HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, January 14, 2011

The House met at 1.30 p.m.

PRAYERS

[MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Members, I have received communication from Hon. Jack Warner, Member of Parliament for Chaguanas West. The hon. Member is presently out of the country and has asked to be excused from today's sitting of the House. The leave which the Member seeks is granted.

PAPERS LAID

1. Thirty-second annual report of the Ombudsman for the period January 01, 2009 to December 31, 2009. [*The Minister of Housing and the Environment* (*Hon. Dr. Roodal Moonilal*)]

2. Annual administrative report of the Diego Martin Regional Corporation for the period October 2008 to September 2009. [*Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal*]

3. Administrative report of the Trinidad and Tobago Free Zones Company Limited (TTFZ) for the year 2008. [*The Minister of Trade and Industry* (*Hon. Stephen Cadiz*)]

4. Green Fund Annual Report for financial year September 30, 2010. [*Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal*]

FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT
(PRESENTATION)

The Minister of Finance (Hon. Winston Dookeran): Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I wish to present the first report (2010/2011) session of the Finance Committee of the House of Representatives of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on proposals for the supplementation and variation of the 2010 Appropriation.

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

The Minister of Housing and the Environment (Hon. Dr. Roodal Moonilal): Mr. Deputy Speaker, again I am extremely proud to announce that the Government is prepared to answer all the questions on the Order Paper. [*Desk thumping*]

Contracts Greater than $1 million
(Details of)

30. Dr. Keith Rowley *(Diego Martin West)* asked the Minister of Finance:

With respect to contracts greater than one million dollars entered into with local contractors for the supply of goods and/or services to Ministries, the Tobago House of Assembly and State Enterprises which are funded by the Treasury, could the Minister state:

(a) The total sum of certified payments made to all contractors during the period September 01, 2010 to December 01, 2010, for works done prior to June 01, 2010?

(b) The total sum of certified payments which exist and have not been paid as at December 01, 2010?

(c) The outstanding sums owing for works completed which are currently being evaluated but for which certification is yet to be established?

The Minister of Finance (Hon. Winston Dookeran): Mr. Deputy Speaker, question No. 31—[*Interruption*] With respect to contracts entered into with local contractors for the supply of goods and services to Ministries, Tobago House of Assembly and State Enterprises which are funded by the Treasury, could the Minister identify the projects and list of local contractors who have been paid—[*Interruption*]

Dr. Rowley: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have asked question No. 30. Could I get an answer for question No. 30, please?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Member for Tunapuna, Minister of Finance, the question under review is question No. 30 on the Order Paper.

Dr. Moonilal: Mr. Deputy Speaker, if we could; could we stand down the question?

Question put and agreed to.

Question stood down.

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS

Reduction of Crime and Violence

The Minister of National Security (Sen. The Hon. Brig. John Sandy): Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker and hon. Members for accommodating me in this august Chamber. Please permit me first of all to extend sincere wishes for

God's richest blessings to you, Sir, all Members of this honourable House, and, by extension, the national community for a healthy, productive and safe 2011, during which the incidents of criminal activity will diminish.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I wish to prelude my address to this honourable House by emerging from a point on which I am sure there is consensus among Members. It is recognized and accepted that crime is the most serious challenge our beloved country faces at this time. We recognize and accept that crime and lawlessness threaten the very fabric of our society. We recognize and accept that a lasting solution to the negative fallout of crime and its attendant evils can only be achieved if partisan politics and personal ambitions take second place to national development and safety of all.

We recognize and affirm that this Government places the highest priority on the immediate reduction of the present levels of crime and violence. Accordingly, Mr. Deputy Speaker, our intention is to reduce crime and the fear of crime, diminish gang warfare, restrict the use of unlicensed firearms, improve road traffic management, expose white-collar crime, improve customer service delivery, enhance public trust and confidence, engender community patriotism, reintroduce family values and virtues, and focus on the development of our youth through enhanced public information and education strategies.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Government of the People's Partnership is guided by the principle that the highest mission of society is the development of its citizens, both young and old. Accordingly, the commitment of our administration is to promote the process of people-centred development. It goes without saying that Trinidad and Tobago will not achieve a desirable future unless law and order, security of person and of property can be restored. In that context, the Government remains prepared to deal comprehensively with the issues which nurture an environment of crime.

Research conducted over the past three decades has shown that several factors influence the incidence of crime and violence in any society. These include poverty and inequality; unemployment and underemployment; the growing economic gap between the rich and the poor; the speed of urbanization; poor urban design; planning; management; lack of judicious parental guidance and the reluctance to pursue positive opportunities, among other factors.

As a consequence, crime and criminal activity require a three-pronged approach: suppression, which includes prosecution, intervention, and prevention. Mr. Deputy Speaker, over the last seven months, the Ministry of National

Security has taken steps to suppress the level of violence our country has been experiencing. We have brought a number of short-term solutions to the table and implemented them in the quickest possible time, all the while applying a holistic long-term approach to solving the crime situation.

There is an increase of routine mobile and foot patrol of our police officers in collaboration with the Trinidad and Tobago Defence Force, and an increase in roadblocks in high-crime areas across Trinidad and Tobago. We have also approved the appointment of a Commissioner of Police and Deputy Commissioners of Police; continued to build on the model police station initiative; increased vigilance and police range in the known gang areas with more stop and search operations; redeployed law enforcement personnel and other assets to deter the frequency of criminal activity, thereby implementing a more aggressive criminal investigative process to secure arrest of perpetrators.

