:

- an advertisement...
- a closing date...
- the engagement of the services of a consultant, and
- the selection of contractors.”

I am showing where the Auditor General is saying that they saw evidence. They saw the advertisement and the closing date, but guess what she did not see?

“15. At the time of the audit field work, the following records/information relating to the award of contracts to the CEPEP contractors at the commencement of field operations were not produced:”

So we are seeing the advertisement, the closing date, the engagement of the services, the selection, but we are not seeing:

- “Application Forms

- the names of the members of the selection committee chaired by a consultancy firm
- the Minutes of meetings of the selection committee, and
- the evaluation forms and grading of each prospective contractor interviewed by the selection panel.”

Mr. Speaker, it is a point that I have been making for years. For years I have been saying: Do not just say you are transparent in an advertisement and that you are transparent when you are pulling chits or names out for people to get houses. From start to finish, show the chain of accountability. In a courtroom, it is never enough for the police to say that they took the exhibit to the police station and then they went to the Forensic Science Centre and received it with the Certificate of Analysis. They have to show the chain of custody.

Across there we are seeing the documents being opened now for the first time by some people. They will come with a defence. I am reading the document as it is because this is worrying to me.

“16. Documentary evidence relating to the award of contracts to the equipment, uniform and haulage service providers were not produced as under:

- the procedures applied...
- the authority for the selection procedures...
- a listing of all the applicants;”

and it goes on.

“17. An agreement between a consultancy firm and SWMCOL dated 2002 June 28 for the provision of consultancy services was seen.”

**Mr. Manning:** I thank the hon. Member for Pointe-a-Pierre for giving way. I wonder if she would advise us of the document from which she is quoting.

**Miss G. Lucky:** Hon. Prime Minister, I began by quoting the entire front page.

**Mr. Manning:** I want to make it clear that it is a special audit. It is not a normal report of the Auditor General. This means it was commissioned by the Government because it wanted to know what was taking place in order to take appropriate corrective action.

**Miss G. Lucky:** Mr. Prime Minister, I take your point, but I would like you to appreciate that these kinds of defences or explanations—with the greatest respect,

I am not saying you are not speaking the truth—at the end of the day gives us no consolation. This is the problem in this country. We get explanations and excuses, but at the end of the day plead guilty, put forward your plea in mitigation and then if you do the crime, do the time. You cannot stand and say it is a special audit and then I hear the Member for St. Joseph say it is not necessarily so. Not only did I quote the document from the outset, but I said that I am not going into areas I do not know. In any event, be it normal audit, special audit, non-special audit, audit, audit, it is worrying. That is my point.

**Mr. Manning:** I thank the hon. Member once again for giving way. I need to clarify when so clearly it is not understood. If it is a special audit, it means that the Government asked the Auditor General to go in and do an audit so that we could find out the state of play in order to take corrective action. Now that we have the report and we know the facts, we are in a position to act on it and we are determined to do that.

**Mr. Speaker:** Unfortunately, there is not an intervention in the—

**Miss G. Lucky:** Mr. Speaker, I will start and if the hon. Member wants me to give way, I will so do.

**Mr. Yetming:** Mr. Speaker, a special audit does not have to be commissioned by the Government. In fact, in the rationale that was outlined by the Auditor General was:

“...this Department undertook a preliminary research of the CEPEP to better understand the Programme and its administration. Arising from this preliminary research, it was decided to conduct a Special Audit...” [*Interruption*]

It does not have to be. The Auditor General is independent and under “Mandate and Interpretation” she spells out exactly what the mandate is in the Constitution and in the Audit Act.

**Miss G. Lucky:** I thank the Member for St. Joseph for giving us that level of explanation. Section 25(4) of the Exchequer and Audit Act makes it clear that the Auditor General may at any time, if it appears to her desirable, transmit a special report.

Mr. Speaker, I am glad that the hon. Member for San Fernando East gave us his explanation that the Government mandated the audit and there are some words to which I will hold him—not in a vindictive way. The hon. Prime Minister said that now that this has come to their attention, they are going to do something

about it. Today I am saying that we will now watch and see what will happen and what action will be taken. I just hope that the action taken will not only be independent, but appropriate.

I am going to continue reading because it gets worse. Despite saying in paragraph 13 that evidence was not seen that the board of directors of SWMCOL had established prior to commencement of the programme a tender policy in respect of the selection of contractors and other service providers, it went on to say that there was a document forwarded to Cabinet which provided the contractor policy for the selection of CEPEP contractors and the waste removal policy for the selection of trucking contractors.

“However, detailed procedures were not produced.”

It went on to say, in paragraph 15, that despite seeing evidence about the advertisement, nothing with respect to the details—application forms, minutes of meetings—relating to the award of contracts for the equipment, uniform and haulage was produced. Paragraph 17 says that an agreement between a consultancy firm and SWMCOL for the provision of consultancy services was seen. Very good! However the decision of the board of directors of SWMCOL authorizing the award of the contract to the consultancy firm was not seen documented in the board minutes in respect of the year 2002.

**Mr. Manning:** I thank the hon. Member for Pointe-a-Pierre for giving way. Having checked with the Minister, she confirmed and I confirm that this audit was carried out at the instance of the Government.

**Miss G. Lucky:** Once again, Member for San Fernando East, I am making the point that whether or not the Government mandated it is not enough, in my view, to know that there has been a breach of procedure or accountability and transparency. This is the same issue you will have to confront and I am coming to it when we deal with this legislation. If there is any mismanagement, lack of accountability and transparency, I want to know what action will be taken. We are fed up of hearing about those who do things and no action is taken. I want to see where in this Bill we can strengthen the provisions dealing with the responsibility of the people in charge of this fund if they are guilty of misconduct. I know there is a provision for it. Strengthen it! Make people understand when they are dealing with the State's money, they cannot lightly dismiss it and deal with it as they see fit.

[MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

I do not believe the provisions are strong enough. I say that without reservation. They are not strong enough. It is very much like when people drive rented cars as opposed to their own car. Some people when they drive their own

car avoid every pothole—and believe me there are lots on the roads—but when they have a rented car, they want to test the tyres and see how fast it can go—open up the jets. People in this country and this Government in most instances, by the way it operates, it is as though it is not our money but their money they are blowing. It is our money! [*Desk thumping*] I will get calm again, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because it gets worse.

We cannot keep saying that the Government mandated that this be done. I want to know the time period to call all those to account. We seem to have police officers who are being mandated to conduct investigations all over. I think we need an investigation conducted. “Chapter 4—Financial Management of the Programme” says:

“24. A money market account in the name of ‘SWMCOL/CEPEP Investment Club’ was opened on 2002 December 12. According to a letter dated 2002 December 10 in which a request for the account to be opened was made, it was stated, inter alia, that funds for deposit to this account represented a collaboration between the CEPEP contractors who contributed a certain sum and SWMCOL which matched their contribution, dollar for dollar.”

Here is where in paragraph 25 it gets not bad, not worse, but gross.

“25. Statements in support of contractors’ contributions were provided. However, the statements seen, which were dated 2003 January 13 and 2003 February 14, were entitled ‘Contractors’ Contribution to Christmas Party 2002’ and ‘Contractors’ Flag Contribution for C.E.P.E.P. Rally 2003’ respectively. Moreover, documented procedures for the collecting and processing of their contributions were not seen.”

So here we have evidence that was not seen.

“26. The goals and objectives of the SWMCOL/CEPEP Investment Club were not seen to have been specifically defined in any official document.”

So get the money and do what you want with it. That is why when you make the decision to pass this type of legislation, I want to see more specificity; not generic. [*Interruption*] Member for Laventille East/Morvant, I will be coming to you shortly.

“27. Evidence of Board approval for the establishment of this money market account was not seen. Moreover, evidence of a memorandum of understanding between the CEPEP contractors and SWMCOL with respect to this arrangement was not seen.”

And the more you do not see, the more they have more than the mortar in the pestle.

**5.30 p.m.**

In other words, there are things that are being hidden. There are things you are not seeing; wheeling and dealing that we do not know about but, yet, the hon. Minister stands firm and straight and says that his Government is committed to transparency and accountability. Do you see the commitment? What action will be taken?

It goes on to 28:

“...a number of internal control weaknesses were observed.”

But, it really got worse under the heading: “Chapter 5 - Monitoring and Reporting” and it says in 31:

“Evidence was not seen that audited financial statements with respect to the CEPEP for the period 2002 August to 2003 April were prepared and submitted to Cabinet as at 2004 September 30.”

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am just asking, if you know that something is to be sent to you, and you do not get it, can you use as your defence, as a government, and say we did not get it so we did not do anything about it?

Put another way, when Mr. Glen Roach goes to Lange Park, Chaguanas, and says: “Well, for two years I did not know all this was happening, I mean, I was misinformed”, is that an excuse? When you have a job, it is your job. The word used is “monitor”. One of the critical components of effective delegation, for anybody who has done basic studies in management, which I must admit I have not done—I know it even not having done it—is that you must delegate; you must ensure a proper monitoring and feedback system.

When they realized—whoever these people are—that they were getting away with more than murder, they continued in 32:

“It was not seen that mechanisms were established for the effective targeting of communities for project identification and implementation under the Programme by the Ministerial Committee as mandated by Cabinet.”

So, Cabinet delegated, which is the function of the Cabinet. We are not saying that Cabinet ought not to delegate, but when you delegate—I want to ask Members this, and there is no need to answer aloud—do you delegate control or do you

delegate responsibility? It is very easy for people to think that it is both, but wrong answer. Many people think that you delegate responsibility, no. You delegate control; you maintain responsibility.

So, if you are having a cook-out and you are cooking the duck, you are cooking the chicken, you are making the roti, you are bringing doubles and you are doing the corn soup, everyone who is responsible for the dishes has the control. You are not supposed to go there peeking and saying: "Well, how that going, how this going and give me a taste." At the end of the day, if the food is not placed on the table on time, the organizers are responsible. So, this Government could do whatever it wants; it remains ultimately responsible. [*Desk thumping*] This is the same approach with respect to crime. If, at the end of the day, the money that is invested goes missing, or through negligence we lose it all, what will the Government say? "Well, do not blame us, the individuals are responsible? You carry the ultimate responsibility. Being a Government is not about exploiting power and enjoying power, but it is about taking responsibility. When you are wrong, do not try to be strong.

It continues in 33:

"Evidence was not seen that the Ministry of Public Utilities and the Environment set performance targets for SWMCOL to achieve with respect to the CEPEP."

So, basically, there were no performance targets, and anything goes. If you do well, you do well; if you do badly, you do badly. What worries me is that we heard Minister after Minister coming into this House and telling us how great things were going and how much CEPEP was achieving.

Well, obviously, if you have a student and you tell the student that whatever mark he or she gets is good enough, the student that is getting one mark is happy, because you have not told them that 40 is the pass mark or 50 is the pass mark. So, they are happy like pappy. So the whole country is being told that we are happy like pappy, CEPEP is achieving and now we have found out why. No targets were being set. Maybe this is why this Government has problems dealing with everything including crime. If you do not set a target and say: Listen, zero tolerance to the commission of serious crimes, and you will not tolerate it at all, you are not going to get anywhere.

It continues in 34:

"Evidence was not seen that the reports submitted to the Ministry of Public Utilities and the Environment by SWMCOL were subject to a formal evaluation."

