

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES*Wednesday, June 06, 2007*

The House met at 1.30 p.m.

PRAYERS[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]**FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT****(PRESENTATION)**

The Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Sen. The Hon. Conrad Enill): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the Second Report (2006/2007) Session of the Finance Committee of the House of Representatives of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on proposals for the Supplementation of the 2007 appropriation.

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

The Minister of Works and Transport (Hon. Colm Imbert): Mr. Speaker, the Government will be answering questions Nos. 72 and 76 today, and I would ask for a two-week deferral of the other questions for oral answers.

Mr. Singh: Mr. Speaker, it is really unreasonable for question No. 5 to be deferred for another two weeks; very unreasonable.

Mr. Speaker: I cannot help but agree with Members opposite. I have seen that question No. 5 has been referred to outside of this House and it is not being addressed in the House. I agree with the hon. Member for Caroni East.

I did recall sometime ago that the hon. Minister, who is here, indicated that he was prepared to answer this question and, to date, it is not yet answered. I am imploring the acting Leader of Government Business to have a chat with his colleagues and make sure that these questions are answered. When questions stay on the Order Paper for this length of time it is, in fact, a discourtesy to the House. I wish that Ministers who have to answer questions do not affront the House in this manner.

The following questions stood on the Order Paper:

Brian Lara Stadium

5. (a) With regard to the Brian Lara Stadium, could the hon. 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*]

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*]

**Community Development Fund
(Status of)**

44. With respect to the Community Development Fund (CDF), could the hon. Minister of Community Development, Culture and Gender Affairs inform this House:
- (a) what is the present status of the fund; and
 - (b) the number of recipients and quantum of money disbursed and the purpose of the allocations for fiscal 2005/2006? [*Mr. M. Ramsaran*]

**Community Development Bursary Programme
(Details of)**

45. With respect to the Community Development Bursary Programme, could the hon. Minister of Community Development, Culture and Gender Affairs indicate to this House:
- (a) the number of recipients of bursaries under the programme; and
 - (b) the quantum of moneys disbursed for fiscal 2005/2006 and for what given purpose? [*Mr. M. Ramsaran*]

**SWMCOL/CEPEP Investment Club
(Money Market Account)**

58. Could the hon. Minister of Public Utilities and the Environment state:
- (a) the purpose of the fund established in the form of a money market account in the name of “SWMCOL/CEPEP Investment Club”;
 - (b) the signatories to that account;
 - (c) the current balance of that account;
 - (d) the average monthly balance of that account since its establishment; and
 - (e) the total amounts contributed annually by SWMCOL to the “SWMCOL/CEPEP Investment Club?” [*Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar*]

**SWMCOL
(Contracts from 2006 to date)**

60. Could the hon. Minister of Public Utilities and the Environment provide:
- (a) the names of any consultancy firms employed by SWMCOL during the period 2006 to date; and
 - (b) the duration of the contracts and the contract amounts? [*Mr. S. Panday*]

**Allocation of Funds
(Details of)**

70. Could the hon. Minister of Community Development, Culture and Gender Affairs state the allocations made to TUCO, Soca Monarch and Calypso Tents for the period 2005–2007? [*Mr. G. Singh*]

E-Teck, InterFix LLC and InterFix Ventures LLC

75. Could the hon. Minister of Trade and Industry list the principal terms and conditions of the Shareholders Agreement between E-Teck and InterFix LLC and InterFix Ventures, LLC? [*Mr. G. Singh*]

**Member for Point Fortin
(Details of Prosecution)**

77. Could the hon. Attorney General inform this House of the date on which the file pertaining to the prosecution of the Member for Point Fortin was sent to the Director of Public Prosecutions? [*Mr. S. Panday*]

**Yolande Pompey Recreation Ground
(Details of)**

79. (a) Could the hon. Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs advise this House as to the extent of work needed in order to fully upgrade and rehabilitate the Yolande Pompey Recreation Ground in Princes Town?
- (b) Could the Minister also advise why this work has not yet been completed?
[*Mr. S. Panday*]

Questions, by leave, deferred.

**Chief Justice Legal Proceedings
(Cost of)**

72. **Mr. Subhas Panday** (*Princes Town*) asked the hon. Attorney General:

Could the Attorney General provide the total cost to date in respect of all legal proceedings involving the Chief Justice?

The Minister of Works and Transport (Hon. Colm Imbert): Mr. Speaker, in the absence of the Attorney General, I will answer that question. According to the Ministry of the Attorney General's record, the total cost to date in respect of all legal proceedings involving the Chief Justice, including fees, disbursements and other expenses incurred, is TT \$5,782,133.28.

Mr. Speaker, it is to be noted that the State won all of the civil proceedings against the Chief Justice to date, so that the costs which are allowed out of the \$5,782,133.28 fall to be paid by the Chief Justice.

The criminal proceedings were aborted and, therefore, the cost incurred for those proceedings are not payable by the Chief Justice.

Mr. Panday: Since the hon. Member indicated that there were criminal proceedings; could he indicate the amount of money the Government paid in legal fees for the criminal proceedings against the Chief Justice?

Hon. C. Imbert: Mr. Speaker, regrettably, I am unable to provide the information. I do not have those details with me.

Mr. Panday: Mr. Speaker, a further question. Did the hon. Member read the question? Could the Attorney General provide the cost in respect of all—

Mr. Speaker: No. You could ask a supplemental question if you wish.

Mr. Panday: Supplemental question. Is the Minister aware of all the legal fees which have been paid in respect of proceedings against the Chief Justice?

Hon. C. Imbert: Mr. Speaker, the question asked for the total cost, and I provided the total cost. If the Member wishes a breakdown or do aggregation of the cost, that is a completely different question. I am sure if the Member files a question asking for a breakdown—the question specifically asked for the total cost, and did not ask for any further details. I do not have the information with me, but I am certain that the Government would be happy to provide a detailed breakdown, if the Member would file a question in that regard.

Mr. Speaker: Ask a supplemental question.

Mr. Panday: Mr. Speaker, supplemental question. Does the Government intend to pursue further legal proceedings against the Chief Justice, which will impact upon the Treasury?

Mr. Speaker: That does not qualify. Move on, please.

Blood Sugar Monitoring Devices (Supply of)

76. Mr. Subhas Panday asked the hon. Minister of Health:

- (a) Could the Minister advise whether the Government intends to supply diabetics with blood sugar monitoring devices including glucometers and testing strips free of charge;
- (b) If the answer to (a) is in the negative, why not; and
- (c) If the answer to (a) is in the affirmative, could the Minister indicate when the programme will be initiated?

The Minister of Health (Hon. John Rahael): Mr. Speaker, the Chronic Disease Assistance Programme (C-DAP) was launched in 2003. Diabetes was the first chronic disease identified to commence this programme together with hypertension, glaucoma and some cardiac diseases. Citizens age 65 and over and anyone in receipt of a disability assistance were recipients under C-DAP free of charge.

In June 2003, the qualifying age was lowered to 60 years, and there were approximately 80,000 persons accessing drugs through C-DAP at that time. To date, approximately 300,000 citizens access drugs through C-DAP which, after four expansions, now provide a list of 50 drugs for 11 chronic illnesses.

The Ministry of Health is currently analyzing the experience of managing the Chronic Disease Assistance Programme. Statistics indicate that approximately 114,400 citizens access medication for diabetes. The Ministry of Health is

currently giving consideration to the provision of additional services for diabetics within the Chronic Disease Assistance Programme. This measure is one of several measures that are currently under consideration as part of the review of the Chronic Disease Assistance Programme.

Mr. Panday: Mr. Speaker, a supplemental question. Could people who are suffering from diabetes expect the Government to supply testing strips for glucometers free of cost?

Hon. J. Rahael: Mr. Speaker, as I indicated, it is under consideration.

Mr. Panday: Would the hon. Minister agree with me, that the cost of supplying testing strips to persons who suffer with diabetes would be much less than the cost that it would cost to attend to persons at the hospital if they do not have these strips?

Hon. J. Rahael: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Singh: This is not related directly to the question, but it has to do with questions for written answers. There are questions on the Order Paper since February.

Dr. Rafeeq: Mr. Speaker, the Minister said that this issue of the provision of glucometers and testing strips were under consideration. Could the Minister give us a time frame as to when a decision would be made on this?

Hon. J. Rahael: I am not in a position to give a time frame now.

Dr. Nanan: Is the Minister considering other items besides glucometers with respect to blood glucose level testing?

Hon. J. Rahael: If Hon. Members would just listen to the response, this measure is one of several measures that are currently under consideration as part of the review of C-DAP.

[Mr. Panday on his feet]

Mr. Speaker: I am not going to entertain any more supplemental questions. Proceed.

FINANCE (SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION) BILL

Bill to provide for the supplementary appropriation for the service of Trinidad and Tobago for the financial year ending 30th September, 2007 of the sum of the issue which was authorized by the Appropriation Act, 2007 [*The Minister of Finance*]; read the first time.

Motion Made, That the next stage be taken later in the proceedings. [*Sen. The Hon. C. Enill*]

Question put and agreed to.

INSURANCE (AMDT.) BILL

Bill to amend the Insurance Act, Chap. 84:01 [*The Minister of Finance*]; read the first time.

FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT (ADOPTION)

The Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Sen. The Hon. Conrad Enill): Mr. Speaker, I beg to move the following Motion standing in my name.

Be it resolved that this House adopt the Second Report (2006/2007) Session of the Finance Committee of the House of Representatives of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on proposals for the Supplementation of the 2007 Appropriation.

Mr. Speaker, the Finance Committee of the House of Representatives met on Friday, June 01, 2007 and agreed to proposals relating to the 2007 appropriation. The proposal was for the provision of supplemental funds in the sum of \$3,121,413,821 or approximately \$3.1 billion, to fund recurrent and capital expenditure to September 30, 2007, in areas where insufficient or no allocation was provided, and which the Government considers appropriate at this time.

A report with the details of the proposed changes was circulated to all Members of the Finance Committee and discussed at its meeting on Friday, June 01, 2007, where clarification was sought with respect to some of the proposed changes to the appropriation for fiscal year 2007. Where responses were not readily available to the Committee, written responses have since been circulated to all Members.

During the course of the debate, my colleagues would provide additional information on concerns that may be raised as we proceed. I would, however, like to summarise the proposal and provide some detail to support our position.

Of the total of \$3.1 billion of supplemental allocations proposed in this Bill, 15 per cent represents amounts to facilitate the payment of increased salaries and allowances arising out of the new collective agreements for staff of the central government. The total incremental cost of the industrial relations settlement for monthly-paid and daily-paid public officers is approximately \$1.48 billion of which \$683 million represents arrears of salaries and COLA. The arrears are one-off.

These are obligations that the Government must meet in order to maintain a functioning public service. Mr. Speaker, 18 per cent is to facilitate settlement of BWIA liabilities, particularly in relation to trade creditors and business partners, and to assist with the capitalization of Caribbean Airlines Limited. The total cost of closing BWIA and capitalizing Caribbean Airlines is \$2,308.8 million of which \$1,027.2 million was met in fiscal 2006. These are one-off payments, which are necessary in order to complete the restructuring of BWIA into Caribbean Airlines Limited as a basis for creating a viable aviation transport system to support Trinidad and Tobago's expanded levels of economic activity.

Mr. Speaker, 17 per cent of the total supplemental allocation is for the petroleum subsidy, which keeps fuel prices in Trinidad and Tobago among the lowest in the hemisphere, and which protects the poor in our society from the full effects of global inflation due to high petroleum prices. Another 17 per cent is allocated to upgrading the quality of our transport infrastructure, expanding access to education and for measures to mitigate the incidence of flooding.

Five ministries are being allocated 81 per cent of the additional resources that are being considered. These are:

- Head 18—\$767,115,000—Ministry of Finance;
- Head 22—\$557,195,100—Ministry of National Security;
- Head 39—\$313,296,362—Ministry of Public Utilities and the Environment;
- Head 40—\$537,000,000—Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries; and
- Head 43—\$366,650,000—Ministry of Works and Transport.

The allocation being proposed for the Ministry of Finance consists of supplementary funding for the following:

1. Increased salaries and allowances arising out of the new collective agreement for the period January 01, 2005 to December, 2007, \$68,214,000.
2. Catastrophe risk insurance premium, \$30,480,000: Following the devastation caused by natural hazards in the Caribbean in 2004, Caricom Heads of State invited the World Bank to establish the Caribbean Catastrophe Risk Facility to provide Governments with index-based insurance coverage against losses caused by natural disasters. The Government agreed that Trinidad and Tobago should

subscribe to this facility with effect from 2007. As a result, the sum of \$30,480,000 is required to meet this country's commitment to the World Bank in this regard.

3. Government Assistance for Tuition Expenses Fund: The demand by citizens accessing educational opportunities has increased and the Government is, thus, increasing the resources in the Government Assistance for Tuition Expenses (GATE) Fund. These resources will ensure that all possible claims from tertiary institutions could be settled for the remainder of the 2007 fiscal year.
4. The closure of BWIA and the start-up of Caribbean Airlines Limited: The financial resources required to restructure the airline industry amounted to \$2.308.8 million. Supplementary resources in the sum of \$556,421,000 are being allocated to facilitate settlement of liabilities, particularly in relation to trade creditors and business partners.
5. Upgrading of Information Technology Systems: The exercise of upgrading the Information Technology in the Inland Revenue Division is continuing on schedule. However, based on contractual commitments, an amount of \$12 million is now required which is being proposed.

In summary, this proposal in relation to the Ministry of Finance covers:

- Increased Salaries and Wages;
- Premium for Catastrophe Insurance;
- Government Assistance for Tuition Expenses;
- BWIA Closure; and
- Information Technology Upgrade

The Government is providing the Ministry of National Security with additional resources of \$557,195,100 or close to half a billion dollars in its continuing fight against crime. The allocation being proposed consists of the following:

1. increased salaries and allowances for First and Second Division Officers for the period January 2005 to December 2007, \$124,814,000;

2. salaries and related allowances to officers on contract in the general administration, police service and coast guard, \$5,520,400;
3. provision for increased salaries and wages for the Trinidad and Tobago Prison Service, \$122,750,000;
4. provision for increased salaries and wages for the Trinidad and Tobago Fire Services, \$86,250,000;
5. payment of arrears of travelling and subsistence for 2005 and 2006 and increased monthly payments for 2007 for the police service and Immigration Division, \$10,000,000;
6. telephone expenses of the police service, defence force, coast guard and Immigration Division, \$7,317,200;
7. rental of new immigration offices at Chaguanas, La Brea and Sangre Grande, \$1,442,000;
8. outstanding payments by the Police Division to several car rental firms for the use of unmarked vehicles in undercover surveillance activities, and also to meet expenditure for the rest of the fiscal year, \$3,019,000;
9. procurement of materials and other goods and services by the prison service and defence force, \$4,252,000;
10. ongoing critical repairs and maintenance work on several buildings at the Defence Force Headquarters, \$2,000,000;
11. increased maintenance costs such as fuel, lubricants, and replacement parts, occasioned by the greater use of vehicles for joint army/police patrols and other activities in the fight against crime, \$750,000;
12. training of 1,500 officers in crime scene investigation by the Special Anti-Crime Unit of Trinidad and Tobago, \$15,000,000;
13. resources contributed towards the regional security effort for the Cricket World Cup and additional support to the Strategic Intelligence Agency, Inter Agency Task Force, Witness Protection Programme and E-999, \$55.6 million;
14. purchase of foodstuff for the police service, prison service, regiment and coast guard, \$1,544,000;

15. expenditure related to the posting of two Immigration Attachés, each at the Trinidad and Tobago High Commission in India and Trinidad and Tobago Consulate in Australia, and one Attaché at the Embassy in Caracas on assignment in relation to measures to facilitate Cricket World Cup 2007, \$2,134,500;
16. medical expenses of members of the regiment and coast guard, national consultations on crime during April and May 2007, hosting of conferences and seminars, replacing of vehicles and procurement of bullet-proof vests and pistols, \$46,602,000;
17. \$58,250,000 to meet contractual obligations for:
 - the refurbishment of Coast Guard Vessel *TTS Cascadura*;
 - continuation of refurbishment works of jetties at Staubles Bay;
 - upgrade of the Piarco air-wing to air-guard base status;
 - refurbishment of coast guard aircraft, C26;
 - continuation of construction and refurbishment works at defence force facilities in Tobago;
 - installation of computer software for the computerization of the defence force;
 - completion of construction of the Sangre Grande and Couva Fire Stations;
 - continuation of improvement works to police stations;
 - transformation of the police service in respect of training of officers, continuation of the communication and public relations plan, organizational development plan, the executive development professional programme, and the continuation of the anti-crime communication support plan;
 - completion of construction of the Prison Administration Building and upgrade of the electrical system as well as to construct a slaughter bay at the animal husbandry, Golden Grove;
 - continuation of the automation of passports; and
 - institutional strengthening of the Forensic Science Centre.

These are the uses to which these resources, totalling close to half a billion dollars, are being allocated.

Under Head 39 - Ministry of Public Utilities and the Environment, an increase of \$313,296,362 is being sought. Of this sum, \$263,696,362 is required to assist the Water and Sewerage Authority to meet its operating deficit and to include an allocation for negotiations in respect of daily-paid and monthly-paid workers of the authority still to be settled. On the capital side, \$49,600 is provided:

- to purchase materials for 80 kilometres of highway lighting and installation of 118,000 residential street lights;
- to replace water mains under the priority pipeline projects;
- to provide consultancy for the integration of smaller private waste water treatment plants; and
- to continue the implementation of the water and wastewater master plan under the Water Sector Modernization Programme.

Under Head 40—Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries, an additional amount of \$537,000,000 or half a billion dollars is required to continue the subsidy to the population on the difference between what it costs to produce gasoline and what the population pays at the pump. The total subsidy allocated for this year is now calculated at \$1.1 billion and this would allow the Government to make the resources available to the National Petroleum Company to meet its commitment to Petrotrin.

Under Head 43—Ministry of Works and Transport, an increase of \$366,650,000 is being proposed. The major purposes for which these resources are required include:

- payment of increased salaries and allowances arising out of the new collective agreement - \$8,000,000;
- \$67,200,000 to facilitate the award of contracts for which the tendering process has already begun, to execute road repairs throughout the country under the programme for upgrading road efficiency;
- \$104,280,000 to extend the current programme of de-silting and clearing of all major and minor watercourses throughout the country as part of the Ministry's effort to reduce the incidence of flooding during the rainy season;

- \$68,720,000 to fund operations of the Port Authority in respect of:
 1. payment of arrears in the sum of \$41,000,000 to Port workers for a new collective agreement covering the period 2005—2007;
 2. payment of \$27,720,000 on a loan of US \$66.5 million or approximately TT \$419 million for the purchase of the *Incat 046*, the *T&T Express*, and the *Incat 060*, *T&T Spirit*, to service the sea bridge between Trinidad and Tobago.
- \$32,000,000 to meet increased operational costs of the Public Transport Service Corporation (PTSC) such as fuel, wages, salaries, maintenance, spares, utilities and security. These additional costs are a direct result of the:
 1. expansion of the corporation's fleet of buses by 75 buses from April 2007;
 2. servicing of new and re-opened routes;
 3. opening of terminal facilities in Point Fortin and Chaguanas and the refurbishment of the Sangre Grande terminus;
 4. increase in the security presence on buses and at the PTSC'S compounds.

An additional sum of \$86,450,000 is also being allocated for the Ministry of Works and Transport under its Development Programme to meet the following:

- the contractual obligations with respect to the rehabilitation of roads and bridges, rehabilitation and stabilization of failed slopes and the expansion of trunk roads;
- the payment of salaries and operational expenses to the respective project implementation units;
- the upgrade of equipment at the Electrical Sub-station South Terminal, Piarco; the completion of electrical works at the north side of the approaching roadway at Piarco; and
- the procurement of critical equipment for emergency response and flood relief.

In making these recommendations for supplemental funding, the Government proposes to maintain its policy position as promised in the 2007 budget in

October 2006, where we programmed a surplus of \$28.5 million. We have now programmed an anticipated surplus of \$2.5 million after providing for \$1.716 billion to be deposited to the Heritage and Stabilization Fund. Mr. Speaker, what this means is that at the end of this fiscal year, the Heritage and Stabilization Fund balance would climb to over \$10 billion and, at the same time, we would still have a small surplus on our accounts.

While we have a lot to be proud about, I think that it is important to briefly describe how we got here, since we did not get here by luck or by chance, but by meticulous economic planning and judicious economic management. [*Desk thumping*] [*Interruption*] High oil prices are only part of the story of our economy's current success. And, by itself, high oil prices will not generate economic sustainability.

We are aware that there are several countries that have benefited from oil and other commodity booms and remained in economic difficulties, and with uncertain future economic prospects, but our experience is not that. We can now report to the national community that:

- real GDP growth has averaged around 10 per cent over the past five years. In the process, per capita GDP has more than doubled since last year;
- the unemployment rate has declined to 5 per cent, the lowest level ever recorded;
- based on 2002 data, poverty declined from 35 per cent on the last occasion it was measured to about 17 per cent. Since this date, however, the economy has expanded further with the creation of several new jobs which would reduce the number of persons unable to participate in our economy even further;
- the energy sector has been the main driver of our economic growth. However, the non-energy sector has grown at a robust 7 per cent since 2002;
- we have a very healthy non-energy export sector which is the envy of the Caribbean, and further diversification into services for example, banking and tourism are proceeding apace;
- our energy sector has been diversified to reduce its vulnerability. We are now major world exporters of natural gas and petrochemicals; and
- while we are satisfied with this performance, we are not unaware of the challenges of poverty, new health concerns, climate change,

natural disasters and the specific problems of many in our society. When we disaggregate the numbers, we see people in need and it is to this that we are responding. After all, as we are doing today, our spending is for improving the quality of life for the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

We have a healthy economy that is built on strong foundations and well positioned for growth and development. Mr. Speaker, I would not repeat what highly respected international agencies have said, but I think it bears repeating that we conduct our affairs in the conduct of:

- prudent monetary policy;
- a buoyant energy sector; and
- the sustained positive performance of the economy and the continued surpluses on the fiscal and external accounts.

In its recently published *Regional Economic Outlook*, the International Monetary Fund has also recognized Trinidad and Tobago as one of the fastest growing and dynamic economies in Latin American and the Caribbean region. And, while some may have their views about the IMF and the World Bank, the sentiments of our success have also been cited by the independent international rating agencies, which have confirmed the performance of the Trinidad and Tobago economy.

I wish to remind this honourable House that this impressive performance has been underpinned by the policy adjustments and structural reforms made in the early 1990s.

The second oil boom provided the initial financing for our now substantial petrochemical platform at Point Lisas. When we on this side hear commentators say that the funds from the second oil boom were squandered, we wonder how do they explain Point Lisas.

Mr. Partap: That is true.

Sen. The Hon. C. Enill: See what it is today and acknowledge that it started with the foresight of the PNM using the oil wealth derived from the second oil price shock.

There is no doubt that the economy went through great stress in the second half of the 1980s. However, coming out of this difficult period, the PNM Government

developed and implemented a series of structural reforms which definitely set the stage for the long period of uninterrupted growth and development that we are now witnessing.

Mr. Speaker, what were some of these reforms?

- we eliminated foreign exchange controls and adopted a floating exchange rate;
- we liberalized the trade system and lowered import tariffs in order to foster greater efficiency and competitiveness in our non-energy sector. Many manufacturers will tell you that the establishment of a more competitive exchange rate and the reduction in import tariffs boosted manufacturing activity in the 1980s;

Mr. Sharma: Is the hon. Minister aware that many business houses are unable to obtain foreign exchange as we speak?

Sen. The Hon. C. Enill: I am coming to that in the discussion.

- we removed interest rate and other direct controls on the financial system, which set the basis for a major expansion in financial intermediation and credit availability, as well as an increase in domestic savings;
- we reduced the size of the public sector through privatization of non-core public enterprises. Those that we felt could be better operated by the private sector, we divested.
- we restructured the public finances, reducing the chronic imbalances in the central government accounts; and
- the Central Bank tightened the supervision of the financial system which was somewhat of an issue, and led to some financial stress during the 1980s.

These are but some of the factors, which set the stage for the growth and development which took place in the 1990s.

We are the first to admit, that the recovery of oil prices played an important part/role, but it was not the only impetus. It so happened that the recovery of oil prices coincided with a period of financial stabilization and structural reform, which created the pre-conditions for robust economic growth.

Our innovative economic policies and our foresight could be credited through the tremendous diversification of the energy sector. These policies have so

strengthened our investment climate that we now have four LNG plants making Trinidad and Tobago the major LNG supplier to the United States. We are now the largest supplier of methanol from a single source and we are a major world supplier of ammonia.

Building on what we have done our strategy in the medium to long term is as follows: In agriculture, we have restructured Caroni (1975) Limited as part of the National Agribusiness Development Programme. We are establishing a number of large agricultural estates to facilitate mass production of several strategic commodities in which the country can develop a competitive advantage. Our economic and social sector development strategy for the medium term is explained in our Vision 2020 Plan in which we will continue to create the policy environment to develop a rapidly growing economy comprising a diversified and self-sustaining non-energy sector that produces sustainable high-quality jobs.

More importantly, we are planning that all citizens will enjoy a high standard of life where quality healthcare is available to all and where safe, peaceful, environmentally-friendly communities are maintained. In the society that we are currently creating, all citizens must share in the wealth by being able to access a quality relevant education system tailored to meet the human resource needs of a modern, progressive technologically-advanced nation.

We are planning that over the medium term, poverty will be further reduced based on continued rapid economic growth, incentives for small business expansion some of which are already in place as many small contractors will confirm. Remember. We created the mechanism that allocated 10 per cent of contracts to small business, and we operationalized this by amending the limit for Permanent Secretaries. We have the most comprehensive government assistance programme for the disadvantaged and those that are in need.

It is this Government that developed earlier in this term the Social Sector Investment Programme, in which we highlighted the challenges of: poverty, the impact of natural disasters, inequality, high levels of unemployment and underemployment, among others, and developed and funded developmental programmes, remedial programmes and preventative programmes. These programmes are reaching those in our society who are in need of support in dealing with identified challenges.

In 2007, this Government's investment in the sector for social infrastructure programming and other social initiatives is \$71 billion. This goes towards poverty elimination in its broadest manifestation.

Our economic strategy also targets the further diversification of the non-energy sector. To this end, we have identified for special attention the resuscitation and restructuring of the agricultural sector. In fact, over the weekend, the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago hosted the Agricultural Donor Conference of Caricom chaired by President Jagdeo of Guyana in which, for the first time, based on information available to me, Ministers of Finance and Ministers of Agriculture and the Donor and Research Community of Agriculture and the international agencies pooled their collective resources to deal with issues of food security in the context of changes in the global dynamics. In addition, we have identified for special attention the expansion of the financial sector activity, including the creation of an international financial sector, as well as seven specific areas for business development and job creation.

We see opportunities for Trinidad and Tobago to participate in the global financial business as either:

1. front office production;
2. booking centres; or
3. middle and back office support.

Our financial sector has been expanding rapidly both in terms of their local operations and through cross-border mergers and acquisitions. This expansion creates an increase in value added through employment, increased taxes as well as greater profit and dividends to shareholders. In recent years, Trinidad and Tobago has become the unofficial financial centre of the region providing financing through direct loans and bond issuance to regional governments and regional sovereigns. The level of such finances reached US \$690 million in 2004 and has averaged US \$350 million over the past five years.

The Government's plan is to leverage this success to make Trinidad and Tobago a true pan-Caribbean financial centre; a platform for which domestic and international banks can service not only the Caribbean, but further afield in Central and South America. We have the advantage of location, and we are working to improve our physical and technological infrastructure, and, of course, the quality of our human resources. We are putting particular focus, also on the upgrading of our regulatory and supervisory regime, in line with international standards.

Accordingly, we are in the process of finalizing a new Financial Institutions Act that meets international best practices. We are also very advanced in the preparation of a new Insurance Act. Work is also almost completed on the new credit union legislation, which will bring the credit union movement under the aegis of the Central Bank, while recognizing the role that they must play in the creation of new small enterprises.

The seven specific areas of business development and job creation are intended to ensure that our diversification agenda is completed. Mr. Speaker, in addition to all of this, Parliament recently approved the rules governing the Heritage and Stabilization Fund. This Government sees this fund as a means of, firstly, cushioning the impact of fluctuations in energy prices on the budget; secondly, putting aside savings for the period when the energy resources are exhausted; and, thirdly, ensuring that the income from these savings would assist us in maintaining Government expenditure. We also see the Heritage and Stabilization Fund as a means of enforcing fiscal discipline.

The Government is proud of our strong economic achievements and our vision and policies for the realization of a strong, sustainable, caring economy. We have said that our country's natural resources have played a critical role in building these successes. Nevertheless, as significant as the energy sector is to this country, we could not have achieved the successes that we have gained in the absence of vision, good policy and sound economic management. We also realize that while our energy sector will continue to be a major asset, it would not be possible to achieve developed country status without disciplined financial policies and building new bases of committed advantage.

We are well on the way to achieving this diversification. Mr. Speaker, we will never forget that development is about people, and that our development model would only be a success if it guarantees a more equitable, caring and humane society where a significant improvement in the quality of life is enjoyed by all. We are committed to this and we are sure it will be achieved.

Mr. Speaker, I beg to move.

Question proposed.

Dr. Roodal Moonilal (Oropouche): Mr. Speaker, thank you very much. It is a pleasure to speak on this matter of the Finance (Supplementary Appropriation) Bill, 2007 and matters related to that. At the beginning, let me indicate that this is a wide-ranging measure, in the sense that it is almost taking the form of a mini-budget and, as such, there are several colleagues on the Front Bench who would wish to speak in some detail on some of the sectoral matters.

I would concentrate first on some policy issues, some issues of governance and a few matters relating primarily to utilities, social development and security. I am sure that my colleagues, including the Member for Caroni Central, would have much to say on the aftermath of a shocking report on the health sector coming out.

The Commission of Enquiry into the health sector is really the longest autopsy report written in the history of Trinidad and Tobago that has pronounced the health sector dead, under the distinguished Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West, Dr. Jack Kevorkian.

Mr. Speaker, let me begin by saying that it was around 1989 or 1990 that a national budget in this country could have been about \$3 billion. So, what was a national budget a decade and a half ago is today a variation of \$3 billion. Mr. Speaker, \$3 billion is a lot of money. However, you look at the currency conversion, \$3 billion is a lot of money.

The Government is coming a few months after the passage of the national budget, to ask for \$3 billion more to complete the operations of the Government for 2027; that is the effect.

Mr. Speaker, while the Minister in the Ministry of Finance, the hon. Senator, gave some indications as to the breakdown of that \$3 billion, and led us to believe that this includes the matter of settling the industrial relations settlement between public officers and the Government and, of course, that consumes a significant part of this appropriation; and also the matter of BWIA and the transition to Caribbean Airlines Limited (CAL). That also involved a significant element.

Mr. Speaker, what the Minister did not tell us and what we can glean from the reading of the document before us is that there are several areas of spending in the Government at several ministries which exclude the industrial relations commitment; the collective bargaining resolution; and which clearly excludes BWIA. What we have, effectively, is a mini- budget for a host of ministries coming six months after we passed a national budget.

There are two theories as to why this is happening; one is that it may well be that the Government has spent money already, and do not have the money and is now requiring Parliament to give sanction to what it spent before, or the Minister of Finance, the Prime Minister, may be hedging his bets, so that in the event that he has to go to the polls before a national budget, he has already accumulated onto himself, enough wealth to spend across several sectors for a political campaign.

It seems to me odd that in the Ministry of Education and in the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs that you would suddenly discover six months after

passage of the budget, that you need \$4 million extra to pay janitorial services. Now, six months after passing the national budget, what did you build in the Ministry of Education that you need \$4 million more for janitorial services? What new complex did you build? They cannot answer a question on the costing of the Brian Lara Tarouba Stadium. So forget building. They just cannot answer. What did you build in the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs that you suddenly need \$4 million more to clean buildings and wash down the wall and so on six months after? This is a mini-budget.

Mr. Speaker, included across several ministries are increases, in some cases, more than 100 per cent increase in spending over and above what was budgeted for the fiscal year. That is a cause for concern. There are areas like training which have been increased by 300 to 400 per cent. What did you suddenly discover between October to May that you need to increase a training budget by 300 per cent?

There is another area across several ministries—we are going to make the direct reference in a moment—that it is one of two possibilities; either the planning that went into the national budget was flawed; either the planning that came from the respective ministries was flawed and inefficient, and they could not plan properly for one year; or there is something else about this extra spending required for political purposes in an election year. You cannot explain!

Mr. Speaker, the Minister is talking about GATE where they suddenly need about \$80 million more. We are going to get the figure in a moment. Now, why could you not have taken this into consideration in September/October last year? What happened in the last six months that you suddenly discovered that the demand for GATE would be \$80 million more? What could have happened? Did we have young students breaking down the doors of the university and other tertiary education demanding more in terms of their GATE benefit? These are some serious questions.

What we have before us is a mini-budget that the Government is coming with. They want parliamentary approval for mass spending in an election year. That is the issue. In the event of no budget before an election—you could never tell how this thing would play off. The Prime Minister may be watching the Opposition Front and Back Benches, and does not know whether he wants to go to Uganda in November or he would prefer the Leader of the UNC to go to Uganda in November. He may be watching that trip to Uganda and deciding that he may want to go with an election before the passage of another budget, and this would give him some flexibility in terms of spending, and that is a concern.

Mr. Speaker, another introductory point is that this Government has performed as the worst Government in the history of Trinidad and Tobago including former PNM administrations. [*Desk thumping*] When it comes to accountability for the taxpayer dollar—whether it is in WASA, social development, planning and development—I am very concerned with an increase in the Ministry of Planning and Development. I see a million dollars more for travelling, and when you see travelling for the Ministry of Planning and Development you would get worried. You need to send the Member for Caroni East to look for a Visa Card.

Mr. Singh: My mail box is open. [*Laughter*]

Dr. R. Moonilal: Mr. Speaker, I will come to that issue again, because it is an issue of governance. Their lack of accountability is appalling. I want to correct the Minister in the Ministry of Finance. The Minister told us that the PNM party that he joined a few years ago presided over good governance for the development of Trinidad and Tobago, and they never wasted away money from the earlier oil boom which he describes as one and two.

I would like to ask the Minister in the Ministry of Finance, in relation to that statement where he defended previous PNM administrations of which he was not a part, whether he remembers the words of the former Prime Minister of this country and former President of Trinidad and Tobago—arguably no friend of the UNC, maybe a friend of the PNM. I want to remind the Minister of the words of the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance and Economy during his budget speech of 1987. Mr. ANR Robinson, Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and the Economy had this to say and I quote:

“The Treasury is not just empty; there is a TT \$1.2 billion bill still to be paid from 1986.”

Mr. Speaker, 1986 was an election year and 2007 is also an election year. Mr. Robinson said that the Treasury was not just empty, but they left a debt of \$1.2 billion to be paid from 1986.

“Public expenditures have been sustained by advances from the Central Bank up to the legal limit. To put it differently, the Government has been surviving on overdraft from the Central Bank.”

Now, if that is not a dignified way to say that the PNM “bust” the country in 1986, I do not know what is. These are the words of the Minister of Finance and the Economy, former Prime Minister, ANR Robinson in his budget contribution in 1987. He is no friend of the UNC. In fact, it is with a heavy heart that we still have

to quote him. He is a good supporter of the ruling party. He concluded in 1986 that the PNM Government simply “buss” the Treasury, to put it in a language that the Member for Tobago East could understand.

Mr. Speaker, I want to put that as my context, because what we are seeing today is the more things change the more they get worse with the PNM in office. There is no accountability. Billions of dollars are being spent at WASA and on social development like poverty alleviation and so forth; millions of dollars in training, and after spending half a billion dollars in training, we now have Chinese skilled workers in this country. That is after MuST, YAPA, “DAPA” and everything conceivable.

After spending millions of dollars in the health sector on advertisements in the newspapers—I was appalled. I saw a gentleman did a full-page coloured ad. I do not want to call the gentleman’s name. He had a kidney transplant. A full-page coloured ad in the newspaper is about \$18,000. Now, I want to tell you that if this gentleman could not afford to do a kidney transplant, he does not have \$18,000 to pay for a full-page ad. So, the Ministry of Health takes money to pay for an ad for somebody to compliment the Minister of Health. The ad speaks about the Minister of Health having the wisdom and the foresight to have the Organ Transplant Programme. They have used taxpayer’s money to put an ad to compliment themselves, and put it in somebody else’s name. This is obscene.

2.30 p.m.