We have begun the process to employ former members of the defence force and other protective services to man stations, while allowing a cadre of the younger policemen and women to supplement our requirements on the streets and in our neighbourhoods; a focus on a more user-friendly and customer-friendly atmosphere at police stations with victim support systems in place.

We have increased municipal police and transit police patrols. We have continued, through the police academy, to train our officers to carry out their duties professionally, and we are placing greater emphasis on the softer side of policing. The target is now to successfully graduate 800 new police officers annually. We have launched the Private Security Network Commission; a partnership between the law enforcement and private security companies.

We have approved in Cabinet the proposal for legislation that would regulate the private security industry. Systematically, we have dismantled an illegal wiretapping net. We have adopted a more stringent policing strategy, especially with regard to traffic and minor offences, and we have passed a new Communications Interception Bill with the anti-gang legislation and the Evidence (Amdt.) Bill being currently before Parliament.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this Government is on the path to transforming the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service in an effort to ensure that it can effectively and efficiently respond to the emerging demands of the 21st Century and beyond. The process to select the Commissioner of Police, which commenced in August 2007 when the vacancy was advertised, was ongoing in May 2010 when this Government took office. Fully appreciating the importance of appointing a

substantive holder to the position and in light of the increasing crime situation, the Government worked tirelessly to have their nominations finalized and approved by Parliament.

Within the Ministry of National Security, two agencies—the Special Anti-Crime Unit of Trinidad and Tobago and the Security Intelligence Agency—were assigned critical responsibilities, and were functioning without legislative framework to govern their operations. In an effort to regularize that situation so as to position these agencies to effectively support the strategic and tactical operational responses, the Government took the decision to establish a steering committee to oversee the restructuring of SAUTT, review its operations, make recommendations and report to the Minister of National Security on the outcome of that review.

We also undertook a comprehensive audit of the SIA and its operations. Given the urgency of the situation, the steering committee was given a three-month period to complete that exercise. The committee, which commenced work on September 21, 2010, has submitted its report which is currently under review by Cabinet. With respect to the SIA and its operations, Cabinet has agreed that there should be an amalgamation of that agency and the Strategic Services Agency, the SSA.

1.45 p.m.

Accordingly, on December 22, 2010 two deputy directors were appointed to the strategic services agency, an entity established by Act No. 24 of 1995 to oversee the merging of SIA and the SSA, and in so doing rationalize the intelligence gathering functions of the ministry. Arrangements for the appointment of the director are being finalized.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the primary goal of the Private Security Network Commission is to enhance public safety and security in Trinidad and Tobago. This is achieved through the establishment and maintenance of a forum of the interagency collaboration. The end result is the creation of a functional partnership between the police service and members of the private security industry. By engaging the more than 20,000 additional pairs of eyes and ears of security practitioners, the police service will be in position to transmit relevant information for appropriate law enforcement action.

The PSNC comprises 12 members and is chaired by the Deputy Commissioner of Police with responsibility for crime. It was officially launched by the Minister

of National Security on October 30, 2010. A total of 14 accredited private security companies was initially accepted to participate in the network, and the process is continuing.

The network is being implemented on a phased basis. This approach has seen a pilot implementation being employed in the West End Police Division, Port of Spain Police Division and the Morvant Police Station District, west of the Lady Young Road in the North-Eastern Division. These areas were identified for the pilot, owing to the high level of crime and violence experienced in these communities. The commencement of full operations is scheduled for this month, January 2011.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, for the period 2006/2009, approximately 211 new police officers graduated from the Police Academy Induction Programme. Today, the academy has almost doubled that figure with up to 390 graduating for the period 2009/2010. With the new intake model and the plan implemented by the Government of the People's Partnership, we are well on our way to doubling that figure to approximately 800 graduates annually, and we will provide all the needed faculties and facilities to the academy to get this done.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, some other figures coming out of the Police Service Academy should be noted. The Special Reserve Police Basic Training Programme currently, 221 officers are in training, with 41 available for deployment at this time, and the remaining groups will be available during the next two months as they complete their firearms training. Traffic Warden Training Programme: we are preparing to deliver a three-week training programme to some 150 traffic wardens from the Ministry of Works and Transport, which is scheduled for February of this year.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have introduced the Meet the Troops Initiative. This initiative provides the opportunity for officers of the Defence Force and protective services and all agencies under the Ministry to meet and hold discussions with the Minister of National Security at locations across Trinidad and Tobago. This initiative is mutually beneficial and allows officers a chance to personally meet and discuss their issues with the Ministers, while allowing the Ministers the opportunity to meet and listen to the officers directly, as well as share the Government's strategic vision for their divisions and the ministry as a whole.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, with respect to prisons security system, more stringent security measures are being introduced into our prisons so as to minimize

inmates' communication with persons external to the prisons, thereby reducing their influence on criminal activity, as well as avoiding the intake of contraband items into the prisons.

The CCTV surveillance system: Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Ministry is continuing its planned performance improvement by increasing the surveillance coverage at existing locations already on its network in Trinidad. We are also expanding to new locations in Tobago to cover the road and highway between the two locations, Crown Point Airport and the Scarborough Port. Currently, the CCTV network accesses footage at the frontage of 72 schools, which can allow principals the ability to detect criminal activity.