So, even when things were sent, nobody was evaluating.

It continues in 35:

“A formal structure for measuring and evaluating the performance of the CEPEP contractors was not produced. However, the following elements were seen—contractors were required to submit Field Operations Reports on a fortnightly basis, Field Officers were to verify these reports and submit monthly reports on the performance of the contractors to the Senior Project Officer and the Senior Project Officer was to submit monthly reports to the Programme Manager.”

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I read the whole paragraph. I did not do what some people would do; just read an excerpt or a part of the excerpt. I put it in the context. There was no formal procedure set for tracking and assessing and, therefore, my point remains—not speaking in the capacity of an economist which I am not or a financial adviser or manager which I am not—where is the assurance, based on the track record of this Government that there will be proper checks and balances, not only in the legislation, but in terms of the actual conduct of the Government?

The Government seems satisfied to say, well, you do this and there is no monitoring and checking. To me, that is just as bad as having not given anything at all, because you are not making sure that people perform. It is time we recognize—whether people are your friends or not, if you are not doing a good job, you say straight you are my friend, but professionalism is professionalism, integrity is integrity, and you have to be fired. People are apparently afraid to be fired, because they do not want if they get fired, some day somebody might fire them if they fire people. All this nonsense has to stop and somebody has to be brave enough to say it like it is, and stop covering up for everybody. We are talking about money for future generations, and we are talking about billions of dollars.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when I was preparing for this contribution, I knew that I was in an area that I do not consider myself an expert and, therefore, I decided to look at the experiences of other countries and what other countries had done with respect to the establishment of their heritage and saving funds.

I have listened to all the contributions coming from the various Members of Parliament and, I think, what has struck me the most is that we have not dealt with a very important component, in my view, and that is the component of culture.

When you think of the word “heritage”—even when you check the dictionary, it is a different meaning—and provision for future generations—even the Member for Arouca North was talking about his own heritage. When you think about legacy, it is not only money; it is also about culture. I do not indict the hon. Minister alone for this, but even in the presentation of this Bill, I looked to see what the Minister said, and what he said, amongst other things, when he was talking about the need to ensure that we make proper provision is:

“This is necessary to finance education, health, housing, social services, national security and infrastructure, which are critical in developing and delivering sound and sustainable economic growth, improved employment opportunities and reliable and affordable public social services.”

I am saying that the hon. Minister is quite right, but nowhere was culture mentioned. Mr. Deputy Speaker, do you know what really hit me? I prefer to speak on this Bill, having admitted that I can speak as an attorney-at-law, but I really prefer speaking as a citizen of the country.

What has been proven over and over is that we like to boast about how important our culture is to us, but I recognized that we really do not know our culture or even appreciate our culture. The first thing that comes to mind is how we treat our steelpan. Today, when I was looking through the *Guardian* newspaper, it really hurts me, hon. Minister—you have dealt with this matter when there was the discussion on BWIA. I am not saying it for emotional points here—when the new airline, Caribbean Airlines was being branded, we chose a humming bird. This is no disrespect to the humming bird. It is a very beautiful creature; and it has all its great characteristics, but we dumped the steelband.

I even wrote an article—I believe that citizens have to do whatever they can do—saying, “Nothing sweeter than pan”. I read the reason and the rationale for choosing the humming bird. How could you, as a citizen of Trinidad and Tobago, who knows fully well that we have not been able to get the patent for pan, and we are running around now, years after the fact trying to see how we could grasp and hold on to what we know what we invented, and an opportunity presents itself for us to hold on to the pan which we had painted on the aircraft of BWIA, and we dumped the pan and we put a bird, a bird which with the greatest respect—I know that Trinidad is known as the land of the humming bird, and I am going to get to that point too. Where is Tobago in this whole thing? [*Desk thumping*]

It was interesting that I read an article about three weeks ago where a Tobagonian—maybe the Member for Tobago East may have read the article—

was making the point that she was fed up of just hearing about Trinidad, and where do Tobagonians fit in. She was saying that her suggestion was not to say, “Tobadian”. That was an article in the newspaper. I said to myself—[*Interruption*]—Member for Diego Martin East, unless you have a better suggestion than “Trinbagonian” or “Tobadian”, or you want to do more than just make your little points, I have no problem giving way if you come up with a better name, but let me hear it before I give way.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, getting back to the pan, hon. Minister, I will appreciate—honestly, I do not want the rationale for why the humming bird was chosen because I read it. The person who chose it could tell me the greatest things about the humming bird, but today when I saw it in an advertisement for Caribbean Airlines, and the way the wings of the bird were depicted, clearly, it did look very streamlined and it looked like an aircraft, but that was no justification for dumping our pan. The pan could have been put on the aircraft, and we could have put the bird if people wanted to put the bird and put a little line: “Nothing sweeter than pan”, so the bird would be endorsing the steelpan. When people around the world say: What is that round thing with all those kinds of things inside of it? We could say that is the steelpan; that was invented in Trinidad and Tobago but, no, we did not do that.

Hon. Minister, I know that you are in deep conversation with the hon. Member for Diego Martin Central, but I am asking you please—and it is not too late because I understand that the little branding of the humming bird apparently just started flaking off. I read it. I cannot say whether it is true or not. Maybe the bird heard me say this sometime ago—find a way of putting back that steelpan.

You see, in Trinidad and Tobago, we like to parrot how much we love our culture, but we do not when we get the opportunity to endorse it. We say that we are proud of Trinidad and Tobago, but you take the average citizen of Trinidad speaking, and they do not say “and Tobago”. People could say that is not true, but that is the truth. I, too, have made the mistake where sometimes you say people of Trinidad and you forget “and Tobago”. The point is that one day you may secede, but until then we are a twin republic. This becomes a challenge and it is very relevant to what we are talking about. These are issues that we keep sweeping under the carpet, and we are not prepared to deal with them. The steelpan is the national instrument.

I want to say today that the individuals who were responsible, despite opposition, for ensuring that the steelpan became the national instrument of Trinidad and Tobago, I commend them. I really hope all those who pioneered for

the steelpan to be the national instrument have gotten some kind of national award. That is what we should be contemplating, when we talk about investing money for future generations.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am going so far today to say—this is my position—that the steelpan which is the national instrument should be taught in every school in Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

**Hon. Member:** That is a good suggestion.

**Miss G. Lucky:** It is embarrassing, Member for Tobago East, with the greatest of respect—

**Hon. Member:** Tell Sat that.

**Miss G. Lucky:** I do not have to tell any particular person. I have just told the country my position. You are the policy makers. You do it, and as long as your conscience is clear, do not worry about what people say, because when you do the right thing you are not always going to be popular. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is embarrassing, and I feel so upset when I hear that a school in Cincinnati has made teaching of the steelpan mandatory on their syllabus. I feel upset when in Canada there are Canadian schools that have mandated that it be on the curriculum, and when you go there they are saying: Do you want to see me play the steelpan? Almost wanting to go teach us about what we know.

I feel upset when you go to Disney World, Pirates of the Caribbean, and you see a man playing the steelpan and he is saying that it is from the Bahamas.

**Dr. Khan:** Yes.

**Miss G. Lucky:** I almost lost my chance to go on that little ride, because I decided to engage him in a conversation to put him right. Some of the personnel from Disney Land came to tell me that I was making a little chaos. I said that I am not making chaos, but you cannot be telling tourists who are going to one of our attractions that this instrument was invented in the Bahamas, and your platform of knowledge came from the *Love Boat*.

When the *Love Boat* programme started on television, you saw them beating the steelpan in the Bahamas. I am just saying that we are losing it. People are saying that it is trivial, but it is not. We are talking about future generations. Hon. Minister, 10 years from now, as a Trinbagonian standing to say that we invented the steelpan, they are going to laugh at us around the world and say, what are you talking about? Do you know how long we have this here? You see, culture gets

left out because we do not want to take on the challenges facing us. We are citizens of Trinidad and Tobago, and that is long to say. If you say, Trinbagonians, people do not like how it sounds; if you say “Tobadadian”, people do not like how it sounds, so we end up leaving out people.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, at the end of the day, unless and until we recognize that what is going to save us and what is really going to unite us is if we could really develop a culture for Trinbagonians. You see, it creeps into the debate. I just want to make the point in this way.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, what I could say—seeing that some of the Members on the other side are getting fiddled away—about the steelpan is that it is the only musical invention for the 20th Century. [*Desk thumping*] Imagine that was the pride we had as Trinbagonians, and the first opportunity we dumped it off the plane, and put the humming bird, and we are not the only ones that have the humming bird in the Caribbean. We have been told that the reason for putting the humming bird is that we would get the Caribbean feeling. My point of view is that there is a time that charity must begin at home. The Jamaicans have their culture, let us start getting ours.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I was making this point which really troubles me and it is this. We have many Trinbagonians who because of crime and other things have gone to live in North America. If, for example, a child whose father is mixed with East Indian and Chinese and the mother or the wife is predominantly East Indian, that child if asked in Canada, what are you? That child is going to say Canadian. Ask the same child, with the same circumstances, and the same ethnic mix and put that child in Trinidad and Tobago and ask the child, what are you? The child would get confused; the same child. That is something that I think should not be flippantly dismissed. Think about it! The same child, just in a different territory is totally confused because we have an identity crisis in this country.

We claim that we love ourselves, but we have an identity crisis. We only claim things when the things do very well or when we are about to lose the things, but ask to fight for the things now, we are not doing it. That is the sad story of the steelpan. It is the national instrument, and some of us do not even know how to beat the notes. I have said that before I leave this natural life, I am going to learn to play the steelpan. I can only play the scale, but I intend to learn it because it is the national instrument. We have to stop thinking PNM, COP and UNC and start thinking Trinidad and Tobago.

Those on the other side may say, well, Member for Pointe-a-Pierre, why are you going all over the place with this? But I am going to tell you why. When I looked at the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund, it was interesting to see that the preamble stated, amongst other things, that the fund was being established:

“To provide prudent stewardship of the savings from Alberta’s non-renewable resources...for current and future generations of Albertans.”

So, in Alberta, they branded it one time. It is the future of Albertans. They are proud to say who they are.

Hon. Member, I know that there were amendments, and I am happy that the amendments were circulated, because some of the concerns I had were addressed. Therefore, I do not intend to go through—

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Hon. Members, the speaking time of the hon. Member for Pointe-a-Pierre has expired.

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

*Question put and agreed to.*

**Miss. G. Lucky:** Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker and all the Members who have supported my extension of time. Hon. Minister, I was just making the point that I did notice in the amendments, that clause 3(2)(c) is, in fact, being amended, and instead of just having “provide savings for future generations”, it is proposed to read:

“(c) provide a heritage for future generations, from savings and investment income derived from the excess petroleum revenues.”

Hon. Minister, I am asking that today we make a very bold move. It may be a very small step for parliamentarians, but it might be a giant step for the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago, and instead of just saying, “provide a heritage for future generations...” I want to suggest, stamp it and brand it: “future generations of Trinbagonians.” There would be people who would tell me that is not a word; it does not exist.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, if we do not start now to try to brand who we are, it will never happen. If people are not radical and brave enough to stamp the approval then at least let us put, “of citizens of Trinidad and Tobago.” Let us get the branding in that form. People would say that we know it is for us, but a country that does not seem to know what its identity is, let us always remind ourselves and

let us be proud of who we are. Sometimes I really think that we are not proud of who we are. The Albertans are residents and citizens of Canada, but they were proud to put Albertans.