The Minister of Health—I do not want to dwell on him, I might take away somebody else’s speech, but I cannot help it. On Monday evening the Minister of Health had addressed a conference; he said he welcomed the Commission of Enquiry Report. Now the Report condemns and slams his Ministry, but he welcomes that. He welcomes that, Mr. Speaker. He welcomes that they condemned his Ministry; that is what he was welcoming. Had I been the Minister of Health, not only would I have resigned, I may have migrated if they had written a report on my Ministry like that. Imagine, shameless; you expected him to tender his resignation forthwith; he said he welcomes the report.

Now that is another little thing they are developing in their last year. Anybody slams their Ministry and they cannot defend themselves, they say we welcome the criticism; we are working on it. That is the attitude; of waste. I do not want to get into people’s personal business, but on May 21, 2007, I came to this House and discovered that there were two women using my money for hairdressing services. I knew of one; I discovered that there were two using my money.

Hon. Member: Your wife is one.

Dr. R. Moonilal: Usually, when my wife asks me for some money to go to the hairdresser, I do not complain, I readily surrender some money for her. I discovered that there was a second person using my money. This is how they squander the resources of the country, the taxpayer's dollar, without thinking. This is where we have reached.

At WASA they increased the hiring. They put somebody else in charge of leaks. There was a gentleman who got a job in 2002; he was in charge of leaks. After about three or four months the CEO said—and I have the data—I do not know what they hired him for. One week later they said he is reporting to the CEO. Today there are three leaks in a place called Dorbassa Trace in Oropouche; we reported it six months now and the water flying left, right and centre from three leaks.

While that is happening there, 15 minutes down the road people are going into a well to pick up water to drink. That is where we are. That is the reality. WASA said "pray for rain" that is their water policy. They increased the subvention to WASA again. They increased by millions to WASA. But the most shameless one of all was when I saw an article in the newspaper. The Prime Minister, himself, Lord and master declared to a newspaper; he said more desal plants coming. I keep a note of these statements because sometimes I do not believe myself. "PM: More desal plants coming to ease water situation." *Saturday Express*, May 19, 2007. "More desal plants coming...".

Mr. Speaker, the UNC built the first desal plant and I find it amazing. When I do my research the Leader of the Opposition replying to the budget, October 15, 1999 and I am speaking to the issue of credibility. This is an election year; credibility. The Leader of the Opposition, the Member for San Fernando East, Hon. Patrick Mervyn Augustus Manning on Friday October 15, 1999 had this to say on the desal plant. I quote:

"Permit me to turn now to the mother of all corruption, the desalination plant...the Minister of Public Utilities..."

The UNC Minister of Public Utilities. He said:

"has foisted yet another scam on the population, this time in the form of a totally unnecessary desalination plant.

Mr. Speaker, imagine in a country like Trinidad with so many rivers and an abundance of surface water, this shameless Government has

decided that we must now mortgage our children's future for the next 20 years to pay...millions of dollars to convert salt water into fresh water. As if Trinidad is Saudi Arabia or some other desert country, where fresh water does not exist! Millions of gallons of fresh water are pouring into the sea every second of every hour at every day, but the UNC has instructed WASA to pay \$200 million a year for desanitilating sea water."

Leader of the Opposition, Patrick Manning. Mr. Speaker, 2007, he said four plants coming and then they speak about vision, foresight, planning, honesty and integrity. When the UNC built the desal plant recognizing our situation and the need to get more water into the system as a result of expanding commercial and residential development, the Leader of the Opposition, Patrick Manning, said it was unnecessary. I would like to ask him, where has all the surface water gone? Where is the fresh water that coming every second of every hour of every day; where it gone? Where? We are exporting water that we cannot find it?

This is the hypocrisy of the Government. Now they want to build four desal plants. But to save face, he has a nice catch line. He says: "Desal plant with integrity". *[Laughter]*

Hon. Member: What he means by that?

Dr. R. Moonilal: I do not know what he means by that; I do not know if the Integrity Commission building it. "Desal plant with integrity" that may be like the Brian Lara Stadium; that may be like the Scarborough Hospital Project; that may be something along that line, construction with integrity and this when we ask in the Opposition for value for money. You build, you spend taxpayers' money; good God provide water, provide security, provide poverty alleviation; that is all the citizens want. Citizens of this country want security. They want to know that if they go in the grocery they have some money to buy the food. They want to know that the education system is working. They want to know the health system is functioning.

In December 2006 when I brought a Motion on the adjournment on the collapse of the San Fernando Hospital in this House; they did not have basic pharmaceuticals, the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West got up and gave us a long PR lecture on how good everything was. Then we got the Commission of Enquiry Report that really speaks to that matter on a different note.

They have a nice one now; they are saying that the phantom companies are really not phantom; although they are not registered and paying VAT with the

Company Registrar and so on. They are really not phantom because phantom is something else. He would give us a clear policy guideline on phantom companies.

Mr. Speaker, accountability is very important for us and the Minister in the Ministry of Finance spoke about that. What really got me even more upset and I did not plan to raise this matter, but the Minister in the Ministry of Finance raised the matter; when we spoke about the restructuring of Caroni (1975) Limited. What restructuring? What exactly is this restructuring? [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Singh: Destination.

Mr. Rahael: The best thing that ever happened to the workers.

Dr. R. Moonilal: The Prime Minister moved with haste to close down Caroni (1975) Limited.

Mr. Ramnath: "We ain't need no Syrian to emancipate us".

Mr. Hinds: Racist!

Dr. R. Moonilal: Mr. Speaker, notwithstanding this crosstalk here that wants to distract me, I will focus on you. The Minister in the Ministry of Finance spoke about the restructuring of Caroni (1975) Limited and what a good job they did. They closed down Caroni (1975) Limited; they sent 8,000 workers home. Workers are still begging for a piece of land. Many of these workers had to end up PH drivers and maxi taxi drivers; still looking for an end to make a living; they bribed them.

The VSEP to Caroni; you have heard of the "Father of the Bride"; that was the "Father of the Bribe". The VSEP to Caroni (1975) Limited was the father of the bribe. They bribed the workers; take some money; go, we will retrain you. They trained them for what? To make sugar cake, drops, toolum and so on? Then put them out on the breadline; closed down Caroni (1975) Limited; health centre, estate police, every single thing that went with Caroni (1975) Limited.

Today the private sector is talking about the re-emergence of a sugar industry because of the development now of ethanol as an alternative fuel, where the United States has taken a clear policy decision on developing ethanol, which comes from sugar cane and other agricultural produce. Brazil is a global leader in this industry. Given the labour cost in Trinidad and Tobago and the problems associated with transforming Caroni (1975) Limited over the years, would the Government not have had the foresight to look at ethanol as an industry to develop?

Mr. Baksh: They cannot see so far.

Dr. R. Moonilal: Could they not? But then they could not see so far. This is a timely moment to remind the country of what the Prime Minister said in October 1999 on Caroni (1975) Limited. I want to quote from the Member for San Fernando East. He said in relation to Caroni (1975) Limited and the Minister in the Ministry of Finance must hear this. I quote:

"The Prime Minister himself has now directed the national community to the impending demise of the sugar industry, a development that would wreak havoc in central and south Trinidad where some 60,000 of our citizens depend on this industry for survival and sustenance. The People's National Movement will not allow this to happen and wishes to advocate a new approach to the industry based on:

- (a) mechanical harvesting;
- (b) automated sugar production;
- (c) intercropping of short crops in the cane growing season;
- (d) agro processing; and
- (e) reduction in employment levels without any loss of benefits.

This approach to technology and efficiency, Mr. Speaker, will make this industry competitive in any market of the world and, while protecting the sugar industry in Trinidad and Tobago, will ensure a stable and secure future for sugar workers and cane farmers alike."

Former Opposition Leader, Prime Minister today, Member for San Fernando East. I hope the national population would take note of this, so when he comes now and promises hospital in Couva—He was "attacking" children the other day in Couva promising hospital and so on. They could understand that in 1999—I have also quotes from 2001 in his budget speech again, where he sang the praises of Caroni (1975) Limited. He said:

"PNM...will address the technical, economic and operational inefficiencies of Caroni with a view to making the sugar industry efficient and economically viable."

Mr. Manning in 2001. By 2002, he said: "we close down that industry". This is the gentleman who is walking up and down the country telling people trust me, trust me. He said in 2001 a PNM government will make Caroni efficient and

economically viable. That is the hypocrisy; that is the deceit that comes from the People's National Movement. I put this in the context of the Minister speaking in grand terms about the restructuring of Caroni (1975) Limited.

Mr. Speaker, while the Minister identified five ministries that contributed significantly to the variation of appropriation which we are dealing with today, he conveniently left out several other ministries where the increase in salary, the increase in cola resulting from the Collective Bargaining Agreement is negligible, is small. Yet those ministries have significant variations and we would just take a couple.

We referred already to GATE; an increase of \$100 million for GATE, that they discovered suddenly. In the Office of the Prime Minister, an increase of \$2.3 million for something called "Expenses of Cabinet Appointed Bodies". As we go along, you have significant increases outside of COLA and salaries. The one that really caught my eye as well, it is under the important Ministry of Planning and Development.

Under the Ministry of Planning and Development we need to be very careful, as I said, with that Ministry, because we know what happens there. Under planning and development, travelling and subsistence and so on, fine, \$3.3 million increase. Promotions, publicity and printing; the provisions in the estimates for 2007 was \$1.1 million. Imagine \$1.1 million provided in the 2007 Budget. This has been increased by \$6.2 million; no, the total figure needed is \$6.2 million. So, from \$1.1 million to \$6.2 million and the increase in this document that we have before us is \$5.2 million for publicity, printing and promotions. Does this mean that between May/June to October, when another budget is due that this Government needs \$5.1 million for the Ministry of Planning and Development for publicity, printing and promotions. That is a significant matter.

The Minister in the Ministry of Finance told us that a significant portion of this variation would go towards national security, because, of course, national security is a major concern of our time. I want to draw attention to this matter involving salaries and COLA and overtime allowances. It is no secret for those in government and for the wider community involved in the protective services that the administration of the police service has been on the verge of some dramatic shake-up. I will not go so far to say collapse, because the Member for Laventille East/Morvant will jump up when he hears that; he does not like the word "collapse".

Mr. Speaker, there are serious concerns as to the administration of the police service in relation to human resource management involving personnel matters, overtime, allowances, Government contribution to NIS, et cetera. If we are to

leave aside salaries and COLA, and I would adjust the numbers in prospective so we will get a quick feel for it. The increase required for salaries and COLA is \$18.7 million, but the increase required for overtime is \$48 million; the increase required for allowances is \$57 million. That is over \$100 million of an increase required for overtime and allowances for national security of all the different branches and so on. As I said before, we are very concerned with developments in the police service as they relate to this matter of overtime, allowances and so on.

Mr. Speaker, I have in my possession here documents which give some type of indication as to the state of mismanagement in the police service as it relates to this matter of allowances, overtime, vacation leave and so on. In a report dealing with human resource management issues and planning issues in the Ministry of National Security, there are conclusions suggesting that there are weak Human Resource Management (HRM) structures in the police and national security; absence of basic recording; absence of common practices; absence of basic data on human resource practices, selection and decisions.

The human resource utilization is poor. There are problems with getting data on personnel matters including overtime, allowances, vacation. The HRM function has almost collapsed and there have been problems where the Police Service Association has recorded their concern and called for the removal of the Human Resource Director. I believe the Human Resource Director has been removed in police administration. But the removal of the Human Resource Director cannot cover up maladministration, inefficiencies, waste, squandering and it is an appropriate time for us to call for some type of public enquiry into this management of not just the police administration, not coast guard, army or what have you.

If these reports are correct, they suggest that what is happening is a lack of proper accountability for persons who are seeking to get benefits for travelling for overtime. They also suggest that there have been poor accountability; the authorization for travelling at the police service, that authorization is non-existent. They have serious problems with responsibility, with accountability, with reporting and there have been violations with the police regulations; the regulations that govern the police service.

There are also accusations that persons are claiming travelling allowances and other related benefits to which they are not entitled and they are being paid. Those are some of the issues of the police service. And while we speak about an efficient police service and we support the police in their work, it is incumbent that the

police service itself abide by the law and follow the regulations as they relate to accountability, responsibility, payment for overtime, allowances for travelling, et cetera.

The Human Resource Management Unit Annual Report, October 2005/September 2006 points in the direction of severe problems with human resource planning, accountability and the breach of the regulations that govern the police service. There are serious doubts as to whether or not managers in the police service at all levels are completing the performance appraisal reports. Part of our public service restructuring is to have regular performance appraisal reports that will feed into the process of promotion.

Today, according to reports coming out of the police service, we have had poor accountability as far as it relates to performance appraisal in the police service. I will be happy; let me pre-empt the Commissioner of Police. The Member for Oropouche will be happy to meet him, discuss these matters and to bring to his attention the black and white; the reports that I have in my possession. I am not afraid of that at all. [*Desk thumping*] I will be happy.

Mr. Speaker, if at the next press conference the senior members of the police service can discuss this matter, it would be fine. Discuss this matter of accountability, of human resource mismanagement in the police service that led to the removal of the Human Resource Director just a few days ago from the police service. Yes, she was removed, Mr. Speaker.

I am not here casting aspersions on anyone, but what I am here to say is that when the Police Commissioner will not approve policy from the human resource department, as it relates to travelling and payment of moneys, that is a serious matter. In terms of national security as well, we see here another significant development. There is a sub-item 36 called "Extraordinary Expenditure"; clearly we do not know what is extraordinary expenditure; to pay for secret intelligent work and so on. We do not mind secret intelligence, once they do not keep the intelligence a secret. The increase in that is \$55 million extra for "Extraordinary Expenditure". While we are not concerned really with what would be the details of that, whether it is purchasing equipment for intelligence; we are not too much concerned with that; clearly there must be some basic explanation why six months ago you did not know you needed \$55 million more.

Training, of course, \$15 million more in the Ministry of National Security; police replacement vehicles, \$30 million more. You know what is fascinating is that in the original budget proposal replacement, minor equipment for the police

service was calculated at \$31 million. Imagine \$31 million you plan for a year, you discover that you need another \$40 million, which is more than the original. What type of planning is that? What that suggests is that our planners at the beginning, when we come to discuss and debate a budget, really the planning is poor. If you did not know that you needed \$40 million more for vehicle replacement while you budgeted \$10 million, that speaks to some lack of planning. We are happy with improvement works to police stations and so on; there is no problem with that. I think people will support that generally.

In the Ministry of Education; now that Ministry as we know is in a serious state of collapse. That Ministry is in a serious state of collapse. It is only awaiting a report like a commission of enquiry to get a full report on what has transpired. Mr. Speaker, for janitorial services—I was making this point earlier—they need an increase of \$4 million in the Ministry of Education. I do not know what they suddenly discovered they have to clean for \$4 million. The Member for Nariva assures me that he knows of this matter and will in due course speak on this matter in our debate, but I do not want to pre-empt him with that.

Ministry of Public Utilities as well, economic infrastructure, \$49 million increase; street lighting, interestingly, the initial estimate, \$80 million; they need \$10 million more for street lighting. We wonder if that is to pay the son of a senior government Minister who is in charge of street lighting now. We wonder whether that is to pay for that.

Another concern, it arose in the committee meeting and a question was asked and an answer provided. This Ministry of Public Administration and Information has contracted and keeps on retainer a British consultancy firm by the name of MORI led by Sir Robert Worcester; prominent statistical man who does a lot of polling in the United States; a very big significant company. The professor has been contracted by the Ministry of Public Administration and Information and to this day, between 2002 and 2007, that company MORI has received \$11 million in payments for polling.

3.00 p.m.

Now, Mr. Speaker I just want to enquire whether or not we have this capacity in the Caribbean, at the University of the West Indies and elsewhere to do polling? Eleven million dollars to tell this Government they are not doing a good job. We tell them for free every week. Every week we tell you for free, and the professor, if anyone were to ask him, would tell you that he has been pointing out for sometime now that the weakest ministry is the Ministry of Health. [*Interruption*]

But it cost \$11 million. He has been pointing out that health is the weakest. They did a survey—the MORI survey—that provided a big thick document to the Ministry of Public Administration and Information. Do you know what the survey said? Out of their sample and so on, 4 per cent of citizens believe that this country would become developed-country status by 2020. [*Interruption*] The great Vision 2020, 4 per cent of persons believed that. That is a MORI finding. Four out of every 100 citizens believed the Government. Do you know what that means? That means their own members do not believe them; that they will develop this country by 2020. But that is the MORI finding.

Hon. Member: It will be before.

Dr. R. Moonilal: Oh, it may well be that 99 per cent feel it may be developed before, and we must tell the professor to check that; while he condemns the Ministry of Works and Transport as being another incompetent ministry. They should find the reports and study these reports.

Hon. Member: Make it a public document.

Dr. R. Moonilal: Mr. Speaker, I will bring my document and share this finding that the Ministry of Works and Transport is among the most inefficient of all ministries. The Minister of Works and Transport has now developed an unenviable reputation where he has no more credibility to lose. Last week we heard that the Disabled Peoples International called for his removal, they said he lied, but we cannot say that in Parliament, Mr. Speaker, as you know.

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

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

Question put and agreed to.

Dr. R. Moonilal: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and colleagues on both sides of the House. I was speaking about the MORI report which they paid \$11 million for—the different reports—and the report we have in our possession suggests that one of the worst performing ministries is the Ministry of Works and Transport. This is understandable as I said before, because, now, every Monday morning, by every street corner, one group or another is calling for the removal of the Minister of Works and Transport. I will just give one example of this issue of credibility. In this honourable House, on March 16, 2007 the Minister of Works and Transport said, and I quote:

“In relation to fixing the road and a wall in the constituency of Oropouche...”

And I am on the matter of credibility, which is an important matter of governance, as, Mr. Speaker, you know. The Minister said and I continue to quote:

“Now that they have written to me...”

Meaning the residents.

“the engineers of the ministry have already done the assessment. The Civil Engineer II in Victoria West visited Goocharan Trace on March 14 and has already presented the ministry with an estimate. We shall schedule this work to be done within the next couple of weeks (March 16) within a month, work will be done on Goocharan Trace as a result of this caring PNM Government. Nothing to do with you”.

Meaning me, because I raised the matter. He was offended that I raised the matter.

“...I thank you.”

This was March 16, 2007. Today, June 06, 2007 not one—I do not want to say wheel barrow of gravel and sand to offend the Member for Diego Martin West—shovel of gravel reached, not one workman on the site. Nothing has been done at Goocharan Trace where the Minister promised March 16, that within one month he would deal with it. Today, June 06, and I want to tell you, you see all this economic planning, all this economic theory and policy, all that is fine, but I want to tell you something, when a “fella” house collapse, he “ain't” really care about economic planning, macro-economic planning and theory.

When somebody builds a house and it cost them \$200,000; they go to the bank, every month they pay the bank. Rain falls and road washes away, retaining wall collapses and the house comes down, they really do not care about your superior macro-economic planning. They really do not care about that. They care about you fixing the roads and fixing the wall. Mr. Speaker, this is something that really makes another difference here; those of us on the Front Bench here, we are concerned with people's issues, we are not concerned too much with all the theory, the policy and the discussion of planning issues. That is fine, but when people go in the supermarket and they cannot afford food that is our concern. That is why they vote for us. My constituency did not vote for me because I have a PhD. They voted for me so I can bring here their issues of roads, their issues of drainage; they were not concerned with education, so that is why on this Front Bench here, we have this passion when we deal with infrastructure and when we deal with poverty.

Mr. Speaker, another scam, and related to a statement made by the Minister in the Ministry of Finance. Another scam! The Minister proudly announced the decrease in the poverty level. The Minister proudly announced that his Government had been working hard and reducing the poverty line. This Government is making reference to a *2005 Survey of Living Conditions Report*, which we have not seen, and they are saying that the poverty level is now 17 per cent, and the Minister boasted about that earlier in his contribution, so I just want to make reference to it.

They are calculating poverty at TT \$655 per month for an adult to live on. That is obscene, that is irresponsible, that is heartless and that is uncaring. Mr. Speaker, I challenge the Member for St. Anns East, the Minister with responsibility for social development. I challenge him to join me in a poverty challenge, let us eat food every month, just food alone, for TT \$655. Forget wigs, forget dresses, forget jewellery, forget lightening fixtures, forget all of that; let us concentrate only on food. I challenge the Member for St. Anns East, the Minister of Social Development, I will join him on a poverty challenge where every day we eat food to the value of TT \$21 per day.

Let me explain to you what that means, because I am not sure people know what that means. A bread and channa is \$5, a small “cokes”—well I mean Coca Cola—is \$3, that is \$8. If you eat that three times a day it is more than they give you to take care of yourself in poverty, so forget bread and channa; bread and gizzard/liver \$7. *[Laughter]* You know, Mr. Speaker, they do not understand. I have a list here, because I know these things. *[Interruption]* Greens, do you know a bundle of greens is \$2.5; patchoi, \$3 to \$7; cucumber, essential \$1.5 to \$5 a pound. If you have to live on TT \$21 a day you cannot eat three hops bread and have three drinks of “sweet drink” for the day on \$21. I challenge the Minister, Member for St. Anns East. I would have challenged my friend from Diego Martin Central but he is already challenged elsewhere and we want to wish him a very speedy recovery, we know he is not too well. *[Interruption]* Mr. Speaker, St. Anns East, \$21 a day you have to live on; you cannot buy food that is nutritional, *[Interruption]* you cannot eat well. *[Crosstalk]*

Mr. Speaker: Order, please!

Dr. R. Moonilal: Now, Mr. Speaker, you are forgetting that the average person needs to pay transportation cost, at sometimes, would need clothes—

Hon. Member: Let them light flambeau.

Dr. R. Moonilal:—rent, lights, water, telephone; \$21 a day. The poverty level is \$655. If the Minister would like to clarify I will give him the time.

Mr. Rahael: Would you give way?

Dr. R. Moonilal: Yes, but you are only talking, not the Minister. Do you want to clarify? *[Interruption]* If the Minister wishes to clarify, because I have read—Mr. Speaker, I do not read too much of the PNM business, you know, because I consider that PNM business—an article on Sunday under the PNM corner or whatever they called it in the newspaper and there is a reference in the PNM article of Sunday last, I have it, where the PNM is saying the PNM as a party, that they are proud that they reduced the poverty figure, 17 per cent on \$655 per month.

Now, if that is wrong then they need to correct that in Balisier House, not in the Parliament because that is what they wrote Sunday last in the newspaper. So, if it is wrong, this is the view of the People's National Movement, \$21 a day, you cannot even eat a bread and channa and drink a small “cokes” with that, far less other expenses, and if any one of them can do that we will not make any problem again with this issue. You know why I said that. There are three Congress persons in the United States; recently, they were protesting the food stamp money. *[Interruption]* How much do they give in food stamp in the United States? Do you know that three members of the House of Representatives in the US went to live for a month; I think US \$3 per day works out as their food stamp. *[Interruption]*

Mr. Speaker, TT \$21 a day, they are asking. Just a few days ago in the newspaper *[Interruption]* there was an article—*[Crosstalk]*

Mr. Speaker: Order!

Dr. R. Moonilal:—which indicated to us, Saturday, June 02, 2007; the *Business Guardian*, “NFM hikes price of flour.” So, Mr. Speaker, very soon that bread and channa is going up as well. Price hike, 15 per cent increase in the price of flour. Every day maxi-taxi fare going up and they expect people to live on \$21 per day. That is the heartless Government—

Mr. Beraux: Hon. Member, would you give way? Hon. Member, I know what you are saying, you are being dramatic. However, you do not think you should more refer to the retail prices in the supermarkets as opposed to what you purchase in the finished product? Most poor people—I grew up very poor so I know we cooked *[Interruption]* I cooked, and today we plant garden, *[Interruption]* so I do not know about you, because you may have grown up with a much richer state, but do you think you should refer to that?

Dr. R. Moonilal: Mr. Speaker, I want to indicate to the Member that for a month of dry goods, as you say oil, rice, flour, whatever; \$655 will not satisfy an

adult for one month. *[Interruption]* The average in this country, fortnightly, someone would spend about \$500 given the price of food at the supermarket. *[Interruption]*

While that may have been good when the Member for La Brea was growing up not too long ago—*[Interruption]* That may have been adequate when the Member for La Brea was growing up not too long ago; it is not adequate today, and I say that categorically, because if you go to the supermarket with \$655 you cannot buy food to last you one month. Also, they are pretending that the \$655 is only for food. The \$655 in poverty is for everything, not food alone.

Hon. Member: And water. *[Crosstalk]*

Dr. R. Moonilal: The calculation of the poverty line, they say if you have \$656 per month you are above the poverty line, so poverty is \$655 per month which comes down to \$21 a day.

Mr. Speaker, let me get back on track with this to indicate to this Government that while millions have been spent, millions committed to building the palace for the emperor; whilst millions of dollars—we look here today—spent on publicity, promotion and printing; millions of dollars spent by WASA for all sorts of public relations gimmicks; the Ministry of Health as well, they expect an adult in Trinidad and Tobago to survive not only with food but with clothing, with transport and with everything else that an adult needs for \$655. I want to tell you there are pensioners receiving \$1,000 and when they go to see the doctor—they have problems requiring some medication that are not on the CDAP list. I know because I also try to help some pensioners. When they have to buy the strip to test sugar that is not given free of charge through the Government's service; that is about \$300 to buy the strips. You are receiving \$1,000 every month and you have to go and buy strips for \$300.

Mr. Rahael: You all did not have any CDAP.

Dr. R. Moonilal: Yes, but we did not have an emperor building a palace for \$148 million. *[Crosstalk]* We did not have SuperPharm. That is what the UNC did not have, SuperPharm. *[Crosstalk]*

Mr. Speaker: Order!

Dr. R. Moonilal: Mr. Speaker, pensioners go for minor attention, for treatment for their eyes; they have a lot of problems with their eyes as they get older. Many of the medications required are not on that CDAP list; \$300 and \$400 gone from pension. When an adult is receiving \$450 as public assistance, I found a recipient of public assistance the other day elsewhere, he came up with a form

asking me for money; I made a small contribution. So I asked him, tell me something, you do not get public assistance for this problem that you have? He said, yes. I said, why are you going around with this form asking people for money? He said, I have \$450, it cannot buy the medication that I need. I have to eat, I have to pay rent; \$450 cannot take care of me and I cannot work, and he showed me the medical report where he cannot work. And you expect someone to survive on \$450 at a time when flour price went up? I told you already the cost of basic vegetables—we heard the cost of basic food.

Now, Mr. Speaker, unlike my colleagues on the other side, we are not talking of what they consume, low fat milk, the best imported cereal; we are not talking about lobster and shrimps; we are not talking about fine wines and diet soft drink and so on. We are talking about drops, sweetbread, small “cokes”, bread and this, bread and that—what is called a piper “roti”—a half of a “roti”, that is what we are talking about that they expect an adult to survive on that. And that is caring for you. That is PNM style caring. I want to tell them do not anger us and amuse us by calling 17 per cent poverty level.

Hon. Member: Milk is \$81.

Dr. R. Moonilal: Eighty one dollars for what?

Hon. Member: Milk.

Dr. R. Moonilal: Milk, I do not want to get into that. Mr. Speaker, I want to tell them do not embarrass themselves by talking about 17 per cent poverty at \$655 per month. What we have in this country now is a new phenomenon for Trinidad and Tobago, a phenomenon known as pension poverty. That is very rampant in some countries, pension poverty, where pensioners are in poverty. They cannot afford to live with what they get as a pension. That is pension poverty as a new wave that has emerged under the People's National Movement Government.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister in the Ministry of Finance, I also want to indicate to him that Prof. Dennis Pantin, Economist at the University of the West Indies, recently wrote an article in the newspaper and he advised the Government, do not be misled for a second time. All of this good report about IMF, World Bank; Prof. Pantin recalls that during the 1987/1988 period, as well, they also advised the then Government about IMF and World Bank, and if they say you are doing good, check on the ground, your social economy is collapsing. When the IMF and World Bank give you a good pat on the back, you know there is a cliff in front of you that you can easily fall over when they decide to tell you that you are doing well.

Mr. Speaker, of course, I did not make reference at all to construction. Do you know in the construction sector prices have gone up astronomically over the last six to seven years? The Member for Diego Martin West is very familiar with construction, goods, prices and so on, maybe, not prices but the construction material, and in that sector what you budgeted for at \$100,000 in 2001, today, that will cost you about \$400,000 with the increase in the basic construction material. Ask anyone today, who built a house five to ten years ago, they cannot build a house today. And when we talk about poverty and so on, that is where we are dealing with.

The other point I want to raise is this scam of unemployment. Today, in Trinidad and Tobago the Government will boast of 5 per cent unemployment by their good economic policy. I believe sometime with this Government is 5 per cent brain, not 5 per cent unemployment. They have taken the labour force of this country to encamp them in Government make-work programmes and starved the private sector of labour so that today there are several areas in the private sector that cannot get workers because all the workers prefer to go with Government work rather than work in the private sector. [*Interruption*] The solution was really to monitor the private sector, to police the private sector so they will have decent wages, decent work, good terms and conditions, lack of exploitation and develop your private sector which has been the traditional area for the transfer of skills.

Mr. Speaker, just this week a very well-known builder from San Fernando came to my residence. Well of course not being in the position of my friend for St. Anns East, I have some problems with my garage collapsing, so he came to make an estimate of what we need with hardware material and so on. I asked the builder, "When can you start, this is a serious problem, my garage can fall." He said "I want to tell you doctor, we cannot start now." I said, why? He said, he cannot get labourers, he cannot get help to do minor, construction work. He said everybody prefers to go and work with the Government make-work programme and they are not free for private contractors and builders.

Mr. Speaker, you know in this country, historically, long before MUST and YAPA, and what else, OJT and HYPE, and all of that; you had a vibrant apprenticeship system where the older persons, the builders, the skilled people, masons, carpenters, and so on, they would take young people to work with them and those young people would get good training as a mason, as a carpenter; skilled making windows, woodwork, whatever, and after a while the young people would then leave and go off on their own to start their own business and they would develop a clientele. That has disappeared completely, because they

decided that they will introduce state-run programmes to transfer skills rather than support the private sector, the self-employed and the talented people in the private sector. That is why today we have Chinese coming in the country from China to do skilled and unskilled work, and while we are doing that they are firing more people.

Mr. Speaker, an article, Wednesday, June 06, 2007, today, "7,000 gaming workers face end of industry, Government accused of acting in bad faith." Well that does not surprise us, but 7,000 persons in the gaming sector to go. Do you know what they will do? They will increase the funding for URP, CEPEP, some other make-work programme and they will put these 7,000 people there. While they could have been working in the private sector under good terms and conditions of work, policed by the Ministry of Labor, Small and Micro Enterprise Development and after a while they could go off on their own business, they could show their own talent and so on. That is where we are, and when they talk about unemployment being low, what they really mean is that they have increased by billions; the make-work public programmes have increased to sap up all the labour.

They are proud of destroying the work ethic. One of their greatest achievements they see is destroying the work ethic of Trinidad and Tobago, where today, regrettably, you cannot get any young person to drive a bread van. They tell you, driving a bread van hard; it is the evening work, to go out in the evenings and weekend and so on. Do you know what they want? They really want to work with some one of the government agencies, because they believe that is where you could get a good pay, you do not work as hard, you do not have the commitment and the sacrifice that you need to get in the private sector.

So, Mr. Speaker, that is their extent of governance that they bring to bear. Those of us on the Front Bench, while we are very happy with some measures here, we ask the country to take a look and listen to the debate where they are increasing their spending, not only salaries and Cola, and certainly, not only infrastructure and national security, but in those other areas which they are masking, as they try to get a lot more resources into central government for spending. National security is, of course, our prime concern now, and all we can do is to hope that at the appropriate time the population will decide on this Government's track record in protecting the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago, because today, over 2,000 homes are with widows and orphans, since 2001 when this Government came into being. Barrels of blood have been spilled across this land. The very latest episode demonstrates to us that Trinidad and Tobago,

whether you like it or not, will now develop a reputation of being a territory that can harbour terrorist elements. We never had that before.

Hon. Member: Oh, God. [*Crosstalk*]

Dr. R. Moonilal: I want to remind the Government of this attitude, I saw it before. In 2003 when we were talking about crime, Members on the other side said look at them, they are feeling happy, there is murder and they are happy; crime is going on and they are happy, they get something to crow about in the Opposition. [*Interruption*] In 2003 you said that. Then this Prime Minister came in 2007 and had a crime consultation, he said, I want to hear what to do, crime is out of hand, what to do? [*Interruption*] When we told them that FTA, they are wasting \$14 million, they said we do not love Trinidad and Tobago.

Hon. Member: It is true.

Dr. R. Moonilal: FTA collapsed and \$14 million gone. We love this country.

Hon. Member: Who?

Dr. R. Moonilal: Let me tell you something, Mr. Speaker, attacking this Government is the most patriotic thing you can do in 2007. [*Desk thumping*] That is the most patriotic thing anybody can do; vote this Government out of office. There is no other method of showing your patriotism than pointing out what they are doing. Today, Trinidad and Tobago with an international image of harbouring terrorists, when I saw the front page of the *Guardian*, "Guess who came to dinner".

Hon. Member: Yes.

Dr. R. Moonilal: And it is not Sidney Poitier. Mr. Speaker, guess who came to dinner? We are getting this news from the daughter of a terrorist suspect that the Prime Minister himself was a guess in the company of persons who, it is alleged, have been involved in the most massive, sophisticated terrorist plot to blow up half of New York. [*Interruption*] The Prime Minister has answered this before.

Hon. Member: Which we do not believe.

Dr. R. Moonilal: I do not want to get into the Back Bench and whether they recruit the person or did not recruit the person, whether the person is an executive member or not, they will give their own public statements on that. The Prime

Minister of the country has made a statement that he cannot remember this person, but he reminds me of the Minister of Works and Transport, he went to the EBC and said he did not know somebody and the person came up the next day and showed him a picture where they met. We support the police in this country.

Dr. Rowley: You do not.

Hon. Member: We do.

Dr. Rowley: You do not.

Hon. Member: We do.

Dr. Rowley: You bad mouth the police every day.

Mr. Speaker: Order!

Dr. R. Moonilal: Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Speaker: Speak to me.

Dr. R. Moonilal: Yes, because the Member for Diego Martin West has his own problem with the police.

Dr. Rowley: Really?

Dr. R. Moonilal: And let him deal with that himself.

Dr. Rowley: My name is Panday.

Dr. R. Moonilal: Yes, Panday tote wheel barrow of gravel and sand in Tobago. Panday tote that? [*Laughter*] You see him toting wheel barrow of sand—

Mr. Speaker: Please! [*Clears throat*] Order, please! Order!

Dr. R. Moonilal: Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Speaker: Now, take your seat, please! Take your seat, please! You have only got about two or three minutes left, and try to—maybe you can address some of the heads that you have missed.

Dr. R. Moonilal: Mr. Speaker, I was addressing my mind to the critical issues when the Member for Diego Martin West [*Crosstalk*] took me off-line by telling me about wheel barrow of sand and gravel. Let me in the few minutes—
[*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: Order!

Dr. R. Moonilal: Mr. Speaker, if you do not want to tell him shut up I could shut him up, you know.

Mr. Speaker: No, no! Please! Until such time as you sit here then you cannot—*[Interruption]* Order, please, Member for Nariva. As I said, I am imploring you, you only have two minutes left and you have not addressed half of the heads that you need to address here.

Dr. R. Moonilal: Mr. Speaker, as I said in the beginning other colleagues here will deal with other sectors and the other issues.

I want to take this opportunity in ending to congratulate the police service in Trinidad and Tobago over the arrests recently *[Desk thumping]* of persons alleged to be involved in some terrorist plot. *[Interruption]* And, all we can say in complimenting the police is thank God that they held the persons before and not after an event. So we are on record as supporting the police. In fact, you will recall that on previous occasions it was the UNC and those in the Opposition who spoke about benefits for the police officers.

The final point, Mr. Speaker, deals with this issue of accountability, and to ask this Government in the short time that they have left if this population can expect this Government to account for the millions of dollars that they have taken from the Treasury, from the public purse and wasted and squandered on mega projects that will not bring water, mega projects that will not bring security and mega projects that will do nothing to enhance the quality of life of citizens of Trinidad and Tobago.

I also want to remind this population, as we said, before that a future UNC government is committed to reviewing these mega projects where they have wasted billions of dollars; a future UNC government is committed to providing the basic utilities, major among them, key, is the matter of security, and my colleagues on this side will speak to that issue.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you.

3.30 p.m.

Mr. Speaker: Before I call on the next speaker, let me indicate to the hon. Member for Oropouche having so admirably moved the concerns about the resident of Goocharan Trace, I suppose you do not want this motion—well, we can talk about it because you did have a motion.

Dr. Moonilal: Mr. Speaker, I like your response.