The Ministry of National Security is also collaborating with the business community, local government authorities and the Central Government to expand the CCTV system initially in the city and town centres and along the East-West Corridor as far as Sangre Grande and as far south as Point Fortin. Discussions also continue with the University of the West Indies on integrating its systems with other existing systems so as to improve communication and responses.

SMS texting: discussions are moving rapidly towards expanding the use of the mobile SMS system as it relates to advisories from the Office of Disaster Preparedness and Management. The strategy is to use the SMS system to alert persons in localized areas of risks or incidents. Persons may then be able to notify the authorities through the 555 system or 800TIPS. With the potential for many eyes on the community and alerting authorities, there is a likelihood that wrongdoers will be deterred or detected with greater frequency.

Analysis of serious crimes: Mr. Deputy Speaker, please allow me to provide this honourable House with information on some of the serious crimes as provided by the Crime and Problem Analysis Unit for the period 2008/2010. For the calendar year 2008, 20,566 serious crimes were committed. For the calendar year 2009, 21,932 serious crimes were reported; an increase of 1,366 serious crimes or a 6.64 increase over those years. For the calendar year 2010, 19,917 serious crimes were reported. Mr. Deputy Speaker, this represents a decrease of 2,015 crimes or a 9.19 decrease.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, let us now take a microscopic view of serious crimes for the period 2008—2010 for the months of June to December. For the calendar year 2008, 11,361 serious crimes were reported. For the calendar year 2009, 11,948 serious crimes were reported. This represents an increase of 587 serious crimes or a 5.17 percentage increase.

For the calendar year 2010, 10,753 serious crimes were reported. Mr. Deputy Speaker, this represents a decrease of 1,195 crimes or a 10 per cent decrease; and that is during the period June to December. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I repeat, serious crimes are down by 10 per cent for the period June—December 2010, as compared to 2008 [*Desk thumping*] as compared to 2008 and 2009 which saw increases for that same period.

Let me hasten to add that the hon. Prime Minister and Members of the People's Partnership are by no means pleased with the commission of serious crimes as exists in Trinidad and Tobago today. I would have been happy to stand here today and report that there were no homicides recorded for all of 2010. Unfortunately, I cannot. What I can say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, with optimism, is that during the tenure of this Government, incidents of serious crimes have diminished.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, for the period June to December 2010, according to police statistics, 260 firearms were seized by the police on operations. Ammunition recovered—5,057 assorted rounds. Cocaine seized and recovered—109.24 kilograms. Marijuana seized—2,024.4 kilograms. Additionally, the Trinidad and Tobago Defence Force through the coast guard conducted 703 patrols covering 27,104 nautical miles. Their successes include seized marijuana to the extent of 2,316 kilograms totalling 22,189, 275 and cocaine to the extent of 20.3 kilograms, one hand grenade, one AK-47 assault rifle and currency in excess of U.S. $15,000. The approximate amount of narcotics dumped at sea was 7,000 pounds. Discussions are also taking place at this time with the Chief of Defence Staff with respect to the acquisition of additional coastal patrol vessels to supplement surveillances of our territorial waters.

Legislative strengthening: Mr. Deputy Speaker, since the People's Partnership Government came into office in May 2010, we have reviewed our legislative agenda with the intent of introducing some crucial enactments that would enhance law enforcement's crime-fighting capabilities. Most recently, on December 16, 2010, the Interpretation of Communications Act was proclaimed. There are several other pieces of legislation which are currently engaging the interest of Members of Parliament, and which will collectively serve as part of a crime reduction plan. These include the Firearms (Amdt.) Bill, the Anti-gang Bill and the Bail (Amdt) Bill, as well as, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Trafficking in Persons Bill, the Regulation of Private Security Industry Bill, legislation to amend the Constitution to treat with the Police Service Commission, legislation to treat with precursor chemicals, further amendments to the anti-money laundering legislation and development of cybercrime legislation.

Intervention and prevention: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will now focus on intervention and prevention. Hon. Members, a part of Government's overall crime intervention and prevention strategy seeks to guide our youth away from a life of lawlessness and felonious activity, so that they can live longer, enjoy a comfortable family life and contribute to society in a meaningful way. Within the youth population of Trinidad and Tobago there has been an escalation of serious crimes. According to KAPPA, between 2009 and 2010, 933 serious offences were committed by persons between the ages of 11 to 18 years. A substantive number of serious offences are also committed by persons between the ages of 21 to 29 years.

2.00 p.m.

Based on various studies, this increase in youth offences in Trinidad and Tobago has been attributed to several issues, including growth of criminal gangs in urban districts, high availability of illegal firearms, juvenile delinquency in the school system and infiltration of the narco economy.

The Government has been involved in several programmes which targeted young persons at the community level and at the primary and secondary school levels. These programmes have incorporated retraining; tertiary education; loans; government-assisted tertiary education and technical skills training; military and academic training.

Pro-social programmes: the Ministry of National Security has been working in communities across Trinidad and Tobago, through its enhanced Citizen Security Programme (CSP). This has done tremendous research and work into alleviating crime at the community level. The CSP has made it a priority to work with our children, young people and families from several communities. The CSP is also playing a key role in a number of other community national programmes such as the National Mentoring Programme, the Pan Yard Initiative and the Morvant/Laventille Initiative. This programme could be recognized as the forerunner.