With the remaining time that I have, I am just going to ask the hon. Minister to just bear with me, as I go through some of the things that I would like for consideration. Hopefully, it would not call for policy change, but a simple amendment that I would ask for is if we could include: “future generations of citizens of Trinidad and Tobago.”

I am looking now at clause 6 of the Bill and, again, I know that there was an amendment with respect to clause 6, and the amendment stated that the provision in clause 5 is for the termination of appointment. In terms of what are the criteria that have to be satisfied in the amendment, it says:

“In addition to the competencies mentioned in subsection (2), each member shall be required to satisfy the criteria detailed in paragraphs (2) and (3) of the Second Schedule of the Financial Institutions Act, 1993.”

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I looked at the Second Schedule of the Financial Institutions Act, 1993 and paragraphs (2) and (3) do not set out criteria. What the paragraphs really do is that they tell you what you should have regard to and what factors “may”, it does not even say “ought to”, but it says, “what you may consider.” Again, I am making the point that you may want to consider putting it squarely, because as it reads, with the greatest respect, there are no criteria set in paragraphs (2) and (3) of the Financial Institutions Act, 1993 and, therefore, you may want to consider re-wording what I am suggesting and put:

In addition to the competencies mentioned in subsection 2, each Member shall be required to be able to be a fit and proper person as contemplated within the meaning of the Second Schedule.

It is just a suggestion, because you do not want to put criteria, and then down the line you find that really there were no criteria. I am saying that this is going to make it stronger, in terms of your selection of the individuals. That is just one of the simple suggestions, but we just have to make sure that we get it right.

Hon. Minister, I am also asking for your consideration. Again, I am looking at clause 6 which deals with the termination of appointment and, again, I feel we need something stronger. I know that they are stated in the Bill in clause 6(a) to (d). It talks about if a person is of unsound mind, becomes bankrupt and is guilty of misconduct and absent and so forth, but I always believe in having what you call a “sweep-up provision”. In other words, the President may wish to terminate

the appointment of a Member for reasons that are proper and appropriate, but which are not contemplated in this clause. Therefore, I am suggesting that you include another paragraph which should be “(e)” and word it along these lines—your technical experts are here. I have worked with the two persons that I am seeing there, and I can tell you that they will get it right, in terms of the proper formulation. They would not put it as clumsily as I might say it, but it should read:

“(e) if for some other reason it is inappropriate or improper for him to serve.”

If, for example, something arises which is not caught in clause 6 (a) to (d), you are going to have this paragraph “(e)”. Again, when we are making legislation, we could never contemplate all the things that may arise and, therefore, we need to give ourselves that level of a sweep-up provision that, to me, becomes important.

Hon. Minister, I am almost sure that this suggestion that I am about to make will not be agreed to, but I want to make it anyway for the record, and it comes in clause 8, functions of the board. As I mentioned earlier, I did take the opportunity to look at the heritage savings fund legislation as it applies to Alberta. I looked at others and I looked at the one from Alberta and what was very interesting—I am not sure whether you had an opportunity to look at it—but in Alberta the committee is called the standing committee, and that committee is equivalent to the committee being established here—the appointment of the board that would manage the fund. In addition to the functions of the standing committee, our clause 8 has functions of the board, and in Alberta they called it functions of the committee and we have them listed from (a) to (d).

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

In Alberta, they went so far as to include this in a paragraph, and this is what it says. In Alberta, under functions of the standing committee, it is interesting to hear this:

“To hold public meetings with Albertans on the investment activities and results of the heritage fund.”

I really think that this is something for Trinidad and Tobago. I do not see why it would not be objectionable to put that in the legislation. Let us just start by showing the country that we do not say that we are going to take care of you, but we act upon it and put it in here as “(e)”. It does not say that you have to follow the advice, but I think that we should put it here to show those future generations

how much we considered them and how much we considered—well, future generations would have ancestors—their ancestors, and that would be us, in 2007, when we were dealing with this legislation. Why can we not put in a paragraph (e) to read:

The board shall hold meetings with citizens of Trinidad and Tobago on the investment activities and results of the fund.

So, it means that any government, not just your Government, but any government to come will now be mandated to be transparent and accountable to the people of Trinidad and Tobago; always including them, at least, in the form of meaningful consultation to determine where their money would be spent. [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Minister, I am aware that clause 22 talks about the provisions of this Act shall be subject to a review every five years. After reading the excerpt from that document that I referred to earlier with respect to CEPEP and SWMCOL from the Auditor General, again, I am asking—Hon. Minister, if I might just be bold enough to ask you to glance across, Alberta’s Heritage Fund is quite short.

What is interesting is how user-friendly it is in terms of how they have done their legislation. One of the things that they have done—Mr. Speaker, if you would just indulge me, it comes under the heading “Who Keeps Track of the Fund’s Investment?” I think this is also good. They have the actual section, and this is something that we do not really do with our legislation, but perhaps we can contemplate it for this.

In Alberta, they have the formal legal sections and then they have an accompanying document explaining it in layman’s language, answering the most frequently asked questions. This is what is done in Alberta.

“The Ministry of Finance is responsible for the Fund and its investments. The Minister of Finance is required to report on the performance of the Fund quarterly within 60 days of the end of the quarter and make public the annual report within 90 days of the end of the fiscal year.

The Standing Committee...”

I am saying that is equivalent to the board:

“has representation from the major parties of the legislature. The Standing Committee receives regular reports on the performance of the Fund and conducts public meetings on an annual basis in different locations in the Province. The purpose of these meetings is to update Albertans on the management of the Fund and to solicit input from Albertans.

The business plan of the Heritage Fund is published as part of the provincial budget and the income of the Fund is consolidated into the revenue of the Province.”

When I read this I thought of how proud Albertans feel, knowing that there are persons in the standing committee—I noticed that we do not have that provision here—who will be members of the board will, in fact, be selected. We cannot run away from it. They will be selected or chosen.

**Mr. Valley:** That is democratic.

**Miss G. Lucky:** You said that it is democratic, but it says that the President on the advice of the Minister shall appoint a Board of Governors for the fund. Hon. Member for Diego Martin Central, perhaps I did not read it properly, but I would not re-read it, but what I would say is that in Alberta it is different. What they have done is that they have made sure that there is not just government control. In fact, they try to get as much representation as they can, not in terms of the standing committee, but in terms of those who are monitoring and, I think, that is a healthy process. It does not divest the control or the responsibility, but it means you have independent persons checking and monitoring. This is something which should have been established with respect to CEPEP and SWMCOL.

If you had an independent body monitoring, then today we would not have to hear the excuse, well, you did not know and you did not get. You know, like Mr. Glen Roach, for two years he heard nothing, so he presumed that everything was going okay, even though every day in the newspapers there were reports about crime coming from all areas including Central, which he thought was just moving very fine and everybody was happy like pappy.

Again, in clause 6, with respect to termination, I just want to make the point that if there is disagreement with respect to the proposed sweep-up provision paragraph (e)—

**Mr. Hinds:** Hon. Member, this is not a defence for anyone, but I heard the comments of the Deputy Commissioner, Mr. Roach, and I understood him to be saying, in response to a question from the residents, that he was aware that the business community, having previously met with the police administration and other elements of law enforcement, had come to an agreement with that community to put certain measures in place. I understood him to be saying that he, not having heard more from them, his colleagues were of the view that these particular measures were being implemented. It is not that he was saying that he

thought everything was honky-dory, and there was no crime in the district. To say so is to misunderstand and to misquote the hardworking Deputy Commissioner of Police. That is just for the record.

**Miss G. Lucky:** Just for the record, Member for Laventille East/ Morvant, you have shown that you really did not understand what I said. That is the point I am making. Member for Laventille East/ Morvant, when you stand and you just say in a different form of words—I would not say better or worse or the same—that is exactly the point that I am making.

**Mr. Hinds:** No.

**Miss G. Lucky:** Member, I am not going to engage in a debate with you. The point that I was making, and I am going to make it again, is that Mr. Roach was ultimately responsible. He said two things were put in place two years before, and because he did not get any kind of negative feedback, he really thought everything was going—and, I said, honky-dory. If you want to deal with that and dissect it in the way you want, so be it. It does not change my position nor the point being made. You cannot say because you may not have gotten negative feedback that that lack of feedback or lack of negative feedback prevented you from doing your own independent, proper and comprehensive analysis of the situation. That is the point.

Mr. Speaker, through you, to the hon. Minister, the point I was making is that looking at clause 18 which deals with confidentiality, there is a criminal sanction dealing with subsection (2) of that clause:

“A person referred to in subsection (1) who unlawfully discloses any document or information...”

It deals with criminalizing anybody using inside information and so forth. I was wondering if there was any way we could have made that stronger. Perhaps, in your closing, you could just give me some level of comfort on this matter. What if through gross negligence, or a term that we used in criminal law, “reckless to the extent”—even though you do not have the direct intention, you are so reckless and careless that it becomes the oblique intention, and you mismanaged the fund. I am just saying if there is any way we could drive the point home to those who are in charge of the fund. Not that for any bad decision there would be a problem, but if that bad decision was accompanied by gross negligence or recklessness or carelessness, to the extent that you could be said to have literally intended to waste or mismanage. If there could be some liability in some form for that since that concerns me.

I know that on the other end of the spectrum, you do not want people to be so intimidated that they feel that if they make a suggestion or do something and it goes wrong, they will be in trouble. So, even though I have the expertise, I am scared. I am just trying to see if we can find a mechanism, if it is possible, for incorporating it. I must admit that is something that concerns me.

I listened carefully to what you had indicated and I looked at not only Alberta, but I also looked at the case of Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan which are two oil producing nations that also dealt with establishing a heritage fund.

As I conclude, I just want to read an excerpt from a document that is entitled: “Governance Framework of Oil Funds: The Case of Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan” written by Christian E. Petersen and Nina Budina. I thought this was very helpful, and I quote:

“Lessons from the three best practice NRFs suggest that transparency of operations in the form of accessible public reports, regular audits available in published form (both on the internet and paper), and meritocratic human resource practices constitute essential components for the good governance of a fund. What distinguishes the experiences in Alberta, Alaska, and Norway...”

These are three countries that have gotten the fund right in terms of management.

“is that the oil funds operate under conditions of...simultaneous, vertical and horizontal accountability...”

I thought this was a very interesting concept, because it talks about vertical and horizontal accountability. It goes on to say:

“...vertical accountability is present in the reporting responsibilities of management in the fund itself that continues up a hierarchy until it reaches a minister. Horizontal accountability operates through two mechanisms: (i) elected officials independent of the government receive regular reports on portfolio performance; and (ii) readily available information is published through press releases, publications of reports and audits on the internet. The presence of nongovernmental watchdog agencies enforces horizontal accountability. An effect of the linked axes of accountability is to limit the discretion of any single actor in the government to decide on the uses of the Fund.”

Hon. Minister, I am just saying that when you are closing and in your winding up, if you could, for my benefit and those thinking along my lines, not just refer us to the sections. I have read the provisions and I am satisfied that there is some kind of infrastructure in place that you propose to set up but, exactly, what are the undertakings.