Mr. Speaker: Members let me remind you, I know a practice has developed when we discuss matters of a supplementary nature that Members turn this debate into a mini budget, but that has been the practice. However, the Standing Orders

say that on a motion that a report of the finance committee be adopted, Members may raise points as to specific details of heads of expenditure in the report, but may not raise any matters of general principle. Now, while I know that you have to respond to the Minister and you may want to raise matters of concern, I would very much appreciate it if the majority of your contributions will be concentrated on the heads of expenditure that have been increased.

Mr. Gerald Yetming (*St. Joseph*): Mr. Speaker, I would join this debate on the point at which the Member for Oropouche left off and that is on waste and squandermania. I could understand the problem of a Minister of Finance when in a period of plenty, you would clearly have considerable demands on the Treasury from all the Ministries for funds, and I could understand that at the time of preparation of the budget that clearly there would be requests far outstripping what Ministries would normally get. Therefore, when there is a surplus fund and there is some distribution to make, then funds are allocated accordingly. I can understand that, but this additional \$3.1 billion in this supplementary appropriation has to be looked at in the context of the amount of money we approved at the last budget also in the context of the amount of money that has been spent by this Government and continues to be spent to the tune of pretty close, if not exceeding, \$170 billion.

Hon. Minister: Wow!

Mr. G. Yetming: And even if you discount \$7 billion or thereabouts for the revenue or Heritage and Stabilization Fund, the question that the population—not just the Opposition—has been asking and I am sure will continue to ask, is what has this \$170 billion done for us in this Trinidad and Tobago? [*Desk thumping*] And has the quality of life improved for each citizen over this period of time? That, Mr. Speaker, is a frequently asked question by most members of the population.

When we look at some of the amounts being requested in this supplementary and I am not going into a lot of details with the amounts under the various heads—I am sure many Members of the Opposition will do so—but we look at the Ministry of National Security with an increase in this supplementary of \$557 million and that is to add to the excess of \$3 billion that they got at the time of the budget, and that \$557 million does not provide, as far as the information that I have, for the police training academy.

When we had a debate recently with respect to improvements in the police service, one of the issues that came up, was the fact that there was a shortfall in officers to the tune of approximately 1,800 men or 1,800 officers, and at the rate of approximately 150 new policemen being turned out a year, it would be

impossible for that shortfall to be ever made up and we had suggested that clearly there needed to be an acceleration of training whereby more officers are turned out every year so that at least in some short time frame the police service could be up to strength.

Mr. Speaker, on June 01, 2007, there was an article in the *Trinidad Guardian* headlined “Police appeal for quick building of academy”. It says and I quote:

“Police service instructors are calling for a speedy construction of the new Police Training College in St. James.

Their appeal comes more than two years after Cabinet approved some \$14.2 million for the first phase or refurbishment work on the decades-old facility, which is to be transformed into a police academy within the next few years.”

The police officers who gave this story continued by saying:

“We have no fixed place of abode in relation to training and we are instructors, the instructor complained ...”

They talked about:

“...work on the Police Training College began four years ago, it had been at standstill for some time.

All they have been doing is demolishing. There have been no real progress... What is the Government doing to us?”

In spite of the fact that we have a supplementary appropriation of \$557 million for the Ministry of National Security, nothing in there based on the information that I have to deal with that critical issue. In fact, the Minister of National Security on a previous occasion gave us assurances that they were going to be turning out so many more men to bring the force up to mark and yet we wonder why there is still the state of insecurity in the country.

The supplementary deals with \$193 million more for the Ministry of Education, adding to another \$3 billion that they originally received and I think out of this \$193 million, \$45 million is to take care of repairs to schools, both primary and secondary. But, for all the billions of dollars that have been allocated, we still have parents and children protesting. In the *Guardian* of June 05, yesterday, an article with parents protesting unsafe conditions for school children and school children standing outside the school with placards. I would have thought that if this Government was serious about education, security and what have you, rather

than this rush to these mega projects, this rush to a Prime Minister's residence which is going to be completed in record time, that the priority of the Government would have been to fix every school in Trinidad and Tobago [*Desk thumping*] in quick time; to fix every police station in quick time; [*Desk thumping*] to fix every health centre in Trinidad and Tobago in quick time, [*Desk thumping*] but that is not their priority. Their priority is not the people; their priority is not the plight of the average and ordinary man in the street; their priority is themselves; their priority is big buildings on show; their priority is their friends and supporters and filling people's pockets.

We have \$104 million to the Ministry of Works and Transport for desilting and clearing of water courses, we are in June and we are in the rainy season. We had an article on May 27, 2007 and the article was headlined, "Waterways still blocked" and the article started off and I quote:

"The rains have begun. And several of the country's flood-prone waterways are yet to be cleared of garbage and silt.

When the *Sunday Express* visited the area last week..."

I think they were talking about Diego Martin;

"debris clogged some of the waterways to such an extent that the water was stagnant."

And it speaks about the Public Health Inspector of the Diego Martin Regional Corporation, quoting him as saying:

"We are in the process of dealing with that. We have 46 waterways earmarked for cleaning ..."—this is June—"we are starting..."—not that we have started—"with the major ones that can cause the most problems. The others would be soon thereafter."

And in Port of Spain they talked about where there is annual flooding.

"...The *Sunday Express* visited the East Dry River...strewn with debris. City Engineer...says the waterways will be cleaned up."

Mr. Speaker, this is absolute madness. So, with the rains having started, we get the flooding in Port of Spain and the flooding in Diego Martin, I want the population to know it is simply because—and they should not be told and they must never believe that we have an unprecedented amount of rainfall in any given day because that is the excuse that is famously given. It is because—the Ministry of Works and Transport has simply not attended to the waterways and the rivers

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and they have waited until the rainy season has started to talk about cleaning debris. There is nothing much for the Member for Diego Martin East to replicate or to emulate, but I will use some of his words anyway, “arrant nonsense! Arrant nonsense!” [*Desk thumping*] And WASA is to get \$300 million.

The Member for Oropouche raised the question on the desalination plant or the desalination plants and it is interesting that on Wednesday, June 06—is that today?

Hon. Member: Yes.

Mr. G. Yetming: Wednesday, June 06, today; in today’s *Express*, there is an article that a WASA official says that the desalination plant should be a last resort. The article started and I quote:

“Three days after the Prime Minister Patrick Manning stated that it was government's plan to solve the country’s water woes by building five desalination plants within the next three years, a WASA official has said that desalination should be Trinidad and Tobago's last alternative in obtaining water.”

He goes on to say:

“I would say desalination should come last as a solution because of the high costs of desalinated water and all the complications that go along with the desalination...

Relying on ground and surface water may be better in terms of the simplicity of obtaining it and maintaining the supply and source.”

So here you have the Prime Minister making an announcement trying to pacify the population in the dry season and the population that had been receiving no water in spite of the hundreds of millions of dollars that WASA has been receiving with an additional \$300 million in this supplementary, he gets up and he talks about five desalination plants and the engineers or some official within WASA is saying, “arrant nonsense”. But you know it does not surprise me that the Prime Minister should make that statement, because his waking up in the morning and deciding on something coming to his head, is how decisions are made and that does not include who he consults. I am going to give you an example of how the decision was made with respect to the Brian Lara Stadium because I am going to talk about the Brian Lara Stadium again, today.

In the debate on a Supplementary and Variation Bill on June 10, 2005 the Prime Minister had this to say; in that debate he was speaking about the Brian Lara Stadium and he said:

“We said that instead of building a cricket academy alone, let us build a sporting complex that is dedicated to excellence, because shortly after Brian Lara made his 400 runs we had George Bovell III winning a medal in Olympics in swimming for the first time, and in one of the heats breaking a world record. To honour that feat, let us do something for swimming, so we will put a 50-metre Olympic size pool as part of a training facility in the complex in Tarouba.”

He goes on to say, Mr. Speaker:

“That is how we decide on these things.”

The Prime Minister speaking and he goes on to say:

“Since we are going to be putting those two things together and there is a requirement for training facilities in other sports, let us put it. We have distinguished ourselves in cycling, so let us put an Olympic size, a 250-metres smaller track velodrome in that centre of excellence.”

So he wakes up and a “fella” wins a medal, he says let us put something there; and we do well in cycling, let us put something there. That is how these decisions are made. So that he wakes up in the morning and he says, he feels that desalination is the answer, and in spite of what he said a couple years ago, it does not matter, he decides. That is why we have the problem with Tarouba stadium to which I will come. He wakes up in the morning and he says in addition to Brian Lara, we will do that, we will do that, somebody rushes and puts a Note to Cabinet to say it is going to cost whatever, and now we are hearing it is hundreds of millions of dollars more to be spent.

Mr. Speaker, there were some smaller items of concern to me because they deal, in my view, with what I consider to be total waste and what I also call the syphoning of the public funds and in some cases, public funds for general election campaign purposes. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Singh: \$1,000 breakfast.

Mr. G. Yetming: We heard about the MORI poll or the MORI pollsters. Part of the supplementary is for an additional \$5.1 million for MORI—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Singh: MORI means more.

Mr. G. Yetming: In a written response to a question raised that was delivered today, there was a breakdown of the amount of money paid to MORI over the past six years, totalling \$11 million; \$4.6 million in 2005; \$1.2 million in 2006 and for this year, an election year, \$5.6 million. That MORI poll, the MORI polling might be done partly to give the Government some reading on what is happening so that they can formulate their public policy accordingly, but that is not the only intent behind MORI. The intent behind MORI is to do political polling for a political party. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Ramsaran: I guess they RPO.

Mr. G. Yetming: And this is where the waste and use of public money for what I would consider to be illicit purposes come in. We have the national consultation on crime, \$3.1 million in the supplementary. That national consultation on crime, the seven meetings they had throughout Trinidad and Tobago was pure politicking, absolutely pure politicking because you cannot tell me that when crime was at its highest, there was absolutely no consultation with the people. They went about doing their own thing and they consulted with whoever they wanted to consult; they came out and bought the blimps and whatever it is and there was no consultation with the people. When they believed that the crime was on the way down; when they believed that was where the trend was going and with an election year, this year, they went out to the people, really to try to convince them that things have improved. So it was pure politicking and those consultations are being paid for by the people of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Member: Frauds.

Mr. G. Yetming: And then we also see within the supplementary, \$5.2 million for the promotion of Vision 2020, some abstract ads that do absolutely nothing for the population. Nobody in Trinidad and Tobago knows or few people in Trinidad and Tobago know what precisely is the Government's plan with respect to Vision 2020. The population of Trinidad and Tobago by and large, does not have a clue what they should expect by the year 2020. If they want to imagine that this 2020 plan would succeed and they want to put themselves down to 2020, they could ask themselves where would I be living; what would be the conditions of Trinidad and Tobago; what would be the condition of my life; what can I look forward to between now and then; what preparations could I make, few people in Trinidad and Tobago have a clue. That is not to say that they may not have developed a good plan, but the point is that few people in Trinidad and Tobago know about it and if we judge by the ads that are appearing in newspapers for Vision 2020 which say absolutely nothing, this \$5.2 million is an absolute waste.

Mr. Speaker, my greater concern is for the fact—I am not dealing with \$3 million here and \$5 million there—that of this \$170 billion that this Government has spent over the past years that they have been in office—and that \$170 billion is not all, because if you add to that \$170 billion the several more billion dollars that are being borrowed by state enterprises to do projects [*Desk thumping*] then you conceivably are dealing with approximately \$200 billion that are being loosely, loosely spent, and therefore, there is now an overwhelming perception that a lot of the people's money, a lot of this \$200 billion is being wasted and a lot is now going into corrupt pockets. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, that is not simply the Opposition speaking, I am saying it is now a widely held perception and it may be true to say that most of them on the opposite side in Government may not be directly involved, but then collectively, have certainly created an enabling environment for that money to get into the wrong pockets. They have created the enabling environment [*Desk thumping*] for a lot of that \$200 billion to reach into the wrong pockets, and in addition, for those who are nowhere near what is happening, they are certainly closing their eyes to what they know is happening.

I want to give some examples of that syphoning. Recently, we spoke, and it is public knowledge that CEPEP has spent over the past couple years \$1.6 billion and the Central Audit Unit of the Ministry of Finance—not the Opposition—the Central Audit Committee of the Ministry of Finance, professionals and independent people evaluated and reported that 41.6 per cent of that money is what reached the unemployed and the poor. Translated, of the \$1.6 billion, about \$600 million reached the poor or the unemployed according to the people in the Central Audit department in the Ministry of Finance. One billion; \$1,000 million of that CEPEP money did not get to the poor, and while some of it would have gone to overheads, most of it went into the pockets of friends and supporters of the People's National Movement. [*Desk thumping*]

The report was riddled with terms of ghost gangs and dummies. Riddled! I want to let the Member for Arima know, warn her really because we have a Finance Bill that is going to put in place the committee that would deal with the Green Fund. That Green Fund is now about \$1 billion; \$1 billion, that is now being termed by people in the street as “TREPEP”. I warn the Member for Arima for whom I have some respect, and she said that when she assumed responsibility for CEPEP, she found things wrong and she took action. I am saying that the action that she is taking is simply taking too long because she simply does not have full control of CEPEP.

I want to see her put her money where her mouth is with respect to this Green Fund because I want to see how she proceeds with dispensing the moneys from this Green Fund and to whom she dispenses this money. I foresee and I think that it is a general feeling, however cynical we might all have become, that a lot of this Green Fund money is going into the campaign of the People's National Movement [*Desk thumping*] for the next general election.

Mr. Singh: CEPEP.

Mr. G. Yetming: I want her—on the basis on what she said with respect to CEPEP—to ensure that whatever she does in getting this money allocated to these projects that she does so with good judgement and to not allow whoever is giving her directions and allowed that mismanagement to take place with CEPEP, anywhere near her office.

Mr. Singh: The Prime Minister.

Mr. G. Yetming: I will not be surprised. There was a proposal several years ago, in 2001 to be exact, where we suggested that some independent people, representatives of certain environmental NGOs be put on the board of the Green Fund, but that is not what is contained in the proposal before the Parliament in that Finance Bill.

4.00 p.m.

I want to believe that Mr. Ray Braithwaite would not be part of that Green Fund committee.

More recently, Mr. Speaker, the Government rushed to do damage control with respect to the Waterfront Project. The *Guardian* published a report on the basis of a release, that they read and misread, and the Government rushed to do damage control.

Mr. Imbert: You rushed to talk nonsense.

Mr. G. Yetming: The Member for Diego Martin East, when he gets home and he is asked, "How was Parliament today?" His response must usually be, "You know, I make dem laugh today again." [*Laughter*] [*Desk thumping*] He is a clown.

Hon. Members: Oh! [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. G. Yetming: Arrant nonsense! He rushed to defend. When Minister Robinson-Regis made the announcement about the Waterfront Project in August of 2005 and she announced the contract at \$1.67 billion, she never said what that

represented. The population never knew that management fees and so on were not involved. We get a release from a bank, not from the Government, saying that they have now lent the Government so many hundred million US dollars, converted to the tune of \$2.3 billion, which is \$600 million more than the \$1.6 originally announced by the Minister.

The Member for Diego Martin East got up and talked about project management fees were this much, and VAT was this much, and so many for beds and pillows and beds sheets. When the project was announced, no mention was made that the \$1.6 did not include a host of things. We are being told now, after the fact, "Well, you know, there is a further amount of \$600 million, because we did not include, at the outset, project management fees and what have you." That is part, I think, of the deceit. They come and report a particular figure and when the figure escalates, they come and tell you, "You know, it is VAT, project management fees and what have you." It is really to disguise the fact that a lot of underhand things are going on, only by virtue of the fact that they have opened the door for it. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Imbert: "Yuh lose de fight already; give up."

Mr. G. Yetming: Why did we have to hear about the loan from the bank and not from the Government, for such a substantial amount of money, \$2.3 billion? Why was the total cost, when it was announced, not broken down? When they made the announcement about the University of Trinidad and Tobago's (UTT) main campus, the Minister announced that the signature building was \$1.2 billion; the infrastructure works was \$245 million; the furniture and equipment was \$280 million and contingency was \$88 million for \$1.8 billion. Why did they not announce the Waterfront Project on that basis? So for different projects they do things differently, really to confuse. But, in any case, with this UTT main campus, it will not surprise me if we find out at some later date that we still have a couple hundred million dollars added on to this \$1.8 billion, because they are going to come and say, "We did not tell you about this and we did not tell you about that and we did not tell you about the other." [*Crosstalk*] That is their style.

They boast about fixed price. The Member for Diego Martin East was quick to jump up and talk about, "Well, you know, the bank says this was a fixed price contract and we are on budget and we are on time." It was a big boast: fixed price, on budget, on time. Why does the Minister of Health not get up and tell us about the fixed price contract for the Scarborough Hospital? [*Desk thumping*] Why does he not tell us that the Scarborough Hospital is on time and on budget?

Finance Committee Report (Adoption)
[MR. YETMING]

Wednesday, June 06, 2007

The Scarborough Hospital, which was originally at \$134 million, is now reported to be, with claims, up to \$350 million and, at this time, only 40 per cent completed. They are quick to jump up on the Waterfront Project and talk about fixed price, within budget and on time, but they would not say a word about the Scarborough Hospital. [*Desk thumping*]

What about the fixed price contract on the Brian Lara Stadium? Get up and tell me about it. [*Interruption*] [*Mr. Yetming sits*] You always quick to jump up and talk. [*Crosstalk*] You want to make people laugh again today? Mr. Speaker, \$275 million.

This project was announced after a Cabinet meeting; the Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs and Calder Hart were present. When they made the announcement of the Brian Lara Stadium, Calder Hart announced that the Tarouba Stadium, including the Brian Lara Stadium, would be by fixed price contract. It was in an article in the *Trinidad Guardian* of Thursday, May 26. He said, "You know, the contractors were against this fixed price arrangement"; in essence he was saying, "We insisted on a fixed price contract."

So where is the fixed price contract on the Brian Lara Stadium that was originally announced? We are not going to buy that arrant nonsense about the move from one location to the other location, because at the time the matter went to Cabinet, they knew that it had already moved from one site to the next, so do not come with that nonsense about, "Because of the move the price has gone up." [*Crosstalk*]

An interesting thing happened on Tuesday, May 29, a couple days ago. I was watching the TV6 news and Sasha Mohammed was doing an interview with Mr. Calder Hart, who appears to be the main spokesperson for the Government with respect to certain contracts, not the Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs. Calder Hart admitted, on air, taped, that the Government had made a mistake with the Brian Lara Stadium. He made that admission. [*Crosstalk*] He went on to say that his mother had told him that when you make your first mistake, put it down to experience; when you make your second mistake, if you make the mistake a second time, you put it down to stupidity.

Calder Hart admitted to the population of Trinidad and Tobago, on air, that he made a mistake with the Brian Lara Stadium; a mistake with the people's money; a mistake, depending on how you look at it, to the tune of \$558 million or \$300 million. But either way, if we take the lower figure, \$300 million, it is not Calder Hart's money; he does not care a damn. He could go and experiment with

the people's money and now come on air and say, "Well, you know, I made a mistake; I will put that down to experience," so he is gaining experience at the expense of the people of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] And not just a few dollars; if they want to spend \$5 million for MORI, let them do it, but not \$300 million. [*Crosstalk*]

Miss Lucky: He has no heart at all.

Mr. Singh: Shameless!

Mr. G. Yetming: Because of the secrecy of these people, who is to say that this is his first mistake? [*Desk thumping*] The number of projects they are handling and the quiet manner in which they go about doing them, without saying a word to the population, this may very well be his second mistake; and he is damn stupid. [*Desk thumping*]

We have another stupid one. Benny Hinn called the Prime Minister and Minister of Finance stupid and now Calder Hart's mother called him stupid. So two of the top people in the Government, dealing with billions of dollars, are stupid. [*Desk thumping*] That is what we have in this country: stupid people spending "we" money. [*Crosstalk*] [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Members: Put it down to experience!

Mr. G. Yetming: And they want to put it down to experience. According to the Member for Diego Martin East, "Foolishness!" [*Desk thumping*] [*Laughter*]

Hon. Member: Arrant nonsense!

Miss Lucky: You cannot say it as he says it; get up and say it.

Mr. G. Yetming: Part of the allocation in the budget this year had to deal with CNMG. It was given \$71.5 million to start up. In a recent newspaper report we understand that they lost \$20 million for the year so far. So we are dealing with another \$100 million experiment; because Dr. Saith said, and it was reported in the newspaper, "Let us see if it can once more be commercially viable", talking about CNMG when they took the decision. "If in two to three years it is still not commercially viable and cannot work, then you are free to look at something else." So this is a Minister of Government, an acting Prime Minister, another one of the top ones in there with the people's money, and he is saying that for \$100 million, "Leh we try dis ting, and if in two to three years it doh work, we go try something else," on \$100 million! By which time, in two to three years, it will be \$160 million; and they do not care.

Tax revenues have moved from \$11 billion to about \$33 billion over the short space of five years. As far as they are concerned, there is more to come. So what if we waste some? That is the attitude. [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. Member: A few hundred million here, a few hundred million there; yes, that is experience!

Mr. Singh: A fool and his money are soon parted.

Mr. G. Yetming: There is another thing that I have not heard about. We are dealing with the Solid Waste Management Company Limited (SWMCOL). In October 2006, there was a big newspaper article about a potential \$3 billion project for the rehabilitation of the Beetham dump. The article dealt with the fact that persons who were tendering had already determined that there was "bobbol", if I can use that term, in how that tender was being handled and that Mr. Braithwaite has already decided, as he had decided who the 107 contractors would have been in the initial start-up of CEPEP, who was going to get the contract for that \$3 billion project.

Mr. Speaker, we have not heard anything further on that. For all we know that contract has already been awarded and we are going to find out about it one of these days.

I saw a report in today's newspaper that the Chairman of Petrotrin talked about the wages of Petrotrin being at such a level that it could become the next Caroni. We had a case, in fact, the matter was supposed to be before the Integrity Commission; and I am continuing to deal with this whole question of waste and corruption. There was an upgrade of the No. 4 vacuum and distillation unit at Petrotrin. A company called Cudjoe Construction that was by some gentleman, a company that never dealt with a contract larger than \$1.2 million, according to the reports, was given the contract under very questionable circumstances. Questionable because a firm by the name of Damus Limited had bid \$27 million for the project. Apparently the decision had been taken to give the contract to Damus because they were experienced in the business. Somebody intervened and the contract was awarded to Cudjoe, a company that never dealt with a contract greater than \$1.2 million. Cudjoe was given the contract for \$22 million. The contract ended up at \$126 million.

Mr. Singh: Scandal!

Mr. G. Yetming: And the contract took three times as long as had been contracted. So no within budget and on time that they quick to jump up and boast

about; \$100 million more than was contracted; with a serious breach of the tendering process. I understand the matter was being dealt with by the Integrity Commission. We have heard nothing further. I would suspect that we shall hear nothing further, because only today it was reported that a particular building housing the procurement operations of Petrotrin went up in smoke. [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. Members: Aw!

Mr. Singh: Burn baby, burn!

Mr. G. Yetming: The reports said that heaps of documents relating to purchases made by the company were destroyed; a building that apparently had been condemned, that Petrotrin apparently did nothing about, because it would appear that they would have been quite happy to have that building go up in smoke. [*Desk thumping*] [*Crosstalk*] If you want to track or trace or investigate anything now, with respect to the procurement of Petrotrin, where they dealt with hundreds of millions of dollars, you have no more evidence. [*Desk thumping*]

It is quite similar to an event that took place in 1996 when the Water and Sewerage Authority (WASA) storage facility, which included its document storage, went up in flames. That went up in flames in the midst of an investigation into the award of contracts for water wells. [*Interruption*]

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

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

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. G. Yetming: Mr. Speaker, the Petrotrin building that went up in smoke, I think they said the fire took place at 2 o'clock in the morning. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Singh: "Lagahoo" set that fire!

Mr. G. Yetming: So I do not know that any investigation into any procurement decision taken by Petrotrin, particularly with respect to that contract awarded to Cudjoe, whether the truth will ever come to light on that. [*Crosstalk*]

While I am on Petrotrin, we are dealing with small money, but it just goes to show the attitude that has developed. I understand a house was being renovated on the Petrotrin compound for the human resource manager, and the dog house cost \$50,000 to fix up. [*Crosstalk*]

The subterfuge, the deceit, the waste, the steps that they take to avoid giving information to the public. Only today we had another response from the Minister of Health to a question that was issued on Friday. The Member for Caroni Central asked a question about the National Oncology Centre, and the response was so vague. We were told that the National Oncology Centre would cost US \$24.1 million; let us say that is TT \$150 million, for simple discussion. All he said was, "Well, you know the contract was broken up into 25 parts; nine for works; nine for interior; seven for exterior; to date, two contracts have been awarded to Junior Sammy Construction through the public tendering process."

In the context of the Government's White Paper on procurement, this is what they tabled in Parliament; they developed this White Paper after a Green Paper had been tabled a year before. They had public consultations and they came with the White Paper and the Prime Minister said that he was coming to Parliament with the legislation. They said that the guidelines would address the following issues: the determination of value for money; open, effective competition which would include public notification of opportunities and evaluation criteria to be used in the bid process; public consultation on major contracts and publication of details of contracts. If you are committed, as a government, to these guidelines, because you ought not to put them in there if you did not mean them, and you are talking about publication of details of contracts, why when you get a question in Parliament, you do not give us the details of the contracts? You come with a vague late little "three-word" response, only to disguise.

I made reference to that White Paper, because one of the things that this Government has deliberately done, is to not have come to Parliament with the legislation to put this public procurement regime into legal effect. In spite of the fact that the Prime Minister made announcements in his 2006/2007 budget that it was to come, it never came. We now know why.

In an article today by Clint Chan Tack on page 18 of today's *Newsday*, it appears that he asked the Prime Minister a question at Crowne Plaza about the new procurement regime. The Prime Minister said it would be difficult to implement the new public procurement regime in its present form. The Prime Minister went on to say it:

"...could slow down the rate of Government national development initiatives at a time when the population was clamouring for improved delivery of goods and services." [*Crosstalk*]

In spite of the fact that we have raised in this House, on a number of occasions, the question of this new procurement regime, nobody ever jumped up

to explain it, as they were quick to jump up on the Waterfront Project. We now understand that the Prime Minister has deliberately withheld this legislation from Parliament because, in his view, it would be difficult to implement it in its present form; meaning that there are certain things in that White Paper that he is uncomfortable with. [*Crosstalk*] Not only that, it would also slow down the rate of his development initiatives, when he claimed that the population was clamouring for improved delivery of goods and services.

What is the rush for Torouba? Is Torouba something that the population was clamouring for?

Hon. Members: No!

Mr. G. Yetming: Was the campus for government offices being clamoured for by the population?

Hon. Members: No!

Mr. G. Yetming: Was the Prime Minister's residence at \$150 million being clamoured for by the population? [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. Members: No!

Mr. G. Yetming: Was a carnival centre in the Savannah being clamoured for?

Hon. Members: No!

Mr. G. Yetming: So what is this nonsense about the public clamouring for goods and services and, therefore, we would have to hold back on this procurement regime, because it would slow up projects? It would prevent them, if that were to go into place, from opening the door for people to "tief the people money". [*Desk thumping*] [*Crosstalk*]

The majority of the big projects are not to benefit the mass population; they are for show and they are being expedited, because the more you could do in five years—because you are not too sure you are going back—and the more you could take, the better it would be for all. You want to move fast with your projects, but you want to move very loose.

Mr. Singh: Fast and loose!

Mr. G. Yetming: To the point where Standard and Poor's in their credit rating report on Trinidad and Tobago of August 2005, spoke about a lack of transparency in Government owned entities; so it is not just we who are saying it; international people are saying it.

Then, of course, do not mention the Gafoor report.

Hon. Members: Oh! [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. G. Yetming: I am sure others will speak about it, because I do not want to come back to speak after tea.

Here we have a government that has phantoms in health. They have ghost gangs and dummies in CEPEP. We had parrots and “douens” in education. We had some problem with a dragon on the roof of the Red House. This is a Government that appears to deal in folklore and superstition; they seem obsessed. Then you also have the Prime Minister formulating Government policy with the use of a prophetess; that is what we are faced with in Trinidad and Tobago [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker, my concern is not so much with the fact that they have come for \$3 billion. Whether we like it or not, they are going to get the approval for it. We clearly object to it on the grounds that the moneys being spent by them are not being effectively and efficiently spent. We object to it on the grounds that the Government has shown itself to be wasteful spenders and the Government has shown itself to be creating and allowing conditions to exist, for there to be a rape of the people's money. [*Desk thumping*] Furthermore, that this thing should be done in a most blatant fashion, in front of our faces and they do it in all kinds of different ways and means, they think that all of us are fools. They were not aware that Benny Hinn was going to pick up on it and Calder Hart did not realize that his mother would have picked up on it; they are just a bunch of stupid spenders. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the sitting of the House is suspended for tea and will resume promptly at 5.00 p.m.

4.30 p.m.: *Sitting suspended.*

5.00 p.m.: *Sitting resumed.*

Mr. Speaker: Before I call on the hon. Member for Arouca South, let me remind the Acting Leader of Government Business, the Chief Whip and in his absence, the Member for Caroni East, that 5 o'clock is 5 o'clock and not three minutes after five. So that when I say that we will resume at 5 o'clock, I am expecting Members to be back here at 5 o'clock.

The Minister of Planning and Development (Hon. Camille Robinson-Regis): Mr. Speaker, I would like to start my contribution where the Member for St. Joseph ended. The Member talked in his last few minutes about the report on the health services of Trinidad and Tobago. It is very interesting that those on the

other side talk about the report that recently came out, as though the report deals only with the period under our administration or just as though it happened a couple of weeks ago.

I am sure the Member for St. Joseph would recall that it was while he was the Minister of Finance there was such concern by him over corruption in the health services, that he insisted that an investigation be done on the health services under the watch then of the Minister of Health at the time, the Member for Caroni Central. I hope they have not forgotten that they are the ones who first saw that there was something wrong with the health services and called for an investigation.

Furthermore, the unprecedented took place, where a minister in the Ministry asked for the resignation of the Minister of Health at the time. I am sure the Member for Caroni Central is going to get up and start talking all kinds of things about the Commission of Enquiry, but I want them to recall that part of the information there took place under their watch; that their Minister of Finance, the Member for St. Joseph, called for information to come forward, an audit to come forward on the health services, and the current Member for Barataria/San Juan, who was the Minister in the Ministry of Health, called for the resignation of the then Minister of Health, the Member for Caroni Central.

Furthermore, it was at that time that the current Opposition Senator, who is also talking a lot about this health report and this Commission of Enquiry, was brought before the courts to answer a charge of corruption in relation to the health services. It was initiated by the Member for St. Joseph. Additionally, that matter is not at an end, because we have appealed the decision of the court in relation to the issue involving that particular Senator. So when they talk very glibly about corruption in the health services that the Commission of Enquiry has revealed, the majority of information in that enquiry is information in relation to their stewardship. I want to place that on record immediately.

Hon. Members: Who was the Senator?

Hon. C. Robinson-Regis: Well, we know. [*Crosstalk*]

At the same time, the Member for Oropouche who was very vociferous about who is using Government's money for what purpose, and saying that without any proof, while that information has been debunked in this very House, was collecting two salaries from the Government of Trinidad and Tobago; one from the Ministry of Health. All that probably prompted the Member for St. Joseph to want an enquiry and an audit into what was happening in the Ministry of Health at the time. [*Desk thumping*] So it is very strange that they would jump up and start to talk about corruption.

Imagine they are talking about corruption in Trinidad and Tobago! Corruption in circumstances where we have an airport that nobody could be proud of; nobody could understand the amount of money spent on that airport and what we have got for it. We have received apologies from the main contractors who worked on that airport; they are before the courts in the United States. We have those down here who are asking not to be extradited to the United States to face their own charges and Front Bench and Back Bench, all of whom were part of one government, are talking about corruption in the PNM. They should be ashamed to talk about that before this Parliament at this time. [*Desk thumping*]

Dr. Moonilal: Your hair is looking nice.

Hon. C. Robinson-Regis: Very, very nice. I pay for my hair with my money; it is my hair, my money. I do not know who is the "second woman hair who you paying for".

Let me go on to talk about the issues raised by the Member for Oropouche, just to debunk some of the nonsense he talked about while he stood before us this afternoon. Let me place on record that the majority of the increase being asked for today, is money to go into the Heritage and Stabilization Fund. Over \$1 billion of the \$3 billion being asked for is to go into the Heritage and Stabilization Fund. Neither the Member for Oropouche nor the Member for St. Joseph admitted that fact; that is true. Over \$1 billion is going into the Heritage and Stabilization Fund.

The Member for Oropouche talked about this Government getting rid of Caroni (1975) Limited and that we could have been using sugar for an ethanol industry. If I could use the Member for St. Joseph's new phrase that he has taken from the Member for Diego Martin East, that is arrant nonsense. Our industry was only producing 75,000 tonnes; that could never be the basis for an ethanol industry; never in 1,000 years. What they do is get up and mention one or two little catch phrases and then get the public to try to believe what they are saying, but that is not true.

In that regard, I want to place on record the issue regarding poverty. When anybody does a calculation of who is below the poverty line and who is above, there is a particular methodology used. What, in fact, you are calculating is whether or not people have moved, whether more people are now below the line or more people are above the line. It is clear that more people are now above the line. That is what we are trying to ensure; that there is a movement above the line. [*Desk thumping*] So when the actual figure was determined in 1992, that figure

was over 30 per cent below the poverty line. In 2006, the information has come back that it is now half that amount, 17 per cent, which means that, in fact, the population is improving in their living conditions and in their living standards.

This talk about somebody living on \$650 or whatever it is, those persons are not the ones who go into a restaurant or who go to buy doubles down the road. Those are the persons who are going to knead flour, boil rice, use a chicken or some corned beef. Those are the persons who we are talking about and those are the persons who we are assessing and have moved. There are more people who are no longer considered poor or indigent; that is the issue. Not that nonsense that the Member for Oropouche was trying to pull here today. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker, I do not know if that Member thinks when he pulls out his palm pilot it makes all of us nervous, because we look at television too. So this talk about his challenging the Member for St. Ann's West to go on a poverty challenge, we saw it on television too, with the US Senator doing the same thing. So do not feel that you are the one who came up with a poverty challenge; it is nothing new; nothing original. [*Interruption*]

"Yuh" checking the palm pilot to see if he came up with something else? [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker: Order!

Dr. Moonilal: I am looking at lighting fixtures.

Hon. C. Robinson-Regis: Anything else? You could send your wife, I could give you the address. [*Laughter*] He could send whoever he wants to send; I could give him the address. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker, that is nothing new. We saw the US Senator give a poverty challenge too, so do not worry to feel like you are pulling one over us, saying that you are coming with a poverty challenge. Poverty challenge my foot.

We would also like to put on record, in dealing with what the Member for Oropouche put forward today, regarding payment of public servants' salaries. He talked about the situation previously where the oil price had gone down. He said that there was no big thing in us trying to pay public servants' salaries at this time. I want to place on record, that when they were in government, they cut public servants' salaries illegally and they saved nothing by making that cut. When the court adjudicated on that issue, they had to return the salaries to a particular level and, in effect, it resulted in no savings to the people of Trinidad and Tobago. It was an illegal act, in the first place, and when they eventually had to return it, it resulted in no savings at all to the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

When we said that with oil prices at the level of \$9, we would use the Central Bank, which is the Government's bank, in order to pay public servants at a particular level and not talk about any cut in salaries, they pooh-pooed the decision that we made. Then when they came into office, they decided to cut public servants' salaries, it resulted in no savings for the people of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] In fact, it was an illegal act and it was deemed that by the courts of Trinidad and Tobago. So his bringing that up at this time makes absolutely no sense.

The Member also talked about the payment of overtime to police officers. That is so contradictory, because on the one hand they tell us that they want increased patrols, they want policemen to work longer hours and the like, but on the other hand when the police officers, who have negotiated a 40-hour work week, have to work for longer than the 40 hours that is their negotiated work time, they are complaining that we are paying the police overtime. Until we get the police service up to a particular level in terms of numbers, we will have to pay overtime, and we make no apologies for that, as we work towards increasing the security of the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

I would like to move on to some of the things said by the Member for St. Joseph. I want to talk about the just over \$5 million increase for publicity in the Ministry of Planning and Development. The Member answered the question; he said that people do not know enough about Vision 2020. He said that people feel, perhaps, that it would not ever be achieved. We recognize that is, in fact, so; despite the fact that the Vision 2020 process involved going to communities, it involved some Members of Parliament and it involved civil society. All the issues involved in Vision 2020, the document we have prepared and even the operational plan which will indicate how we make that vision a reality, the people of Trinidad and Tobago do not know enough about them.