There is also Government's Community Patriotism Initiative, which is designed to build community patriotism with the establishment of community competitions and carries the message: "Compete in sports and culture and not guns and violence". As part of the introduction to the Community Patriotism Initiative, the Ministry of National Security successfully launched and implemented a series of concerts of hope. This novel initiative is primarily based on a partnering between our steel and brass brands from throughout the protective services and our steel bands and cultural performances by various performers from respective communities both in Trinidad and Tobago. I am extremely

heartened to announce that this initiative has been warmly embraced by the steel band fraternity and communities throughout Trinidad and Tobago. The Ministry of National Security is also supported in this venture by the Ministries of Local Government, Community Development, Sport and Youth Affairs and the People and Social Development.

The Concerts of Hope is intended to foster more meaningful community relationships between uniformed officers and members of the communities throughout the country, by regaining our citizens' confidence and winning hearts and minds. I am convinced Mr. Deputy Speaker, and hon. Members, that this kind of cooperation and interaction will assist in reducing crime and criminality in our country.

National Mentoring Programme: additionally, a National Mentoring Programme for high needs youth is being spearheaded by the Ministry of National Security, in collaboration with the Ministry of the People and Social Development; the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs; the Ministry of Education; the Ministry of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education and other stakeholders. We intend to launch the mentorship programme nationally in April 2011.

The National Adopt a School Programme (NAASP): additionally, the Ministry of National Security, in conjunction with the Ministry of Education, has also created the National Adopt a School Programme. The programme focuses on initiatives to be implemented after school and within regular school hours. Students will benefit from motivational talks, guidance counselling sessions, after-school clubs, et cetera. It is our hope that the principals of schools would, therefore, guide the programme administratively, in terms of the areas of interest that would be most beneficial to the schools. In this regard, officials of the Ministry of National Security this week met with principals at their respective zonal principals conferences.

The Morvant/Laventille Initiative: the Ministry of National Security will soon redesign the Morvant/Laventille Initiative, which has become the framework for a model for sustainable community development for communities within the east Port of Spain region. Primary Goals are to improve the quality of life within the community, through the effective delivery of policing and social service programmes. They provide relief and comfort to residents in the short to medium term and contribute to the long- term transformation and development of the community.

To date, the Ministry has taken several steps to advance this initiative. These include the establishment of a strategic partnership with the East Port of Spain Development Company and with British Gas Trinidad and Tobago; the hosting of

pre-planning sessions with key stakeholders; the holding of orientation workshops with community members and working groups; the provision of support for various youths and other family-oriented projects in the Morvant/Laventille area; and the identification of a site for the establishment of the Joint Services Community Centre and has received Cabinet approval for this acquisition. At present, the Ministry of National Security is in the process of establishing public and private partnerships to supplement the steering committee.

Other youth initiatives: work continues with our youth initiatives, such as the Trinidad and Tobago Cadet Force, the Civilian Conservation Corps and the two military-led academic and vocational programmes, MILAT and MPART. We see most of our defence force, protective services and cadet force personnel as being exemplars and role models. We, therefore, expect them to instil discipline and engender the value of hard work in our young people.

Upcoming initiatives 2011: in 2011, the Government will be implementing a number of new crime-fighting initiatives. Enhancing law enforcement: to increase police visibility, response and enhance deterrence, surveillance base will be installed along the Uriah Butler Highway in the first instance. A committee has been established to oversee its implementation.

For greater communication and police effectiveness, the Ministry will begin the process of equipping every police vehicle with the global positioning system (GPS) and linking with every police station, through an appropriate technology platform. Joint operations including air, land and sea assets will be launched more frequently with inputs from out-helicopter units. Given the increasing demands on police officers and the recognition of the dangerous environment in which they operate, a National Recognition Programme will be developed to honour those officers who go above and beyond the call of duty.

Establishment of the National Security Operations Centre to co-ordinate various activities, including the formation of teams in respect of intelligence operations and logistic support—this centre will serve as a dedicated platform for the launching of joint operations and the exchange of intelligence information among defence force, protective services and intelligence agencies. There was the introduction of the Fathers Day Initiative that simply asked fathers to bring their sons and come to a rally on that day.

Finally, I wish to give the assurance that the Government of the People's Partnership will do everything in its power to ensure that the crime rate is

reduced, so that citizens can enjoy their constitutional right to safety and security. We will do everything to ensure this surge is removed from our society, so our citizens can walk freely and without fear.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, hon. Members, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago will leave no stone unturned in fulfilling the mandate given to us by the citizens of this country as it pertains to crime and criminal activity. In this regard, we welcome all our citizens to partner with us, as with God's grace and help we seek to return peace and tranquility to Trinidad and Tobago. I thank you.

Crime
(Government's Commitment)

The Prime Minister (Hon. Kamla Persad-Bissessar): Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It is axiomatic that crime is the nation's number one concern and, therefore, this Government's number one priority. We welcome the statement and the report made by the hon. Minister of National Security.