It would be the equivalent to regulations that you would have for an Act which really form the lifeblood of the Act. How are you going to enforce and implement? That is what I would like to hear more of in the Minister's closing. What would be these regulations and forms of accountability both vertical and horizontal that would really give this country the assurance that not just your Government—your Government may not be the Government that is there for the next election or elections to come—but to make sure that at the end of the day, whichever party or whomever finds himself or herself in control that there is legislation in place to ensure that we do not get persons or governments on wild spending sprees, and to ensure there is really proper provision, not just in terms of provisions, but in terms of workable infrastructure and mechanisms to ensure that level of transparency and accountability. At the end of the day, this is not just our money; it is money for generations to come.

In the same way the Member for Princes Town talked about how we treated the buffalypso. Again, this is something that we should be proud of, and also the work of Dr. Steve Bennett, and today we do not know where the buffalypso has gone. What is worse is imagine we now have to import an animal that you can say, not really created but, certainly, we developed the gene pool, and we have to go begging now to territories that we exported to, and say that we need some of the very animals. If we treat animals like that and human beings are also animals, we really have to worry about how we are going to treat material objects. Therefore, hon. Minister, I am hoping that the issues that I have raised will be addressed and, with this, I thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

**Mr. Kelvin Ramnath** (*Couva South*): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is not very often that I speak this late in the evening, but I am happy to join the list of speakers who have contributed so much on this very significant piece of legislation. Almost everything that has to be said has been said, and I will just take a few minutes to emphasize some of the points which require such emphasis.

I recalled in the period 1978 to 1986, when I had the honour to sit in this House, we had established long-term development funds for the purpose of doing exactly what this piece of legislation intends to do. It was described as the “rainy day funds”. I also recalled that in a very short time the funds were depleted, because of the need for Government to use the funds to finance the expenditure of the country. I do not see anything in this legislation which will cause the Government to handle the funds in this Heritage and Stabilisation Fund in such a manner that we can be assured that the same criminal profligacy which characterized Government's spending in the post 1970 boom, would not characterize spending in the event of a drastic reduction in oil and gas prices.

I do not see anything to prevent the withdrawal of moneys, because the Government has been charged with the responsibility under the Act to have moneys withdrawn under clause 15 of the Bill, and to use that money in the way that it sees fit. We do not have any criteria other than the amount of money to be financed. I do not understand what heritage fund means. In fact, what we really have is a fund so that we can withdraw if and when necessary.

This country is one of the oldest oil provinces in the world. In fact, it was said that the first well was drilled before the Drake 1857 Well in Trinidad. If we are talking about a heritage fund, we should have a provision where a certain amount of money could be withdrawn from the fund for the purpose of protecting our heritage.

**Mr. Valley:** Member, will you please give way? I do not know whether you are saying that the amendment which says that there will be no drawing from the fund if, by such drawing, the fund would be lower than US \$1 billion. [*Crosstalk*]

**Mr. K. Ramnath:** Mr. Speaker, I am not going to debate that. I am simply saying that a portion of that fund should be used in preserving our heritage. That is all I am saying. We do not have an oil museum in this country. We have rotten equipment which could have been put into a museum to become an important place for Trinidadians and foreigners to visit. It demonstrates that we have no sense of history, and very little appreciation for the finer things in life.

**Mr. Singh:** And \$10 million has already been spent.

**Mr. K. Ramnath:** The sugar industry has been wiped out from the face of this earth, and we have no evidence—apart from the rotten Reform Factory, and the soon to be demolished Brechin Castle Factory and the Usine Ste. Madeline Factory—and nothing to show as a means of telling the world what our history has been.

**Mr. Narine:** Thank you, Member for Couva South. At the ministerial committee level, I would like to indicate to the Member for Couva South that we do have a committee that is looking at the sugar museum. They have already acquired certain assets from Caroni (1975) Limited and other areas like Woodford Lodge, so that we would establish a proper sugar Museum. I assure you that we are working very hard on that.

**Mr. K. Ramnath:** There seems to be a conspiracy to take me off. I just want to say that I wish the Minister and the Government well, because I have known of all kinds of committees over the years. I am sure that I can find in the *Hansard* a

similar statement from the hon. Member for San Fernando East when he was the Minister of Energy, talking about a petroleum museum. Mr. Speaker, it appears as though when you get into high office these esoteric matters simply fall by the wayside. So, it is a Government of lots of promises.

**Mr. Manning:** Promise.

**Mr. K. Ramnath:** I want to say, if only for the record, that we have to take a greater interest in our heritage and all of those things that comprise our heritage. It is not sufficient to say that you want to rid this country of the history of sugar, so you get rid of everything that looks like sugar and resembles sugar, and feel that by replacing the sugar plantation by a plantation of houses which are very poorly constructed without any taste; without any plan for being viable communities, and believe that you have done a great service to the people of Trinidad and Tobago. I will return to that subject very shortly.

Mr. Speaker, the point that I am making is that this legislation is really not going to control Government's spending, once oil prices drop to a level that will not permit revenues to be available to the State. We will see the disappearance of these funds in a very short time, as we have seen the frittering away of hundreds of billions of dollars under the charge of the Government.

You know, it has been a great pity, during the course of the debate, for the Prime Minister himself to criticize the Member for St. Augustine—*[Interruption]* I am like my friend from Siparia. I hold no brief, I am a Member of the House—for statements he made that the Government is in retreat. I think the Member for St. Augustine was very charitable, because what we have today is not a Government in retreat, but a Government on the romp—*[Desk thumping]*—one which has abdicated its responsibility for the prudent and efficient management of the State. *[Crosstalk]* I am not getting into that. The Prime Minister went on to deliver almost a budget speech in his contribution on what was said with respect to a Government in retreat.

I had to sit in this Parliament and listen to a lecture, not aimed at the Opposition, but aimed at certain Members of the Government's Front Bench. Mr. Speaker, whilst no names were called, I could see him looking at the faces of certain people in the Front Bench.

**Mr. Partap:** At the corner of his eyes.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar:** And watching them "coki-eye".

**Mr. K. Ramnath:** And warning them to be careful of what they say. In fact, his words were to the effect that when you are on the Opposition Benches and you

raise certain issues, then you are opening the debate, and when you are on the Government Benches and you raise certain issues you are causing the Opposition to reply. I do not know whether that was because he wanted the licence to speak on every topic before the Parliament.

When I read the speeches of the Members for Diego Martin East and Diego Martin West, I recognized that the message was directed to these two honourable gentlemen. I tried to find out what Mr. Noor Hassanali, His Excellency's pension had to do with this debate. I wanted to find out what the price of breadfruit had to do with this debate. I can help the Member for Diego Martin East. I have two fully laden breadfruit trees in my yard and I give them away.

We had to put up and endure a statement with respect to inflation that had to do with breadfruit in an oil and gas economy, from a Government that blames everybody except itself for the woes that the people of this country are facing. I never thought, beyond my wildest imagination, that breadfruit will be responsible for inflation in Trinidad—[*Laughter*—and that baigan, bodi, tomatoes, cassava, bhaji, beans and spinach will be responsible for taking up inflation from 3.9 per cent to over 10 per cent. I do not want to get involved in that matter.

It is clear that you have a Government that has lost its way; a Government that is not guided by any vision; a Government that has at its disposal, over \$40 billion a year to spend to make people in this country happy. It is clear to me that this visionless Government which is led by a visionless Prime Minister—[*Desk thumping*] whose only interest is the personal accumulation or the accumulation of personal power, to the extent that he has given his blessings to a Minister who does not come from the House of Representatives to open files on all his colleagues, and to threaten their existence in the political arena.

The file of the Member for Diego Martin East is on top of the list. I understand his anxiety. He does not support an Executive President; he does not support the building of a palace in La Fantasie grounds; he does not support the takeover of these hallowed halls of which you are the leader, Mr. Speaker, by the Prime Minister; and he does not support the almost one-man show in Trinidad and Tobago. So, he is on his way out, and I understand his anxiety.

When I came back to this House a few years ago, I know the Member for Tobago East—I went to Tobago a few days ago with the Deputy Speaker, and I gathered from good intelligence that she is also on her way out. [*Laughter*] So, in all seriousness, we all understand that we are going to—those of us who will be sitting here and those of us who will be sitting there—have the opportunity to take

note of my admonitions and warnings that this country will not tolerate and will never tolerate that. [*Desk thumping*] What we have is the increasing accumulation of power. What we have today is a Government that intends to shut up everybody who it perceives as opposing the Government.

**6.30 p.m.**

The Chief Justice of this country has been hounded out of office by the PNM led by the Prime Minister. When you take an officer of such stature in this country and you drag him before the Magistrate's Court so that he would have to sit before some low level legal functionary, many of whom cannot find employment in the private sector, abusing your power, setting up certain elements of the police in the country to arrest a man of such importance or who holds a position of such importance, it makes it clear to the world that you are trying to accumulate personal power.

The people who drafted the Constitution developed a procedure with respect to how you deal with people. If the procedure is not quite clear, as Members of this Parliament, we should make sure that we rewrite these things, because nothing prevents the Prime Minister, using the long arm of the State, from having the Chief Justice, who is acting now, arrested for drunken driving and dragged before a magistrate; nothing prevents that. Nothing prevents any member of the Judiciary from being the victim of the power hungry elements in the Government today. It is a total abuse of power and the Prime Minister is willing to pass judgment, even at this stage, on the holder of the Office of Chief Justice. I find it difficult to live in this society, in which power can be abused to that extent.

So all the money you have and all the money you are going to put in the Heritage and Stabilisation Fund will disappear because of the biblical injunction that a fool and his money shall soon be parted. You cannot and should not be allowed to abuse that power. Today, if the head of the Judiciary in this country, based on some hearsay, a man said, that he came and sought to influence the judgment, you grab him—

**Mr. Speaker:** I think you have made that point; the matter is before the court, so let us move on.

**Mr. K. Ramnath:** But you did rule, Mr. Speaker, in this House if the matter is before a judge or magistrate and not before a jury—in the case of Chandresh Sharma versus Rowley—that we were entitled to comment on it.

**Mr. Speaker:** But please, you were making an excellent contribution; I am so impressed with it, but you are sidestepping the issue now. I am always very happy to hear you, so please, continue on a good contribution.

**Mr. K. Ramnath:** Let me say that my political future has nothing to do with your good impression. *[Laughter]* *[Crosstalk]* I do not wish to involve characters; I am simply making the point that we have reached a level in the society where people can become victims of oppressive politics. I am afraid for the acting Chief Justice, who a moment ago said that I would not want to be a State witness. The acting Chief Justice is saying, I will not want to be a State witness because the State does not protect its witnesses.

That is a damning condemnation of Government and the man did not have enough time to take a breath and I hear the Attorney General saying, we have one of the best witness protection programmes in the country. We spend a great amount of money in the judicial process in the country, and when one looks at the circus that took place in the Abu Bakr trial, you ask yourself whether there can be justice or the system in Trinidad and Tobago can deliver justice.