As a matter of dealing with that situation, we are going to spend money on making sure that the people of Trinidad and Tobago understand the process. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Yetming: No problem with that.

Hon. C. Robinson-Regis: No problem; you understand why we had to increase it. Thank you, Member for St. Joseph.

Mr. Yetming: Useless ads.

Hon. C. Robinson-Regis: We are going to improve the ads and we need money in order to do that, because the people of Trinidad and Tobago need to know what Vision 2020 is about.

The Member for St. Joseph also talked about the Waterfront Project. I do not understand, and I think I speak for those on this side, why in circumstances where on the last occasion the Member, using the information that came out in the *Guardian* newspaper, talked about the Waterfront Project being in a situation of cost overruns and squandermania, it was revealed by the Member for Diego Martin East and, subsequently an apology came out in the *Guardian* newspaper that the information was totally incorrect, that the Member is still raising that as an issue. It is not an issue. I would like to repeat: The Waterfront Project is within budget and within the budgeted time set aside for the completion of this project.

What was very strange was that there has been an apology, but the Member for St. Joseph continues to raise that issue. [*Crosstalk*] What has me very concerned is that when that Member was the Minister of Finance, the Waterfront Project was brought to the then Cabinet of Trinidad and Tobago. My understanding is that at that time there was a consortium called RGM of the Royal Bank Trinidad and Tobago (RBTT), Guardian and, I think it was, Barbados Mutual, that had a different way of dealing with this project.

My understanding is that UDeCott was to sell the land to this RGM consortium, and that is prime land, at \$80 a square foot for land on the waterfront. Then the Government was to subsidize the development for 15 years to the tune of over \$700 million. It would have been owned by RGM, the Government would have subsidized it and at the end of the day the people of Trinidad and Tobago would have received nothing. [*Crosstalk*] That project was stopped by the then Minister of Planning and Development, the Member for Diego Martin West, because it was a project that made absolutely no sense for the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

I stress, the people of Trinidad and Tobago, because when we do any project under our administration the people are put first. [*Desk thumping*] We are very concerned that in circumstances where the project would have been done under those conditions and we are now doing it under far superior conditions that would redound to the benefit of the people of Trinidad and Tobago, the Member would try to make an issue of this situation. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Yetming: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the Member for giving way. I do not know how the Member for Diego Martin West could have stopped the project. The fact is that project never got off the ground while I was Minister of Finance. [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. C. Robinson-Regis: Mr. Speaker, if I recall the Cabinet decision had been taken.

Mr. Yetming: Cabinet had not taken any decision.

Hon. C. Robinson-Regis: There was information before the Cabinet. When we came into government there was a decision taken and it was reviewed by us and was stopped.

Mr. Yetming: I was Chairman of the Finance Committee of Parliament. [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. C. Robinson-Regis: It was stopped because it would not redound to the benefit of the people of Trinidad and Tobago. As usual with those on the other side, it would have been for the benefit of the few rather than for the benefit of the many. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Yetming: It could have gone through, but it did not.

Hon. C. Robinson-Regis: Thank God it did not go through, because it would have been for the benefit of the few rather than for the benefit of the many. [*Crosstalk*]

I would also like to take this opportunity to debunk what has been an impression continuously given by those on the other side when we come for a supplementary appropriation. They behave as though it is the first time in history that any government has come for a supplementary appropriation. They behave as though when you do a budget, you are not supposed to come back for a supplementary appropriation. In time if it were perfect, perhaps, we would not come back for a supplementary variation. But a budget in itself suggests that it is an estimate, what you anticipate will happen over the fiscal year.

On every occasion that they were in government, every year from 1996 to September 2001, they came for supplementary appropriation. Instead of them on every occasion behaving as though we are doing something wrong or we are doing something that is not normal, it is a normal process and they did that too. Everybody does it. I am sure if we were to go back into the record of the Parliament from the time that we have sat here and had budgets, we would see that this has happened. It is a normal part of the budgeting process, because a budget is an estimate.

The Minister of Finance said quite clearly that the amount of money that we had anticipated was different from what we see now and, consequently, we are before the Parliament for a supplementary appropriation and we make no apologies for that.

In this supplementary appropriation, our objective is to ensure that there is a continuous improvement in the quality of life of the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago. Whenever we have found that a ministry is not using the money allocated to it, we will re-examine in mid year and determine where moneys should be reallocated. That, in fact, is the objective of the supplementary budgetary process. It is the objective to ensure that where there is a decrease in one area, there is an increase in another and we can reallocate the money in order to ensure that projects which need to be expedited, can be expedited. Our objective, as we have said regarding Vision 2020, is that we have five pillars of development. They are: developing innovative people; ensuring that we develop a nurturing and caring society; enabling competitive business; investing in sound infrastructure and the environment and promoting effective governance.

In order to achieve those objectives, we have developed an operational plan for the implementation of Vision 2020 and, consequently, all ministries are working in that regard and they are working together to ensure that these five development pillars are, in fact, the way that Trinidad and Tobago gets to developed country status.

When we did the review at mid year, we found that there were certain ministries working at a faster clip than other ministries. Those ministries with the highest expenditure levels were the Ministry of Works and Transport, the Ministry of Housing, the Ministry of National Security, the Ministry of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Public Utilities and the Environment.

5.30 p.m.

In fact, the review process which is a stocktaking of implementation performance involved very detailed discussions with the ministries, state agencies and the Tobago House of Assembly (THA) on the status of projects. That in particular is in relation to the Consolidated Fund and the Infrastructure Development Fund. In the Ministry of Planning and Development the review process took a period of time to ensure that when we went to Cabinet to indicate what was necessary in the mid-year review, we would have taken on board all the issues involving ministries, state agencies and the Tobago House of Assembly.

In that regard, the assessment of the implementation status of all projects under the Public Sector Investment Programme (PSIP) and the implementation capacity for the rest of the fiscal year were undertaken. During the review process, it was indicated that the funding provided for certain projects and it could have been reasonably reduced because in the second half of the year, implementation

occurs at a faster rate and in the first half of the year there is mobilization. Consequently, we could see what ministries we needed to move funds from and put in other ministries to ensure that implementation would take place. As a consequence of that, there was an aggregate reduction of \$148.3 million but at the same time there was need to increase the funding by \$648.3 million for other projects including critical new projects. There was the need for net additional funding to the tune of \$500 million.

The ministries where this increase will take place and what we are asking for are as follows:

<u>Ministries</u>	<u>\$ million</u>
Education	181.7
Works and transport	486.45
Science, technology and tertiary education	72.93
National Security	58.25
Public Utilities and the Environment	49.6

I will indicate that the projects where the increase will take place are directly related to the improvement in the quality of life of the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago.

In relation to the Ministry of Education, there have been some concerns as to the rate of implementation of the provision of computer equipment in schools. In the main, the Ministry of Education has been providing schools with computer equipment but because of issues of procurement and the like, the rate has not taken place as quickly as we would have liked, but it has taken place. This Finance (Supplementary Appropriation) Bill, once passed, would ensure the provision of basic ICT, computer and library equipment to secondary schools throughout Trinidad and Tobago.

Another issue that has been continuously a bugbear for the Ministry of Education is the Repair and Refurbishment Vacation Programme for schools. In an effort to ensure that this programme takes place without any hindrance, money is being provided in this supplementary appropriation for the Repair and Refurbishment Vacation Programme. Several other programmes and projects are being done in the Ministry of Education but I would not deal with them now because given the information that has come forward regarding the Finance Committee, some of it has been dealt with there.

In relation to the Ministry of Works and Transport, there have been some continuous concerns regarding rehabilitation of roads and bridges. As a consequence of those concerns and in an effort to ensure that there is a continuous road repair programme, within the Infrastructure Development Fund and the Consolidated Fund, provision is being made to ensure that roads are rehabilitated; bridges are repaired and any expenses that are incurred in relation to these projects will be funded in a timely manner, so that the contractual obligations would be met. We make the point, that despite the fact that under the last administration the sum of over \$1 billion was spent on roads, many of those roads are now in need of repair. The problem is that there was such a rush to have those roads resurfaced that they were not done as well as they should have been and, consequently, we are now in the position where we have to resurface some of the same roads that were resurfaced just over five years ago. The Minister of Works and Transport is saying, "that were allegedly resurfaced just over five years ago." Given the amount of money that was spent we should not be in the position where, today, we have to resurface the same roads that were resurfaced just over five years ago.

We have said that one of the pillars of development that is important for leading us to developed country status is the development of innovative people. Apart from the Ministry of Education ensuring funding for various projects, the Ministry of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education is also charged with the responsibility for ensuring that we develop innovative people. Within the supplementary appropriation we are asking for funding for the relocation of the Tobago Learning Centre to the Signal Hill Senior Secondary School, with a consequent expansion of programmes in Tobago to establish the National Community College that was announced several months ago.

We are working assiduously to ensure that it is a reality. We are also asking for funding to ensure that there is the refurbishment and upgrading of existing campuses of the University of Trinidad and Tobago, to ensure that all our citizens who reach the level of tertiary education have access to any of the campuses throughout Trinidad and Tobago. Under the heading of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education, we are asking for funding to complete the construction and equipping of the Pleasantville Technology Centre and the extension and expansion of the craft programmes that are run by the Metal Industries Company (MIC). These are all in an effort to ensure that the money that we have been able to get from the increase in petroleum prices and assuring that the economy is effectively managed, all redound to the benefit of the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

We came to Parliament and indicated that in an effort to ensure that the police service is improved, there was a need for enacting the police reform legislation. We stood here and said that one of the effects that we know would take place from enacting police reform legislation is a transformation of the police service. This transformation started before the police reform legislation came into being. The whole transformation process includes legislative and management changes.

With regard to the management changes in this supplementary appropriation we are coming for funding for the transformation of the police service in respect of training for officers; the continuation of the communication and public relations plan for the police service; the implementation of an organizational development plan; the executive development plan for professionals within the police service and the anti-crime communication plan. Our objective is to ensure that there is no skimping on the money spent on national security. Apart from police stations being refurbished new police stations are being built. Apart from police vehicles being bought, the purchase of equipment and housing of police, we are here to ensure that the police officers are properly trained. We have said that without proper training given the change in the types of crimes that are taking place and the trans-national national of some crimes, our police officers would always be at the mercy of criminals. That is not the intention of this Government. Our intention is to ensure that over time the police service is transformed into a service of which everybody in Trinidad and Tobago, including those on the other side, can be proud.

When the Member for Oropouche gave congratulations to the police service it rang hollow with us on this side because continuously, even during the debate on the police reform legislation, those on the other side had nothing good to say about the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service. We have continuously said that there are bad apples within the police service. We have made no bones about that. We have also said that there is the need to construct police stations and we are doing that. There is the need to provide vehicles and we are doing that. There is the need to provide new technology and we are doing that. There is the obvious need to provide proper training at all levels, from the Commissioner down to what we call the last joined recruits in order to effect proper crime management. [*Desk thumping*] We make no apologies for that and that is why we are before Parliament asking for a supplementary appropriation to ensure that those things happen.

We heard some talk about money for WASA under the Ministry of Public Utilities and the Environment. We also heard that so much money was being spent but nothing is being seen for it. Every time those on the other side talk you

wonder if they were not in government and they were not the ones who said that there would be water for all by 2000. Water for all? At this time, the percentage of people who receive a continuous supply of water on a 24-hour basis in Trinidad and Tobago is just over 25 per cent of the population. Since we have come into government we have increased the number of people who receive a continuous 24-hour supply of water.

Our objective as we have said in the WASA plan that we announced to the public, is to improve WASA to the point where there is a continuous 24-hour supply of water to the majority of people in Trinidad and Tobago. We have admitted that it will take time and it will not be an overnight transformation. We are not going to say quite glibly, water for all in 2000. We have said that over a period of time—there is a short-term plan; a medium-term plan and a long-term plan. Over time there would be an incremental improvement in WASA and the supply of water to the people of Trinidad and Tobago. They would see the benefit of ensuring that this supplementary appropriation and the budgets that we have done over the time that we have been here and would do—whenever an election is called and we return here. People will see the change over time. We are asking for money for WASA to ensure that this process does not stop.

I have spoken in the main about existing projects. In the supplementary appropriation there are some new projects and I will deal with them very quickly. In relation to the new projects for which we are asking that there be an appropriation, they are under the Ministry of Education in the order of \$75 million. It is the deshifting, conversion, technical upgrade and general rehabilitation of secondary schools. Some schools have already been deshifted. As we deshift schools new schools come on stream. Because of the fact that the Ministry of Education has been able to deshift several of the schools on their programme, they are now able to bring forward other schools at a faster pace and, consequently, there is a request for \$75 million for deshifting, conversion, technical upgrade and general rehabilitation of secondary schools.

Regarding the Ministry of Public Utilities and the Environment, the new project is the Navet Trunk Main and the amount being requested is \$15 million. This sum represents an initial investment to provide for the commencement of surveys, designs and the procurement of pipelines for the replacement of the Navet Trunk Main. This is all in an effort to ensure that the people of Trinidad and Tobago benefit from the petroleum dollar.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the speaking time of the hon. Member for Arouca South, the Minister of Planning and Development, has expired.

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

Question put and agreed to.

Hon. C. Robinson-Regis: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and I thank my honourable colleagues for the extension. [*Desk thumping*]

As a matter of history the implementation rate for projects as I have indicated has quickened in the second half of the year. Available information indicates a resource utilization rate of more than 90 per cent in fiscal 2007. That was the average implementation rate from 2001—2006. Regarding the period 1995—2000, the implementation rate was at the level of 75 per cent. Because of the fact that this Government has determined that in an effort to provide services and goods to the people of Trinidad and Tobago, the implementation rate must be increased, we have put everything in place to ensure that through the public service the implementation rate of ministries, state agencies and the Tobago House of Assembly is increased.

Apart from ensuring that this should happen, through the Ministry of Planning and Development and the Ministry of Public Administration and Information, we have taken the initiative to enhance implementation capacity in ministries, state agencies and the THA by ensuring that there is ongoing training in project cycle management. We have moved to streamline the tendering process and we have strengthened the project monitoring and evaluation functions within the Ministry of Planning and Development, to ensure that the PSIP is implemented at the highest rate possible.

As a government, we have also introduced a system of quarterly releases to replace the monthly system of releases that had stymied project implementation. A ministry, state agency or the THA can now address its project implementation on a quarterly basis rather than wait every month for releases. With these improvements we have seen a continuous improvement and increase in the rate of implementation in the public service.

Today, we have come to Parliament requesting a supplementary appropriation in the order of just over \$3 billion. We feel justified in coming before Parliament and asking for this money because, unlike what has been said by the Member for St. Joseph, we have not squandered the patrimony of the people of Trinidad and Tobago. We can look around us and see the built development not only in Port of Spain but also throughout Trinidad and Tobago. We can also look around us and see the increase in the number of people who are accessing training and tertiary

education and who are now employed. We make no apologies for that. We say to the people of Trinidad and Tobago that they are now better housed; they are now better prepared for the world of work and particularly to public servants, that with the Government's campus and other buildings, the amount of money that we have paid in rent over the years would be no more. Public Servants would have a permanent home. We say to the people of Trinidad and Tobago that their health needs are being taken care of.

Mr. Speaker, I support the Minister in the Ministry of Finance and I ask the House to approve the Finance (Supplementary Appropriation) Bill, 2007.

Thank you.

Dr. Adesh Nanan (*Tabaquite*): Mr. Speaker, I sympathize with the Member for Arouca South because when she looked at her notes to give the number of schools that were deshifted by the Ministry of Education, she could not find it. The Member said that there was an allocation of \$75 million for new projects in the Ministry of Education starting with the deshifting exercise. She had to come down to a figure and state several schools. It is quite a shame that the information was not supplied to the Member for Arouca South. That is how it is with the Government. The Member for Arouca South who is the Minister of Planning and Development has to take all the blame. If you recognize that when you are dealing with budgeting and development programmes—she spoke about a 90 per cent implementation rate in 2007. What are we seeing in the landscape of this country in terms of performance of that Government? Look at the performance!

The Member always has to compare with the UNC administration in terms of performance. We are talking about \$3 billion extension on a budget. If I recall, the PSIP in this particular year was between \$1.7 billion to \$1.9 billion with an implementation rate of 75 per cent in terms of the rate. When you look at the performance of the United National Congress administration you can see value for money. It is unfortunate that the Member for Arouca South comes here and talks about a waterfront project of the United National Congress. I have the information to show how wrong she is and to correct the record. She pulled that out of a hat. She did not have any figures.

I would show you because I recall. She should have recognized that when I spoke in this House about the waterfront project—Mr. Speaker, you stopped me when I was speaking about the revenue derived from that project and why the

Member for Diego Martin West stopped the project. I will show you why he stopped that project because he did not want a UNC project to bear fruit under the PNM. This evening she has given me the opportunity to show the entire national community what that project was going to be. I would deal with it in detail because it was mentioned in the debate.

We are dealing with the plan for the waterfront development in Port of Spain ICC tourism project with hotel and the National Centre for the Performing Arts. The RGM Report was published in July 1997, and she made reference to RGM. It was a careful discussion about the idea of developing a complex that would provide the requirements for the Caribbean Trade Association and meet the needs of a growing trend in business travel meetings and conferences within the Caribbean Basin. It is part of the tourism master plan. It is not something that UNC had pulled out from the sky. The tourism master plan included a particular project like a waterfront project. Based on a feasibility study carried out by Synterra International who was commissioned by RGM to develop a facility programme for all the components of the proposed Port of Spain ICC Tourism Project, Synterra International led the collaborative effort with RGM and UDeCOTT.

Mention was made of UDeCOTT to develop the implementation plan for the Port of Spain International Conference Complex Tourism Project. [*Crosstalk*] They are trying to distract me but I would not be distracted because this is information the country needs to know.

The development team reviewed previous 1997 plans created for the Kings Wharf site. As the Synterra International team analysed ways to invigorate and jump-start the development of the ICC Tourism Project, they discovered that there were a very limited number of business class hotel rooms in Port of Spain. That was the driving force. A determination was initially made that an internationally branded hotel would be an essential element of a successful conference complex. Synterra International presented preliminary findings to Crestline Capital, a major U.S. based operator for Marriott Hotel.

This is what they turned down. Crestline representatives visited Port of Spain and agreed that the Kings Wharf site would be an appropriate site for a Marriott Hotel. At that time the Member for Diego Martin West came in the House and fooled the entire population. Let me show you in terms of the benefit of this project. The budget for the project was \$1.2 billion. He talked about airport. He did not read the profile of revenue generation from the project. I was debating the Provisional Collection of Taxes Order and I will show the revenue that could have

been derived from that project. Today, he told the national community that he stopped the project. I will show the national community what project he stopped and what they have in place.

6.00 p.m.

“Project Financing:

The estimated total development cost of all buildings and infrastructure for the ICC Tourism Project is TT \$1.176,000,000. While selected commercial components of the project (office and detail) generate net revenues sufficient to facilitate development with private sector financing alone, private sector financing for other elements, such as the hotel, will need to be supplemented with Government investment.”

But I will go on to show you, even with Government investments, the rewards would have come back for the particular project. They said the Government will be subsidizing the entire project.

The conference centre and park—the previous design for the project proposed a 20-storey office tower as the chief commercial element.

“The conference center and parking garage both generate revenues but not at a level that covers development costs and will require Build Own Operate Transfer (BOOT) financing. Common areas such as site infrastructure and pedestrian walkways will require Government financing through Build Own Lease Transfer (BOLT). It is anticipated that the National Centre for the Performing Arts would be financed with government and corporate contributions including use of BOLT.

The ICC Tourism Project will provide a catalyst for development in the surrounding area and generate spin-off revenues...”

Mr. Speaker, the Conference Centre:

“The estimated cost of the Conference Centre is TT \$277,000,000. Conference centres of this type are typical public financed requiring development and operating subsidies. The proposed financing for the conference centre would use the Build Own Operate Transfer mechanism that has been used for other facilities in Trinidad. RGM and Royal Bank, in concert with the government would arrange financing.”

I want to read that again.

“RGM and Royal Bank in concert with the government would arrange financing.

Commercial Block & Retail/Office:

This block is proposed as a two-part development with the Waterfront Mall constructed in Part I and offices developed in a later phase as the market demand warrants. The estimated cost of the Waterfront Mall is TT \$82,000,000 and estimated cost of the office is TT \$138,000,000. Potential revenue support, financing, and private sector financing for the commercial block would be provided by RGM and Royal Bank.”

What we heard? We heard from the Minister \$80 a square foot in terms of land sale, but I will come back to that part because I want to deal with this.

Dr. Rowley: The Minister did not say that.

Dr. A. Nanan: Of course she said that. You were not listening. I said \$80. Ask the Hansard reporter. You sorry you stop the project? I know that. [*Crosstalk*] When I am finished with you, you should not stand up. The estimated cost of the Waterfront Mall—[*Crosstalk*]

“Hotel/Office Tower: The central and largest building of the ICC Tourism Project complex will contain both offices and hotel rooms.

Tower offices: Potential revenues for the 88,000 s.f. tower offices will support private sector financing of TT \$132,000,000. RGM and Royal Bank will provide financing for the tower offices.

Hotel: The estimated development cost for the 400 room hotel is \$325,000,000 TT. The financing of hotel properties (or in this case the hotel component of a mixed-use building) bears little resemblance to the financing of other commercial properties such as office and retail.”

Mr. Speaker, I want to deal with the Marriott Hotel.

“The Marriott Hotel planned for the ICC Tourism Project incurs the development costs of a high-rise structure on an environmentally sensitive site. While potential market support appears strong, the absence of similar new properties of this scale in Trinidad results in rather conservative underwriting by private sector financing sources. The projected stabilized income averaging US \$5.5 million annually is not sufficient to attract a private sector partner only.

The specific debt/equity and private/public investment ratios needed to support the hotel is a 50% minimum equity position by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago.

‘...hotel financing will be arranged jointly by Synterra Partners, RGM and the Trinidad & Tobago Government.’”

Mr. Speaker, I want to give you the economic impact analysis because that is important.

“The Performing Arts Centre has an estimated development cost of TT \$72,000,000. The economic impacts of the Port-of-Spain ICC Tourism Project will occur in three areas:

- A. new employment generated at the complex;
- B. direct tax benefits accruing from economic activity at the complex; and
- C. additional economic benefits resulting from the expenditures in other portions of Trinidad by the new visitors attracted to conference activity at the complex...

Nearly 1200 new permanent jobs will be created...

Direct Tax Benefits:

The Government of Trinidad and Tobago will receive dramatically increased annual taxes and direct income as a result of the development of the Port-of-Spain International Conference Complex. The total annual tax and income benefits from the complex will be more than \$93 million at 2001 wage and price levels. These tax benefits include:

- an estimated \$11.3 million in increased income taxes paid by the nearly 1200 new employees at the complex;
- \$11.7 million in increased corporation taxes;
- \$48.3 million in increased VAT payments;
- \$8 million in hotel room taxes;
- \$8.4 million in real estate taxes;”

Do you know what is happening here, Mr. Speaker? His technocrats cannot give him the information to respond to me, so he is trying to distract me. But that cannot happen. I am going to read the information.

- “\$2.6 million in increased airport passenger taxes from the 26,000 new visitors attracted to the conference complex;

- \$.3 million in new insurance premium taxes;
- \$1.2 million in annual land lease payments; and
- \$1.2 million in annual utility income.

While the 26,000 new visitors to Trinidad will make most of their lodging expenditures at the International Conference Centre, as well as eat some of their meals there, they will also make significant purchases from other Trinidad restaurants, retailers, transportation companies and attractions. These off-site expenditures are estimated to be over TT \$106 million per year, yielding an additional \$15.9 million VAT for the Government of Trinidad and Tobago.

The total tax benefits accruing to the Government each year from the complex and from the new visitors attracted to Trinidad and Tobago by the complex will be TT \$109 million.’

The Projected Revenue:

The debt servicing of the conference centre, car park and the art centre, which is 50 per cent, is \$67.5 million. The hotel/debt services \$10.3 million. Conference/car park revenue from this centre would have been \$14.6 million, and the hotel revenue, \$17.1 million.

...VAT on additional spending. That would be the 26,000 visitors that would be spending money within the economy—\$15.9 million; direct tax revenue, \$90.6 million; and lease/utility, \$2.7 million.

The net revenue from this project is \$63.1 million...”

I took the time here today to point out that this particular complex—and, I have all the details here. I want to deal with the Marriott Hotel because that is important.

“...direct tax benefits.

“Income Tax.	\$3,810 million annually;
Corporation tax	\$2,750 million
VAT	\$6,800 million
Hotel Room Tax	\$8,030 million
Airport Passenger Tax	\$2.6 million”

A total of \$23 million.

From the conference centre:

“Income Tax	\$540,000
VAT	\$1,500 million.”

A total of \$2.04 million.

And I could go on, but I do not want to keep the House detained on this particular area. If you want me to go on I will.

I see the Member for Diego Martin West taking notes, Member for Couva South. Let me give him some more notes to take.

The VAT on the Waterfront Mall.

“Tenants	\$1.24 million
Corporation Tax	\$5.9 million
VAT	\$25.31 million
Total	\$32.46 million

Mall Maintenance/Security/Management:

Income tax	\$270,000
Corporation Tax	\$500,000
VAT	\$2.14 million
Total	\$2.9 million

Promenade Shopping Tenants:

Income Tax	\$290,000
Corporation Tax	\$1.34 million
VAT	\$5.72 million
Total	\$7.35 million

Exterior/Public Space Maintenance/Security/Management:

Income Tax	\$270,000
Corporation Tax	\$11.74 million

Finance Committee Report (Adoption)
[DR. NANAN]

Wednesday, June 06, 2007

VAT	\$48.27 million
Hotel Room Tax	\$8.03 million
Real Estate Tax	\$8.4 million
Airport Passenger Tax	\$290,000
Annual Land Lease Income	\$1.2 million
Annual Utility Income	\$1.2 million
Total	\$93 million.

A direct revenue stream coming into the country. When you take out all the other debt servicing, you have a figure of \$63.1 million above the red line. That is profit.”

Member for Diego Martin West. So you need to go back—it is not too late to look at that project again. And I am sure I can advise you because I was involved in that particular project.

Mr. Speaker, when we heard from the Member for Arouca South, about the Ministries that are performing apace, we heard the Ministry of Education. I will deal first with the Ministry of Education, and I will come back to the Ministry of Works and Transport.

Mr. Speaker, it is unfortunate, and it is relevant because the warrant here is for certain allocations for computer equipment. It is a deplorable shame that in 2007 schools in this country are without proper computers and computer facilities. It is a crying shame. The Minister of Education is a total failure. It is also related systematically to the Minister of Planning and Development who is the monitor for all the Ministries. And I will go through this evening in every warrant and show this single ministry how they are not performing, and this is why the country is in this state right now. And to quote the words, “we are not on automatic pilot” because, if we are on automatic pilot, we are computer-driven and we are going somewhere. We are heading in a downward spiral. That is what is happening and no matter what the Member for Arouca North or South says in this House, it is very hollow. And to attack the Member for Oropouche with two salaries is a low blow. I will not be descending in this House to talk about wigs, her lighthouse fixtures or her jewellery. I will never do that.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, I am sure a couple Members on the Government side are very appreciative of your contribution. Do not let them distract you. You were going well. Forget the peripheral matters.

Dr. A. Nanan: Mr. Speaker, they even attacked the Member for Caroni Central, and that is going to happen because she cannot defend the non-performance of those Ministers. The Member of Parliament for Arouca South had to descend to that level because she cannot defend you all. You are indefensible because of your non-performance and I am sure that when the Member said 90 per cent, she bit her tongue. Check and you will see with respect to the implementation rate.

Mr. Speaker, I will deal with the computer situation in this country and the allocation for computers. I have asked several questions in this House to the Minister of Education and the Minister came with a long discourse about all the schools that are going to get computers, phase 1, phase 2, 3, 4. How could you give money to a Ministry that cannot utilize the initial amount of money to put computers and then, give them more money to put computers? What is going to happen at the end of the budgetary year? You are going to take out that money from the Ministry of Education because they cannot perform. The Minister cannot perform. If you go right now—I have asked that question several times. The Mayo RC School in my constituency, and Gasparillo Government Primary School—I have asked several questions in this House. They built their own computer labs, they have raised money on their own to build their computer labs. The room is sitting there and they have not supplied them with the computers and I have asked that question a long time ago. The reply came in November and to date, those schools do not have computer equipment.

Mr. Speaker, to say that you are going to put more computers in schools and where: In the secondary schools? You are going to put computers in libraries—this particular year, 2007—at this time all secondary schools in this country should have had a minimum of 40 computers in a computer lab. You want to have innovative people. And you cannot supply computers in schools. Those poor children in those Caroni schools. The St. Stephen Anglican School built their computer lab, no computers. It is not because the principals are not making representation; they are not getting the computers. They are being promised—next three months, next six months you are going to get the computers. It is a sad state in this country. Barbados is ahead of us in terms of computers. They have moved away from computer labs now. They are going to lap tops. So when you look—and the Carenage Government probably does not have computers. That Member would not even make representation for his own constituents. I will come to you next Member for Laventille East/Morvant. I am very concerned. Billions of dollars are being spent in this country, but the people are suffering.

When you listen to the poverty statistics being given in this House and you take a ground level survey, it is totally different. People are suffering, and I warn that Government. People cannot afford cheese in this country. Milk for children. This country is heading for malnutrition. Basic amenities, people cannot afford in the supermarkets and it is a laughing matter but people are suffering out there. They do not care. They are not a caring Government, Mr. Speaker. It is a sad situation in this country emanating from our schools in terms of our primary schools.

There is an allocation for Early Childhood Care and Education Centres to get more money. And the joke of the year is the Minister of Education, when asked how many schools—47. When they said that was wrong she went and checked the records and said—71. That is the joke of the day. Is the Minister being misadvised by the technocrats in that Ministry? I say not. Because that ministry has over 100 years experience in terms of the technocrats in that Ministry. But probably the Minister is marginalizing those technocrats and using that particular person, Ken Burgess, to run that Ministry. It is like a bull in a China shop. The Minister of Planning and Development should get down in that Ministry and sort out that Ministry.

Mr. Speaker, sad state. The Early Childhood Care and Education Centres. They are being given more in this budget in this particular allocation. Two Early Childhood Care and Education Centres, they have constructed. And if we are not careful they might go and photograph the UNC Early Childhood Care and Education Centre and say that is theirs too, because that is their attitude.

I saw a number of pictures of schools that were constructed by the UNC on the newspapers built by the PNM. We have to deal with facts. They come with a budget document that gives us figures. Bring the pictures too. There should be documents like that with the pictures to prove that is what is happening. Every budget document that is supplied in this House should have facts, an album; bring it on a CD and show us the pictures and let us see what you did. Do not just put it in the document and when one checks, it is no longer there. In Garth Road, the Minister said they were building an Early Childhood Care and Education Centre. I say okay, fine, that is a great move. I cannot even find the site up to today in terms of a survey for a particular Early Childhood Care and Education Centre, and the Minister beats her chest and says, yes we are putting one there.

It is not fair to the country. It is a total shame in terms of misrepresentation and misleading the House. There should be a sanction for misleading the House. The Member for Diego Martin West comes time and time and he misleads the House.

I was dealing with the computer distribution and I also want to deal with the capability of the libraries because the libraries should also have multimedia capabilities now. Video recorders should be in there. There should be computers there, multimedia projectors—the full works in those libraries in our secondary schools. There was a NALIS (Amdt.) Bill before us and that particular Bill, when it was being debated, should have been the driving force.

Our school libraries started under the Ministry of Education and moved to the other Ministry and are now taken over by NALIS, but the situation is still the same. There is a hard-working person. If I remember correctly, Ms. Benson was the head of libraries and when she was there some kind of driving force was taking place, but now everything has totally crashed. There is nothing happening in our secondary schools. Our secondary schools are supposed to be driving the Caribbean now. We are behind in terms of our performance. If there was an education system that was really driven and energized, today one would not have to look in the newspapers to see how many students would be number-one in the world. The whole collection of our students being number one in the world. They are getting by on very little and they are doing so well. One could imagine if we give them a little more in terms of their capability.

Mr. Speaker, I was looking at the 1900s and comparing it with this particular time, and the kind of discoveries that took place in the 19th Century is mind boggling. One wonders where the thinkers of today—could the thinkers of today be existing in the 19th Century?

Mr. Speaker, we need to get innovative thinkers in this country. I do not know what those ministers are thinking over there. It is the same thing over and over, and every time they come to this House with a budget document or even a warrant with respect to the appropriation, they are trying to fool and hoodwink the population.

There should be proper work ethic for those ministers. They are not performing. And the Prime Minister must know that these Ministers are not performing. No matter how much he comes to defend them in this House, it cannot work because the Ministers are not performing.

I will go to another sector because this Early Childhood Care and Education Sector which is an important section, they are using the sector to say that they are doing so well in education and when we ask how much Early Childhood Care and

Education you have built—it is, we built two and there are many under construction. I want to see how the Minister of Finance in this House will defend that. He cannot, and if he does, he better be right because the national community is listening.

We were given reason after reason for the non-performance in this sector. One of the excuses given was that the UNC had these budgeted at \$250,000. They could not construct any for that price.

Next—Cabinet \$450,000 approval. We cannot build that either. Next, \$1 million, we cannot build that either—\$2 million; possibility. What we heard from the Minister of Education is that a secondary school will cost \$80 million. We built in our era between \$25 million to \$30 million; outside, \$34 million to \$40 million was the most. *[Interruption]* You should not speak. I am coming to you next.

I would not be surprised if the Minister says we cannot build at \$2 million, that is why we built two. Money is just flowing like water. But you cannot throw money at the problem all the time. You need to have proper direction, proper planning and that is the failure of the Minister of Planning and Development. Imagine, look at the case in my constituency. Protest for a Digicel Tower at Almond Trace in Gasparillo.

6.30 p.m.

Imagine, Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Planning and Development. Look at what is happening in my constituency—protesting about a Digicel tower in Alma Trace in Gasparillo. What is happening? Is it that the Minister of Planning and Development is saying to put the tower and the EMA gives permission without any consultation with the residents? Bypass everything; that is what is happening? Then the Minister of Planning and Development will hide her face and say you cannot build it there, break it down? That is the kind of planning by the Government. *[Interruption]* Exactly and any company like that would have areas where there are no signals and they would want to construct a tower. There must be a plan. This ad hocism cannot work in this country. So the Minister of Planning and Development is a failure.

I was only saying that as an aside, Mr. Speaker, but I am really dealing with the warrants here. I recall when we constructed the Early Childhood Care and Education Centre in Laventille East/Morvant. The Member for Laventille East/Morvant shook my hand in Rose Hill. We constructed that. He was with me when we constructed that. *[Interruption]*

Member for Tunapuna, you should not talk. I do not want to go into your department. I will give you a break in this debate. [*Interruption*] He was very happy for that centre in Rose Hill. We constructed others and they were visible. It is not like we were saying in the budget that it would be constructed and it was not done. That is the difference: 90 per cent implementation rate compared to 75 per cent, but in terms of actual construction and building, it is present. They have a 90 per cent implementation rate, we are not seeing anything; we cannot even find the site they are quoting, Mr. Speaker.

Another area is teaching and learning strategies. From an estimate of \$50 million, they go to \$100 million, an increase of \$50 million. What are the teaching and learning strategies? We have not been told anything. I know the teaching and learning strategies were designed as part of the IDB loan and it has to do with the same audio-visual component and the software to be utilized in the schools, as well as for teachers in rural areas there is some kind of incentive built in, so there would not be those vacancies in our schools.

It is a sad situation to see students protest for a Mathematics teacher in this country in this day and age. [*Interruption*] They did not have a Mathematics teacher for an entire year and they are going to write exams. It is sad; two main subject areas: English and Maths. They cannot go anywhere without those two subjects and they cannot have teachers in the secondary schools. It is really a sad state of affairs.

Not only that, in our own existing secondary schools—I went to the Gasparillo Secondary School in my constituency and it is a sad state of affairs. The roof is almost collapsing in spite of repeated representations to the Ministry and now they are talking about a vacation repair programme. Where is the database for this vacation repair programme? You should lay it in Parliament. Lay the priority requirements for this particular vacation repair programme in Parliament so that we will see exactly the schools you are repairing. I feel that they will fix the roof of the same schools every year because there is no planning in that Ministry.

We recognize that and that is why we put a GIS system in that Ministry that is now in cobwebs, I am sure, in the planning section of that Ministry. They have marginalized all that—that was a UNC plan, get rid of it; it is no use. The same thing they did in agriculture was the same thing being done in the Ministry of Education. Lay that here! We want to see that. Put it on a CD and give it to us in terms of your priority of the schools throughout the country; where you are going

to repair them. You have just told us that you are going to allocate that amount of money to repair schools. [*Interruption*] Exactly! That is the situation. Lay it here! We want to see the blueprint for our schools, both primary and secondary, so that people would know.