Over the last seven months, we have reviewed much of what former governments have done. We have looked long and hard at the multiple initiatives and, as such, their failures and successes. Our findings have informed the many initiatives undertaken by our People's Partnership Government, but there is much yet to be done. In every tear shed by relatives of every murder victim, there is a desperate cry for justice. Mothers have lost their sons and daughters, children are left homeless, motherless and fatherless, homes are left without incomes, families destroyed and forced into poverty and worse.

The Government recognizes that there are multiple causes of crime, as was enunciated by the hon. Minister of National Security. We recognize that the war on crime cannot be won unless we use every weapon in our arsenal. The present crisis caused by the escalation in criminal activities over the past eight years is a multidimensional problem to which there is no single answer. A multifaceted approach is therefore necessary if we are to protect law-abiding citizens from harm and restore dignity and respect to the sanctity and value of human life.

Section 4(a) of our Constitution, as you well know, guarantees to each citizen the fundamental right to life, liberty, security of the person and enjoyment of property. This basic and fundamental right is under threat. The terrifying tsunami of crime has all but made a mockery of the State's ability to guarantee this fundamental right to citizens over the past 10 years. Our sons and daughters are no longer free to carry out their daily activities, as they live in fear and feel

threatened by the growing criminal element in our society. The harsh reality is that anyone can become the next nameless robbery or murder statistic. Innocent people have been forced to barricade themselves into their homes as they live in fear.

It is my Government's responsibility to restore respect and honour to the Constitution, which is the supreme law of our land. It is our duty to rescue and free our nation from the clutches and grip of criminals who rob, rape, kidnap and murder our loved ones. I refuse to let a small handful of devious criminals hold this nation to ransom, whilst they savagely attack and brutalize our society. The Government is committed to addressing frontally the challenge to fighting crime. We intend to retaliate with full force and strike back in the knowledge that the State has provided every opportunity and avenue for those who seek a new way of life to turn away from a life of crime.

Hundreds of billions of dollars have been spent on social and training programmes, designed specifically for young men and women from all walks of life, to facilitate their personal development and upward social mobility. Education, including vocational training, is free, accessible to everyone. There is, therefore, little or no excuse for choosing a life of violent crime.

The hon. Minister of National Security has enunciated some of the plans that we have and some of the actions already taken, because we see that there are many aspects to the multifaceted crime plan of the People's Partnership. We are committed to detecting and solving crime, and to this end we have already taken measures in the short seven months that we have been in office, and these include, at the very first early sittings of this Parliament, the appointment of a new Commissioner of Police and two Deputy Commissioners of Police, according to the law of Trinidad and Tobago. We did that very early o'clock in this Parliament.

The illegally operating Special Anti-crime Unit we have reviewed and will be restructuring. We have the report before us. It is before the Cabinet, in terms of redirecting and focusing the vast resources in the fight against crime on the ground. The restructuring and streamlining of our various security intelligence agencies are to facilitate the proper gathering of criminal intelligence. I heard it from someone on the other side that we are dismantling the security agencies and units and so on, and nothing is further from the truth.

2.15 p.m.

What we are doing we have been compelled so to do, because, with all that was happening and all the resources that were being spent, crime went up instead of going down. What we are doing is reviewing, reforming and restructuring these agencies to properly direct the focus on the fight against crime. We also had the passage of the Interception of Communications Bill, 2010 to prevent the continuing misuse and abuse of intercept abilities of the State, which engaged in the interception of private communication of law-abiding citizens.

All of us in this Chamber are aware of the introduction of the Anti-Gang Bill which specifically targets gangs and gang-related activities. May I say again, the former Prime Minister spoke of knowing Mr. Big—and the former Minister of National Security of knowing of the number of gangs—but yet the anti-gang legislation which had been drafted was never brought to this Parliament. We have brought it to the Parliament and it is engaging the attention of the Parliament.

We have also introduced the Bail (Amdt.) Bill to deny bail to gang leaders and gang members and repeat offenders. We have increased several grants and benefits that are available to the less fortunate in our society. We have created the Ministry of the People and Social Development which is dedicated to providing relief to the poor and needy in our society. We have increased the minimum wage from $9 to $12.50 per hour; we have increased the old-age pension to $3,000 per month; we have awarded a non-taxable special allowance of $1,000 per month to all police officers; we have provided the first-formers with laptops; we have introduced the Anti-Corruption Bill; and we have introduced procurement legislation which is presently engaging the attention of this honourable Chamber.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we intend to implement several further measures and these include, for example, new regulations for the prison service with special emphasis on the rehabilitative aspect of the prison system, and as the Minister of National Security has disclosed, the introduction of GPS technology in the police service and the outfitting of police vehicles with GPS transponders and tracking equipment and the introduction of high-tech CCTV cameras in various crime hot spots. I am advised by the hon. Minister of National Security that within the next month or two we are going to have a roll-out of these measures, that is to say, the GPS technology and the CCTV. I am advised that the CCTV cameras need some rehabilitation and work will begin on them very shortly.

The abolition of preliminary inquiries is engaging the attention of the hon. Minister of Justice and that piece of legislation will come to the Parliament. We have a comprehensive package of legislation directed at improving the pace of

criminal justice to expedite and to get swifter justice, which is also under the purview of the hon. Minister of Justice.

The completion of the DNA lab: we passed that piece of legislation in this Parliament long ago, and it has not been implemented as it should be. Again that is under the newly created Ministry of Justice, the forensic DNA lab that will be moving toward completion. The use of the Internet in the fight against crime by the establishment of a virtual command centre and the use of text messaging are some of the measures that we intend to roll out very shortly, in addition to those enunciated by the hon. Minister of National Security.