What is the point of the Heritage and Stabilisation Fund? What is the point of increasing revenues from oil and gas and so forth, when the body politic is infested with people who have no vision and whose only vision, if one exists, is to accumulate personal power? *[Desk thumping]* I am worried, the PNM has used its elements in the police force to terrorize the former Leader of the Opposition by continually invading his privacy; by continually searching his home and finding nothing and sending these policemen who enjoy this process of humiliation; enjoy it. In addition to which, you have an Attorney General who sent the police to raid the home of the former Leader of the Opposition, calling for an investigation and then giving an opinion after he had sent these crooks into the home of the former Leader of the Opposition; an investigation, himself to himself.

These are important issues; you will not want that to happen to you. If I am entrusted with ministerial responsibility I shall never do that to you. I will let the course of justice take place; but I will not victimize you.

**Mr. Manning:** I will not have \$1 million in an account.

**Mr. K. Ramnath:** You do not have any evidence of anything, which is why you could never win any case. Except you use a magistrate to do your bidding and all this nonsense about convict and so on. Any magistrate could convict you and you are awaiting the process of appeal and so on, but you are regarded as a convicted felon. By whom? A man who got 100 acres of Caroni lands in La Gloria Estate with trucks, trailers and jeeps to harvest; a man who—

**Mr. Valley:** Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, 36(10), please. [*Desk thumping*]  
[*Crosstalk*]

**Mr. Speaker:** Please, I am on my feet. I was looking at it myself. I do not think he has quite breached that particular Standing Order. [*Interruption*] No, well I hope he does not do it.

**Hon. Member:** He is close.

**Mr. Speaker:** He is close to it, but please, I think the hon. Member knows better. [*Crosstalk*]

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar:** But it is true; it is true.

**Hon. Member:** But you should not talk, man.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar:** You pretending you do not know that; it is true.

**Hon. Member:** “Yeah”, you pretending you do not know.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar:** Ask your Minister of Agriculture.

**Hon. Member:** But we know.

**Mr. K. Ramnath:** You see, Mr. Speaker, I am not going to smear the character of anybody. All I am saying to you is you have a system that allows—  
[*Interruption*]

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar:** You do not ever get to speak in the Parliament; just leave me alone.

**Hon. Member:** I am sorry for you.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order!

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar:** Mr. Speaker—

**Mr. K. Ramnath:** You have a system that allows and perpetuates very serious issues that can destroy the life of people. I am for doing the time—as you all used to say—if you do the crime; I have no problem with that. They have hounded down the Member for Caroni East; they have smeared his name—

**Mr. Manning:** Who?

**Hon. Members:** You! You!

**Mr. K. Ramnath:** The PNM!

**Hon. Members:** You have smeared his good name.

**Mr. K. Ramnath:** Yes, they have caused to be planted, Mr. Speaker; allegedly planted cocaine, ammunition and so on. He has reported the matter to the police. They would do that to their own members when they want to get rid of them. [*Crosstalk*]

**Mr. Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. K. Ramnath:** My concern is that we are returning to the days of Randolph Burroughs and his gang; whatever it was called then—

**Hon. Members:** Flying Squad.

**Mr. K. Ramnath:** —the Flying Squad; who felt they had a divine right to do anything they wanted. You might very well discover, Mr. Speaker, that if you give a ruling that they do not like your home could be searched as well. The Prime Minister must take note of these things; it is important for him to take note. People like me and others are afraid to live in this country. You can be the victim of some passer-by shooting. I went to church on Old Year’s night—

**Mr. Manning:** “Doh make joke”; which church? [*Crosstalk*] [*Laughter*]

**Hon. Member:** “Ooh good!”

**Mr. K. Ramnath:** —and I read the scriptures from the pulpit.

**Mr. Manning:** Which church?

**Mr. K. Ramnath:** St. Paul’s letters to the Ephesians.

**Hon. Members:** Oooh!

**Mr. K. Ramnath:** I was not like you feting in Soong’s or wherever you went; I keep tabs on you. The point I want to make, Mr. Speaker—

**Mr. Manning:** I think the hon. Member for Couva South knows very well that on Old Year’s night I was not feting in any Soong’s or any such place; that my wife and I attended All Saints Church on Marli Street, as we always do every Old Year’s night in some church. The difference between him and I is that I could identify the church to which I had gone; regrettably, we have not been similarly circumstanced by the Member for Couva South. [*Desk thumping*] [*Laughter*]

**Mr. K. Ramnath:** I come from a proud history of being a Presbyterian, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Manning:** Which church?

**Mr. K. Ramnath:** And I attend the Arunudi Presbyterian Church and in English it is called the “early dawn”. It is the church of my forefathers.

**Hon. Member:** What is the address of the church? [*Crosstalk*]

**Mr. K. Ramnath:** Balmain. He is trying to distract me. What he is trying to do is to distract me. [*Interruption*]

I was raised by the Canadian missionaries because I came from a system of oppression and I continue to live under a system of oppression under neo-colonial masters. [*Laughter*] We have said from this side a lot about crime and so on. My concern is not only the level of crime in the society, but the thinking coming from the Government that is, one of persecution of those who do not support what they do.

I was at a press conference earlier today where the Leader of the Opposition spoke about this decision by the Attorney General to swiftly move for the Chief Justice to pay costs; a letter being sent to the Solicitor General to have it waived and before the Solicitor General could be appointed, a decision was taken and I want to find out whether the Prime Minister paid his cost, which amounted to over \$1 million. After an application was made it took them over four years to even consider the application and he had not paid. You want to speak?

**Mr. Manning:** Yes, of course. Mr. Speaker, the Member for Couva South is best described as mischief incarnate.

**Mr. K. Ramnath:** No, no, no, I will not tolerate giving you my time to speak to me like that.

**Mr. Manning:** Okay, that is fine. I think the Member for Couva South knows very well that of all public officials who have ever been charged, the person who has paid the most to the State is me. That my charges amounted to \$1.1 million and so far payments to the State have exceeded half a million dollars and he knows that.

**Mr. K. Ramnath:** I am glad he has admitted; he is a good Christian. He owes about \$1.1 million at this stage with interest. [*Laughter*]

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar:** That is right and that debt is since 1997.

**Mr. K. Ramnath:** But you know, he had not paid since about 2002; so he has paid no money, but his good friend who is a Minister of the Government, Sen. Dr. Lenny Saith, was forgiven \$11 million or well let us say it is more; debt forgiveness. The Chief Justice—forget who the holder of the position is—is the third highest office in the land, challenges in the court an attempt by the Government to get rid of him and we have a system which says that he should pay costs in such a situation. This is not a case where two people are fighting over property and so on and they have gone to court; this is a case where a most senior official of the State is being attacked by the Government; by the crime instituted

by the Prime Minister and then is called upon to pay costs in a matter. Something is wrong with this system. I do not think that the Prime Minister should have had to pay cost in a matter relating to the Parliament. [*Crosstalk*]

I am dealing with a very important point and I am hearing some asides there from the Member for Diego Martin East, who had his chance to speak. We cannot run a democracy with this kind of vindictive action. [*Desk thumping*] And it is as a result of the behaviour of governments that lesser mortals in the society are perhaps taking in their own hands the law and creating many problems for us; we set no example.

So the Attorney General is very active collecting money from the Chief Justice. A man who has been the victim of conspiracy by the Government, headed by the Prime Minister, is called upon to pay cost in a matter where he is defending himself and defending his office. I ask the Prime Minister if he went to church because he believes in the Christian doctrine, whether that is the way, or he is a Moses follower perhaps, an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. You see this is what power does to you.

So I want to say that in spite of all the money available, in spite of all the blessings on this State, the Government is like a blight. [*Desk thumping*] We cannot move; we suffer from inertia; it is difficult to move this society forward. Every time you talk about where we are going they talk about how many billions have been allocated and have been spent, and there are floods everywhere. They have been building Caparo dam since the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. We are going to deal with the flooding caused by the overflowing banks of the Caroni River. We are going to deal with the flooding in Penal, where people depend on subsistence agriculture for a living. We are going to deal with the level of crime in the society. In the Freeport Police Station they usually have three policemen at night and sometimes when one is absent none of the two can leave to go on a patrol. If you go to the Couva Police Station, the St. Margaret's Police Station, the same thing happens.

People who use the highway will tell you that you have no protection from the police in the country. Once in a while you see a small car, 1500 cc, with lights on, warning the public they are on the way and providing no support for the people who are victims of the road hogs and people who are the victims of criminal elements. But they walk into Panday's house with submachine guns and eight police officers to search on a regular basis. And they rejoice; they rejoice in that, but police is not there to protect anybody in the country. If we have to double the police force in this country we should do it and find the money to pay for it. But

the police cannot be led by a visionless leader, one who has not established a code of conduct for his Ministers and for the people who administer government services in the country.

So what is the point of all this money? To pay salaries? To buy spying equipment? To build a rail in 20 years' time? It is a set of "ol' talk"; it is election time so we are going to build rail. It is not taking us anywhere because the citizen does not feel protected in a society with a lot of money that we can put into a Heritage and Stabilisation Fund. The quality of life in this country has deteriorated to an all time low and the question people are asking is: Why is it we cannot live a happier life when there is an abundance of oil revenues and oil wealth?

I listened to the Prime Minister when he spoke and I listened to his message to the nation. The debt to GDP ratio has dropped from 20.5 to 11.5. The external debt to GDP, expenditure \$4 billion in 2001 to \$12 billion in 2005; imports from \$3.5 billion to \$7.1 billion; reserves from \$1.876 billion to \$6.47 billion, to \$8.2 billion in the current year.

This is the message of hope, but nothing about what has happened to health care in the country. Nothing about what has happened to dealing with crime in the society, which affects everybody. Oil reserves, \$10.8 trillion in 2005; gas reserves, I beg your pardon, in 2006, \$16.3 billion and in 2007 it will be about \$17.7 billion. The Prime Minister does not understand that the purpose of all of these resources; the exploitation of these resources; the money that comes from these resources is to ensure that we have a happier life for all our citizens.

You know I am reminded about a statement coming from one Dr. Petronella Manning—I do not know if the good lady is related to the present Prime Minister—lamenting the increase in mortality rate in the health services of this country, not only on one occasion but on several occasions. When they have problems delivering health care, they create a fight with the doctors of the country and instead of attending to outstanding matters, which the doctors are legitimately complaining about; that is having their pensions transferred and giving them the security of tenure they have as public servants, you have this Minister who says, you can resign. You do not have enough medical personnel in Trinidad, but you have those who are talking about "resign".

What do we have, Mr. Speaker? A set of statistics. Do you know what worried me most? It is a statement coming from the leader of this country talking about establishing mixed communities. I do not think that the Minister of Housing has ever articulated a housing policy and included in that policy, is a policy on mixed

communities. I really want to find out whether you are going to enquire from applicants what race they belong to, so that you can say I am going to have so many Whites, Chinese, Indians and Africans distributed in a certain proportion. And to talk about mixed communities in the society, in which the population is almost evenly divided, is to indicate that the Government is prepared to adopt a racist policy with respect to housing development. [*Desk thumping*] But I would have liked to hear a statement coming from the Minister of Housing, as to whether that statement that emanated from the Prime Minister in fact is part of Government policy. Those are things you have to be careful about in a society that is so sensitive.

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

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

*Question put and agreed to.*

**Mr. K. Ramnath:** Thank you, very much, Mr. Speaker and hon. Members. My concern what is the kind of leadership that is characterizing this nation of ours. I find it very difficult when other Ministers—particularly those who are not elected to office—will quickly join the bandwagon to talk such undiluted piffle. And in order to secure the favour of one sort or another, they will quickly support the rubbish that is being spouted by the Prime Minister.