There is a lot of behind-the-scenes activity. Yes, we will fix your school; no we will not fix yours and so they are going on. There is no order of priority. None! They have just decided they would fix this, they would not fix that. In fact, I think they put it all in a hat and pull one out. We will fix this one. We will fix that one.

How could you explain, Mr. Speaker, when a vacation repair programme stops in September and you see school children at home, schools close, no repairs to that school; and that is a vacation repair programme. Do your priority schools first! That is how it is supposed to be done. You have pigeon droppings. Do you know what I saw? “Fleas in a school; Children sent home”. That is the situation in this country in the education sector. I will leave the education sector and deal with another sector. The sector I will deal with now is the environmental sector.

Yesterday was World Environment Day and we have to hear on the radio and see on television that the Minister of Works and Transport is probably not aware that a drainage channel they used last year is still open and is destroying the Caroni Swamp, a RAMSA site, a wetlands of international repute. That is the situation with him—destroying the Caroni Swamp. That is what is happening there. That is the situation with them. There is no planning in this country: none.

Mr. Speaker. There is another RAMSA site in Nariva, but he does not care and does not know. That site was only designated a RAMSA site, if I remember correctly, in July 2005. He is not even talking to the Minister of Public Utilities and the Environment. Member for Tobago East, in 2005, they also put your site, Buccoo Reef, at the lagoon, as a RAMSA site. I am dealing with the allocation here to a specific area, which is the National Parks and Wildlife Conservation Authority. That has a colourful history that I would like briefly to go through because it is important.

They are allocating an increase of \$100,000 for that; to do nothing. They are fooling the population once again. That is what they are doing. They get \$100,000; they want \$100,000; to do what? That is major controversy.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the first 45 minutes of the speaking time of the hon. Member for Tabaquite has expired.

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

Question put and agreed to.

Dr. A. Nanan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and all the Members for extending my time.

Hon. Member: Do not thank me; I voted no.

Dr. A. Nanan: Mr. Speaker, this is an important area because the Government is not aware of the situation there and probably after I give them this brief history they might recognize what is happening in that particular area. That is an important sector for national parks and protected areas. Initially, it was part of the Forestry Division of the Ministry of Public Utilities and the Environment, but it is wrapped in controversy.

The National Parks Wildlife and Conservation Authority, as I said, has a colourful history, but a situation that has developed in the Forestry Division with a Wildlife Division and the Wildlife Division of that Ministry had some driving force in that area. Forestry has been blamed from time to time for being lethargic and dinosaurian in terms of their capabilities, but this authority was supposed to manage our parks and designate certain areas in Trinidad as national parks and protected areas.

These protected areas would not only be our forests, it could include people living in that particular area, who are part of the national park. Designation of Matura as a national park, Mr. Speaker—[*Interruption*] Member for Arouca North, I have some time left, but I would not come there. [*Interruption*] Matura is important as a national park, designated by the EMA, but nothing was done after that. They made it a sensitive area, but there is no allocation for anything in Matura. The Member for Toco/Manzanilla should be ashamed. It is a good thing he is on his way out. The situation in Matura is terrible. The only thing that is happening in Matura is happening in spite of them—the leatherback turtles are coming in their record numbers. That is not because of them; it is because of persons like Nature Seekers, with whom the Wildlife Division was working. That community group works with the turtles, tags them and risks their lives, at times, to save them. That is what we are reaping now—the benefit of Nature Seekers and their conservation efforts, not the Government. Matura is a sensitive area designated by the EMA, but the Government is not allocating any money to do anything in that area. They are saying it is a protected area, but they are not putting—that is a great area for eco-tourism.

There is an allocation here for an earwig. We have seen serious fires in the dry season. The entire Northern Range is just waiting for a major flood, for major erosion. I thought a plane would have been budgeted for here. It is a necessity in terms of fighting fires on the Northern Range. Mr. Speaker, I have only digressed to make the point that if those fires were under control in the dry season, we would not be facing a crisis. I want the Member for Diego Martin East to know that. There is allocation here for drainage but when that amount of water comes down that Northern Range, God help us if there is that kind of weather pattern for heavy rainfall on the Northern Range.

I am sorry for the people who live in the foothills of the Northern Range because a serious catastrophe could happen, like in Caracas, in terms of the situation there. That is because of the uncontrolled, raging forest fires in the dry season. There should be a plane to put out those fires, rather than just saying there is a fire and no attention is being paid. People went through the Northern Range trying to put out those fires. There must be some kind of planning. The Member for Arouca South is at fault in every sector of the Forestry Division in the Ministry of Public Utilities and the Environment.

I want to talk about the protected areas. Our Northern Range is another area that should be protected in terms of our forest capability. There is a whole plan, but it was shelved. In 2001/2002, the PNM budget talked about the authority. Then the years 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007? That is what is happening: fooling the population; no conservation of anything in this country. Everything is under threat under the PNM. They are breaking every convention. Everything will be written off from the RAMSA site because they are wiping out the Caroni Swamp.

What is the performance of the EMA to date? The EMA should have been taking control of the environment, but we see a lackadaisical approach. They should have been working with the Town and Country Planning Division to ensure that Matura's plan includes eco-lodges. Not only Government has to put the money for the eco-lodges, the UNC administration passed the Tourism Development Act that would give incentives for locals as well as foreigners to get involved in eco-tourism. That is an area in terms of the protected areas and national parks that is a boost to tourism. The Member for Tobago East should take notes—

Mrs. Job-Davis: I am taking notes. I am. I am.

Dr. A. Nanan:—because that Main Ridge in Tobago is another area that should have been designated a national park. What hurts me most of all is when I look at the Internet for world heritage sites, we have none. St. Lucia has the Pitons, Mr. Speaker.

My recommendation is that the Member for Arima should get the Ministry working with respect to that particular convention. The Ministry of Education should work with the Ministry of Public Utilities and the Environment because the President of UNESCO is the Minister of Education. That is why they have no heritage sites.

Main Ridge in Tobago should be a world heritage site. I have no problem with that. Main Ridge in Tobago, in terms of heritage, is the oldest forest reserve. It is not difficult to do because they have had several reports. When I look through the number of people who are reporting on these sites, we must have something in our country to be recognized as a world heritage site.

The Members of Parliament should get involved and see if they can identify any area in their constituency. Of course, the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West does not have a clue what I am talking about. Member, you might have some areas in terms of waterfall capability in Maracas, St. Joseph. *[Interruption]* I do not know where your boundary ends, but you may go looking and see that you have a waterfall.

I know, in terms of the Member for Toco/Manzanilla and the capability in that area, there are possibilities for the world heritage site. It depends on what you classify because there temples are classified as world heritage sites too; villages. I thought the National Trust Act passed by the United National Congress administration would have been the driving force for that world heritage site possibility. That would have been a register for all the treasures of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Speaker: I am trying to follow you. Are you under Head 17?

Dr. A. Nanan: Head 17? Head 17? I do not know. *[Laughter]* Yes, yes. I was speaking, in terms of Head 17, that was the allocation for national parks and wildlife conservation, so I am under that heading. *[Laughter]* I am very happy, Mr. Speaker, that you are following my direction.

In terms of world heritage sites and RAMSA sites that is why nationally protected areas are so important. They need to look at the National Trust Act because that Act is supposed to have a register of all the treasures: all the waterfalls, all the Amerindian area, all the forests, every single thing should be there. Then you can look at them and select which one you can classify as your own heritage site.

They have marginalized Prof. Kenny on Nelson Island because there is a lovely project there that is getting no funding. It is a lovely area, Mr. Speaker, because you are dealing with wildlife, not only plant life, in terms of flowers and fauna.

We also had a convention on biological diversity. We signed that convention. Nothing is happening there. That convention was supposed to trigger—all these various things are a mosaic; they are all inextricably linked, but nobody is handling that. It is of great potential because it is an area in terms of non-energy resources and utilization for income. In a time of plenty, it may not seem like much, but in a time of little, it is a treasured asset. So you need to get your act together Minister of Community Development, Culture and Gender Affairs and look at that National Trust Act.

You should be the driving force. It is an area for you to blossom. Come forward with that; that is the real gem of the country. You will go down in history for that. [*Interruption*] I do not know what you are going to name him, but that is a beautiful area. Take it out, look at it, get the register, ask all the MPs to submit everything to you, look at the entire thing and then get the Minister of Education working. Get the Minister of Planning and Development involved and locate a world heritage site. We do not want to be known as a terrorism destination; we should be known as a world heritage site location. Once you get on that website and people look down there, people will come to your country. I do not know what your Minister of Tourism is doing. That is an area that is being left unattended in terms of tourism potential.

Your Minister leaves a beautiful island here to go to New York to buy wigs and things like that. She should stay here and walk around the country with the Minister of Planning and Development, the Minister of Community Development, Culture and Gender Affairs and the Minister of Education, not for votes, but to identify the treasures of Trinidad and Tobago and put it on a register and say this is our treasure.

You can start it, Member for Tobago East, in Tobago and I am sure Trinidad will follow. You will get the money, just make the representation. The Minister of Finance is right there; you can ask for the money. He can add to the money. He can do that.

Mr. Sharma: You want a credit card?

Dr. A. Nanan: Do not use the Government's credit card for anything in that particular area. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker: I think your Members are disturbing. Whilst you are on the matter of foreign affairs, do not let them disturb you.

Dr. A. Nanan: I am going to the Minister of Works and Transport quickly. I have confidence in the Minister of Works and Transport, however, I have a feeling that he is not in touch with his technocrats in terms of the linkage between the ground and the office.

The Member for Diego Martin East takes the information—I do not know if he throws it in the bin, but at least he accepts the request. What is happening, as the Member for Oropouche pointed out, we were promised something with respect to my constituency and the Mayo Road. We had a discussion. There was supposed to be activity on the road in terms of an upgrade. I listened to the Member for Arouca South in terms of the UNC performance and rough roads. I want to point out to the Member for Diego Martin East—and he is well aware—I saw him clapping when the Minister made that comment; but Member for Diego Martin East, when the contractors did the Guaracara/Tabaquite Road, under their administration, time after time they had to go back and fix parts. It was collapsing. It is because of the terrain. There are a lot of springs in those areas. It is very difficult to build roads in those areas. Of course, you have all your engineers, supervised by the IDB, but still the roads are collapsing and you have to go back from time to time to fix them. When you make reference to the UNC administration road repairs and bad road conditions, the same thing is happening under the PNM administration.

I am sure other Members promised that the road would have been repaired and now they have missed the dry season. I also make reference to the implementation of 90 per cent. Where is it? Where is the procurement? What is happening? Are you giving the instructions that are not being carried out? Is the Minister of Finance overriding your instructions? That is what is happening. So I just wanted to show you Minister of Works and Transport that you may have very good intentions, but the work is not getting done and that is why you are being labelled a failure. Very good intentions, but the performance on the ground is poor.

I want to deal with the Minister of Health. It is disheartening to see that in the Prime Minister's constituency and I was shocked when I saw the Tacarigua Health Centre and the Tunapuna Health Centre. Could you believe, Member for Tunapuna, I do not know what kind of representation you make there. I feel sorry for the children in that area. I feel sorry for the teenagers and the adults. There is no functioning dental capability in that centre and what is sad is that the dental equipment, if I recall, is there, not being used. In Maloney, it is not being used there.

What is happening, in Blanchisseuse, is that the equipment is there and not being used and the Minister of Health is putting ads in the papers to say how well that Ministry is doing and under his nose that is what is happening. I am sure Member for Tunapuna that you have made representation to the Minister of Health, but he probably throws away everything you send to him, so it is not your fault. That is what is happening. I was totally shocked!

It is sad. It is very sad and we are in a time of plenty. They could have the best dental equipment in those areas, supplying that kind of dental capability, but it seems that we are in the backward days. Health centres are being opened one day for that particular facility. There is some initiative in the eastern region, but nothing else and the Minister of Health wants to beat his chest; every day he comes on television and says we are doing so well in this sector, fooling the population. That is the idea. It is a simple area. There is nothing magical in that area. To get that organized, you cannot, so how could you organize the health system. If you cannot organize the smallest part of your Ministry, which is the dental capability, you want to organize the rest? Come on, Minister of Health, you have to get your act together. You still have some time.

7.00 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, I have one area before I close. [*Interruption*] I gave him a small touch.

Mr. Sharma: Just polish his teeth a bit.

Dr. A. Nanan: I can go into the pharmacy section, but I would not go there right now. I wanted to point out to him that a total situation is developing there.

Mr. Speaker, the other area I want to deal with quickly before I close is the situation with respect to water in my constituency. We have heard about the desalination plant and the plans they want to build a desalination plant. What is very disheartening is when the Minister of Planning and Development said that under the UNC there was 25 per cent and they have been able to move it to 25 per cent, in terms of water for all. This is a shocking revelation, misleading the Parliament. There should be a sanction for statements like that from a Minister. A Motion should be moved in this House for statements like that. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Ramnath: It would not qualify.

Dr. A. Nanan: It might not qualify. It is a fact that under the UNC administration, in terms of water distribution, it was the best. Look at the \$1.7 billion investment programme, not only for water, but the entire budget of \$1.9 billion, in terms of

delivery, at 75 per cent. Could you imagine if we were delivering 90 per cent? Everything would have been fixed. We would have had nothing to debate in the House. There would have been no complaints, in terms of distribution.

In my constituency we still have problems. From time to time I ask questions in this House about the Brasso and Corosal areas. There is no water. They are using a reservoir. That reservoir is leaking continuously and all WASA does is put some plaster on the crack. Water leaks out of the reservoir. It runs dry from time to time. That is the performance. The Member comes here to defend WASA. It is totally unbelievable that the Minister would come and defend WASA.

Mr. Ramnath: She had a vested interest in it.

Dr. A. Nanan: It has to be, for a Minister to come here and defend WASA. It is totally unacceptable in this House. The situation is terrible in this country with respect to water delivery. We are always hearing about people buying water and using water from ponds. It is totally unacceptable.

The Minister of Health should also be blamed. There are unhygienic conditions in the country. He would say nothing and support the Minister of Planning and Development. In Corosal, Mayo and my constituency there are water problems.

In the other areas—do you know what is even worse? The Minister said we have a Navet trunk main. In fact, the Navet Dam is supposed to be a protected area for recreational purposes as well.

I was also dealing with—before I close I want to show a link. The protected areas would have been the Valencia Dam, the Navet Dam and the Caroni/Arena Dam. In those areas there would be recreational facilities and fishing allowed in certain parts. An industry is developing around that particular area. But, no, we have a Navet trunk main that will be boosting the water supply. The people in Allan Road would not believe that Minister because they can see Navet Dam from where they are. They do not need a Navet trunk main. Water is already passing there. There are one million leaks on the line. A trunk main would not give them any more comfort with the water distribution.

You know what? Wherever the UNC has put down lines during the period 1995—2001, there is no water. Of course, lines were run in certain parts of the constituency, but there is no water. It is spite. No water. Anytime you look at a project where UNC lines were laid, no water is being sent on those lines. *[Interruption]* I do not think so. I cannot believe that. Somebody said that they do not think the water has a UNC tag or a PNM tag. What can we say? That is the situation as it is. Those are the facts on the ground.

Ministers, you need to get your act together and get on the ground. When you talk about innovative people and people-oriented, you need to actually demonstrate and not doublespeak in this House.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you.

Mr. Manohar Ramsaran (*Chaguanas*): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is my distinct opportunity to speak on a Bill to provide the supplementary appropriation for the service of Trinidad and Tobago for the financial year ending September 30, 2007 of the sum of the issue which was authorized by the Appropriation Act, 2007.

I would like to correct some mistakes or untruths perpetuated by the Member for Arouca South. The first mistake or mischief is the mere fact that she did not prepare for this Bill when she said that the sum of \$1 billion was put into the Stabilization Fund. This is not true. I went through the documents since then, to make sure that I did not make a mistake. When I read from “President” down to the “Ministry of Community Development, Culture and Gender Affairs”, the total was \$3.121 billion. There was no mention of any—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Enill: I thank the Member for Chaguanas for giving way. The method by which money now goes into the Heritage and Stabilization Fund, since the enactment of the Bill, is the same direct charge relationship that we have in the Consolidated Fund. It goes directly to the Fund, without having to be appropriated. The amount of \$1.716 billion is going to be put into the Fund, but it does have to come to Parliament for appropriation. When we passed the legislation on the last occasion, we made that change. That is what is programmed in the surplus and it is in fact that.

Mr. M. Ramsaran: If you listened to the Member, when she was speaking or if you go to the *Hansard*, she said that the \$3.1 billion that we are speaking about is not true and that \$1 billion is being put from this Fund into the Stabilization Fund. That is a serious misrepresentation of the facts. We must correct these mistakes and not try to hoodwink the population, of which the Member is becoming very popular, recently.

The Member spoke about the poverty line. I would not debate that now. What methodology was used? How would this figure of TT \$685 million in 2007 be used as a benchmark to measure poverty? The methodology might be quite clear and explained by the Ministers, but I would like that report be laid in this House as a matter of urgency.

I have been hearing about this report for the last year. The Ministers would allude to it and Members of the Opposition would talk about it. If this Government was responsible when talking about dealing with poverty, that report should have been laid in this House as an urgency, so that we in the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago could meet and decide how best to treat with the poor in this country.

Let us stop playing games with the poverty line as to who is right and who is wrong. I would like to have a clear indication, by the Government, of the methodology used and that they lay the report in the Parliament as quickly as possible. “Quickly”, in this Parliament, could mean anything when we look at the way questions are answered. I would like to look at that report and get an opportunity to debate that report, so that the people would understand what is happening as to how we deal with poverty.

While I am on that Ministry, I have been looking through the record and have not yet seen any moneys being allocated for the Children's Authority. That one is not included. I feel disappointed. We have other Ministers and Ministries coming to this Parliament, through the Minister of Finance, and requesting money as we appropriate funds to deal with the problems facing Trinidad and Tobago. It is as if children's problems are not important. I am asking the Minister, please. If he comes with a Bill tomorrow he would have to come back with another Appropriation Bill because no money is put aside for the Children's Authority. I wanted to touch that in passing.

Another mistake is how a Minister could—the last time the Minister accepted that she was a bit naïve—come to the Parliament again and say that we are discussing a variation of appropriation. This is not true. We did debate that Bill in January 2007. If I remember correctly, the Minister of Finance came to the Parliament in January 2007 and presented to the House the Variation of Appropriation, which is moving funds from one Head or Sub-Head to another. We debated that in January 2007 and approximately \$81 million was transferred to other Heads.

What we are debating today is the supplementary appropriation. To put it in the correct context of Parliament, it is the Government's request for \$3.1 billion in addition to what was passed in September of last year of \$38 billion. In effect, the budget is \$41 billion for fiscal 2007. That must be cleared and not be misunderstood and used politically. The fact is that \$41 billion of taxpayers' funds are being used as the budget for 2007.

When we look at—the Minister said that the money will be spent to improve the quality of life of the people of Trinidad and Tobago and therein lies the problem. The layman is listening to us—\$41 billion for fiscal 2007, and \$170 million for the last five or six years. According to the Minister of Social Development, 15 per cent of the population lives on less than US \$100 per month. What would these people think about us, the Government and the Parliament when we are spending billions of dollars as if money is no problem and 17 per cent of the people survive on less by US \$100 by their own admission? Is this not the reason people out there believe every word when we talk about corruption in this Parliament? They must believe when we talk about living the high life, being able to swipe a credit card, doing this, that and the other. The people out there would have to eke out a living, even though it is 17 per cent—I accept that figure—living on less than US \$100. To me, that is insulting. I believe, when we look at the quality of life and the cost of living, the poverty level should have been way higher than that. But, that is for another debate. I am sure we would go to that quickly.

My colleague from Tabagite spoke about roads. I would like to make a recommendation as to what has been happening in my constituency. I have discovered works being done in what is the creation, building or construction of box drains. Works have been done, to me, in a very haphazard manner. There is no planning. There is a drain and in the middle of that drain they built a box drain. My friend from Arouca North would understand what I am talking about. This way is lower than the box drain and that way is lower than the box drain, so it creates a block and there is stagnant water on both sides. This has been happening throughout the constituency.

I investigated and the Minister of Local Government has his Infrastructure Renewal Improvement and Development programme (IRID), which is about fixing some drains. Maybe somebody who has direct contact with the Minister could get a box drain in front of his property. I have no problem with that. There is no planning. There is nothing put there to deal with it.

In the URP, there are contractors building drains. We have, of course, the Rural Development Company; the new kid on the block, under the Ministry of Planning and Development. They have spent over \$76 million over the last two years. When I asked that question recently for a written answer, I was not in the Parliament, so I did not get the answer—I was told by my colleagues that box drains are coming in at \$4,000 a meter. I would have to verify that as soon as I get the answer. For example, in Church Street, near to where I live, 125 meters cost

\$1.07 million. What is happening in his country? When people see and hear this, are they not worried? Is it that there is corruption in every Ministry and agency? Because of the nature of the society, we have grown to accept corruption as if it is a part of the daily psyche. *[Interruption]* I am sure, I remember that figure but I would verify it before. We would look at it. I remember this particular one where 125 meters in Church Street, a box drain cost \$1.07 million. When I did the calculation it is \$4,000 per meter. When you look at that signal alone of what is taking place—

Let me finish the point I was making. We have the Rural Development Company, the Ministry of Works and Transport building box drains and I almost said the Regional Corporations. Of course, they are ineffective and have been emasculated by this Government. The Regional Corporations cannot build a box drain.

I would like to recommend to the hon. Minister of Works and Transport, as the senior Minister I consider in the whole works scenario, that they set up a drainage authority or something of the sort, to monitor what is happening. I am fearful we can have floods because of the careless works—*[Interruption]*

Mr. Imbert: I thank the Member for giving way. You are absolutely right. Because of the confusion with respect to the responsibility for drainage channels, it really makes the case for a single national drainage authority to get rid of all the duplication of effort and confusion, with respect to standards and responsibilities. We do intend to create a drainage authority. You are absolutely right.

Mr. M. Ramsaran: Thank you very much, Minister. I hope to see that as quickly as possible. I have written you a letter about this and hope we could deal with the immediate problems to see how we could avoid flooding, because flooding affects all of us.

I was on the question of corruption. We all know that corruption, at least we should know, eats from the national pie. It is something—*[Interruption]*

Recently I was selected to participate in a conference which dealt exclusively with strategies to deal with corruption. After participants introduced themselves, I found myself in the company with no other Commonwealth country, but countries from the Far East, Middle East and one or two countries from the African and Asian continents. After I heard people introduce themselves, I asked the moderator: “Why am I here? Why was Trinidad and Tobago chosen to be in this?” The answer shocked me. We in Trinidad and Tobago banter, share and give

blows to each other on who is more corrupt than whom and we pass it as a joke. The answer I got is: “Are you not aware that Trinidad and Tobago is now becoming one of the most corrupt countries in the world?” I staggered and looked back. He then mentioned per capita and that the income we have is not reflecting the quality of life that we in Trinidad and Tobago enjoy. More importantly, he said: “Remember MP, a Prime Minister of your country has been arrested and hauled before the courts for alleged corruption.” We banter, trade punches and we do everything, but we are also on the world stage. People are looking at us.

When the question of corruption comes up—I made this point about three years ago—and we accuse each other of corruption and we believe that we have scored political points, the world is looking on us as a place where people will not want to do business. We have to be very careful of that.

I would continue on this trend before I move on. Corruption is a disease that threatens the hopes of the poor. Let us look at it carefully. There are poor people out there and when corruption comes in and eats the resources of the country—we now have corruption across the board.

I was recently sent a note on the life of Mr. Calder Hart. I would not read it here publicly. I have to first study it and get more information. It was about the kind of person he was wherever he has worked before. He has come to Trinidad and Tobago and was given an exalted position. I am not pointing fingers, I do not want to do that, but he is the Chairman of Nipdec, which is one of the agencies that deals with Government contracts, building and construction and the industry. He is the Chairman of UDeCott, another very large corporation that deals with the country's finances and a very influential member, which he is now becoming in Trinidad and Tobago. I would flash it. We have a picture and the information would put me in plenty trouble if I read it without—You have a copy of it? I do not know why they chose me, but I got a copy and if people want, I would send it to them via email. Things are said about his gentleman and his life before Trinidad and Tobago.

I wonder if a security check was done on him because the position he has been given and what is coming across is about the amount of money that passes through him. I am not at any time making allegations. I am talking about the facts. Was a security check done? I would stop there for today. We need to really deal with the question of corruption. When we talk about corruption, as I said, it eats away at the resources of Trinidad and Tobago—*[Interruption]*

Mr. Imbert: I thank the Member for giving way. It seems that you are not aware that Mr. Hart has been in this country for 20 years and was the Chief Executive Officer of the Home Mortgage Bank for 20 years and, therefore, he did not just come. He has been here since 1987. He was here when your administration was in power and he was working in UDeCott when your administration was in power.

Mr. M. Ramsaran: I am aware of that, but 20 years, is but a short time. He has been here in our country and now things are appearing and we have to raise our eyebrows. I am not making allegations. In the national interest, I am asking that maybe the person be investigated. They even talk about his wife and her activities. That is something. I do not want to read it. A couple of the Members on your side read it and raised their eyebrows. Yes, we are talking about the question of corruption which is eating away the core of our development.

There are people out there with disabilities—senior citizens or pensioners—who are living on \$800 per month. This is a grant given by the Government. When they sit—they have a lot of time to think and listen to their radios or look at television—in the comfort of their homes and receive this paltry \$800, they also look at what is taking place in the society with billions of dollars being spent by the Government and other agencies. This is something we must be worried about.

Just to show how corruption is eating at the society—I do not make this up, this is something that has been coming across—in CEPEP, the Ministry of Finance identified dummies, meaning people who received pay and did not exist. That was said in the CEPEP report. Of course, in the URP there are ghosts and ghost gangs that have been with us for quite a long time.

When we look at the question of the Ministry of Health, there are phantom firms. We have a combination of ghost, phantoms and dummies appearing on the payrolls in Trinidad and Tobago.

I am linking this to how corruption eats away at the core of our development and where people who really deserve that assistance cannot get it and poverty continues to grow. I am sure you are aware that it is worldwide phenomenon, but is more so in Trinidad and Tobago, that 75 per cent of the wealth is owned by a few, maybe less than 10 per cent, of the people in Trinidad and Tobago, whereas the rest of us would struggle for the next 25 per cent. At the bottom, there is 50 per cent who will be fighting for the last 15 per cent of the wealth in Trinidad and Tobago.

People look for parliamentarians to help, raise issues and protect them. I mean all 67 of us who have been placed in this Chamber to look after the interest of our people. What do we see? We see our parliamentarians before the courts. We see them charged for corruption. Where are we going? What is happening in our country? When things happen, we look for political escape, to see who is the most cunning or would wine better than the other one. This is what is happening. I want to make a warning. I have seen and heard enough. I have been here long enough to know that we must get to the core of this.

Maybe I can recommend to whoever would listen to me. Let us get involved with the parliamentarians across the world who are interested in fighting corruption. There is the Global Organization for Parliamentarians Corruption, which has been formed approximately three or four years ago and is led by John Williams of the Canadian Parliament. We have a chapter in Trinidad and Tobago, albeit small. We, the parliamentarians who are interested in fighting corruption could get together. We are the leaders. We are the ones who come here and approve budgets. We are the ones who come to this Parliament, as the Constitution dictates, and approve spending in Trinidad and Tobago. The Ministry of Finance will come and lay its budgets and we will have to vote for it, albeit, a simple majority. We must get together to cut out the whole question of corruption, or else this country, despite the wealth, will see the growth of poverty and a few people in the country will earn the wealth and continue to have a big division. I want to warn that this is recipe for social disorder. I am not crying doom and gloom. I am looking at the interest of the people of Trinidad and Tobago. We have to be careful. The Minister spoke and I responded to that.

When we look at the \$170 billion, just to move away from that point, and we divide that by the population of Trinidad and Tobago, each one of us would have had a hefty sum of money to take home. This is crazy logic. We are not seeing that kind of development, per person. We have roads that are pothole-riddled and police stations that are not worth being police stations. There are public officers who work under terrible conditions. Across the board, we see problems.

I would like to quickly go through the Bill before us, to see if I could point out and ask some questions so that the Minister in his winding up could help me and the nation to understand. To be fair to the Minister, he attempted to dissect this before us. There are many agencies and ministries that are involved. Therefore, he could not have gone through them himself. A Minister could have spoken for five minutes or 10 minutes to tell the country what is happening in his Ministry and why there is need for more money. If you want to run a Parliament and want the

people to understand—it is as if you are hoodwinking somebody. One newspaper would say that the Government asked for \$3 billion more and then the Member for Arouca North would say that it is not \$3 billion, it is \$2 billion, because \$1 billion went to the Heritage and Stabilization Fund and try to confuse people.

On page 11, I would like to know—I am a layman. I have seen that the airline industry, not only Trinidad and Tobago, would have gone through many trying periods. The Minister mentioned that a budget is an estimated figure. I want to differ. I believe that a budget is a document that spells out where a company or government wants to go. This is the money I have allocated to this Ministry, because this is what the Minister asked, this is what they believe they could spend for the year and this is what they need to use. They would then come to the Parliament and go through it with all of us and approve a budget.

I see \$28 million was being voted for BWIA. With this Appropriation Bill, the Government has now asked \$556,421,000. What kind of budgeting is that where you had to move from \$20 million to almost \$600 million? I want an answer for this. I want to know what has happened. According to the notes I have, this money is required to facilitate the settlement of BWIA liabilities, particularly in relation to trade creditors and business partners and for capitalization of Caribbean Airlines Limited, as agreed to by Cabinet. I do not know how many persons outside of Cabinet. Mr. Speaker, you may not know what Cabinet discussed. We are not supposed to know.

I believe that the time has come, in Trinidad and Tobago, where the decisions in Cabinet Notes—maybe not right way, but sometime—should be known, so we would be aware of what is happening. Is it that the Government is run by secret? Of course, a Cabinet Note has the word "secret" written across it. This country is being run as a secret. I know of some junior Ministers in Ministries who do not know what the senior Ministers in Cabinet would know. I think we must have some transparency. That is the first question I want answered.

On page 13, it speaks of immigration. This is very interesting. It is not much money, but as the Minister of Planning and Development said—We must remember that the Minister of Planning and Development has an important role in the creation of a budget. That Minister is the one who would have to meet with the Ministers and the Ministry officials and then make recommendations to the Minister of Finance. The Minister of Planning and Development is the engine room which would approve things and send them across. The Minister has come and misled this Parliament with very simple mistakes. I am very concerned about the Government of Trinidad and Tobago.

The Immigration Division is looking for more money for offices that were established in Chaguanas, La Brea and Sangre Grande and for new machine-readable passports. An additional \$1.422 million is necessary to meet the cost of rental of new immigration offices in Chaguanas, La Brea and Sangre Grande.

I have a copy of a letter written to Sen. The Hon. Martin Joseph by one of my constituents. It reads:

“Sir,

It is with a great sense of shame and regret that I write to you on the failure of your Ministry to honour its work ethics as has been gallantly displayed in the electronic media.

On 17th February, 2007 the attached copy of an advertisement by your Ministry, appeared in the daily newspaper. Four (4) days later I applied for the new machine-readable passport.”

This is one of the negatives of public relations; you advertise something and when it backfires, you hurt the people.

“On 21st March, twenty one (21) working days later, I was told that my passport was not ready.

On checking on 28th March, I was again sent home to Chaguanas, without my passport.”

On February 17, he applied for a passport and attached the advertisement. Maybe he was expecting this kind of treatment.

“On 4th April, I was again asked to be patient for two (2) more weeks to be sure that it will be processed.

On 18th April...”

Mr. Speaker, if you check it is like the question on the Order Paper that deals with the stadia.

“On 18th April, I was again denied my passport and was rebuked by an Immigration Officer in my demands for a status report on my application.”

At least you did not rebuke us, but this was happening outside there.

“I was now told the problem lies with the Registrar General Department.

The Immigration Officer, requested that I go and make a copy of my application. On my return he informed me that someone will be going to the

Registrar General Department before the end of the week and I should again check back in a week.

Mr. Minister, today, 25th April, 2007 is nine weeks since I made my application. To be more specific is it forty two (42) working days that have elapsed. Is this 20/20 vision? In the circumstances, I cannot help but come to the conclusion that only the passport of those citizens who wish to expedite the process through a fee of \$300 as is stated on Page 7 of the New Passport booklet are being processed. It is my humble opinion that this fee is tantamount to legalized bribery and as a consequence I do not wish to indulge in such practices.

Kindly give this matter your urgent attention as I am now beginning to feel that my status is that of a criminal, whose passport has been taken away from him.”

This is the Immigration Division.

This is the *Newsday* of Monday, June 04 with a headline:

“Midnight lines to get renewed passports”

This showed that persons would have to go as early at 4.00 a.m. to collect a number and wait for their passports.

“Conducting business at the Immigration Offices on Frederick Street, Port of Spain, especially as it relates to renewal and applications for the new Machine Readable Passports (MRP), is now a tedious process which takes hours, forcing persons to gather at the office from as early as midnight.”

This is Trinidad and Tobago, in 2007. We are coming to a Parliament and approving \$41 billion to run a country and we cannot get it right in a simple process as getting a passport. We all need a passport. I would continue to read, with your permission. I would summarize what is written. My constituent has to go to the passport office and stage a one-man protest and eventually, after 14 weeks be obtained his machine-readable passport with a new electronic birth certificate, giving four stars as his name, perhaps, because the television cameras highlighted him during his protest demonstration. Where his name should have been, four stars appeared from the computer as his name.

I would like to read this into the record and hope that something will be done. The substantive issues raised in his letter have not been addressed. To obtain a passport, its costs the taxpayer \$250. To receive an emergency passport, it costs the taxpayer \$300. What is an emergency passport? [*Interruption*] Short notice.

To expedite the passport the taxpayer must pay an additional \$300. Mr. Speaker, an expedited passport costs the taxpayer a total of \$550. Is this a new measure of raising taxes? Or is it, as has been alluded to by my constituent, legalized bribery? I would like the Minister responsible for immigration, the Minister of National Security, to look at this. I was also told that the Chaguanas Immigration Office has been closed down and maybe this is what is causing added pressure in Port of Spain.

Sometimes I wonder why these things happen. Something would be going well and you suddenly decide to get rid of it. This is something we have to look at and correct in the future. If you want to have a country with 20/20 vision and five pillars of development, we must do the small things good so that we would encourage people to become better citizens of Trinidad and Tobago.

I now turn to agriculture which is in page 18. I hope the Minister would answer this one. If he cares to, I would give way. This is an exciting proposal I read. We need a lot of assistance in the agricultural sector. We have had some assistance with respect to agricultural access roads in my constituency, albeit I do not think that they are completed, but the farmers are not too unhappy about the improvement. I will give credit where it is due.

Listen to this one, Head: 25 Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources, \$9.67 million. An additional sum of \$9.67 million is required to meet contractual obligations relating to the acquisition of sites for non-agricultural purposes. This sounds, to me—[*Interruption*] Sure, I would give way. I promised you.

Mr. Narine: Thank you very much for giving way, Member for Chaguanas. Under the non-agricultural sites, the Government acquires properties for public purpose, the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources is the administrative Ministry that deals with sections 3, 4 and 5. When section 5 comes to Parliament, we would make final payment.

You would recall that in those areas with sections 3 and 4, we need to pay 80 per cent upfront. When that is paid and you publish section 5, we come to the Parliament and pay the next 20 per cent, with 9 per cent interest.

Mr. M. Ramsaran: Thank you very much. This is what I have been alluding to. We, the laypeople out there, should understand what this is about. If someone reads this, it would be very comical that you have a budget document to spend \$9.6 million for non-agricultural purposes. I thank you for the answer.

As you mentioned that you know take the responsibility for the land distribution and payment for land acquisition, there is a problem in the Chaguanas constituency, Frederick Settlement to be exact, where after numerous requests were made in this Parliament—I am sure the Speaker would remember that I filed questions on the Order Paper and Motions on the Adjournment—with respect to lands in Williamsville, in my colleague's constituency of Tabaquite, Caroni and Frederick Settlement, Chaguanas. Up to this day, despite years of pleading with the Minister of Housing—part now falls on the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources—I had a meeting in the village to deal specifically with the issue. Persons reported that approximately 50 per cent of the deeds have been given out. In this Parliament, the Member for Diego Martin East, standing in for the Member for Diego Martin West, answered the question and promised that all deeds would have been issued by December 2004.