On May 24, 2010, the citizens of this nation voted comprehensively for change and change they must get. I have said elsewhere that we see 2011 as the year of delivery, delivery, delivery; more action and less talk. Today, murder is one of the most heinous crimes. The pain and trauma of the loss remain permanently scaring families of the victims who have been dispossessed of their loved ones. This is made worse by the fact that almost invariably these families are denied justice. For them, even when the murderer is convicted, that murderer is hardly ever made to pay for his crime; not this time. Unlike a former Prime Minister who boasted of knowing Mr. Big who was perpetrating bloodshed on our nationals, but chose to do nothing about it, this Prime Minister is prepared to walk the talk. [*Desk thumping*]

The continuing non-implementation of the death penalty is an issue of great public concern to the people of Trinidad and Tobago, and I dare say also to people of the region. I take this opportunity to make this statement on the status of the implementation of the death penalty so that the national community would be conscious of the status of this very significant matter.

I turn first to the existing law. The death penalty is the punishment provided by the law of Trinidad and Tobago. Section 4 of the Offences Against the Person Act, Chap. 11:08 provides that every person convicted of murder shall suffer death. That is the law of Trinidad and Tobago. The question as to whether a trial judge has a discretion whether or not to impose a mandatory sentence of death upon any person found guilty of the crime of murder in this jurisdiction was finally settled by the landmark decision of the Privy Council in the case of *Charles Matthews v the State*, Privy Council Appeal No. 12 of 2004. Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Privy Council ruled that the imposition of the death penalty was, in fact, mandatory and constitutional, it was not discretionary. So the law of the land is that, if you are convicted of murder, the judge must impose a sentence of death. He has no discretion in the matter.

The marked increase in the murder rate has led to a determined desire by the people of this country for the implementation of the death penalty. This demand is premised on the belief that frequency and ease with which murders are committed may be reduced by a clear demonstration that there are serious consequences for such disregard of the law and the lives of fellow human beings. It is the duty of the State to employ every means at its disposal to treat with the wanton disregard of the law by criminals.

During the period 1995—2001, the average murder rate per year was about 100 except in 2001 when the figure reached 151. In the following period, 2002—2010, there was a dramatic increase in the murder rate. I would let these figures speak for themselves. So, in 2001, 151 and during 1995—2001 an average of about 100. Mr. Deputy Speaker, 2002 the past administration entered; 172 murders; 2003, 229 murders; 2004, 261 murders; 2005, 386; 2006, 371 murders; 2007, 391 murders; 2008, 547 murders; 2009, 506 murders and in 2010, 472 murders. These figures show that in the last 10 years, with the exception of 2010, that the average murder figures were very high; an increasing trend. Every murder, whether it is one, two or 472, is a crime against the people and is abhorrent to every citizen of the national community.

I am advised that whilst the statistics as revealed by the hon. Minister of National Security revealed a decrease in serious crimes as compared to 2009, while I am happy to say this was so in the latter half of 2010, I welcome that decrease with a sense of hope and optimism, I see no cause for celebration as the murder rate continues to soar daily. An entire generation of fatherless and motherless children has been created by the criminal element in our society.

In the period 2002—2010, 3,335 persons have been murdered. This is totally unacceptable. These are alarming statistics for a country that is blessed with so much in terms of natural resource with a population of just about 1.5 million. What is particularly disturbing is the callous and casual manner in which the lives of some were taken. What angers us even more is the gruesome nature of some of these murders against innocent men, women and children. We cannot allow the situation to continue unchecked. We have tolerated it for too long and the change demanded by the population on May 24, 2010 calls for a radical and revolutionary vision and approach to our many inherited problems. I intend to heed that call in this cry for change. It is a cry for help as criminals have ruptured the very soul of our nation.

To this end, the People's Partnership Government has decided to introduce a Bill to amend the Constitution to facilitate the implementation of the death

penalty. We have incorporated into this Bill all the previous laws that were passed by this honourable House in 2000 whereby murders were categorized to strike a balance and appreciate the very circumstances in which a murder can occur.

We propose to treat with murder in three categories and not to impose the death penalty in all cases of murder. That Bill, the Offences Against the Person Bill, which sought to categorize murders, was debated in this Parliament in October 2000. The Bill was passed unanimously without any amendments with the full support of the then Opposition which comprises some of the Members who are in the present Opposition.

In outlining the PNM's position, former Member of Parliament, Mr. Fitzgerald Hinds—a former Member of this House and now a Senator in the other place—said:

> "…we on this side support any measure that is designed to bring some improvement to the law of murder as it now stands, and in principle, and in general terms, we support the amendments proposed to the Offences Against the Person Act. I thank you."

There was no real debate then on October 13, 2000 on that Bill, because there was agreement by both parties that it was necessary and proper. That law was never proclaimed. Some legal experts have expressed the view that such a law in any event requires a special majority and would be better housed within the Constitution than within the Offences Against the Person Act, Chap. 11:08. The present Opposition has publicly supported the enforcement of the death penalty. However, no real or meaningful steps to secure implementation have ever been taken.