I live next to the Couva NHA housing; in fact I live very close and in the 1980s 1,007 units were constructed. They could not find seven Indians to put in 1,007 units. I do not know whether the policy of mixed communities now will mean that they will evict some of the people there and they will bring some others in, but that will be a ridiculous thing to do. If you go into La Horquetta or you go into Maloney or you go into Pleasantville, you will see that there are no mixed communities; they are all Government housing. You know they are quick to talk about the private housing in the country, whether it is Lange Park, or Palmiste, or Westmoorings or wherever, they are generally not mixed communities.

**7.00 p.m.**

A government that has a responsibility for ensuring equity in the system and ensuring that houses are given to those in need rather than what they look like or which political party they support is talking such nonsense. Is that the word? Arrant nonsense. I heard the Prime Minister's most recent statement: squatters

from San Fernando East can now go on Caroni lands. Is that, Minister of Housing, a policy of the Government? Because I have squatters in Couva South; there are squatters in Caroni East, Caroni Central and Siparia.

**Mr. Manning:** Mr. Speaker, in central Trinidad the decision of the Government now is to construct, and I think it has worked up to something like 22,000 lots; 7,000 of those are reserved for former workers of Caroni and the rest will go on the market. When I say market, the market for allocation by the State in accordance with our housing policy and everybody has access to that including the squatters, and including squatters from Couva South. [*Interruption*]

**Mr. Singh:** How you established that?

**Mr. Manning:** Need. [*Crosstalk*]

**Mr. K. Ramnath:** This statement is nothing new but it adds a different dimension now to my contribution. The price of the lot to the public will be the same price paid by the sugar workers. It is very interesting how he has his private conversation and then when I say something that offends him he gets up quickly. [*Laughter*]

**Dr. Moonilal:** He can multi-task.

**Mr. K. Ramnath:** Sugar workers were allocated a lot, Mr. Speaker, as part of their compensation—

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar:** But they are paying for it.

**Mr. K. Ramnath:**—compensation for under the VSEP. You are saying that the general public will have equal opportunity as the persons who have received lots for which they must pay on the basis of a Voluntary Separation Employee Programme. And I am not saying that people should not pay, but if someone who was not being compensated under VSEP has to pay the same price as someone who is outside of that system then something is wrong, and what should be done if they should waive the cost of the land for sugar workers in the circumstances—

**Hon. Members:** Yes. [*Desk thumping*]

**Mr. K. Ramnath:**—they should have to pay. I am not asking you to raise the price for those from outside the industry but you cannot have those from outside the industry enjoying the same benefit as those who have been compensated under VSEP. And I have no problem, Mr. Speaker, but I would like to find out whether it is the Ministry of Housing or the Housing Development Corporation that will administer this programme.

**Mr. Valley:** Yes.

**Mr. K. Ramnath:** You do not have any say in this matter. You could not even talk about what to do with BWEE. [*Laughter*] I know you would have kept BWEE if you had your way. [*Laughter*]

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar:** That is true; he is a good Caribbean person.

**Mr. K. Ramnath:** One of problems we have, Mr. Speaker, is that you have the Estate Management Development Company led by a “fella” called Uthara Rao.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar:** He is still there?

**Mr. K. Ramnath:** And Mr. Uthara Rao is a lord unto himself.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar:** Predator.

**Mr. K. Ramnath:** Yes. And he and his little group of appointees, appointed by the Prime Minister and a certain section of the PNM, they are the ones who are determining what is happening in Caroni lands. Why is the Housing Development Corporation, which is the body that is supposed to implement government policy on housing not involved in that?

**Mr. Manning:** They are involved!

**Mr. K. Ramnath:** They are absolutely not involved!

**Mr. Manning:** They are involved!

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar:** The Minister of Housing is not saying a word.

**Mr. K. Ramnath:** But you know I understand their problem because the mandate given to the Minister of Housing to construct a certain number of houses according to PNM policy has been, in fact, effected! And that is a threat! That poses a serious threat to the Prime Minister. [*Interruption*]

**Mr. Manning:** What do you mean he got fired?

**Mr. K. Ramnath:** Like you got fired before. So what I am saying, Mr. Speaker, [*Interruption*] that they are allowing their internal problems—

**Mr. Imbert:** What is he talking about?

**Mr. K. Ramnath:**—to interfere with the rights of citizens who should be enjoying property on the basis of need. I am sure that the 20,000 lots which the Prime Minister [*Interruption*] has indicated that the 20,000 houses—

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar:** Twenty two thousand.

**Mr. K. Ramnath:**—22,000 housing lots will be made available to the public. What assurance is he prepared to give this Parliament that those who are in need across the country will in fact have a fair and equal chance to the ownership of one of these lots?

**Mr. Manning:** Yes, Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. Member for giving way on yet another occasion. The Cabinet considered this matter yesterday, actually. Yesterday! And the Cabinet decision indeed, involves the HDC using established allocation criteria for determining who the beneficiaries are.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar:** Which are?

**Mr. Manning:** A statement will be made before the House in due course and all of that, but essentially, it is a question of need. And let me also say this, because of that policy of the Government the effect of that for sugar workers has been a significant reduction in the cost, the price at which the land will now become available to them. In fact the price of the land has fallen for sugar workers from somewhere between \$75,000 and \$80,000.

**Mr. Imbert:** One hundred and twenty thousand dollars.

**Mr. Manning:** Actually, the cost from about \$120,000 to between \$20,000 and \$30,000. That is what is happening when it comes to sugar workers.

**Mr. K. Ramnath:** And would that cost be the same cost to the public?

**Mr. Manning:** Yes.

**Mr. K. Ramnath:** But you were not listening to what I was saying. [*Interruption*] That sugar workers received that price and a lot of land as part of their VSEP compensation. [*Crosstalk*]

**Mr. Valley:** Nonsense! Please.

**Mr. K. Ramnath:** That the general public should not have the same treatment. That is all I am saying!

**Mr. Valley:** Nonsense!

**Mr. Imbert:** What!

**Mr. Manning:** Mr. Speaker, what happened, is that the sugar workers were dealt with first and we established a price at which the sugar workers will have access to the land. Subsequent to that, the Government firmed up its policy for land distribution and availability to the public at a price significantly lower than

the price at which the sugar workers would have had access to it, as a consequence of which in the interest of equity everybody was now given the same price. So the sugar workers had benefited considerably as a consequence of the policy that the Government has now enunciated on this matter. [*Crosstalk*]

**Mr. K. Ramnath:** The Prime Minister, obviously, does not want to understand the truth. I am saying that the lands that are to be distributed to sugar workers were distributed on the basis of compensation based on a VSEP agreement.

**Hon. Members:** No.

**Mr. Imbert:** No, they got access; first choice.

**Mr. K. Ramnath:** Compensation, Mr. Speaker. It was part of the agreement; it is a matter before the courts of the country.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar:** To develop equity in the land.

**Mr. K. Ramnath:** And the agreement signed between the All Trinidad Sugar Estate & Factory Workers Trade and the other unions with Caroni Limited, was that they will get a lot of land and they will pay a price for it.

**Mr. Manning:** Yes.

**Mr. K. Ramnath:** I am saying, Mr. Speaker, that if you are going to distribute the same quality of land in the same environment to people outside of the sugar industry then you should remove the price that sugar workers must pay and they must pay far less than those who are coming in.

**Mr. Manning:** Mr. Speaker, the difference between the sugar worker and the rest of the national community is that the sugar worker is guaranteed a lot whereas nobody else is.

**Mr. Imbert:** Exactly.

**Mr. K. Ramnath:** Mr. Speaker, I have never heard such donkey logic in my whole life but I have made my point. They have guaranteed a lot. [*Interruption*] But he said it will be distributed on the basis of Government policy, and I am saying, and without apology, the PNM housing distribution policy has been biased against Indians. [*Desk thumping*] And if people are not afraid, either on your side or this side to say that, I am not afraid.

**Mr. Imbert:** We on this side will say you are going mad.

**Mr. K. Ramnath:** Your policy has demonstrated that there is a bias against Indians with respect to distribution of State lands [*Interruption*] and housing and you must do something about it.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar:** Tell him again about La Horquetta and Balmain and the others. [*Inaudible*]

**Mr. K. Ramnath:** We have to face the truth. Do not shake your head and conclude that I am making trouble.

**Mr. Manning:** I am only shaking my own head. [*Inaudible*]

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar:** You cannot shake it.

**Mr. Manning:** I can shake my head.

**Dr. Moonilal:** So why you complained when Dookeran used to shake his head. [*Laughter*] [*Crosstalk*]

**Mr. K. Ramnath:** Mr. Speaker, the empirical evidence—[*Interruption*] I am not getting into that. You do not know we might be sitting together in government. [*Laughter*] You do not know! And those who feel they are close to you may be out completely, [*Laughter*] having regard to your propensity for the personal accumulation of power.

**Mr. Manning:** This man. Listen; this man—run you run.

**Mr. K. Ramnath:** So, Mr. Speaker, I am very concerned and I warn the Prime Minister, and I am going to say it publicly, I am going to be on the streets campaigning for equality with respect to the distribution of land; it does not matter where it is, whether it is land in Port of Spain or whether—basis of need.

They could say what they want, I am saying, in a country like Trinidad and Tobago, blessed with enormous wealth, [*Interruption*] we must make sure that the dispossessed people are treated with equality by the State. That is part of the Constitution of this country, but you see it offends them because their policy has always been to dispossess people who they believe do not support them.

[*Mr. Valley sighs and laughs*]

**Mr. K. Ramnath:** Yes, you should be sleeping all now man.

**Mr. Valley:** I am telling you.

**Mr. K. Ramnath:** You should be sleeping. This is an issue, Mr. Speaker, which is going to be very well articulated in the months to come; very well articulated. [*Interruption*] Because what has happened, Mr. Speaker, is that a Government without vision; without the ability to plan and without planning for a future has now resorted to primordial instincts. Their position is to give the impression to the country that they support one group of citizens. They have failed their

supporters; they have failed them miserably. They cannot provide them with healthcare; they cannot provide them with sustainable jobs. They have wasted the money, they cannot run an airline. When the UNC was in power BWEE was making a profit.

**Hon. Member:** Not true.

**Dr. Moonilal:** It is true. [*Crosstalk*]

**Mr. K. Ramnath:** They cannot run anything, Mr. Speaker. The only thing that they have going for them is the generosity of the Arabs and Chavez keeping oil price at a level that we can benefit, and in the process they are wasting the patrimony of the State. So what do they do? They have continued a policy of voter padding through the process of house padding, and the policy is to move who they perceived as their supporters into areas which they perceive to be Opposition areas. We can have no democracy in the country when you can rig elections based on bribery such as providing housing accommodation on the basis of party support and these are very important issues for peace and stability in the country.

In addition to which, Mr. Speaker, when you have people of one race being the victim of kidnap; when you have people being the victims of crime and the Government is hopeless in dealing with these things; a society can fragment more than it has ever fragmented as a result of that kind of policy. [*Interruption*] But the Government does not care about that, they are quick to shout “race”. They are not concerned about equity and they are not concerned about equality. They are concerned about one thing, how to stay in power. I want to remind them that people in Trinidad and Tobago are coming of age in terms of defending their democracy.