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

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

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. Speaker: Before I call on the Member for Chaguanas, perhaps the Member for Diego Martin East would like to move the Procedural Motion.

PROCEDURAL MOTION

The Minister of Works and Transport (Hon. Colm Imbert): Mr. Speaker, I beg to move—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: I am checking on something, continue the debate.

FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT (ADOPTION)

Mr. M. Ramsaran: I move to the bottom of page 18, which deals with providing secondary schools with basic ICT and computer equipment, library equipment and the provision of textbooks for students under the Textbooks Rental Programme for the improvement refurbishment of primary schools under the Vacation Repair Programme. I know my colleague from Tabaquite dealt with this, but I would like, again, that the Minister of Education come to the Parliament and tell the nation.

When we look at the school system, violence in schools and some of the problems already mentioned, I believe the Minister of Education owes this

country an explanation. What am I doing to improve the quality of the school system, albeit it might be the physical infrastructure as mentioned in this document? People need the assurance that when they go back to school in September—some schools are closed and the others have one more month before closing—they would understand that things are happening. The sum of \$181 million is being requested at this time. People would like to know what the moneys are used for. This is what I am talking about, the question of getting it right.

I am getting very concerned that we come to this Parliament week after week and sometimes day after day, trying to improve the quality of our lives. Some persons make speeches, sometimes informed and sometimes not informed and we continue to hoodwink the population.

I now turn to page 22, which deals with the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs. I am not seeing the Minister here. Before sport, I would take a look at PTSC, where the sum of \$32 million is requested to meet increased operational cost of the PTSC such as fuel, wages, salaries, maintenance, utilities and security. These additional costs are the direct result of the expansion of corporate fleet of buses by 75 buses from April 2007. This comes under the Minister of Works and Transport, I think.

Minister of Works and Transport, with respect to PTSC, I would like to make a request. We were discussing transport, which is now one of the major problems in this country, whether we want to accept that or not. [*Interruption*] You could move it.

Mr. Imbert: What do I move? We are not going to finish.

PROCEDURAL MOTION

The Minister of Works and Transport (Hon. Colm Imbert): Mr. Speaker, I beg to move a Procedural Motion, that this House continues to sit beyond 8.00 p.m.

Question put and agreed to.

FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT (ADOPTION)

Mr. M. Ramsaran: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would continue talking to the Minister of Works and Transport, through you. We are looking at the Chaguanas business of PTSC. Chaguanas, for some reason, I do not know, has been wiped out of the map of PTSC services. I am talking about the Southern Main Road, from Curepe to Chaguanas, where the majority of the people live. That is known as the Old Road. We then have the road from Caparo back into Chaguanas. I notice you are reopening the Chaguanas Terminal according to this note. I would like to see

that a fleet of buses be sent to these areas to assist the rural poor. This is a request I am humbly making, because we need buses back on these roads. I am sure, as the Minister of Works and Transport, once these roads are fixed to a certain standard buses would be able to pass. This would ease the plight of our commuters on a daily basis. I want to make that request.

Mr. Imbert: I thank the Member for giving way. As the Member has correctly surmised, we will be reopening the Chaguanas Bus Terminal and I would like to give the Member the assurance that we would examine the needs of the greater Chaguanas area, because we do intend to station a number of buses in the new terminal in Chaguanas. All that is required is some discussion, so that we could arrive at the most feasible and the best routes for the bus service within the Chaguanas area. We will talk to you, do not worry about it.

Mr. M. Ramsaran: Thank you. I made this request very humbly, but it is so important that I do not sound arrogant. The fact is that \$32 million has been voted for this and I would like to see the people of Chaguanas and environs benefit.

I remember the number of the bus because I travelled by bus in my days. It was 47 from Chaguanas to Curepe, but that has been disbanded.

I now come to the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs. Where will the bus terminal be, or has that not been decided?

Mr. Imbert: It would be somewhere close to the center of the Borough of Chaguanas. I cannot tell you the precise location now, but it will be centrally located and easily accessible by persons who live in and around Chaguanas.

Mr. M. Ramsaran: I hope this comes before 2020. I would be only happy to meet with you.

Mr. Imbert: I thank you again for giving way. I did intend to go and open the facility in the very near future.

Mr. M. Ramsaran: All right, remember election might be in July.

We move to sport. I am very concerned with respect to what I am reading. Again, the sum of \$6.937 million is required to provide financial assistance for high performance athletes. I want the Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs to explain what this means. Who are the high performance athletes in Trinidad and Tobago? To give the sum of \$6.937 million to high performance athletes, I am a bit worried. I would like to have the names of the athletes and the disciplines they participate in so that we could support it if it is to improve the quality of the sportsmen in Trinidad and Tobago.

Again, I would like to recommend, in future that when a Bill of this nature comes to this Parliament we debate it. Maybe the Minister would not take 75 minutes if he is tired, but 10 minutes would be enough to tell us about his request so that the population would understand what is happening. I am very worried.

Again, \$1.6 million is given in fiscal 2007 to assist the Ministry in its preparation of hosting the Caribbean Games 2009. I cannot query that. I know because I was the Minister responsible. I chaired the Caricom Ministry of Sport and that was put on the agenda since 2000. The first Caribbean Games should have been held in 2004 in Cuba, but that has been pushed back a couple of years. I congratulate the Minister for remembering Caribbean Games on the agenda.

The sum of \$3.93 million is needed for a grant approval as financial support to the Trinidad and Tobago Pro League for fiscal 2007. I do not know if this is football, cricket, netball, or basketball. I understand that a popular Manning is in charge of basketball. I do not know if it is that money. The sum of \$3.93 million is needed as a grant approval for financial support to the Trinidad and Tobago Pro League Limited for fiscal 2007. This support to the league is based on deficit funding of the approved budget relative to the projected expenditure of the league. This is shabby work. It does not say whether it is football, cricket, hockey or horse racing. It does not say anything. I wanted to add something to it. I am serious about this. This is not the kind of work I expect the Minister of Finance to bring to this Parliament.

The sum of \$13.068 million is required to assist the Trinidad and Tobago Football Federation for the payment of salaries for 2006 and 2007 for the technical staff involved in facilitating Trinidad and Tobago's qualification for FIFA World Cup 2010 in South Africa. Again, maybe I would have no objection to this.

When government funds are involved, you need to discuss it with the Parliament. The Parliament, according to our Constitution, is that body that would disburse funds. We have many sports in this country. My last count indicated that we have more than 30 sporting disciplines. I asked the question recently what about cricket and the other sports; do they not qualify for funding? This is something I would like to see cleared up, before we move on.

In my final examination, I ask that the Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs come to this Parliament and tell us why and how this is necessary and what would this do to improve the quality of our lives in Trinidad and Tobago.

There is the question of the health sector. I know that I am running out of time. I wanted to spend some time in the health sector because it affects all of us. I am glad I summarized, so that I can go through this very quickly. I want to draw to the attention of the hon. Minister, the revelation made in the Gafoor Report, with respect to the Chaguanas Health Facility. I am sure that this was raised here ad nauseam. Maybe, you remember the many times I would come to this Parliament and talk about the health facility. Maybe I was exonerated by the report.

On page 279, item No. 2 of the report states:

“There are no toilet facilities for staff and the dispensary is closed at clinic times, so that clients must go to the clinic at Arima or Couva to purchase their medication.”

If you go quickly to Volume II, Part I you would see—I would read it, it is not long because I want to put it on record:

“This clinic at Chaguanas is conducted in the original Chaguanas Health Center, an old building that needs to be renovated. There is no examination lamp and a torchlight is used for pelvic examinations and for taking smears.”

This is in 2007 in Trinidad and Tobago.

“The examination rooms are small, very congested and poorly ventilated. Privacy and confidentiality are concerns at this clinic, as examination rooms are very close to the waiting room and the field health interviewer conducts interviews in an open corner of the waiting room. There are no toilet facilities for staff and the dispensary is closed at clinic times, so that the clients must go...”

I quoted this earlier. That is what is passing for a health center in Chaguanas. I have written the Minister numerous times and have spoken with him on the corridor and in the tea room.

The Member for San Fernando East announced that there would be a brand new John Hopkins Hospital in Chaguanas, as if to take the heat off the Minister of Health. So far, nothing has happened.

Just to put it back on record, I want to draw to the attention of this honourable House that in the reply to my question on the Chaguanas Health Facility on February 11, 2005, the Minister stated that the Chaguanas Health Facility is expected to commence on August 15, 2005 and is expected to be completed on

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August 15, 2006. We are now in 2007 and I have toured the entire constituency of Chaguanas, looking for this phantom, but it is not to be found. Can we really believe this Minister when he speaks?

What is becoming an addiction is the propensity with which Members of this Government are slaughtering the integrity of our Judicial officers. First, it was the Chief Justice who was indicted. Then Justice Amrika Tiwary-Reddy in this House was indicted. Now, Justice Gafoor is indicted when the Minister says that the learned judge is not truthful about the phantom companies, they are real. The Minister said so. Maybe we have to deal with it. I have all the letters here. I have written the Minister about the Chaguanas Health Facility. Hopefully, I would get some assistance with that.

Another area—when we talk about poverty and assistance—is the question of the National Commission for Self Help. I have been very patient over time, in trying to deal with this. I have in front of me numerous requests which were made to the National Commission for Self Help to assist the poorer constituents in Chaguanas.

Mr. Speaker, you are aware that in these constituencies there are levels of the rural poor. We want to get things done. What is sad about this is that they do not get a response from the National Commission for Self Help. I do not know who the Minister is. I have in front of me letters which I have written. I was also given the names. I do not want to call the public servant's name.

“We kindly wish to submit applications for the following Self Help projects in the Chaguanas Constituency.

1. Sumaria Branch Trace (South)
2. Last Road; New Street Caroni
3. Lisa Drive off Kolajal Road
4. Pooran Drive off Endeavour
5. Palm Lane
6. Aftab Avenue”

The list goes on and on and nothing substantial has been done to really make us feel that we are part of the population of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mrs. Job-Davis: I thank the Member for giving way. Are you aware that there are some standard forms that you use to apply for self help and if that goes

to the Commission, it is run by a board and there is an office on, I think, Abercromby Street, that you can access their assistance for the Self Help Programme?

Mr. M. Ramsaran: Thank you very much, Minister. I am quite aware of that. I was the Minister of Community Development. I was in charge of the centre and everything that you said was done. We have put things in place to deal with it, but nothing has happened. I thought I would mention it so that the message can go back that I am concerned about what is taking place. I would not use all my time. I believe that sufficient has been said. I am very concerned about corruption.

I have two pieces of corruption to talk about in another area. One area is the airport. I met a very irritated person yesterday who told me that I should tell the Minister of Works and Transport once more that at the airport there is also a ghost gang of a security firm and that we should investigate it. I understand that there are two security companies operating and it is creating quite a problem. I ask that the Minister of Works and Transport deal with it. There is a problem, as was told to me yesterday, at the Piarco Airport, concerning the security firms that are hired. I understand that one is a ghost gang. A word of advice is enough for you to check it out. You will find some very interesting revelations. *[Interruption]* I will tell you. I do not want to call people's names. I heard it verbatim last night.

This is a very serious matter that I must bring to the attention of this Parliament. The Minister is not here.

“Honourable Manohar Ramsaran

MP Chaguanas Constituency

Dear Sir

I wish to draw your attention to a mischievous and scandalous situation, which is in public interest and is taking place within the REGISTRAR GENERAL.

It has become known to me that several Title of Property or DEEDS have been ripped or torn off from the records of the Registrar General.

In January 4th 2007, a Judgment concerning a parcel of land...was granted in our favour. The Defendant agreed to pay for the said parcel of land in two trances; 1st payment on the 30th April 2007 and final payment by the 4th June 2007.

From communications with my attorney, it was known that the Defendant was prepared to make the first payment, when suddenly on 30th April, 2007 it was

discovered that the title Volume 3154 Folio 55 was missing from the records at the Registrar General. This of course has delayed all further transactions. Upon further investigation with my attorney, it was disclosed that not only our Deed was missing, but several others. I am desperately trying with my attorney to have the matter regularized, which is costing a tidy sum.

I personally feel that officials from the Registrar General should be more responsible and trustworthy. Documents shouldn't disappear suddenly, especially when there is a Judgment. Please use your good office and investigate this situation in the Public Interest.

I would be pleased to provide you with further documentation or information to support my claim.”

Mr. Speaker, you are more versed than I am in this area, but when people could write about these things, I am very concerned. How could we trust institutions in this country when these things happen?

I have listened to these kinds of things in the past and I know that judgments were made against people who came to me and cried their hearts out because they knew they were right and the history of their land as to how they got it and when they go to the courts, documents are missing and they lose their cases.

8.00 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, I think this is a very serious issue and it should be checked immediately. We also have the question of the ICT in various agencies. With respect to the whole question of land, the Ministry of Legal Affairs should have a proper computerized system to deal with these very sensitive documents. If we continue to lose trust in the public institutions then we are in trouble.

Mr. Speaker, I want to ask this Parliament, once more, as we are debating the Finance Bill, to understand how we deal with the poor people in our country. What signals are we sending to the unemployed? With respect to this whole question of full employment in Trinidad and Tobago, as an Opposition Member of Parliament, I meet with my constituents. I feel irritated when people come to me and tell me the kind of work that they are doing for a living, I wonder where these statisticians got their information. We know what the interpretation for full employment is. We understand how it works. We understand that you have to find the people who are not working and then you would get the statistics.

Mr. Speaker, are our systems in Trinidad and Tobago capable of dealing with this? Let us not fool ourselves. We know the definition. We know how the numbers are calculated. In Trinidad and Tobago, how many persons know where

to look for work? If you go to PricePlaza in Chaguanas to look for a job—my good friend knows where PricePlaza is—this should be recorded somewhere so that people would know that this person is looking for a job. How do we track this?

If I call on unemployed persons to join us in Parliament outside on the streets, I am sure we would not have room for them. So, to hoodwink this population and to say that we have full employment is, indeed, a disservice to the people of Trinidad and Tobago. We are not—I am saying this emphatically and anybody from the Central Statistical Office or the Ministry of Finance can challenge me on this—capable at this time in Trinidad and Tobago to come up with the figures to tell us that we have full employment. This is not true. This is misleading the public of Trinidad and Tobago. I want the Government to disabuse this. If you want to do it, set up offices and have advertisements. Let the unemployed persons go to the Ministry of Labour, Small and Micro Enterprises Development offices in Chaguanas, Port of Spain and so forth, and you are going to see the number of persons going to register. Maybe this is where we are going wrong in this country; we politicize important things.

We go to the media and make pronouncements that the Ministry of Health is working very well. I have seen and read a number of advertisements over the last four or five years about the Ministry of Health, and the Minister of Planning and Development said that was not only during the PNM time. There was no date on this report. I read it. I want to read it into the record of the Parliament, but I am sure that somebody else would do it. There was no date. It was all over, but the problems exist now and we must deal with them, because people are dying.

Mr. Speaker, just to make my final point, with respect to the question of old age pension, I know it would be debated in another place, but we are talking about \$41 billion. When I asked a question here, the Minister got up in a haste and said that by May he is going to raise the ceiling for people with disability, and that did not happen. It is not on any of the Finance Bills. He has misled the Parliament and the country. I will return to this Parliament and read what he said, because without permission from the Parliament, he made an announcement and he should be dealt with.

Mr. Speaker, when you are a Member of the Cabinet, you cannot make announcement like that and get away with it. He promised this Parliament that he is going to increase the ceiling for people with disabilities, and it was not done. The Minister got up here when I talked about raising the ceiling for persons with

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disability, and in his response said that he was going to raise it and it did not happen. The Minister promised that in May they would pay the new pension to persons who would have crossed the limit.

This was promised by the Prime Minister in his budget debate. He said that people who earned more than \$1,000 in pension would be prorated. That was supposed to happen on January 01, 2007. People are now waiting six months now. Do you know how many senior citizens have died and they have not received that increase?

Mr. Speaker, the Parliament or the Cabinet should not make promises that they cannot keep, and then try to hoodwink our population into believing that they care. Let us do this collectively and make real promises, and when we deliver, our people out there will be happy.

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

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Nariva.

Mr. Sharma: No one from the Government has anything to say? What kind of one-sided thing is this!

Mr. Harry Partap (*Nariva*): Mr. Speaker, thank you. I wish to make a few comments on the Bill before us which is the Finance (Supplementary Appropriation) Bill, 2007.

Mr. Speaker: We are not dealing with the Bill just yet. We are dealing with the report.

Mr. H. Partap: Mr. Speaker, thank you. The report before us would have allowed the Government to dip into the Consolidated Fund, and to take \$3.1 billion that will be added on to the budget, and this makes the 2007 budget—I think the point has been made by other speakers—pass the \$41 billion mark.

This is a clear indication and a clear demonstration that we are in a period of plenty. In times of plenty, the PNM Government just spends and spends. This rush to spend brings monumental waste, and this is what we are seeing happening in Trinidad and Tobago today. It is tragic that wealth abounds, but there is so much poverty and hopelessness in the society; even in the midst of plenty; even in the midst of our great wealth; there is so much poverty and hopelessness.

Mr. Speaker, the fact that we are raking in billions of dollars in oil and gas revenues; this is not making our lives better. It is not making us a better people. We live in fear. We are burdened by high food prices. Some of our roads are

deplorable. Our schools are dilapidated. The recent report of the Commission of Enquiry into the health services confirmed what we all knew, and that is health is in a mess. Mr. Speaker, sometimes I get the feeling that our wealth is working against us, because nothing seems to be working in Trinidad and Tobago.

This morning, I spent about two hours in a traffic jam to get into Princes Town. This is a rural area; a semi-urban area. I spent two hours from Tableland to Princes Town in a traffic jam. [*Crosstalk*] In fact, I thought I was in a funeral. Mr. Speaker, where is the highway that the Government promised to construct from San Fernando to Mayaro? Where is the highway? The Ministry of Works and Transport is getting an additional \$366.6 million following the Finance Committee Report. Well, if we cannot get the highway, at least, the Naparima Mayaro Road should be fixed.

Mr. Imbert: When do you want it fixed?

Mr. H. Partap: As early as possible. We will be grateful. I am grateful to the Ministry of Works and Transport, because they have started paving some roads in the Cumuto/Manzanilla district. [*Crosstalk*] You are not on the ground. The Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources paved some agricultural access roads using hot mix, but Bon Air Road is still in a state. I just want to ask the Minister to hurry the process there, and do not forget the Plum Mitan Main Road. [*Interruption*] I traverse that road five days a week and I find it difficult, so you could imagine the farmers and so on. The landslip needs to be repaired or the road needs to be realigned.

Mr. Speaker, we do not want promises; what we need is action, and we will be glad to get action. The people of Trinidad and Tobago can no longer live on promises; they need action. I strongly suspect that they will take action against the PNM Government so that they will understand their frustrations. I do not understand why in a country that is bringing in billions of dollars in revenue, citizens have to burn tyres; they have to block roads; and they have to make all kinds of protests in order to get what they deserve. Why that is happening? Why are you developing a culture in this country where you have to fight for everything? It is protest and fight. People have to leave their work, fields and homes into order to demonstrate to get the Government to do what it should be doing. The purpose of Government is to make people happy; do things to make people happy. That is the purpose of the Government. That is why we are here. We are here to fulfill the needs of the people of Trinidad and Tobago. That is what we are here for. Sometimes, I believe that sometimes we are so frustrated that we do not know what to tell the people outside there.

[MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

I want to make reference to the report dealing with enterprises, and that is the Ministry of Finance. The Ministry of Finance has allocated an additional \$556,421,000 for BWIA. The documents from the Minister of Finance stated that this staggering sum is required to facilitate settlement of BWIA liabilities, particularly in relation to trade creditors and business partners and for the capitalization of Caribbean Airlines Limited as agreed to by Cabinet. So, this additional \$556,421,000 will be used for this particular activity; the closure of BWIA.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it would seem to us that the hon. Minister of Finance has taken no notice of the minority shareholders in the now defunct BWIA. According to what the Minister told us this evening, 80 per cent of the supplemental vote that is being discussed here this evening deals specifically with the BWIA affair, but nothing has been allocated to deal with the special problems of the workers.

On May 01, 2007, a report was published in the *Guardian* newspaper and I want to quote two or three lines from that report and it says:

“Government is yet to make a decision on compensation for minority shareholders in the defunct BWIA West Indies Airways Limited which was closed down at the end of last year.”

The report continued:

“The Minister in the Ministry of Finance, Sen. Christine Sahadeo said last week a committee within the Ministry was still working on the issue. She said a first review of the issues involved have already been submitted and the ministry was now getting legal opinion.”

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Minister Sahadeo had recognized that the BWIA minority shareholders—I am going to quote what she said:

“They are a special category of persons and it was in that context that the appeal was being examined.”

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I agree that the minority shareholding and the minority shareholders of BWIA is a special case. I know what the financial people would say—you have taken a risk; you have invested; and that is the end of the story. If you lose you lose, but this is something more. Remember, these persons took their hard-earned earnings, and they invested it in BWIA with the understanding that BWIA would have moved on; not moved out. I think that Minister Sahadeo

recognized this, and this is why she was saying that the BWIA workers were in a special category, and I agree with her.

The fact is that workers of former BWIA had invested their life savings in the purchase of that 3 per cent of the company's shares at the time. One would have thought that the Government would have included compensation for the losses sustained by these retrenched workers at BWIA in the Bill that we will be discussing. That was the expectation of the retrenched workers. It was an expectation signalled by Sen. The Hon. Christine Sahadeo. Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is not in the supplementary vote. I would imagine that the Government had not been thinking of that, and they are not prepared to offer any assistance to the minority shareholders in BWIA who have lost millions of dollars.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we on the Front Benches are making an appeal on behalf of these workers this evening. I think the Minister of Finance can still amend this Supplemental Appropriation Bill and add compensation for the losses of these retrenched workers of BWIA; in the same way the Government has extended preferential treatment for the former BWIA trade creditors and business partners.

While I am on the subject of BWIA, let me express our disappointment over the manner in which the Government disposed of BWIA's landing rights at Heathrow Airport. When the Government folded up BWIA, it was announced that the Heathrow slots were sold to British Airways for £5 million. It is really inconceivable to believe that BWIA's Peter Davies—I think he was General Manager—was not aware that six months before that deal had taken place, the European Union Ministers and the United States of America were negotiating an open-sky policy on Trans Atlantic Air Travel. That would have swept away the American arrangement under which just two airlines from each country can fly the Trans Atlantic route. As a result of the open-sky policy, Heathrow's two-minute slots could have fetched no less than £20 million. Did Mr. Davies ease up his former employer at British Airways at a loss of £15 million to BWIA? If he did, it means that he sold assets of Trinidad and Tobago at an undervalue, and he should be held accountable. If he did not know about the negotiations, it meant that he was negligent in his duty, and either way he now has to account for the sale.

We are asking the Minister of Finance this evening to investigate the sale of the landing rights. Had BWIA received the £20 million, today the minority shareholders would not have been in this loss position as they are in at present. Former BWIA workers are being cheated by both Mr. Davies and the Government.

I want to make reference now to the schedule relating to the First Supplemental General Warrant 2007. I want to look at Head 21 which deals with the Ministry of Planning and Development. A number of items under the Ministry of Planning and Development in this warrant speak of contract employment and short-term employment. Reference is also made to the Ministry of National Security and the Ministry of Public Administration and Information.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am always skeptical about contract and short-term employment provisions in the various ministries. I find it strange that just three or four months before a national budget is read that provisions are being made for a total of \$12 million for contract and short-term employment. Just three or four months before a national budget is due, you are telling us today that you want \$12 million more for contract and short-term employment for the Ministry of National Security, the Ministry of Planning and Development and the Ministry of Public Administration and Information.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this means for this financial year that these three ministries would have had a total of \$36 million for contract and short-term employment. [*Interruption*] What is even more worrying is the fact that the Ministry of Planning and Development is asking for \$5.1 million for publicity, promotions and printing. So, it means that an additional \$17.1 million more will go to these ministries; for what? Why? I can only make a guess, and I will make a guess based on experiences with the PNM; not being with them, but watching them operate. The experience that we have is that they are going to use that \$17.1 million extra—[*Interruption*—you should know that. I will never want to be with them. [*Desk thumping*] I mean, I would be crazy, or as the Member for St. Joseph said, I would be foolish—to be spend in three or four months. As I said, I believe, based on the experiences that we have had with the PNM that they are going to use this money as a slush fund for the general election.

Mr. Imbert: How?

Mr. H. Partap: Well, you are asking me how. I must tell you how you are going to do it!

Mr. Imbert: Yes.

Mr. H. Partap: No. I am not going to do that. I do not want to give you any ideas. You should know. In fact, you should be telling us how you are going to do it. I see some of you raising your eyebrows. Do not be surprised, how you are going to use it. Do you remember what the Minister of National Security did in Mayaro for the 2002 general election?

Mr. Imbert: What he did?

Mr. H. Partap: He stole the election. He used money; he used funds. Our fear is that this money, the \$17.1 million, will be used to buy votes and to fool the population again. I want to tell them that this is not 2002; it is 2007. We are telling our supporters to take what they can get from you, but remember on election day what to do. After they are finished with you on election day, they will forget you for another five years.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The Hansard Reporter is having some difficulties recording, please.

Mr. H. Partap: Mr. Deputy Speaker, what we are saying is that we will be looking very closely—of course, there is nothing much that we could do on this side—to see how they are going to use this money. I also want to tell the Minister of Planning and Development that publicity and advertisements about what they are doing—how they are trying to give the PNM a facelift—is going to backfire on them as how it backfired on the Minister of Health in relation to the services being given in this country.

When you open the newspaper now, you are seeing five and six pages of full-page advertisements. The Minister of Education has put a number of Early Childhood Centres in the newspapers and she said a number of them have been completed. This is not true. We know it is not true. The Minister has admitted that only two Early Childhood Centres have been completed, but advertisements are not going to help them this time.

We have already instructed our supporters that they must take what they can get and then do the right thing and vote. You know, they feel a little happy when the Prime Minister goes to Sangre Grande in Mc Shine Street and he is kissing babies and so forth. They feel that they are taking supporters from us, but they are our supporters who are getting the little URP and CEPEP jobs. They were instructed to go there or else they would not get any work. We know that! This is not only happening in Sangre Grande. This is happening all over this country. So, that red shirt gang that you see following the Prime Minister here, there and everywhere is the same set of people. I want to tell him that they are only voting in one polling division. They cannot go in every constituency to vote, so he could tote them around if he wants.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to turn now to agriculture and the Member for Chaguanas had raised this matter and I would also like to raise it. I want the Minister to tell us some of the sites for non-agricultural development purposes.

We want to know them so that we can identify them. I wish that the Minister would do it. I see that \$9 million is being spent for that.

The Minister is doing some work in the Plum Mitan section of the Nariva Swamp. It started during the dry season and the rainy season has encroached. We are happy about the rainy season. Mr. Deputy Speaker, the work is spinning top in mud in that area. The farmers are very dissatisfied, because the arrangements in relation to the dredging of the rivers, that is draining the swamp in the event of a flood, are still clogged. The machinery is there in the rivers, but they do not have the supporting equipment to be useful. I fear and the farmers fear that their crops will be washed away again, and then they will have to wait for months and years to get compensation.

There are shadon beni farmers in my constituency and the Minister has moved this off from the list of crops for compensation, so these farmers will not get any compensation in the event of a flood. Mr. Deputy Speaker, the two waterways in the swamp that need to be dredged in order to allow the farmers to plant and reap their crops are not dredged. The work that was done in the swamp during the dry season will all go to waste in the wet season. I do not know what the Minister is going to do. I certainly hope that he would go down to Plum Mitan and explain to the farmers how he spent the \$7 million. That \$7 million that he spent in the area will just go to waste. That is the kind of waste that the PNM is accustomed to. It is nothing new. It is the kind of experience that the farmers have with them.

Another important matter that I want to raise with the Minister is the security at the Macoya Market. I have it on a Motion for the adjournment and, therefore, I am not going to elaborate on it now. I am going to leave it there. It is critical that some effort should be made.

I want to look at Head 26, Ministry of Education. I see that under primary schools you have improvement/refurbishment and extension to primary schools. In the estimates for this year, \$25 million was approved and an additional \$25 million was given. So the ministry would have had \$50 million to spend on refurbishing. I do not know what the Minister spent the original \$25 million on. So, \$25 million was spent on improvement/refurbishment and extension, but since 2006 and up to the present time, the Minister has not approved refurbishing and improvements to primary schools run by denominational boards. This is an act of discrimination. Where this money went? The hon. Minister is asking for an additional \$25 million. Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Minister did not approve any of the schools operated by the denominational boards, because she was stifling them;

she was blackmailing them into signing a memorandum of agreement that would have nullified or watered-down the Concordat that was there since 1960.

Last week, the hon. Minister did respond to a Motion that I had on the adjournment, and she was sending the message that there was no accountability or transparency in the operations of the board. The Prime Minister repeated this in a breakfast meeting a day or two days ago—\$1,000 a plate. The Prime Minister did not only repeat it—I do not have the clipping with me this evening—but he made an accusation. He did say that the boards—I am putting it in my own words now—were colluding with the contractors. They are repairing the schools at a cheaper cost, and then the boards are using that money.

I want to say this evening—I am saying this from a position of knowledge—that if a school is to be repaired, the boards will have to do an estimate. That estimate is then sent to the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Education has to approve the estimate, and it would do so only after they have inspected it. Once it is approved, the Ministry would give the okay to the boards to select a contractor. The boards have a list of contractors and so forth who went through a process. Three or four contractors would bid for the project and the lowest tender, I believe, is the one that will be taken. So, the contractor does the work and so forth and the board supervises.

When the project is completed, the contractor submits his claims and the claims are then sent to the board, and the board would then send it to the ministry. The ministry would then send their quantity surveyor and their people to inspect the work to make sure that it is done and then they would approve how much is to be paid. Sometimes it is not what the contractor had asked for, but they would approve it. On that approval, the Ministry would send the cheque to the boards and the boards would pay the contractors. The boards act as conduit. The Boards do not handle the cash; they do not handle the money. The Government does not send the money to the boards; they send a cheque for the contractors. So, where is this collusion between the contractors and the board? Unless the Prime Minister could tell us what that collusion is and what is the nature of that collusion.

They are finding excuses to do the nefarious things they want to do in relation to moving the boards; completely moving the boards out. They are saying now that the boards are resisting the implementation of the Government's curriculum in the schools. That is not true. Anybody who has knowledge of what takes place in our schools, particularly in the primary schools, will understand that the educational aspects of the schools are not managed by the boards. The boards

managed the physical aspects of the school, not the educational aspect. The boards do not do it. You have a manager and the manager does not interfere with the running of the schools. The principal does the running of the schools, and the inspectors or what we called supervisors now come and visit the schools on a regular basis from the various divisions, and they instruct the teachers as to what the curriculum is. The teachers go to seminars and so forth to update themselves and to strengthen their delivery and so on in relation to the curriculum. So, the board does not interfere with the curriculum.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I know what the Minister was harping on. There was one denominational board, when there was this talk of introducing pan in schools that did not resist, but made an objection. The objection was a reasonable objection and that was if you are introducing pan in the schools, you must also introduce the musical instrument of the particular culture. That is not unreasonable. That is why the Minister is saying that the boards are resisting. That is not true. I am saying this to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and by extension the national community, that the boards have never resisted the introduction of the Government's curriculum into the primary schools. That is not true at all.

With respect to accountability and transparency, it is there with the board. Every year the boards have to present an audited statement to their synods or their general meeting. I suspect they send it to the Ministry, because this is part of the arrangement under the Concordat. There is an audited statement. I cannot understand where this lack of accountability and transparency is. If there is any lack of accountability and transparency it is with the Educational Facilities Company Limited that the ministry formed.

The ministry gave that company \$28 million during the period 2005 and 2006, and they did not build a school, not a single school. They did not even put a post hole down, but they were given \$28 million. I see here where they want to give them an additional \$20 million. To do what! Let them account for that \$28 million. The Prime Minister should be asking for accountability and transparency there.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, presently on the Educational Facilities Company, there are members on the board of directors who are directors in private contracting firms, and they vie for the same contracts that the Educational Facilities Company are giving out.

Mr. Imbert: That is not true.

Mr. H. Partap: I asked a question here in this Parliament and the Minister never answered it.

Mr. Imbert: Name one.

Mr. H. Partap: I will not name it yet. The time will come and I will name it.

Mr. Imbert: Name one.

Mr. H. Partap: Mr. Deputy Speaker, the time will come and I will name it, but it will not be here. I will name it on the streets, because it is there the fight will be. So, they are talking about accountability and transparency, and they have on the Educational Facilities Company directors who are directors in other construction companies vying for contracts from the Educational Facilities Company. So, it is one hand giving to the next hand. You need accountability and transparency in those transactions. They think they can fool people.

Mr. Imbert: Name one.

Mr. H. Partap: I could name the person now, but I would not do. I am going to give you a chance to bring me before the Privileges Committee. There is where the accountability and transparency should be; not where the Ministry is sending a cheque for a contractor through the board, and you want accountability and transparency! Mr. Deputy Speaker, they are making all kinds of excuses in order to take away the schools from the boards, but they would have a fight. They lost the fight in the 1960s and they would lose the fight again now.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am a little worried that the Minister of Labour, Small and Micro Enterprise Development, with this additional money that they will be getting—it would be \$9.6 million—

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

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

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. H. Partap: Mr. Deputy Speaker, thank you. I think we share the same faith, so he understands me and I understand him. I was looking at the Ministry of Labour, Small and Micro Enterprise Development. [*Interruption*] You are not going home. They are sending you home; they are pushing you home.

Mr. Narine: Not at all.

Mr. H. Partap: They are sending you up to Cumuto/Manzanilla. They wanted me to do their dirty job for them, but I am smarter than that. [*Interruption*] I do not know. I do not intend to do any dirty work for the PNM. I was looking at the Ministry of Labour, Small and Micro Enterprise Development and I found that \$9.6 million to deal with the increases in wages is unusually high. I think this is one of the ministries that is seeking additional funding to meet this payment. I have no problem with the payment, because the workers must be paid. This is a signed agreement between the union, the Government and the employers and they must be paid. I find that figure is unduly high. You only have 359 workers there, and the number had not increased significantly since I had been in that ministry. I just wanted to raise that matter. I suspect that figure is correct and if it is not, they would do the adjustments.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we will be giving the Government the additional money, but they continue to waste what we have given them before. They are doing a lot of things for their supporters only. You cannot run a country only for your supporters. You cannot do it. You cannot run a country like that. How could we get them to understand that they have to share the wealth of this nation equally or in equal terms with the population? They must understand this. The URP in these regions—when a person who they think is not their supporter goes for employment in there that person is chased away.

In Housen Village, there is a gentleman who could be mistaken for a UNC supporter. He went to drop a letter for a Minister in the URP office in Guaico—he has been supporting the PNM for a long while. As he entered the compound, they told him he has no right here and to get—I will not use the word here because it is unparliamentary—to so out of this place. This fellow was so shocked that he called me and said; “Not me and the PNM them again”.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the point I am making is that these programmes should be opened to all and sundry. It is not so. The Prime Minister is also telling me the same thing. He said that these programmes are opened to all. That is not true. All in the PNM! Somebody is advising him badly.

The same thing is happening with the Smart Card. The Smart Cards are not reaching the poor. The Minister is trying his best to see if he could get it under control. The Smart Card really is for the smart and not for the poor. I know the Minister is trying his best but, the poor fellow is overwhelmed by those in his ministry. Do you know what is happening? People with two and three jobs under the PNM—they are working with CEPEP, but drawing a salary under URP—are

getting a Smart Card. They are not getting the \$100, \$200 or \$300 Smart Card, but they are getting the \$500.

Mr. Narine: Bring the names for me.

Mr. H. Partap: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am in a constituency where you have a number of poor persons, and that is why I can talk about poverty. There is a mixture of well-to-do people and there is also a great number of poor people; people who do not have access to food. If you are giving the Smart Card to the poor then let it go to the poor. I have no problem with that. There are poor people of all shades who would need it. The Minister needs to look at that very carefully. I am going to assist him.

I intend to raise some about pensions but not now. There is another Bill later on and I will raise it there. I do not know if it is on instruction from the Government, but they are discriminating against people. They are doing it on equal terms. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would not bring you into this, but let me leave it there. We will talk outside behind the Chair at some stage.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have to make these programmes accessible to all—the URP, CEPEP and so forth. As I am on CEPEP, let me just say that we have no intention of closing down CEPEP. We intend to make the workers responsible and profitable workers. We are going to ensure that they get the benefits under the decent work which the ILO recognizes.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, with these words, I thank you for the intervention. [*Desk thumping*]

9.00 p.m.