The PNM, in a press release dated May 09, 2007, congratulated the then Prime Minister, Mr. Patrick Manning, for and I quote:

> …'his insistence that he intends to enforce the death penalty'…" which has shown to be overwhelmingly supported by the people of Trinidad and Tobago."

In an article carried in the *Newsday* published on Friday, May 11, 2007, PNM PRO Jerry Narace criticized the Privy Council and stated that the party was in full support of the death penalty. I quote one sentence from that article which reads as follows:

> "Narace said that the death penalty was both the current law of the land and a measure which opinion polls have shown enjoy overwhelming public support."

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in the circumstances, the Government anticipates the full and unconditional support of the Opposition in this matter. There is no room for partisan politics when it comes to the fight against crime. Responsible and mature leadership is needed to rescue our nation from this abyss of crime.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we proceed on the assumption that the PNM has not changed its position on this very critical matter in the fight against crime. Let me hasten to add that the death penalty was and remains the law of Trinidad and Tobago. This Bill does not introduce any new penalty. The Constitution (Amdt.) Capital Offences, Bill, 2011 laid on our Order Paper, does not introduce any new penalty, because it is the law of the land. It simply seeks to plug some of the loopholes that have been exploited and manipulated by murderers who have been properly convicted and sentenced to death according to law.

The Government of the People's Partnership is fully committed to the rule of law and to this end we will seek to give effect to the law of the land in relation to murders. However, the Government's commitment to upholding the law has resulted in difficulties in implementing the death penalty mainly because the convicted murderer has a constitutional right of appeal to the Court of Appeal and the Privy Council and also has a right to further petition the Inter-American Court of Human Rights to apply for presidential pardon by the Mercy Committee. And so the systemic and endemic delays in this process make it virtually impossible to implement the law of the land, that is to say, the death penalty.

2.30 p.m.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in looking at the concept of the categories of murder, we see that such is common among many states in the US. Most states allow capital punishment for first-degree murder. First-degree murder is defined as an intentional killing by means of poison or by lying in wait or by any other kind of wilful, deliberate and premeditated action. Second-degree murder is homicide committed by an individual engaged as a principal or an accomplice in the perpetration of a felony. Third-degree murder is any other murder, for example, when the intent was not to kill but to harm the victim. That is in most of the states in the US.

In Germany, murder is categorized into three groups: detestable—motive/reason of the criminal for which life imprisonment is a penalty; detestable—way of committing the crime, 15 years; detestable—purpose/aim of the criminal, 10 years. In Australia, only Western Australia distinguishes between grades of murder. The state distinguishes between murder and wilful murder, which requires proof of an intention to kill. The distinction affects the penalty and parole periods.

In Canada, under section 229 of the Criminal Code, there are two categories of culpable murder. A conviction for murder carries a mandatory sentence of life imprisonment. In the case of first-degree murder, there is no parole eligibility for 25 years, and, in the case of second-degree murders, all murders which are not first degree, the period of eligibility is anywhere from 10 to 25 years. All other murders are treated as manslaughter.

For us here in Trinidad and Tobago, our prison service is in high gear towards fostering a system of restorative justice that is focused on crime reduction through a process of training and treatment of prisoners. The objectives of this new system would be the restoration and reintegration of prisoners back into society as a whole, assisting them to become contributing members of the communities and thereby reducing the level of crime that is currently plaguing our society.

One of the measures through which these objectives would be accomplished is through the replacement of the existing prison rules, which were made under the West Indian Prisons Act, 1838. We are in the process, and have almost completed, the revision of those rules. We will replace the existing prison rules with a new set of prison rules. These new rules will seek not only to satisfy international standards on the treatment of prisoners, but will also empower prison officers in a manner that would allow them to effectively manage the prison service and implement those systems that will bring about positive changes in the mindset and behaviour of prisoners in their charge. The new prison rules are currently receiving the attention of the Ministry of Justice and they are expected to be implemented within the near new future.

As we look at this issue of the death penalty, we may want to consider John Stuart Mills' view on liberty, being that, the individual ought to be free to do as he wishes, unless he harms others. Individuals are rational enough to make decisions about their good being and choose any religion they want, but government should interfere when it is for the protection of society and Mills explains as I quote:

> "…the sole end for which mankind are warranted, individually or collectively in interfering with the liberty of action of any of their number, is self-protection. That the only purpose for which power can be rightfully exercised over any member of a civilized community, against his will, is to prevent harm to others..The only part of the conduct of any one, for which he is amenable to society, is that which concerns others."

The Constitution (Amdt.) (Capital Offences) Bill, 2011, seeks to make provision in relation to the implementation of the death penalty.

Firstly, the Bill will include in the Constitution provisions for three categories of murder: murder one, two and three. We intend to restrict the mandatory imposition of the death sentence in relation to murder one. These will include, categorized as murder one: the killing of a member of the security forces, a prison officer, a judicial or legal officer acting in the performance of his duty; the murder of a witness or juror; murders committed by bomb and contract murders.

The Bill will also specify circumstances in which the death sentence or life imprisonment may be imposed for murder two and a classification of murder three as involuntary homicide. The categorization of murder will be enshrined in the Constitution. The provisions of this Bill with respect to the categories of murder by Act 90 of 2000, have not been proclaimed, were not given constitutional sanction in terms of the majority, and so the categorization contained in the present 2011 Bill will be housed and enshrined within the Constitution.