The recent decision by the Government to back off with an aluminium smelter in Chatham was as a result of the pressures being brought on the Government. I know my friend from Point Fortin may not have liked that decision, but the fact is that people are becoming aware of their rights, and it is not as a result of politicians interfering or intervening on behalf of the people. It is as a result of the determination of the people to ensure that their rights are not trampled upon. When I hear this ludicrous argument that we are going to build an island in the sea; I have never heard such rubbish in my life; building an island in the sea to put down a smelter. [*Interruption*] What they will be doing is modelling the exhaust plume to determine where it will fall, to determine where the island will be constructed, because the issue there is the fallout of hydrogen fluoride which is a deadly gas.

I was about to bring a photograph of a smelter in Butte, Montana to show the world what happens around an aluminium smelter and then I am told that the Prime Minister, in his wisdom, decides to construct an island offshore. [*Interruption*]

The Member for Point Fortin will tell you that the Clifton Hill Beach disappeared into the ocean from the moment Atlantic LNG was constructed and a port was developed and the area dredged. The Prime Minister knows, Mr. Speaker, what happens in the marine environment; you change wave energy and you change current direction. So the dredging of the Point Fortin area to accommodate Atlantic LNG vessels resulted in a change of wave energy and current direction that took away the entire beach. The building of an island off Otaheite will have significant negative impacts on the area surrounding Otaheite; there will be a change of wave energy—

**Mr. Manning:** Show me the EIA! Show me where the EIA says that!

**Mr. K. Ramnath:** I do not have to do the EIA; you have to do the EIA.

**Mr. Manning:** Well you would just talk nonsense.

**Mr. K. Ramnath:** No, I am an expert in EIA.

**Mr. Manning:** But what makes you say these things?

**Mr. K. Ramnath:** You have done no EIA, but I have done modelling of the Gulf of Paria.

**Hon. Member:** What qualifications do you have?

**Mr. Manning:** I see!

**Mr. K. Ramnath:** And I am in the process of now doing a storm search model with the experts to look at the impact of storm surges category 2 and 5 hurricane scenarios.

**Mr. Manning:** So when you do it tell me what you find. Do not tell me now.

**Mr. K. Ramnath:** Oh, I will be glad to put you in a room and lecture to you. [*Interruption*] And I will send you copies of the reports. I have sent to the Minister of the Environment, but you do not read. [*Interruption*] You have stopped reading technical literature because your focus is on Machiavelli.

So, Mr. Speaker, when you make these statements as a Prime Minister [*Interruption*] having retreated [*Interruption*] and having abandoned his failed ideas in Chatham, he has now come to impose it on the people of Otaheite. And I

ask myself: What is driving this process? What is driving it? *[Interruption]* You do not have to build an aluminium smelter to develop an aluminium industry.

**Mr. Singh:** Agreed.

**Mr. K. Ramnath:** I disagreed with the Member for Diego Martin West when he made a statement in this House about the high price of steel coming from Ispat.

**Dr. Moonilal:** That Member is very quiet today.

**Mr. K. Ramnath:** Ispat does not subsidize anybody or Mittal Steel—*[Interruption]* I just want to finish this point.

**Mr. Manning:** Before you finish.

**Mr. K. Ramnath:** You anxiously jumped into the debate; you wish now you could have replied to me.

**Mr. Manning:** I have another debate to reply to; you do not worry, I have time.

**Mr. K. Ramnath:** Mittal Steel, Mr. Speaker—*[Interruption]* I will come to you in a little while. *[Interruption]* This is a “fella” who built a little piece of ramp about 100 feet for \$30 million.

**Dr. Moonilal:** It capsized.

**Mr. K. Ramnath:** And there is no stability on that ramp. I tried driving myself there; for \$30 million. *[Interruption]* Waste of Government funds and six years later he is talking about building flyover and so on.

**Mr. Partap:** And he built a stadium and it “blow away”.

**Mr. K. Ramnath:** A stadium in Grenada that became the victim of a hurricane.

**Mr. Singh:** He said he built it for one— *[Inaudible]*

**Mr. K. Ramnath:** After he built the stadium the court ruled that he owed Emile Elias \$30 million. He is a man to be declared bankrupt very soon; he will not be able to run for election.

**Mr. Imbert:** Seven years you are saying that. That is a long time to be saying that, you know. Seven years.

**Mr. K. Ramnath:** All I am saying to the Prime Minister is that when you come up with these ideas you should research them properly.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Mad cap ideas.

**Mr. K. Ramnath:** Mittal Steel will sell you steel rods at the world market price. They have to please their shareholders. They just bought Arcelor for \$34 billion. They have just decided to go into a big investment in India. They are in Quebec and they are in Mexico. They are not here for our benefit. They are here to utilize competitive gas prices for their benefit and that is what business it is all about. What are the downstream industries that have flowed from establishing Ispat? What are the industries?

I can see the decision to have SR steel from iron ore to palletizing and to rolling of sheets as having the potential for the manufacture of refrigerators, car bodies and so on. But all I am saying, Mr. Speaker—

**Hon. Member:** You are correct. Your policy changed.

**Mr. K. Ramnath:**—with respect to aluminium, you can buy aluminium ingots, and billets and create an aluminium industry in Trinidad. You do not have to destroy the ecology and the environment in the process. [*Desk thumping*] [*Interruption*]

I find you take a little of my time—

**Mr. Manning:** That is all right; it is a debate and that we are speaking here so that the public could benefit—

**Mr. K. Ramnath:** You are having several bites of the cherry.

**Mr. Manning:** It is fine; it is all right, as a result of your very kind courtesy for which I will be eternally grateful.

**Dr. Moonilal:** It looks like Adesh is your dentist.

**Mr. Manning:** Mr. Speaker, the experience worldwide is that the downstream industries from aluminium are normally established very close to the markets. Since the domestic market of Trinidad and Tobago is so small that it cannot sustain these industries and all of them will therefore will be for export purposes, on what basis does the hon. Member for Couva South believe that some downstreamer will choose to select Trinidad and Tobago for the establishment of a downstream industry without the domestic availability of aluminium? On what basis would he want to do that?

**Mr. K. Ramnath:** You know, Mr. Speaker, they are almost totally unrelated and I will tell you why. If the downstreamer is interested in aluminium wheels as Alutrint claims it is interested in, or our products which are marketable, say in the United States, that has nothing to do with the source of raw material.

**Mr. Manning:** It must!

**Mr. K. Ramnath:** No! Alcoa will never sell you aluminium at a reduced price in Trinidad.

**Mr. Manning:** But this is precisely the reason why the Venezuelan company came out of the Alcoa arrangement and entered into its own arrangements with Alutrint, for precisely that purpose; so that you can have access to aluminium at prices that give you a competitive advantage in the international market.

**Mr. Singh:** Because Ken Julien undermined Alcoa. [*Inaudible*]

**Mr. K. Ramnath:** Mr. Speaker, the entire production of the proposed Alcoa plant was scheduled for export; the entire production, and I think the Prime Minister understands that well, so none of that production was going into downstream. Alcoa will not give any concession with respect to their production because the very establishment of that plant was prefaced on an export market, so they secured that market. They cannot wait until you have a mature downstream industry here to determine how much they will allocate to you.

In the case of Alutrint, Mr. Speaker, more than 60 to 70 per cent of their production is slated for export.

**Mr. Manning:** Off course!

**Mr. K. Ramnath:** The Prime Minister is saying this, but I know that, as a fact I have read it. The Prime Minister has stated that the basis for having a downstream industry will be supported by the ready availability of raw material. [*Interruption*] And I am saying that Alutrint is not going to subsidize any downstream plant in this period of globalization.

So what you are going to benefit from is that tranche of gas which you own. It is not owned by the NGC; it is owned by you. Because when I asked NGC the question they said they will only transport the gas; it is the Government of Trinidad and Tobago that will determine what price they will sell the gas for.

**Mr. Manning:** Correct; in lieu of royalties.

**Mr. K. Ramnath:** So that gas, Mr. Speaker, which was supposed to go for the generation of power is still going for the generation of power but not for the national grid; it is going for generation of power to supply cheap electricity to plant.

**Mr. Manning:** Who said that it was going for generation of power? Who said that?

**Mr. K. Ramnath:** That was the agreement between you and the supplier of the gas, and you said that to the country, that it was going to benefit the supply of power generation to the country.

**Mr. Manning:** Mr. Speaker, we wanted to adjust the royalty rates [*Interruption*] for certain companies in the country; the company was BP. There is a pass through clause; if you increase the royalty rates then you have to pass that increase on to the consumer and you will present the consumer with higher prices.

What the Government of Trinidad and Tobago decided to do to avoid—when I say the consumer this is the utilizer; the ammonia and methanol plants—the utilizer of the gas to avoid them having an uneconomic gas input price; we decided instead of taking it in cash; if we took it in kind it does not affect that price. So we took it in gas and it puts the Government in a position then to determine the price of that gas and to utilize a policy that is designed to foster our industrialization objective. It takes a very forward thinking and innovative government to do that. It is beyond the understanding of my friend. [*Interruption*]

**Mr. K. Ramnath:** I have lost a lot of my time, Mr. Speaker, and I hope you will give me some injury—how many minutes do I have?

**Mr. Speaker:** I have to give you injury time; you will have to finish at 7.30. [*Interruption*]

**Mr. K. Ramnath:** That cannot be injury time; that means I have two minutes. That cannot be injury time; he has spoken for 15 minutes.

**Mr. Manning:** Oh my goodness!

**Mr. Speaker:** At your pleasure.

**Mr. K. Ramnath:** Yes. Oh, I will now learn; it should never be at my pleasure anymore.

**Mr. Imbert:** It is not too late; you have 15 seconds.

**Mr. K. Ramnath:** Let me make the point, the Government did not wish to impose the royalty on gas for several reasons [*Interruption*] so they ring fenced the Train 4; is that true? And they have to pay royalty on that gas. [*Interruption*] Because of an agreement between the Government of Trinidad and Tobago and BP in the past that they will postpone the royalty increase, [*Interruption*] a decision was taken that the Government will take gas in lieu of that royalty because we had an arrangement with the Train 1, Train 2 and so on. It does not mean that you can take that gas and give it to whoever you wish.

**Mr. Singh:** Absolutely!

**Mr. K. Ramnath:** You told the country that it was going to be used for power generation to keep the price of electricity down. *[Interruption]* That is what you said. Now you are going to give aluminium companies which will not subsidize the price of the raw material so that we can have *[Interruption]* cheap manufacturing and that is what people are concerned about.

**Mr. Manning:** What the gas will be used for?

**Mr. K. Ramnath:** The gas will be used for power generation for the plant. *[Interruption]*

**Mr. Speaker:** I must indicate to you as a good Christian, you allowed another good Christian a little latitude but unfortunately your time is up. *[Desk thumping]* The hon. Minister of Health.