Dr. Hamza Rafeeq (*Caroni Central*): Thank you Mr. Deputy Speaker. Before I make my contribution there are a couple comments I would like to make. First of all, I think the practice of having Finance Committee meetings in private and in secret is long outdated. I do not know what the genesis of that is, but there is nothing in these committee meetings that the public should not be aware of and I do not understand why these meetings are held in secret, where—as we call them—strangers are not allowed to witness.

There is a Motion which has been sent to the Standing Orders Committee for the Committee to meet, deliberate and bring recommendations back to the House. I hope that when they meet they do take this into consideration, because I really

think there is no need to have Finance Committee meetings in secret and in private. When these meetings are held I do not think there is even a *Hansard* record of these meetings, so even referring back to these meetings is difficult. I just wanted to make that point. I do not think it is necessary at all.

I wanted to mention as well, that the Member for Arouca South, when she spoke, mentioned that the Opposition had been making heavy weather of the matter before us, that is the Supplementary Appropriation for the year 2007, but we did not realize that the \$1.3 billion—I think she said—or somewhere thereabouts will be allocated to the Heritage and Stabilisation Fund. I went through this document twice, three times; I went through this document in detail and I have not seen anywhere in the explanations and the allocations of the \$3.1 billion any money being allocated to the Heritage and Stabilisation Fund. I do not know if that was a mistake on her part and I am hoping when the Minister in the Ministry of Finance responds that he would clarify that for us, because I am not seeing anywhere in this document where it says the moneys we are dealing with today will be allocated to the Heritage and Stabilisation Fund.

Mr. Narine: I think in your absence the Member for Chaguanas had raised this similar question and an answer was given by the Minister of Finance. The explanation was that since last year, according to the Act, that we are not going to put that inside there, but it is \$1.7 billion that would go into the Heritage and Stabilisation Fund. Indeed when he is here and he is winding up you can raise the question again.

Dr. H. Rafeeq: Whether that is in fact so, Mr. Minister, the point is whether that is included in the \$3.1 billion that we are talking about today and I am saying it is not included in the \$3.1 billion we are speaking about today. The \$3.1 billion that we are speaking about today are allocated to different ministries. If money is going into the Heritage and Stabilisation Fund it is not here; it is not part of the \$3.1 billion that we are speaking about.

The other point I wanted to make is that the Member for Arouca South said this is really a routine exercise and every government and even the government of the UNC, of which I was a part, comes from time to time for variation of appropriation during the financial year. That is true; it is an exercise that all governments engage in during the fiscal year. I have been here for 12 years, 11 or 12 budgets and this is the very first time that I am seeing that there is variation of appropriation during a midterm review and there are no decreases; all of the ministries have gotten increases.

Normally, I know what happens in a midterm review and in the variation of appropriation; programmes that are not performing so well, moneys are removed from those programmes; moneys are removed from those ministries and are put into ministries and programmes that are performing well; and programmes that are performing well that need additional funding are given additional funding. But this is the first time I am seeing that all the ministries are getting additional funding and there is no decrease in any ministry's funding. That is the difference in this and all the previous variations of appropriation that we have had in this Parliament. The point is being made that this is happening, that is an additional \$3.1 billion not removing from one ministry to the other but an additional \$3.1 billion and it is happening in a year of election.

The issue before us is, the Government is asking the Parliament to agree to support the Government increasing the budget for 2007 by \$3.1 billion. I want to deal a bit with some of the issues regarding the health sector and I also want to deal with two other small issues outside of the health sector and maybe I will deal with that right away, so that I can get that out of the way.

The Preysal Community Centre—there is moneys allocated here from the Ministry of Community Development—is in serious trouble. The Preysal Community Centre started construction a little over a year ago—maybe a year and a half ago—and that has a long history. In the year 2001, I think it was, the sod was turned for the construction of the community centre and immediately when the PNM came into office they removed the funding from the Preysal Community Centre, took it elsewhere; built community centres elsewhere and Preysal was not constructed, even though the sod was turned and I think a contract had been awarded or was about to be awarded.

I raised the matter in this House in the year 2002 and the acting Leader of Government Business answered that Motion. He said that the community centre will be constructed within that fiscal year. Mr. Deputy Speaker, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005 and as I said, just last year construction started. The design of that community centre was so badly done; there was an area for a stage in the community centre and the area for the stage was larger than the area in which seats would have been allocated. The stage area was larger than where the hall would have been. That is ridiculous! How can you build a community centre and have the stage area bigger than the hall that people would be seated. Even though that is so, work in the community centre has stopped for about six months.

My understanding is—and I am subject to correction here but this is the information that has been given to me—that the contractor who was constructing

the community centre is in jail. So, I do not know what the difficulty is but the thing is the people in Preysal are suffering because we do not have a community centre. There are no public buildings in Preysal that can cater for activities for the community. We have a secondary and primary school but they have their own activities, and sometimes they do assist in lending the facilities; allowing the villagers to use the facilities. Preysal is a well known community and they definitely need the services of a community centre. I want to make the appeal here today that the community centre construction be restarted as early as possible.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to get to the health sector, because in the matter before us the Government is asking for an additional \$9.5 million to be allocated to the health sector. This is in addition to the moneys that have been allocated in the 2007 budget; an amount of \$2,540,675,000, that was the previous allocation and they are asking for \$9.5 million more.

I just want to let Members of this House and the national community; let us put this in perspective. In the year 2002, the Ministry of Health spent \$1,013,803,000. In the year 2003, the Ministry spent \$1,262,127,000. In the year 2004, the Ministry spent \$1,435,254,000. In the year 2005, the Ministry spent \$1,995,680,000. In the year 2006, the Ministry spent \$1,974,875,000; and in year 2007, the Ministry has been allocated \$2,540,675,000. That adds up to a little over \$10 billion that this Government has spent within the last five years in the health sector. This is only in recurrent expenditure.

In the development programme they have spent another billion dollars or thereabouts, so it means that within the last five years or so this Government has spent over \$11 billion in the health sector. I heard the Member for St. Joseph said a while ago that the total amount of money expended by this Government within the last five years is close to \$170 billion. So, out of that \$170 billion, \$11 billion have been spent in the health sector.

After \$11 billion, what do we have to show in the health sector? I know that the Minister has been putting out a lot of advertisements in the newspapers detailing the work that he has been doing; detailing his achievements; detailing the work that the Ministry and the Regional Health Authorities have been doing and so on. Mr. Deputy Speaker, really, the proof of the pudding is in the eating. And for those citizens of Trinidad and Tobago who seek health services in the public health sector, they are the ones who would be best able to say whether there has been significant improvements or what kind of improvements there have been in the health sector and whether they are satisfied with the services that they get when they interact with the public health sector.

Some of these concerns by the citizens are documented in the Report of the Commission of Enquiry into the Operation and Delivery of Public Health Care Services in Trinidad and Tobago, and I would like to make reference to a few of these. But before I go there, in the 2007 budget, moneys were allocated to the Ministry of Health under different headings and as I said, we are being asked to add to that \$9.5 million. In the 2007 budget, \$12 million have been allocated for promotions, publicity and printing. We are asking for an additional \$9.5 million to be added to the allocation for the construction of the Oncology Centre. We have had an allocation here for the Ministry of Health for \$12 million for promotions, publicity and printing.

I would have liked the Minister of Health during the course of this debate to tell us exactly what the Ministry has done and what the Ministry is doing with that allocation of \$12 million that has been allocated to the Ministry for promotions, publicity and printing. Is that the \$12 million the Minister has been using to put these full-page advertisements in the newspapers, telling people about how good the health services are?

In addition to this, the Ministry was allocated \$900,000 for overseas travel. Mr. Deputy Speaker, \$900,000 is close to \$1 million. Again, we do not know what benefits the \$900,000 that had been allocated—and I am sure that a lot of it has already been spent—how much benefit these have really brought for the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago.

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Recently, as you know, Mr. Speaker—and welcome back, Mr. Speaker—I asked a question in this House to which the Minister responded, as to how much money was spent on his trip to England to recruit health care personnel. He did say at that time that \$174,000 was spent on that trip and no one was recruited. Nobody was recruited but \$174,000 was spent on that trip.

I said a while ago that \$12 million was allocated for promotions, publicity and printing, but that was in the Ministry of Health. For the vertical services another \$2.1 million was allocated for publicity, promotions and printing. So that would be \$14.1 million being allocated to the Ministry of Health for promotions, publicity and printing. I am asking the Minister, give us a breakdown as to how these moneys have been spent and why is it that moneys could not have been vired from this head to build the Oncology Centre; the \$9.5 million that we are asking Parliament to approve today.

Drugs; the allocation in 2007 was \$225 million; \$225 million have been allocated for the provision of drugs and related supplies to the public health sector. We know that the Government has made heavy weather of the CDAP; we know there has been a lot of publicity surrounding the CDAP. In addition to the publicity by the Ministry of Health with regard to the success of these programmes—particularly the CDAP—we know that there have been a lot of complaints by members of the public who access these programmes.

One of the complaints has been—and I want to put that on the record today—the efficacy of the drugs that are supplied by this programme. We know that a lot of the drugs that are supplied in the CDAP are generic drugs and while there are some generic drugs that are efficacious, that do work, we have information from senior specialists, from people who have first-hand information with these drugs, that a lot of these generic drugs do not in fact work.

I want to inform the Minister that I do not know how much he knows about the functioning of these clinics at which these drugs are prescribed, because when a patient goes to a health centre; if that patient has diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease, that patient is seen in about three to four minutes, five minutes at most and you cannot blame the doctors because there are many patients for them to see there; the workload is very, very great for them; they see a patient in about three, four or five minutes.

A lot of times patients who have diabetes do not even have time to get a blood test done; sometimes they do not even have time to get a blood pressure test done, but they are given a prescription for 16 weeks for one of these generic drugs or a set of these generic drugs; 16 weeks is four months. So, they are given a prescription for four months; asked to come back in four months time and even then they had not been tested for their diabetes, high blood pressure and so on. So if their sugar is high; if their pressure is high, it will be another four months before they are actually seen in the clinic again. You can imagine, Mr. Speaker, what will happen to patients like these. A lot of them will end up in the hospital, with complications from the diabetes, high blood pressure and so on. They may end up with strokes, blindness, heart attacks and things like that, especially, if during the period of time, the four months they have been given medications for; if they have been using medications that are not in fact efficacious.

So, you start up with a pressure that is high; you start up with a sugar that is high; you are given medications, which are probably not working and you are given a four-month appointment; you can well imagine the difficulties that these patients can have. I wanted to bring that to the attention of the Minister.

The next issue is that there was an allocation during the budget of \$19 million for pension contribution. This is pension contribution for employees in the Regional Health Authorities. We know that one of the great difficulties the health sector has been facing over the last 10 or 12 years or so, is the dual track employment. It is one of the aims and objectives of the health sector to have all employees within the employ of one employer and that is Regional Health Authorities. In order to get the workers to transfer from the public service to the Regional Health Authorities, one of the prerequisites and one of the requirements was that they should have their pensions well taken care of. When the United National Congress was in office, as you recall, we established the RHA Pension Fund to fund the pensions of employees within the Regional Health Authorities.

Even though that fund was established; even though it was very well funded; even though it was a pension fund that is superior to the pension fund in the Government service; even though that is so, the Regional Health Authorities are not offering the doctors they are employing, who come across to the Regional Health Authorities, permanent employment. They are offering most of them contract employment for one year.

Most of the doctors, in fact I think all of the doctors who are working in the Regional Health Authorities are working under contract for one year. When a doctor gets a contract for one year, there is nothing or very little he can do with that. He cannot get a loan from the bank to buy a car; to build a house; to buy a piece of land, because he only has a contract for one year. That is why workers are not transferring from the public service to the Regional Health Authorities.

We established the pension plan and all the programmes and human resource policies are in place to allow the doctors to access permanent employment, but I am saying that all they are being offered is temporary employment for one year; a one-year contract. Some of them are fortunate get a two-year contract; most of them get a one-year contract. This is the difficulty that is being faced.

Mr. Speaker, in the budget allocation for 2007, \$16 million was allocated for renal dialysis. The difficulty I have here is, how much of this \$16 million actually been expended and what has the money been used for? We were told in the 2004 budget that two dialysis centres will be constructed; one in north and one in south, to dialyse 200 patients each and that would have been completed by January 2005. January 2005 has gone; January 2006 has gone; January 2007 has gone, we are now in June, none of the dialysis centres has been constructed and the Ministry has been allocated \$16 million.

I am saying if no contract has been awarded for this, you have \$16 million, why could you not vire the \$9.5 million from the \$16 million to the Oncology Centre so we would not have to be voting for additional money for the Ministry of Health today. What has happened with the \$16 million? Has anything been done and if any contract has been awarded, then what is the cost of the contract and how far are we in the construction of these dialysis centres?

The other \$5 million were allocated in the budget for tissue transplant. Again, I have spoken about tissue transplant ad nauseam in this House and outside of this House and up to today—we are in June 2007—things have not been put in place for tissue transplant to take place in Trinidad and Tobago from cadavers. I do not understand why; what is the keep back. What is keeping back the Government, the Ministry and the Regional Health Authorities from performing tissue transplant from cadavers?

I have been talking about this thing from 2001; from 2002 we passed the Human Tissue Transplant Act. The problem they said was the regulations; well the regulations have finally come; the regulations have been submitted and published, but not one transplant from cadavers has been done to date. And I am saying that you have a lot of young people who are dying from accidents, murders and so on and the organs from these people can be used to give life to people who are suffering from renal failure, because you cannot provide renal dialysis for these people. Three or four years now and you have not been able to build these centres and even after you have built these centres you cannot continue to dialyse people; a more permanent cure is transplanting them with a kidney and so on. Every year you can give at least 200 or 300 people a new lease of life if you are able to do tissue transplant from cadavers.

Mr. Rahael: Thank you hon. Member for giving way. The Member for Caroni Central is fully aware that a transplant unit has been established at Mount Hope Eric Williams Medical Sciences Complex and in fact kidney transplant is taking place; these are from live donors. We have been very successful in all of those kidney transplants up to date. In addition to that we are ready and prepared also to provide kidney transplant from the cadavers. But in order to do that you need donors. So, I am hoping that the Member in his contribution will appeal to citizens of Trinidad and Tobago to be enlisted as a donor for their organs, so that whenever that time comes we will be able to access the deceased's organ so that we would be able to do the transplant. Everything is in place; the unit is in place; we are prepared and capable of also doing not only live transplant, but also cadavers. [*Desk thumping*]

Dr. H. Rafeeq: Mr. Speaker, the Minister is misleading the House. I am asking the Minister and I would like the Minister to get up and respond. First of all, I am saying to the national community that you have not performed one single transplant from a cadaver so far. Is that true or is that not true? You have said that that is true. You have said that you have set up the systems in place and you are transplanting organs from live donors. Mr. Speaker, that is being done in Trinidad for the last 20 years. [*Laughter*] [*Desk thumping*] For the last 20 years we have had kidney transplants being done in Trinidad; this is nothing new.

We have today a gentleman; it was reported in the newspapers just about three of four weeks ago with his picture and an entire story. He celebrated his 20th year as a recipient of a live donation of a kidney in Trinidad and Tobago. On that same day five or six transplants were done and all of them have been successful. Since then many transplants have been done in Trinidad from live donors. So, if the Minister is saying that he has now set up that; that is not so, that has been in place for a long time. That is ongoing for a long period of time. I am asking about the cadavers. I want you to specifically answer the question about cadavers, because it is much more difficult to get a kidney from a live donor than to get from a cadaver.

Mr. Rahael: Mr. Speaker, again, I never said that it is the first time that kidney transplant is taking place in Trinidad and Tobago. What we have now is the proper structure. What we have now at the Eric Williams Medical Sciences Complex is a unit that is focusing on tissue transplant and it is not only going to be kidneys but other organs. Therefore, we are very well aware that in fact live kidney transplant has been taking place in Trinidad and Tobago in an ad hoc manner. What we have done now is, we are putting a proper structure so that it can be sustainable, so that on a monthly basis we can schedule surgeries for persons who are donors and needs their transplants. Nobody said that this is something unique; or it is the first time it is being done in Trinidad. [*Desk thumping*]

Dr. H. Rafeeq: Mr. Speaker, the Minister has really got up to waste time. I am asking you specifically; it is a lot easier to get tissues; it is a lot easier to get a kidney from people who have passed away. I want you, Mr. Minister, through you, Mr. Speaker, to get your legal people and I will like you to go through the Human Tissue Transplant Act in detail and see exactly what is required before you can harvest an organ from a cadaver.

I want you to do that and I am telling you that you would be surprised to know that there is a lot that you can do even now without having to appeal to the public

to donate organs; there is a lot that you can do. Get with your legal people; go through the Act and see what can be done, because I am telling you that there is a lot that you can do that you are not doing. Go through the Act and see.

I have not signed a donor card, but I am saying let the Minister look at the Act and see exactly what is necessary. If it is necessary for me to sign a form, I will sign it. I am saying to the Minister, check and see whether that is really a requirement; check the Act and see; go through with your legal people and see what the requirements are.

9.30 p.m.

Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs, I want to ask you whether you are a donor, if you are a donor what particular organ are you donating? [*Laughter*]

Mr. Boynes: My brain.

Mr. Sharma: Or any other instrument.

Dr. H. Rafeeq: You have to donate organs that are working and workable. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Sharma: Maybe he would not qualify.

Dr. H. Rafeeq: Mr. Speaker, after a little while, after you have had an accident or after you have had some kind of injury and so on, your organs become dead and you can no longer use them. If there are any dead organs you may not be able to use those.

Mr. Speaker, there is an allocation in the budget as well for Special Programmes Chronic Disease \$6 million. Six million dollars for Special Programmes Chronic Disease, and the reason why I have to raise these issues here is because when we ask them in the finance committee we do not get responses and that is why I am raising these issues today, because I am of the view that if moneys were allocated to these programmes and have not been utilized that they could have been vired to construct the oncology centre so that we would not have to be voting money for the oncology centre today.

Mr. Speaker, waiting list for surgery, \$16 million. I do not know if all that has been utilized or if there is requirement for more. Special programmes for HIV/AIDS \$10 million, and support the World Bank Funded Loan for AIDS \$5.5 million. Mr. Speaker, that is \$15.5 million, again, whether all these moneys have been allocated, because you see, when you come to ask the Parliament for additional funding, at least you should be able to give the Parliament an

appreciation of what you have done with the moneys that had been allocated to you so far. It is the same thing as if you give your son money and he comes back for more, you will want to know what have you done with the money that I have given to you and then you can decide whether in fact he needs more money, so in the same way you should have given us an appreciation of what you have done with the money that Parliament has allocated to the health sector under these different headings and then we will see whether you should be viring money from one head to another or whether you should be actually getting the increase that you have actually asked for.

Human Resource Strategy: There is a head in the budget of 2007 called Human Resource Strategy and \$43.38 million had been allocated for that. This is the third or fourth time that this has appeared in the budgetary documents and I have been trying to find out exactly what this means, Human Resource Strategy. What exactly does that mean, Human Resource Strategy \$43.38 million? And I have not been able to get an answer as to what this money has been allocated for, but it keeps on appearing from year to year and I hope that at some point in time—now for the \$43.3 million that was an increase from the year before, then what is it being used for, whether all of it has been utilized or whether you could have vired some of that for the construction of the oncology centre. We would really like to know.

Mr. Sharma: You are not getting any answer.

Dr. H. Rafeeq: Mr. Speaker, \$50 million had been allocated for physical investments, and in a minute I want to just quote a few paragraphs from the report of the Commission of Enquiry dealing with physical investments, dealing with the plant that we have in the health sector and we have allocated \$50 million, and I am saying I do not know if these moneys have been utilized, if they have been utilized wisely and what are the results the population can expect from the \$50 million that have been allocated? Information Systems, Equipment and Software, \$9 million: Mr. Speaker, this report makes reference over and over again that one of the greatest deficiencies in the health sector is information technology. So much now revolves around the fact that there is no information technology available in the health sector, so many problems, so many difficulties and so many challenges are there in the health sector because you do not have information systems in place; \$9 million had been allocated in the last budget, in the previous budget a similar amount had been allocated and yet we do not have information systems within the health sector. And for construction of the oncology centre for which we have been asking for another \$9.5 million, \$20 million had been allocated.

Mr. Speaker, the oncology centre, and I will be saying a lot more about this in a while. The oncology centre, as you know—[*Interruption*] Twenty million dollars.

Mr. Imbert: You are saying a lot more.

Dr. H. Rafeeq: Well, I have about an hour again.

Mr. Rahael: Yes, man. [*Laughter*] [*Inaudible*]

Dr. H. Rafeeq: Do you want to adjourn now? [*Interruption*] That was my introduction, actually. [*Laughter*] Construction of the oncology centre, so I am now getting to the oncology centre; \$20 million had been allocated in the budget and now we are asking for another \$9.5 million. [*Interruption*] Sorry.

Mr. Imbert: Are you sure you are going to get that extension.

Dr. H. Rafeeq: Yes. [*Laughter*] Minister Enill cannot vote. [*Interruption*] We will like to have an appreciation of what is happening in the oncology centre, and as I said, that is an issue that I would deal with in greater detail if this House will be so kind to give me extra time later on.

There is another heading, Contract Employment, \$55 million. Again, we do not know what category of staff this is, but \$55 million had been allocated to the ministry and if the Minister can give us an appreciation of what \$55 million contract employment. There is a heading and I know somebody else raised this under a different ministry; extraordinary services, \$4 million for extraordinary services. We do not know what extraordinary services are. This is a Ministry of Health; you are paying staff; you have contract employment; you have all the infrastructure projects and all of that, but extraordinary services, we do not have a clue as to what these extraordinary services are, but \$4 million have allocated for extraordinary services and this is not the first time I am raising this, but up to now I have not been privileged enough to get an answer from the Minister or from any other Government agencies.

Mr. Sharma: [*Inaudible*]

Dr. H. Rafeeq: No, we never had this, for extraordinary services, no.

Mr. Sharma: Deny yourself some extraordinary services.

Dr. H. Rafeeq: Mr. Speaker, the oncology centre is going to be sited at the Eric Williams Medical Sciences Complex, and we want to be assured that when the oncology centre is constructed and when it is completed that it is properly run

to the benefit of the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago, and if we intend to treat citizens of the wider Caribbean that it is—[*Interruption*] Sorry? [*Inaudible*]—properly administered. Mr. Speaker, in addition to that, cancer treatment should be looked at in a holistic manner. It should be looked at in a holistic manner from prevention, from treatment, from palliation, from counselling, the whole range of services for managing cancer.

Mr. Speaker, one of the areas within the health sector that will be managing and will be looking after the preventative aspects of cancer is the primary care centres. We have grave difficulty with the primary care centres in Trinidad and Tobago, and as I said I would like to briefly quote a couple paragraphs of the report of the Commission of Enquiry. The Member for Chaguanas a while ago mentioned the Chaguanas District Health Facility and I would like to quote from the report of the Commission of Enquiry:

“A new facility is scheduled to be constructed in Chaguanas at a different site. During the Commission’s visit, Members noticed the ridiculously dilapidated condition of the health facility. There were rotten wooden ceilings and flooring everywhere; rusted plumbing and plumbing fixtures; leaking roofs; the stench from a backed-up sewer; obvious signs of flooding; malfunctioning toilets; inhumanely cramped offices and treatment rooms, overcrowded and uncomfortable waiting areas. It is a rundown and rotten and ancient health district facility that floods whenever heavy rain falls.”

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Health, as the Member for Chaguanas mentioned in this Parliament, gave a commitment in this Parliament in 2005 that construction of the Chaguanas Health Facility would commence on August 15, 2005 and was expected to be completed by August 15, 2006. August 15, 2005 has gone; August 15, 2006 has gone, we are now in June 2007 and not only would it not be completed, but as we speak, even a contract has not been awarded for the construction of that facility. A contract has not been awarded for the construction of that facility even as we speak.

The report said that of the five district health facilities—and they are talking about Princes Town, Couva, Arima, Mayaro and Chaguanas:

“Chaguanas District Health Facility has recorded the highest attendance, 80,000 and more over the last two years.”

Here you have a district health facility that is recording an attendance of over 80,000, the highest among all the district health facilities and yet even a contract

has not been awarded for the construction of that centre. When you look at the growth that is taking place in Chaguanas, when you look at the housing developments that are coming on stream in Chaguanas, you would realize that a lot of pressure is being put on that centre and will continue to be so.

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

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

Question put and agreed to.

Dr. H. Rafeeq: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I want to thank the Member for Port of Spain South/St. Ann's West and all Members of this honourable House for extending my time. I do not know if it will be enough to say what I want to say but if I only have half an hour that is what I will utilize.

Mr. Rahael: You will get more.

Dr. H. Rafeeq: You will give me another extension.

Mr. Rahael: Yes.

Dr. H. Rafeeq: Thank you very much. Yes, Mr. Speaker, I was making the point that Chaguanas is a growing community and the facility there, as described by the Commission of Enquiry is rotten, dilapidated, rundown, ancient and all of the negative things that can be said about it, and I am saying even as we speak, up to today a contract has not been awarded for the construction of that primary health care facility.

Mr. Speaker, the other health facilities; primary health care facility, Couva: There has been a drastic increase in the number of patients presenting themselves on mornings rising from the previous recorded 90 to 200, the problem here is, and I am saying that when you are doing your planning for these services you are supposed to take all these things into consideration. Caroni '1975' Limited provided health services for their employees and their dependents and that would mean that Caroni '1975' limited would have been providing health care services for its 9,000 or 10,000 employees and their dependants which would have come up to about 50,000 or 60,000 people. Once you close Caroni '1975' Limited and you close the health facilities with the health services that they would have been providing, then obviously these people would have to come to the health services and put additional pressure on the public health services and you have to cater for this.

Mr. Speaker, the report said the same thing about the Arima District Health Facility, the same thing about the Mayaro District Health Facility and so on, and I want to make the point again that the district health facilities are extremely important in the organization of the health sector in Trinidad and Tobago. Extremely important, they play an extremely important role and they would continue to play an extremely important role in the treatment and management of patients with cancer. Four district health facilities have been constructed, four or five more are supposed to be constructed and up to today none has been constructed by this Government over the last five or six years that this Government has been in office, not one district health facility has been constructed. I mentioned in the treatment of cancer you will need social workers, and again the report says that the caseload for the social workers within the health sector has become unmanageable and because of this the medical social workers are unable to provide the services required by the patients who require these services.

Mr. Speaker, just let me briefly touch on a couple of the other institutions that we will be required to provide services in the treatment of cancer patients. All of the hospitals will be integrated in providing care, and what does this report say:

“Poor and inefficient management, inadequate or weak leadership at the major institutions, lack of accountability, failure of the regional health authorities and the Ministry of Health to provide remuneration packages to attract staff, lack of training opportunities for all levels of staff, urgent need to address the shortage of nurses, pharmacists, doctors and so on, insanitary conditions in the kitchen, inadequate medical equipment, delay in implementing computerization within and across the RHAs...”

And the list goes on and on. Mr. Speaker, St. Ann’s Hospital is a building that is over 100 years old and the—

Mr. Rahael: Five years ago it was how old?

Dr. H. Rafeeq: Sorry, I did not get the comment, Mr. Minister?

Mr. Rahael: That is all right.

Dr. H. Rafeeq: Okay. Because you see, Mr. Speaker, [*Interruption*] yes, I want the Parliament to know and I want the country to know that the UNC was in office between 1995 and 2000, and it is impossible within this time that I am speaking to say what the UNC did as far as the health sector is concerned between 1995 and 2000.

Hon. Member: There is nothing to say.

Dr. H. Rafeeq: I do not have the time to say it, I will have the opportunity [Interruption] I will have the opportunity to say it and I will have the opportunity to say it here—

Hon. Member: Say it now.

Dr. H. Rafeeq:—and I will have the opportunity to say it outside of Parliament.

Hon. Member: Say it now. Go ahead and say it now, they did nothing. [Crosstalk]

Dr. H. Rafeeq: Let me tell you what this report says: “The ambulance service is totally inadequate.” [Interruption] When I came to office in 1995 you had one ambulance in San Fernando, one ambulance that had three wheels in San Fernando and you are proud of that. [Laughter] Remember that you had been in office over the last 50 years, you have been in office for 40 of those years. You have been in office for 40 of the 50 years, from 1956 to now. Remember that. So when this report talks about the failures in the health sector, remember that you have been in office for 40 of the last 50 years, remember that. So do not lay the blame at the feet of other people.

Hon. Member: Tell us what you did.

Dr. H. Rafeeq: Yes, we introduced the emergency health service so that we can get people to have today. [Desk thumping] [Crosstalk]

Today when I was coming to Parliament there was an accident on the highway where two people died and I was very proud to see two ambulances on spot there, if we had not introduced that system between 1995 and 2000 you would have to get—

Hon. Member: You all introduced what? A big pick up or some vans.

Dr. H. Rafeeq:—a pick up, you would have to get some old van in order to get those bodies. [Crosstalk] [Laughter]

Mr. Speaker: Order!

Dr. H. Rafeeq: That is what you would have to do.

Mr. Narine: A three-wheel left-hand drive.

Dr. H. Rafeeq: Yes, a three wheel ambulance. The ambulance service in St. Anns, inadequate, there is one small ambulance to service the hospital. The

ambulance although equipped for emergencies, is not wheelchair accessible. In some emergencies the administration has to resort to calling other hospitals for assistance. The unavailability of a passenger bus prevents patients from being taken on field trips. *[Interruption]* I am talking about St. Ann's here, but let us talk about other institutions, let us talk about Port of Spain Hospital. Port of Spain Hospital, the report says:

“It is almost inhumane, in fact, for the doctors, for the nursing staff as well as the patient to be sitting on benches with a fan in an overcrowded area and sitting around where there is no confidentiality.”

Just two days ago a doctor was saying she sits here with a patient and just three feet away you have all the other patients sitting there and she has to interview this patient. How can you be proud and how can you boast of that after \$11 billion in expenditure *[Crosstalk]* over the last five years that this Parliament has voted. Eleven billion dollars and you are proud of that today. *[Crosstalk]* What have you done with the \$11 billion that the Parliament has given to you? *[Interruption]* Eleven billion dollars!

Mr. Rahael: I will tell you what we have done.

Dr. H. Rafeeq: The entire building is falling apart and shifting, there are visible cracks—

Mr. Rahael: Nonsense.

Dr. H. Rafeeq: “Ah”, nonsense, yes. I know that eventually you would have said that Gladys Gafoor, she is talking nonsense here. Yes, I know that eventually you would have said so.

Mr. Rahael: But it is true.

Dr. H. Rafeeq: That is another attack on another judge in this country, that she has said nonsense in—*[Interruption]* The building is termite ridden, there is insufficient space to store equipment. Of the seven fetal monitors in the department only one is functional.

Mr. Speaker: Order!

Dr. H. Rafeeq: Say that she is talking nonsense.

Mr. Rahael: That is what you have done.

Dr. H. Rafeeq: Say that she is talking nonsense.

Mr. Rahael: That is what you did. *[Inaudible]* Outdated.

Mr. Sharma: Three-wheel ambulance outdated.

Dr. H. Rafeeq: Three-wheel ambulance, and Mr. Speaker, the authorities, including the Minister, whenever they talk about the health sector and the deficiencies, they say you cannot get people to work in the health sector, you cannot get doctors, you cannot get nurses, you cannot get pharmacists and you cannot get radiographers, but that there is a shortage. In Trinidad there is a shortage, all over the world. But, Mr. Speaker, there is a shortage of kitchen staff in the Port of Spain Hospital, even that you cannot get. [*Interruption*] You cannot get doctors and nurses, and you cannot get even kitchen staff to staff the hospital. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker: Order!

Dr. H. Rafeeq: Staff are dissatisfied with the supply of food stuff requested to prepare meals and it is alleged that the monopoly enjoyed by one supplier compromises the ability of the department to provide quality meals to the patients and that the kitchen is understaffed.

Mr. Rahael: That is your supplier. That is the supplier you hired.

Dr. H. Rafeeq: Mr. Speaker, this is so horrifying. St. James:

“Over the past five years the institution was left to deteriorate.”

I am quoting from the report.

Mr. Rahael: That is a political statement.

Dr. H. Rafeeq: Dire shortage of nurses at the Caura Hospital, and they are talking about the plant at the Caura Hospital. [*Interruption*] The Mount Hope Maternity Hospital, that is another disaster by itself. The unit is seriously overcrowded, increased susceptibility to infection, obvious overcrowding, bad electrical supply, unavailability of certain medications.

Mr. Speaker, I can go on and on with this but I do not want to spend too much time on that again. I just want to read one last extract from the report, and I know that the Minister had a press conference over the weekend dealing with this, but I just want to put it on the record that they investigate the allegations of corruption, nepotism and mismanagement in the engineering and dental departments of the Eric Williams Medical Sciences Complex. There have been alleged misappropriation of valuable equipment and large sums of money have been missing. This is under the watch of this Minister. Investigate this.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, there should be an investigation into the cases of phantom companies operating in the public health sector. Our enquiries have disclosed that nine companies were paid for services in the health sector without being registered with the registrar of companies or the Board of Inland Revenue. *[Interruption]* An investigation should be launched into the procurement and contract management services of the National Insurance Property Development Company. And, Mr. Speaker, we are asking for \$9.5 million, again for the oncology centre. The oncology centre is an institution, as you know that is very close to my heart, because I have been saying all along that cancer is assuming epidemic proportions in Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Rahael: That is true.

Dr. H. Rafeeq: And we now have the resources, at least, the financial resources that we can give the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago a better deal, and it is an indictment against this Government, it is certainly an indictment that today, 2007, we do not yet have a centre of excellence.

The Minister promised that in 2006/2007 we would have been walking into a brand new—

Mr. Rahael: I never promised that.

Dr. H. Rafeeq:—hospital with state-of-the-art equipment and all of that, and that was quite possible, but of course, we do not yet know when that centre will come into being.

Mr. Rahael: We will bring the Chinese to do it.

Dr. H. Rafeeq: We know that wrong things have been done and we do not yet know when that centre will come on stream. We have heard 2009; all I can say is that there are patients in this country who are dying from cancer because of improper treatment. But, Mr. Speaker, the Regional Health Authorities must get their act together if they have to administer this centre properly. Staff has to be properly compensated and staff has to be properly motivated if they have to give of their best when they are working in the health sector.

Mr. Speaker, I have a document here from the North Central Regional Health Authority in which they want to employ a Medical Chief of STAFF for the Eric Williams Medical Sciences Complex, and I was speaking to the outgoing Medical Chief of Staff at the San Fernando Hospital and the remuneration package for a Medical Chief of Staff is in the vicinity of \$30,000 and \$32,000 per month. That is the remuneration package for medical chief of staff. There are other doctors

within the hospital who work for less than that, their salaries are less than that, and of course they are allowed a little private practice as well, as the Medical Chief of Staff is. The North Central Regional Health Authority wants to employ a Medical Chief of Staff, and listen to the compensation package that they want to give to this Medical Chief of Staff:

Basic Salary	\$32,000 per month
Travelling Allowance	\$15,000 annually
Transportation Allowance	\$5,000 monthly
Motor Vehicle Loan and repair loan	
Administrative Allowance	\$17,600 per month
Telephone Allowance	\$2,000 per month
Gratuity	20% of salary
On-Call Allowance	16,000 per month
Communication Allowance	\$1,000 per month
Continuing Medical Education Allowance	\$3,000 per month
Housing Allowance	\$5,000 per month

And then you have official allowance, entertainment, leave and so on. Mr. Speaker a package of \$84,000 per month.

Hon. Member: “Oooh.”

Mr. Sharma: How much?

Dr. H. Rafeeq: A package of \$84,000 per month. *[Interruption]* Mr. Speaker, \$84,000 per month, how would you motivate the rest of the staff in that hospital to work? How will you motivate the rest of the staff who are working sometimes double shift, triple shift and so on, and for \$20,000 and \$25,000 a month? How will you motivate them to work, Mr. Speaker? And here you are offering one person *[Interruption]* Medical Chief of Staff, a remuneration package of \$84,000.

Mr. Rahael: Would you give way?

Dr. H. Rafeeq: Mr. Speaker, I only have about three minutes again, and sorry I really cannot, because there is another issue that I want to *[Interruption]* raise here very quickly and I only have a few minutes.

10.00 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, in the North Central Regional Health Authority—and I just want to make this point very quickly—there was the requirement to do arrears of increment for the workers there so that they will pay them their increments and so on and they thought that the workers within the system could not do the job effectively and so they wanted to hire some staff from the Port of Spain Hospital to do it. When they did that, listen what happened. An examination of the cheque registered in respect of the Republic Bank Limited recurrent account contained in the computerized accounting system revealed that payment of \$48,000 was made to an unfamiliar individual by the name of Mr. Demetrius Harrison via cheque number so and so.

In view of this, the respective cheque and the supporting documents were verbally requested by audit at the Eric Williams Medical Sciences Complex from payables department, however, the said documents could not be located. It goes on to say, “A copy of the return cheque was received from the general accounts department which confirmed that \$48,000 was cashed the same day as the date of the cheque, that is, December 07.” Communications held with staff at the internal department of the North West Regional Health Authority revealed the Mr. Demetrius Harrison—the cheque was made out in his name—is currently employed as the hospital attendant at the St. Ann’s Hospital. Clearly, this individual in question is not a member of the payroll or the administrative department and was not a member of the team that participated in the increment exercise. Therefore, the preparation of the cheque utilizing public funds in the name of an individual who did not supply any goods or service was in contravention of standard accounting practices.

In addition, since no agreement was seen by audit to be executed between the Central Regional Health Authority and the individual, this situation appears to be tantamount to an illegal conversion of funds and to represent a fraudulent act which must be dealt with seriously.

Mr. Rahael: I agree.

Dr. H. Rafeeq: This type of action if allowed to go unaddressed leads to the demise of the organization. Mr. Speaker, I wanted to mention that, and finally if you just permit me one minute. There is an issue that is mentioned here concerning the recruitment of the Chief Executive Officer in the Central Regional Health Authority.

That gentleman, Mr. Charles Mitchell, was invited to a board meeting and when he attended the board meeting, he was introduced by the Chairman of the Board to the other members of the board as the person who will be taking up the

appointment as Chief Executive Officer. On that day he signed his contract within the board, but that is the same day, at that very meeting that the board decided what the interview panel would be for the Chief Executive Officer. On that same day they decided what the panel to interview the Chief Executive Officer would be and on that same day he was given his contract and the contract was signed.

Mr. Speaker, when the Commission of Enquiry asked for the documents relating to the interviews and so on, they said that the documents had been misplaced. These are the instances of corruption that we are talking about and I know that my time is up, but there is a lot more that we would raise on subsequent occasions, but I thank you for this opportunity. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Chandresh Sharma (Fyzabad): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we have been here since 1.30 p.m. and it is indeed a very shameful day for this Parliament because from 1.30 p.m. until now, 10 o'clock, almost eight and a half hours, the PNM refuses to get up and defend their foolishness, the wastage of state money and the massive corruption that exists.

Mr. Speaker, how is it we are in a Parliament where we have been invited to debate and not a Government Member—the country is in a crisis; every institution is failing; the entire country is in crisis and the Minister of Health agrees with me. He manages a billion-dollar corruption since he has been in office, well of course, before him is the Minister for Diego Martin Central, \$10 billion and what we are seeing for it, very little. How unfortunate. Now, the other thing too, is that we are paying a Minister of Government close to \$40,000 per month and they work for about 10 days a month with the exception of the Member for Arima. So for \$40,000 today, look at the benches, they are empty; \$40,000 we pay them to come here and they contribute nothing to the debate. This is a circus show; there is not a single person here from the Ministry.

Now, we have been here long enough to know when a debate of this nature has to take place, there are officers from the Ministry who could respond, who could assist the Minister, but there are no such officers, so all the matters raised by colleagues on both sides—very little was raised by the Member for Arouca South who really came here to defend herself. So what is the purpose of this debate really? What are they satisfying? Who are they satisfying? What is the national community feeling?

Mr. Speaker, very interesting, the Government spending \$321 million in PR and every Minister is photographed in every newspaper, every God's day, thousands of dollars being wasted. On the national news earlier this evening, 76

per cent of people responding to a poll said that they were not in favour of the Government receiving \$3 billion that they are requesting; 76 per cent. Now, take into consideration, the PNM has people that they pay to look at all the shows and to call in and respond in their favour; all the talk shows and television shows. So, 76 per cent indicated today—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Hart: [*Inaudible*]

Mr. C. Sharma: The Member for Tunapuna has nothing to say, do not embarrass yourself on national television, you had an opportunity to join in the debate. So here it is 76 per cent of the national community is saying, “Listen, we are not in support of the Government receiving this \$3.5 billion”. And the question that begs, why? The national community has no confidence in this Government, this Government is seen as the masters of corruption from the early days of PNM. Masters of corruption.

In fact, in the survey that has come to my attention, they have looked at parliamentarians in the Caribbean and the richest parliamentarians in the Caribbean are PNM Ministers and the Member for Diego Martin East is aware of the report. The richest and how did they become the richest? When you are spending this kind of money as Gafoor’s report indicated, massive corruption. Can we point at any Ministry where corruption does not exist? Not a single one.

Hon. Member: All.

Mr. C. Sharma: Let us start from my good friend the Minister of Works and Transport, that Ministry and let us continue, every single Ministry, corruption, mismanagement, more corruption. Let us go on.

Mr. Speaker, why are we here today? The Government wants to spend an additional \$3 point plus billion, what has the country gotten for the first \$38 billion? What can we show? Are there more and more people on the poverty line; people are unable to feed themselves? The WHO says an average citizen should have five servings of fruits and vegetables, they cannot buy it in the market; they cannot afford it; they cannot afford food and the Government continues pumping money. Into what? What do we have to show for this money? The health institution has collapsed? Every institution you could look under this PNM administration has collapsed, so we are getting absolutely nothing, but what you have is the Minister of Government getting rich and rich and more rich everyday. They drive the biggest car, where do they get the money? Let us look at some of the expenses that are being asked for.

Mr. Speaker, this is so embarrassing, it is an insult to us, it is an insult to the national community to come to this Parliament and the Government has nothing to show. Every Minister dressed in their jacket and PNM tie for which the State is more than likely paying also, delivers nothing at the end of the day. The Office of the Prime Minister, \$75 million, expenses of Cabinet appointed bodies, friends and family of the PNM. What is the country getting for it? Absolutely nothing. \$75 million. You know the national community is just waiting to change this Government. This is the only solution to this country; the PNM must go and must go very fast. What has any Minister contributed to adding value to the life of any citizen in this country? Absolutely nothing. \$75 million expenses of Cabinet appointed bodies.

Under Development Programme, recreation and culture. What is the culture of Trinidad and Tobago? It is the PNM that determines what is the culture. This Government does not embrace the national culture. A few days ago we celebrated Indian Arrival Day; for the Government that is bad news, they do not contribute to it at all. Small little pittance, a \$100 plus million for Carnival and every equipment of the State is available to those promoting Carnival. We support Carnival by the way because they always want to make the point that the UNC is only about 'Indian ting' and does not promote Carnival, but when you look at the quantum of money spent on Carnival and when you compare it to Divali or Eid or Phagwa, zero. Are you all not ashamed? What a shameful bunch of people you all are.

Establishment of a dance orchestra. How come nothing other than your culture, that you term culture in this country is promoted? Pan, Best Village, what happened to Indian dance? What happened to the Orisha Movement? Those are taboo, why are you so? Why do you discriminate like this? Come on, get serious, this cannot continue, people are ready to explode. You cannot discriminate in a society like you do. You build pan theatre all over the country, not a single tassa theatre, are you all not ashamed? Is tassa not part of Trinidad and Tobago? Are you not ashamed? What have you delivered at the end of the day?

Mr. Imbert: Have you ever seen a tassa theatre? [*Laughter*]

Mr. C. Sharma: And look at the shameful question, what is a tassa theatre? You know what is a pan theatre? A pan theatre is a building where millions of dollars are spent with equipment, air conditioning and all the support facilities, and you do not know what is a tassa theatre. What a shame. What a total shame and you will not join the debate, you want to defend it. You write cheques for your friends and family.

Mr. Speaker, when you look at the Ministry of Community Development, Culture and Gender Affairs, and I will come to that, that is a Ministry with a slush fund to promote PNM party groups. PNM party groups across the board. When you look at the groups that are getting moneys—

Mr. Speaker: Just remember you have 45 minutes.

Mr. C. Sharma: Forget about the 45 or 40 minutes. [*Laughter*] What are you threatening, you would not extend my time? Who cares, the truth must be told. Whether the truth is told in 45 minutes, 75 minutes or 40 minutes, it makes no difference, the truth must be told.

Mr. Speaker, BWIA, you heard the quantum of money, \$2.3 billion. BWIA was running at a loss, they pumped \$2.3 billion and then come back under a new name CAL, and CAL is yesterday, another \$1.2 billion. So, close to \$5 billion, but for Caroni, where they lick up 9,000 workers and their dependants which is another—nine by five—45,000 people, you were not prepared to pump half a billion dollars. What is that, is that economics? That has to be discrimination.

Hon. Enill: Thank you, hon. Member. Mr. Speaker, that is not a correct statement. The cost as I recall it for Caroni at this point in time based on all that we are doing is somewhere in the vicinity of about \$4 billion and climbing and that takes into account the severance issues, the development issues and all the other costs that the Government is absorbing in order to make sure that the promises that are kept are going into the Caroni workers. The other issue is that there is no \$5 billion for BWIA, the number for both CAL and BWIA is the \$2.3 billion, that is the total cost, there is no additional cost.

Mr. C. Shama: [*Inaudible*]

Hon. Enill: No, what I said is that \$1 billion of that was dealt with in 2006, the total cost is \$2.3 billion and that also includes capitalization and all other cost, so that is what the final cost is. There is no request at this point in time for any more money into CAL because the business plan that we approved does not require any additional money and it says that for a period of time it will break even and then start to contribute positively and that model has not changed so, just to provide that information.

Mr. C. Sharma: Mr. Speaker, one cannot help for a small moment to admire the Minister. He tries to be frank and oftentimes truthful, on this occasion I think he is. But the fact of the matter, Minister, is that under your watch you sent home 10,000 people at Caroni when it could have been different because Caroni was

earning income. Caroni was bringing in foreign exchange. More than that, the social consequences of sending home 10,000 people with dependants multiply by five, 50,000 people, that was adding value to the country, at the end of the day Caroni was adding value, but it was a decision based on something. It was a political decision and many have argued, and rightfully so, it was based on race because you looked at the Caroni workers as a vote bank for UNC and that was your decision, it had nothing to do with the economics.

In another instance in a radio station, when the license was threatened, within 24 hours for five people you grant a license and now you come and spend \$1.6 billion in CEPEP that is bringing no revenue, that has no real value at the end of the day; certainly the people engaged in CEPEP needs the employment and when you look, they get the least amount of the money. So who are you really serving? Do you not all sit in your private moments and reflect, I am really adding value to this country as a Minister of Government? It is an honour to be a Minister; it is an honour to be a Member of Parliament, but what do you do at the end of the day? You treat the Opposition with scant courtesy and you give no projects.

Mr. Speaker, you were once a Member of this House on the benches. A PNM Member of Parliament—Mr. Bereaux is my good friend, Member for La Brea and he will tell you that—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Imbert: He is friend to you too?

Mr. C. Sharma: Yes, yes. You can choose your friends sometimes. The point is a PNM Member of Parliament—here we are all equals, one is Minister, but we are all Members of Parliament—can indicate when a road is going to be paved and which road. He can indicate where a CEPEP job will be done, who will be a CEPEP contractor; he can send a list, in fact, if you going to any PNM Members of Parliament, on their office walls is a list of all persons who will be working in URP because they are members of Government.

Mrs. James: Not on my wall.

Mr. C. Sharma: You have no wall. Okay? The point is, they can choose those things. They know how much money they are going to get for any celebrations, Opposition cannot get that opportunity. Inequality. How can you move a country to 2020 or to 2010? What you are moving this country, is to explode. The young people are not going to take this nonsense for much longer. How it is, we make representations ourselves, when you look at distribution of the wealth of this country, it is for the PNM only, even when they go into the UNC constituency.

Let us look at any project, the most number of streetlights installed in this country, PNM constituencies; majority of National Commission Self Help projects, PNM constituencies; URP employment, PNM constituencies. When you look at the composition of the URP, it does not reflect the pot-pourri of Trinidad and Tobago at any level. When you look at Petrotrin, look at all—and I see the Chairman saying that the wage bill is too high—the recent appointments, it does not reflect the pot-pourri of Trinidad and Tobago. Do you not think that people are getting fed up of that?

Hon. Enill: I thank the Member for giving way. Mr. Speaker, I just want to get a view from the Member in terms of the statement that he just made. Now, in Trinidad and Tobago, we have a situation where there are really only four ways in which you earn income, either as an employee or self-employed or as a business owner or investor. In terms of the divide that he is talking about, it would seem to me that simply on the basis of my understanding of the way the economy is structured there is a major part of the population that is involved in business activity and investment, and another part of the country that is involved in employee and self-employment. And the conventional wisdom is that the poor, basically and middle-class are involved in employee and self-employment and the rich and famous are operating in business ownership and investment.

I just want to understand what he is saying to me in the context of the statement that he just made because when we analyze the revenues that the Government gets in terms of business ownership and individual taxation and we look at who comprised the rich versus who comprised those that are considered poor, the statement that he just made is really not consistent. I want to understand what he is saying because when you do the technical analysis, what you are saying is not borne out in fact. The fact of the matter is that insofar as business ownership is concerned and where an investment is concerned, those who you are talking about that are being against really command that level of activity and I just wondered how you explain what you are saying.

Mr. C. Sharma: I am really glad you have asked that question. One reason why you may not have fully understood is because you are wearing the PNM hat and you need to discard the hat for a few minutes. It is the Basdeo Panday administration that advanced the thinking that 10 per cent of all Government and State bodies' contracts would go to small business people, across the board. During that same period we promoted the idea of Small Business Development which you converted to NEDCO. Look what you have done with NEDCO, all the

loans are secret and the evidence, early o'clock when you removed it from under the Freedom of Information Act, it was going to PNM members.

In fact, in the Moruga area you went and took an entire area, gave them loans to vote for the PNM and it has collapsed. So, the question really, if there is equality and equal access to opportunities, you would reduce all of this. Let us look at the CEPEP contractors, who are the CEPEP contractors? The workers are not benefiting, they get \$100 a day. So what have you done? Somebody made a story about Cudjoe, who I understand was a hamburger vendor and I am glad he got a contract, but you moved the contract from \$22 million to \$129 million. The State pays; the PNM thinks that is their money that should have gone to small business people. So you have a lot of money, running down a lot of expensive projects but it is not reaching the small man and the list can go on and go on and go on.

All these multi-million projects, is that bringing food for people? What are people eating? The Minister of Health boasted about the health care provision, but what is the prevention; what is the purpose of spending these millions of dollars, \$10 billion in six cents tablets for diabetes. Prevent the people from becoming diabetics; let there be recreation facilities, that is why I advanced the call for the constituency fund which I hope I would develop if I have some extra time.

At the Ministry of Planning and Development, contract employment, where are these contracts? We do not ever see them advertised. How it is only PNM people get these work? Do you not think that Mr. Bereaux could do with some work?

Mr. Bereaux: Hon. Member, first, let us not make any jokes. Hedwige Bereaux is a retiree, so he does not want any work. The next point I want to make—
[*Interruption*]

Mr. C. Sharma: What about the PNM retirees, what is your point?

Mr. Bereaux: The point is that I am just telling you that I cannot do any work; I do not need any work.

Mr. C. Sharma: Mr. Bereaux, thanks. Promotion, publicity and printing, this is a big thing in the Government now, one Ministry, \$6.2 million. \$6.2 million, how many families that could feed? Publicity, you ran the Ministry by PR, everything is a PR. Short-term employment, at another Ministry, \$5.2 million, we do not see these advertisements. How are these people employed? Contract employment, another place, \$2.6 million, so what the Government has done is created employment opportunities for themselves and this is why they also train and sponsor PNM candidates.

Let me tell you about the case in Fyzabad for the last five elections, since 1991. Every time the candidates that come from a PNM sponsored agency, URP, WASA, Petrotrin and those in circles, so on this occasion, three nominees, three persons were interviewed. One, the former Programme Manager from URP, so he is placed in the URP using taxpayers' money to promote himself to become the candidate; another nominee from Petrotrin, another nominee from WASA. So the MP makes his representation as he is lawfully required to do for projects and the WASA employee who is a nominee for the PNM goes and identifies with the projects and they do that across the board. If you look across Trinidad and Tobago where the PNM has candidates, oftentimes they come from state sponsored bodies.

Mr. Speaker, I see we are spending \$1.7 million at the Chaguaramas Hotel and Convention Centre, what benefits does it bring to the country? I am sure it does, but we do not know. Who uses this Hotel and Convention Centre except the PNM for its convention? So we are pumping all this money all over the place, but it is not reaching the small man. Overtime in the police service, \$164 million, an increase of \$48 million from what was required, initially. Again, you are overworking the police officers, so you are not getting value for money. Recruit more police officers, but you see the problem is, you want to recruit from PNM party groups, and it is not open.

I have suggested that there be a national examination, supervised maybe by the University of Trinidad and Tobago, so that when the young man or woman having met the initial requirements wishes to join the police service, they write the exam, pass or fail and then they proceed. Contract employment, \$11 million, this is in the Ministry of National Security, and Mr. Speaker, this is an interesting development. The Ministry of National Security on contract employment is asking for and getting \$11.8 million which is close to \$12 million. What are these contract officers doing there; how are they contracted? Are they contracted to spy on Opposition Members; to lock up Basdeo Panday every Monday morning; to charge Basdeo Panday every Monday morning? This is what the national community is seeing; \$12 million.

At the same Ministry, promotions, publicity and printing, \$5 million. What are they printing, PNM handings; PNM t-shirts? What are they printing? What is the country getting for it? So we are asked to come to this Parliament at 10.30 p.m.— Mr. Speaker, I am hungry, can I have my dinner now?

Mr. Speaker: Yes.

Mr. C. Sharma: So what do I do?

Mr. Speaker: Go. You can go, but we will—[Inaudible] [Laughter]

Mr. C. Sharma: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, I would really like to know how is dinner because it is a sweat box. We have been sitting here eight, nine hours; I would love to have my dinner, can I be advised?

Mr. Speaker: If the Member is feeling hot, you can get the air conditioner cooler—

Mr. C. Sharma: Food, not air conditioner.

Mr. Speaker: No, the food is available since 8.30 p.m.

Mr. C. Sharma: Yes, but I am now hungry.

Mr. Speaker: No, the arrangement was that Members would rotate and go for dinner.

Mr. C. Sharma: Mr. Speaker, I would not support that. I much prefer that we are treated like people in here; that we break the entire Parliament and we have our dinner. I do not like this thing about one go and sit down and eat like we are in jail. This is where we reach to? [Crosstalk]

10.30 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, I am here to do my duty; hungry as I am, let me do my duty.

Rent, lease, vehicles and equipment—\$7.2 million; we are not seeing any justification for this; this is foolishness about unmarked police vehicles. I am sure there is use for it, but how is it done? Is it all PNM friends and family, so they could rent any number of cars? Did we not approve a large sum of money to buy police vehicles the other day? Could we not have bought unmarked vehicles? What are unmarked vehicles? The vehicles that do not carry the TTPS sign; is that all? Why are we wasting money?

Contract employment, \$5.2 million; food at institutions, \$35 million. I see under the same heading: medical expenses. The Minister indicated that medical treatment was available free at all institutions. Why are we approving \$6.4 million for medical expenses, Mr. Minister?

Mr. Breaux: When you get ill, you could get free medical.

Mr. C. Sharma: When you are back-bencher, remain a back-bencher.

The same institution again, \$22 million for food and institutions. Medical expenses, \$2.5 million. At the Defence Force headquarters, I am seeing that the

telephone bill was \$2.5 million, which is \$200,000 per month; that is a lot of phone calls. There seems to be a lot of overseas phone calls. In the constituency offices we cannot even get \$500 a month; I am not sure what we get now. When I have to call from Fyzabad to Port of Spain, to call the Minister of Finance, he takes about five minutes to come to the phone and you have to go through about 10 persons to get him on the phone, so that call is \$10. We get \$500, and I work 30 days a month; here they are paying \$200,000 per month. They make all these approvals, because the PNM Government always wants to have the police on its side to threaten the Opposition to lock them up, to use the force.

Mr. Imbert: You would not want the police on your side?

Mr. C. Sharma: That is a good idea.

Minor equipment purchases, \$172 million. Look at how the Government operates—minor equipment purchase. They do not tell us what we are buying or what the process is. Have you seen an advertisement that says, “We are looking for X, Y and Z; small business people you can get involved?” You see, the PNM is a small shop; they control it; they control every single thing and Ministers are prepared for a jacket, a tax free car and \$40,000 a month to give up their birthright. The country does not benefit in the process.

Mr. Speaker, vehicle replacement—the original provision in the 2007 estimate, \$10 million; revised, \$40 million; an increase of \$30 million. What vehicles are they buying for \$40 million? These must be all Mercedes Benz.

I will tell you what happens. When they buy these vehicles, there is some kickback to get motor cars to run the elections. Again, the PNM is a master at kickback; they take kickback from everything. [*Crosstalk*] I did not say that; that is the knowledge of the national community.

Refurbishment of coastguard vessels, \$26 million—just the other day, we purchased a number of new vessels. In addition to that, we got some donated by the US Government, but here they move from \$12 million. So who did the first estimate, a shoemaker? Did they move from a shoemaker estimate to a professional estimate, from \$12 million to \$26 million? Corruption; you cannot help but see the PNM corruption. I would be ashamed to be associated with the PNM.

This is what the national community is seeing. That is why this evening, 76 per cent of the national community, in spite of the PNM-paid people calling in, said, “We do not want you to obtain the \$3 billion.” That is the duty of the Opposition. Oh Lord, look what this Government has brought us to!

Refurbishment of coastguard aircraft C26, from \$10 million to \$21 million. The last time with BWIA, when they said that they were rebranding, one of their friends got the contract and it cost close to \$1 billion. Yes, you waste money all over. Over the last number of years it is about \$1 billion you wasted on BWIA.

Mr. Speaker, automation of passports, \$21 million, and you still have to wait five or six weeks for the passport; more than that now. When the Minister made the announcement, first he reduced the shelf life of a passport from 10 to five years; he then increased it to \$250, and if you need it in an emergency you have to pay \$300; but he did not tell us that in the Parliament. Somebody needs to look into that; that is a rip off. So if you have a death in your family and you are hustling to go to New York or wherever and you have to get a passport, you have to pay an extra \$300.

Mr. Speaker, this is an interesting one: citizens' security programme, \$3 million. Nobody knows what this is about. So the Minister came here, laid the documents in the Parliament and gives absolutely no explanation; not a single one of his ministers has the ability to get up and say, "This is what we are doing", and expects approval. Of course, they have a slim majority, so they use that. [*Crosstalk*]

You can use it to vote against me; you cannot vote against the people. Very soon the people will vote against you. So when you could stop one of us after 45 minutes, in less than 45 days or weeks, you will be stopped. The country is waiting to breathe.

The Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources is a ministry that has delivered absolutely nothing, and you are giving them more money. When you look at access roads, they are where the PNM has contacts; where PNM members have their family living; where the PNM Ministers have bought lands. Where is the agricultural policy of the Government? Land acquisition, \$42 million; nobody knows where these lands are or what they are used for. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Speaker, Standing Order 36(5), the Member is imputing improper motives by saying that work is being done where PNM Ministers have bought land; that is simply not true.

Mr. Speaker: I rule you out of order.

Mr. C. Sharma: Mr. Speaker, janitorial services in the Ministry of Education, \$68 million. The question is: How did this come about? What services are provided? In this day of automation, in this day of so much technology, what are

we paying for, and schools are falling apart? Children are unable to access water in their schools; many schools have to close, because they do not have pipe borne water, and here you are spending \$68 million on sanitation.

Mr. Speaker, I see \$20 million for construction of additional blocks and improvement works to recently constructed secondary schools. Here you have a Government that is spending billions of dollars on education, a lot of it being wasted, and then you are going to add additional blocks and improvement works to recently constructed secondary schools. I do not understand this thing at all. Recently constructed secondary schools and you now have to do improvement works for \$20 million? The country cannot continue in this way at all, at all, at all. The Government is obligated to give better accounts.

Under the Ministry of Public Administration and Information, rent, lease, vehicles and equipment, \$48 million. What are they renting? What are they using these vehicles for? This is largely administrative, what equipment? Is it fax machines? Is it photocopy machines? Is that what is considered equipment? They moved from \$37 million to \$48 million. Is this Minister proud to come to this Parliament and present this nonsense; taxpayers' money, \$48 million? You are a Member of this Parliament? Under information on Community Technology Division, training of librarian, singular, \$3.5 million. "We better" stop being Members of Parliament?

Many of our beaches are without lifeguard services and changing rooms, more so in the south areas, they always discriminate. The Member La Brea would agree with me, the Member for Point Fortin and the Member for Siparia. They do not provide any services. [*Crosstalk*] Lifeguard services are essential. Oftentimes you hear that some person has drowned because there were no lifeguards. The last person who drowned was a police officer.

Hon. Member: Where?

Mr. C. Sharma: It is a shame that you asked such a stupid question. A police officer drowned a few days ago. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker: I am sure it is getting a little late; be careful with your language. You cannot say that a Member is asking a stupid question. I am sure you did not mean that.

Mr. Sharma: I withdraw it. The question has no basis. It was a question that should embarrass you, simply because it was a police officer. You are the junior Minister of National Security and you would have seen it in the newspaper. You

should have called the family and visited. The report that obtained in the print and electronic press indicated that at the beach which he drowned there were no lifeguards. I really sympathize with you.

Mr. Hinds: I asked where.

Mr. Sharma: Forget where, he drowned.

Mr. Speaker, the Water and Sewerage Authority (WASA), \$1.4 billion. Do you know what is interesting? The original allocation was \$1.2 billion; here they have come and asked and are obtaining an increase of \$263 million. Where are these projects being done? What are we spending money for? Imagine people are still without pipe borne water in so many communities. Electricity, \$100 million. Where are these projects? Which Member of the Opposition was asked: Do you need a project in your area? Only things for the PNM? And then you go to the little PNM party groups in the Opposition constituencies.

National Street Lighting Programme, \$19 million. How are these submissions done? We accept that every street light will have a lamp.

Hon. Member: Is there a Standing Order against being boring?

Mr. C. Sharma: “You study” Standing Orders; you have a few more weeks here.

Other water projects, \$7 million; so on one hand you are asking for \$100 million and then you come back and say, “I want another \$7 million.” How does the Government account for these things, Mr. Minister? Tell the national community. On the one hand you ask for “X” amount, then you come back. Under electricity you get \$100 million, then under street lighting, \$19 million, then under fuel and energy, \$100 million.

Mr. Speaker, the record will show that the worst government is the Government during the period you were Speaker. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Hinds: “Yuh reach de last page, let me see where you will go now.”

Mr. C. Sharma: There are many others. Under drainage, \$169 million. When it drizzles in Port of Spain you still see floods. Every year the Minister comes and tells us that more money is being spent, but where is the work for it? What is interesting is that under sub-item 28, the request was for \$65 million; the increase revised, \$169 million, an increase of \$104 million. Not a single Member of the Opposition was asked to submit what moneys were required.

Public Transport Service Corporation, \$116 million. Recently we saw a number of public transport buses introduced: Point Fortin, San Fernando, Sangre Grande and

Port of Spain; none in the rural communities. In Point Fortin you see five and six buses. So when it is a PNM area, it is always five, six and seven buses. [*Crosstalk*] The Member for La Brea is of the opinion that one came to Fyzabad; well, I want to thank him for confirming that; one to Fyzabad and six to Point Fortin. The reason: Point Fortin is PNM, Fyzabad is UNC; that is the only reason.

I want the Minister to do an intelligent review; look at the distribution of any project that the Government is connected to or in charge of: public housing, PNM areas; street lighting, PNM; water projects, PNM; employment, PNM; CEPEP, PNM. [*Crosstalk*] You want to ask them to do this, Member for Tunapuna? [*Crosstalk*] And he hopes to win the election with that; that is how they work to win elections.

Roads and bridges programme, \$125 million. Members on both sides for us in the Opposition have raised it, we have written letters, we have had representation made, and to this day, while they are asking for \$125 million, an increase of \$40 million, the Ministry has not been able to tell us which bridges have been fixed in any of our constituencies. The PNM feels that when they come and do work in the UNC areas, they are doing us a favour.

Mr. Hinds: Are there any PNM supporters in UNC areas? [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. C. Sharma: You asked nothing. You have a history of asking nothing.

Procurement of critical heavy equipment for emergency response and flood relief, \$21 million; original request, \$10 million. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker: Order!

Mr. C. Sharma: How does the Ministry identify that it is going to need \$21 million? Where is the consultation? Where are these things available? We have floods in our areas and we see no equipment coming in; we see no Ministry officials responding; no disaster response; no food hampers are given; those are reserved for the PNM areas. [*Crosstalk*]

Thank you; the Member for La Brea is confirming it. You see, their conscience is starting to bother them. They have to agree with the truth; you cannot avoid the truth.

National Youth Apprentice Development Programme, \$9.8 million. You will recall a young apprentice saying on national television that when he looked at the programme he was disturbed that its membership did not reflect his friends. So, again, you see that people are getting fed up.

I see under non-current transfers and subsidies—we would like the Minister to tell us—non-profit institutions, \$35 million; moving from \$23 million to \$35

million, an increase of \$12 million. Where are these nonprofit institutions obtaining this \$35 million? How do they get it? How are they communicated with? We see no public advertisements' as an MP I have not been advised that non-profit organizations can access moneys from \$35 million. Is this only for the PNM? It seems so. [*Crosstalk*]

Overseas mission, \$30 million; again, many persons have raised it throughout Trinidad and Tobago; in fact, a judgment recently in the High Court showed that the membership in the overseas missions does not truly reflect the population of Trinidad and Tobago, and that must be of concern. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Hinds: Will you give way?

Mr. C. Sharma: I will invite you to speak for 45 minutes and I will extend your time by another 30 minutes. [*Crosstalk*]

There are other areas. Under the Ministry of Social Development, in the On-The-Job Training Programme, the original request was \$90 million; new, \$147 million; an increase of \$57 million. Let us look at the \$147 million. How do persons get on the OJT programme? Where are these people coming from? How are the advertisements done? Is it only through PNM party groups, only through PNM Members of Parliament? I would like to get people from Fyzabad involved as well. Can the Minister or the Ministry responsible tell us? We have too many programmes. There must be a reality check. You cannot keep denying that these things are happening. For the OJT programme a PNM Member can write a letter and get anybody on it; no interviews done.

National Energy Skills Centres, \$22 million. Mr. Speaker, in some MP offices, which are offices of the State, funded by the State, we were able to have these computer centres established. Now under the PNM, they take them to the PNM constituency offices, different from the Members of Parliament offices. For instance in Fyzabad, the State office, meaning the MP's office is for anybody who becomes the MP, that will be his or her office for that period. But the PNM has a party office in which you have this "ting". This is illegal; it is corruption, but this is the PNM practice across the board. They make no apologies for it; they feel that they could continue giving, giving, giving, and fool the people.

Mr. Speaker, I see here the establishment of the Pleasantville Technology Centre, which is in the constituency of the hon. Prime Minister. When you look at the number of projects that have gone on in that constituency, there is no equality of distribution. I am not against it in the least, but let there be some fair distribution. The most expensive community centres are in the PNM areas; recreation facilities, PNM areas; lighting up of sports grounds are in the PNM areas. Establishment

The Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Sen. The Hon. Conrad Enill): Mr. Speaker, I thank all those who contributed to the debate, including the last speaker. I just want to make a few brief points.

If one were to listen to what happened, one would believe that the way the Government is run is on the basis of some kind of amateur procedure. [*Crosstalk*] [*Interruption*] [*Members of the Opposition exit Chamber*] I am talking to the Member for Chaguanas. [*Laughter*]

Just by way of explanation, a couple points before I wrap up, the way that we arrive at the allocations is as follows: The technocrats in the Ministry do a very extensive evaluation of the ministries requests and make the determination on the basis of some kind of process. At any point in time, there is an amount of demand by ministries for projects that are in the pipeline. We basically have to determine on the basis of revenue, what those priorities are.

I could not agree with the last speaker when he said, for example, that in WASA you only provide water to a group of individuals in a particular constituency, because it would seem to me that once you connect a pipe and that pipe is flowing and providing water, it must pass by everybody who is connected in the chain to get to the people he was talking about. So the logic of that particular statement does not make sense; likewise T&TEC. When I look at the street lighting programme, I do not see lights for those who I know and lights for those I do not know. If I saw that, I would say that he was correct. What I see is that areas are lit.

I look at the Aranguetz Savannah; that as far as I could tell is not yet a PNM constituency. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Imbert: In a few months.

Sen. The Hon. C. Enill: In St. Joseph I do not know that is so, but I see a significant number of people 12 o'clock, 11 o'clock in the night enjoying the benefits of the thing the Government has done. I, therefore, cannot support his statement in the context of the impression he gave. In fact, when I talk to chairmen of state enterprises in housing, when I talk to those in health, when I talk to those in social services, I am told that those in the Opposition Benches take time to make sure that the forms to access Government programmes are filled out completely, together with birth certificates, proper documentation and so on. In those circumstances, they are, in fact, participating in all the Government has.

I want to place on record the fact that, as far as I am concerned, on the basis of the information available to the Government, there is no discrimination insofar as

access to opportunities is concerned. What can, in fact, happen is that because of the demand, in many situations, it takes a little while longer to get to a particular individual.

There was a lot of discussion taking place; let me just deal with them. Value for money—the Government has a system of implementation in which we provide money, we do the policy and the implementation is done by technical officers within the system. We hold them to account in some instances and we have very intricate systems in which we do the processes, and that will occur.

The Heritage and Stabilisation Fund—we changed the legislation. In fact, this year we propose to put \$1.7 billion into the Fund. Somebody talked about the question of salaries being paid; salaries are approved by the Public Sector Negotiation Committee, which would inform the Government's policy. Basically, we looked at salaries and wages within the context of the Government system.

I find it difficult to understand why, as the Member for Fyzabad said, 76 per cent of the population would not agree to providing resources, either for their education, as we are doing now, for paying persons who actually work to provide services, for national security, for maintaining the cost of petrol so that poor people in the country can continue their normal lives, without massive disruptions in the price of food. If we were to reduce that subsidy, Mr. Speaker, there would be the same difficulty that the population found itself in when a previous administration, instead of doing what the PNM did, which was to go to the Central Bank and get resources to carry out the government programme, took the decision to cut salaries, and over a period of time created massive kinds of social disruptions to individuals.

The alternative that would have been available was simply to get the resources from the Central Bank, who is really the Government's banker, instead of putting a significant number of people through a significant amount of difficulty for a very long time and, in fact, pauperizing a basic part of our society. We do not think that we will do that at all. This Government continues to focus on the small man. We focus on making sure that he has the ability to educate his children, to house himself and his family, to feed himself and to have a good programme of health available to him.

Concerning the issues they talked about with respect to the police, the police service basically recruits individuals through the Police Service Commission. The Government has absolutely nothing to do with recruitment. In those circumstances, the statements that were made were extremely untrue.

Mr. Speaker, we have spent a long time here. The Government, through its interventions, explained today in very great detail, and on the occasion that we met in the past, where the resources were going. But remember that these resources are allocations and they are only going to be spent if the technocrats in the Budget Division of the Ministry of Finance believe that there are good reasons and there is documentation to support the spending. Therefore, from our side, we have absolutely no doubt in our minds that this \$3.1 billion of allocated resources will find its way into productive activity for the benefit of the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

Remember, that while we said all of this, we will still be contributing to the Heritage and Stabilisation Fund, which, during our period in office for this term, will be at the end of this particular year some \$10 billion. That would certainly set the stage for developments we are talking about and for giving us the kind of security that we want, should we find ourselves in a situation where our oil and gas resources are either depleted or do not do what we expect them to do.

At this time, Mr. Speaker, I beg to move.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved:

That this House adopt the Second Report (2006/2007).

FINANCE (SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION) BILL

The Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Sen. The Hon. Conrad Enill):
Mr. Speaker, I beg to move,

That a Bill to provide for the supplementary appropriation for the service of Trinidad and Tobago for the financial year ending September 30, 2007, of the sum of the issue which was authorized by the Appropriation Act, 2007, be now read a second time.

Question proposed.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a second time.

Question put and agreed to, That the Bill be read the third time.

Bill accordingly read the third time and passed.

Adjournment

Wednesday, June 06, 2007

ADJOURNMENT

The Minister of Works and Transport (Hon. Colm Imbert): Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this House now stand adjourned to Wednesday, June 13, 2007, at 1.30 p.m. On that day we will resume debate on the Finance Bill, 2007, and complete it. May I also tell Members that it is the Government's intention to debate the Bail Bill on Friday, June 15, 2007. Copies of this Bill will be circulated to Members tomorrow. The Bill will be introduced for its first reading on Wednesday.

Question put and agreed to.

House adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 11.06 p.m.