**7.30 p.m.**

**The Minister of Health (Hon. John Rahael):** Mr. Speaker, I rise to make a contribution on the Bill to provide for the establishment and management of the Heritage and Stabilisation Fund and for matters related thereto. What a pleasure it is to participate in a debate that is establishing this heritage and stabilisation fund. It is a debate that certainly one will take pleasure in making a contribution towards. It is a Bill in order to ensure that we create—*[Interruption]*

#### ADJOURNMENT

**The Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley):** Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this House do now adjourn to Wednesday, January 17, 2006 at 1.30 p.m. Members are informed that Finance Committee will meet on Wednesday after which, Mr. Speaker, my colleague, Minister Rahael will continue his contribution on this very important debate and then we will follow the Order Paper. The Government plans to do two other Bills on that day.

**Mr. Speaker:** Before I put the Motion for the adjournment to the House, there is a matter to be raised by the hon. Member for Chaguanas.

#### **Increase in Old Age Pension (Failure to Pay)**

**Mr. Manohar Ramsaran (Chaguanas):** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to debate this very important matter; it is the Government's failure to pay the increase in old age pension of \$200 as promised by the Prime Minister in his budget statement.

Mr. Speaker, senior citizens who reach age 60 and above face a very bleak future. I say this because in their productive years they may have not saved enough to provide for their retirement. Maybe in earlier years they envisioned a senior citizens' grant sum that they would have generally believed to be enough senior citizens' grant to carry them through their later years. People who are now 60 to 65 and in their productive years maybe in the '60s and '70s would have believed that the sum of money that they were working for then—and I am sure we will all remember those days when we were working for \$100 per month and believed that if we worked for \$1,200 per year we could have saved for the rainy day. In my own case, I remember my first insurance policy was for \$5,000 and I thought that was a huge sum of money. But with today's prices, what has happened over time from the 1960s to now, what people earned for their 40 years of employment for those who have been in productive employment or not, we see today that the economy cannot sustain them with what they have saved and I take that into consideration.

The hon. Prime Minister announced in his budget presentation that certain things would happen. I want to remind this honourable House of what transpired on that day. I re-read this into the record to show what happens when people speak in this Parliament. The hon. Prime Minister himself reminded us recently that when you come to this Parliament and make statements, the people out there would believe you and when they believe you and you disappoint them, just imagine it.

Mr. Speaker, people have been coming to me and I wrote various letters to the Minister of Social Development asking him to explain what was said here and what is being done. So I am not saying this without first having attempted to clarify matters with the Minister. Let me remind this honourable House what happened and I am quoting:

“Hon. Members will recall that effective October 1<sup>st</sup> 2004, the maximum Old Age Pension was increased from \$1,000 per month to \$1,150 per month. The Government has reviewed the distribution of the Old Age Pension to be renamed Senior Citizens' Grant and we now propose the following amendment:”

Mr. Speaker, I pause here. The Government has reviewed the distribution of the Old Age Pension and renamed it the Senior Citizens' Grant. If I remember correctly, this was supposed to be dealt with by amendments to the Pension Act which should have been brought to this House long ago. But again, due to the carelessness of the Government, as I said before, that has retreated; they have not brought to Parliament this piece of legislation which will give effect to the

renaming of the Old Age Pension Act to Senior Citizens' Grant. That piece of legislation would also give the Government the authority to increase the old age pension. This has not been done and again, we cannot help but say that this Government has lost its way. The Ministers maybe are frolicking and having a good time while the country burns.

I continue:

“With effect from October 01, 2006, there will be only one qualifying income ceiling, that is, income not exceeding \$2,150 per month;”

I pause to tell you that numerous people who would fall within this system would come to my office, call me or call my colleagues enquiring what has happened. When I called the welfare offices, they said no such directives came to them and I consider this, again, to be irresponsible. You are dealing with old age pension, you are dealing with senior citizens and you have this happening. I wrote the hon. Minister and he promised me with effect from next year this will happen, which of course is 2007.

Mr. Speaker, I told people to go to their nearest offices to find out about this and they were turned away. They cannot believe what they read in the newspaper; they cannot believe what the Prime Minister said until they get something in writing. This is how we deal with the senior citizens of Trinidad and Tobago which this Government considers and always says that they care for. If you do not care about the senior citizens, I am afraid that this Government is really misleading this country.

I am reading this, Mr. Speaker, because I would like the Government to get this right. The hon. Minister was kind enough to say that under the last administration, I attempted to do this, and of course it did not happen, but he came and did it. Three months later nothing has happened and I am very concerned because as he himself admitted, I was pursuing this a long while ago.

I continue:

“Under the current system, a person whose income exceeds \$100 per month but does not exceed \$1,000 per month receives a basic pension of \$1,050. It is proposed that with effect from January 01, 2007, this person will now receive a Senior Citizens' Grant of \$1,150 per month, an increase of \$100 per month.”

Then the hon. Prime Minister when he wound up the debate announced another \$100, increasing this by \$200. The date is January 01, 2007. This time has passed. I saw no advertisement in the newspaper saying why this was not done, that is

why I raise the matter this evening to remind the Minister, on behalf of the senior citizens who came to me. Maybe because of the impending increase, they over spent at Christmas and when they looked forward to their new cheques, they did not receive any. This to me is a promise to senior citizens who have no other form of income and who will be depending on this increase. This Government promised that.

I bring this to the Parliament because promises are made by the Government all the time; promises that never materialize; promises that they keep making and when we go across the length and breadth of their promises, you will realize that these are just empty promises. This is another example. I know that the Minister will get up and say it will be paid in February, but we had three months to prepare to pay this increase which was boasted of by the Prime Minister: We are going to increase this by \$200 per month from January 01, 2007. It did not happen. *[Interruption]*

**Hon. Member:** *[Inaudible]*

**Mr. M. Ramsaran:** No, I hoped somebody would say that foolishness. Old age pension cheques are paid on the first working day of the month. You see, you do not know what is happening in the Government. Salaried people are paid at the end of the month. It is here, January 01, 2007.

**Mr. Valley:** I know I am breaking the rule, but let me break the rule—

**Mr. M. Ramsaran:** Go ahead. *[Crosstalk]*

**Mr. Speaker:** No, if you are breaking, you cannot do it.

**Mr. M. Ramsaran:** No, I wanted him to make that mistake—a cardinal error. *[Crosstalk]* He likes to make noise, but the fact is unless it is not changed, the date to pay old age pension is the first working day of the month. In this case it was January 02, 2007. Cheques should have been prepared in December. For your information, the financial year is October to September, so you do not have to close accounts at the end of December. Cheques should have been paid on the first working day. *[Interruption]* That is the fact. You cannot change the fact. *[Interruption]* Yes, it is paid in advance. No, no.

**Mr. Speaker:** You cannot carry on the debate seated.

**Mr. M. Ramsaran:** We continue:

“A person whose income is less than \$100 per month is currently paid a monthly pension of \$1,150. This person will continue to receive \$1,150 per month as a Senior Citizens’ Grant. In addition, this person will also be provided with an additional allowance of the \$100.”

So Mr. Speaker, these promises were made and not delivered.

“The maximum amount paid as a Senior Citizens’ Grant will be \$1,150 per month.

A pro-rated payment mechanism will be introduced whereby for every dollar of income of over \$1,000 per month, the Senior Citizens’ Grant payment will be reduced by an equivalent amount.”

The Prime Minister went on to give an example of how this will work and I appreciated that. In the case of the former Caroni (1975) Limited workers and the former WASA workers, most of these workers retired a couple years ago. They are now 65, their pension before was \$500, \$600, \$700, and so on and when you add the national insurance to that, it would be about \$1,600, \$1,700, \$1,800, depending on how you calculate. The difference between that and \$2,150 will be \$500 and I appreciate that something is happening

However, the fact is that a promise is a promise and must be kept. That is why when people call me, I owe it, as my duty to come to this Parliament to ensure that I ask the hon. Minister to tell us why the delay. Why was this not paid as it was supposed to be paid, so that the people out there, the senior citizens will feel happy with the start of the new year.

The burning question is the disability grant. You promised, hon. Minister, through you, Mr. Speaker, that you would come in the new year and increase that to be on level with the old age pension. This has not come. The ceiling for the disability grant has not yet come to this Parliament. People must earn \$300 or less per month to get a disability allowance. That is ridiculous; if you earn more than \$300 you cannot get a disability allowance. I feel this is ridiculous and it should be corrected as quickly as possible.

Also, I want to remind the Minister that he must come with the legislation to put things in place to ensure that the senior citizens’ grant is not illegal and will be paid according to what was promised.

So, we are in a new year, the hon. Member for Diego Martin Central promised he would answer questions; he would do this, he would do that. I want him to do this in the interest of the people of Trinidad and Tobago, so maybe next week; I would say the Government is now coming out of its retreat. Because I believe they have now retreated and this is what is taking place. I know the answer. It would be paid in February, but I do not know if I can live on that promise.

Thank you very much.

**The Minister of Social Development and Minister in the Ministry of Housing (Hon. Anthony Roberts):** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am not at all ruffled by my friend, Mr. Speaker. I guess Parliament is to talk, so he has his opportunity. But I am very grateful for the opportunity to continue to inform the national community, and in particular, all the recipients of the disability assistance grant as well as those who will be recipients of the Senior Citizens' Grant which we know as the old age pension; in respect of the increases as referred to in the budget presentation of 2006/2007.

In the case of the Disability Assistance Grant, there is an increase of \$100 per month and the Senior Citizens' Grant of \$200 per month. As the Member for Chaguanas indicated, he is aware because I guess he would have seen the notice in the newspapers that the grant will be paid retroactively from October 2006 which senior citizens' grant will be included in the recipient's regular Senior Citizens' Grant payment on February 01, 2007. [*Desk thumping*] All the arrangements have been put in place and the payments will be made, so you can advise your constituents when they come to you.

Mr. Speaker, prior to the budget presentation of 2006/2007, persons who satisfied the criteria of age and residence, but whose annual income exceeded \$12,000 were not entitled to what we know as the old age pension. I want to repeat it because apparently you have said it, but you do not understand it. However, the new provision as mentioned earlier on, by the sliding scale, as announced by the hon. Prime Minister in his presentation, all persons whose annual income exceeds \$12,000, but does not exceed a sum of \$25,800 will be entitled to a Senior Citizens' Grant of a sum based on where their income places them on the sliding scale with a maximum payment of not more than \$2,150 monthly. Provision is made for no one to receive less than \$150 payment.

I also want to make the point that notwithstanding satisfying the income criteria, I want to make it very clear that you still have to satisfy the criteria of age and residency before you would be able to access the grant.

So while I am very pleased for the opportunity to inform the national community and you have heard my colleague from Chaguanas, I am not at all convinced that his intentions were all honourable. He felt he had an opportunity to come to the Parliament, maybe to try to embarrass the Government. But I want to make the point, as leaders, we should not at all pamper to foolishness, especially when we should know better because my colleague the Member for Chaguanas was, in fact, a Minister of Social Development.

*Increase in Old Age Pension*

*Friday, January 12, 2007*

As a matter of the fact, the Member is very much aware of the procedure as he did indicate and one would expect that he should be honest in communicating and talking to his constituents who will come to him from time to time. I hope that he would practise his politics with honour and not allow his politics to have a morality of its own. I want to urge him to continue to work with us as they have shown on the other side recently that we can work together in the interest of the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

Thank you very much. [*Desk thumping*] [*Crosstalk*]

**Mr. Speaker:** Order!

*Question put and agreed to.*

*House adjourned accordingly.*

*Adjourned at 7.50 p.m.*