This Act 90 of 2000 has not been proclaimed, because it was not passed with that special majority. Jamaica passed similar legislation which retained the mandatory death sentence for certain categories of murder, but their law was struck down by the Privy Council in the case of *Watson v R 2004*, 4LRC at page 811. It was struck down on the grounds that the imposition of the death penalty was inhumane and degrading treatment, it was unconstitutional and did not have the sanction of the special majority that was needed in terms of breaches of fundamental rights.

Our legal advice is that any new legislation relating to the implementation of the death penalty that is not protected by the savings clause—and in this case, what we are doing is not protected by the savings clause—then it must be protected within the Constitution itself, so that it will not be squashed as a result of the decision in the Privy Council case of *Watson v R*. These provisions therefore need to be included in the Constitution which is the supreme law of the land.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, if I may just take two seconds more in terms of the categories of the murders as contained in the Bill; we talked of murder one, but there will be circumstances where what may seem to be murder two can be dealt with as murder one. So first of all murder one:

- The murder of a member of the security forces acting in execution of his duties or of a person assisting a member in acting;

- A prison officer acting in execution of his duties or a person assisting him; judicial or legal officer acting in execution of his duties, and it includes the murder of any such member of the security forces, prison officer, judicial officer or legal officer, directly attributable to the nature of his occupation;
- The murder of any person or the immediate family member of that person, for any reason attributable to the status of the person as a witness or party in pending criminal proceedings;
- Any murder committed by a person in the course of the furtherance of an arrestable offence;
- Murder committed by destructive device, as I said before; and
- Murder committed pursuant to an arrangement whereby money or anything of value passes to one person to another, a third party.

When we come to this category one, murder that is especially heinous, atrocious or cruel, manifesting exceptional depravity—from the word "depraved"—murder where the deceased was intentionally killed because of race, religion, nationality or country of origin.

Then we come to members of families and so on. Then we come to murder two. A person convicted of murder two shall suffer death in certain circumstances; that is to say, the penalty for murder one. Those circumstances would be where a person convicted of murder two shall be sentenced to death, if, before conviction of that murder, he has been convicted in Trinidad and Tobago of another murder, whether done on the same or different occasion. So this would be like a multiple murderer, where it would be dealt with as murder one. There are several other provisions within the Bill, which, of course, the details would be dealt with, but I thought I would take the time to point out the murder one category.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Bill first seeks to categorize murders: one, two and three, and, secondly, seeks to overcome the hindrances to implementation of the death penalty arising out of various Privy Council decisions such as pretrial delay, post-trial delay, legitimate expectation that the Mercy Committee would consider the findings of an international body and prison conditions.

The case of *Pratt and Morgan*, some of us may recall, requires the death penalty to be executed within five years from the date of sentence. The case of *Thomas Hillaire v Baptiste*, the Privy Council upheld the right of condemned persons to access international bodies to which Trinidad and Tobago had

subscribed, even if such bodies are unable or unwilling to deal with capital cases, within a reasonable time, so as to allow Trinidad and Tobago to comply with the *Pratt and Morgan* deadline.

The case of *Lewis v AG for Jamaica* opened the door for potential challenges to proceedings of the Mercy Committee by specifying that a condemned person must be notified that the Mercy Committee will be meeting to consider his case, be given all the information that the Mercy Committee may consider and be invited to make representation to the committee. The case of Lewis also suggested that deplorable prison conditions might be such as to aggravate the punishment of the death sentence as to amount to inhuman and degrading treatment. These have been some of the areas which have resulted in pretrial delay, post-trial delay and the net result is that the law of land, the death penalty, is not implemented. We are seeking in this Bill to address that.

When the UNC in government sought to address the murder rate in September 1998 by seeking to amend the Constitution to prevent delays in implementing the death penalty, the Opposition refused to support the measure. They voted against that Bill in 1998. This is not a time for political games. This is a time for action in the interest of the nation and our citizens.

I want to point out that it is not the intention to remove these impediments to implementation of the death penalty in such a manner that an accused is denied his constitutional right of a fair trial. The death penalty is to be implemented only after such a person would have exhausted all legal avenues. It is not that we intend, as happened in a previous regime, while the case was pending in the Privy Council, Glen Ashby was hanged. That is not the intention of this Bill. What is to be done is that the convicted person, the accused, will have all rights according to the law of Trinidad and Tobago.

The success or failure of passage of this legislation lies squarely on the shoulders of all of us in this Chamber and especially those on the opposite side. It requires a substantial majority, a three-fourths majority in this House and it requires in the Senate a two-thirds majority.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I urge the nation to pay close attention to what happens with this Bill. We must all rise and join hands to conquer the demon of crime. We must send a loud and clear message that the rule of law is alive and well in Trinidad and Tobago. This law will send a powerful message to those who are intent on wreaking havoc in our society and destroying innocent lives that we have come together, we are united and ready to confront them.

The People's Partnership is committed to restoring law and order in this country and those who do not intend to respect the laws of this land shall feel the full weight of this law and pay the ultimate price. We must act now before it is too late. I am not afraid to lead this charge against the enemy in the name of the rule of law, in the name of justice and in the name of law and order.

I thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

FINANCE (SUPPLEMENTARY AND VARIATION OF APPROPRIATION) (FINANCIAL YEAR 2010) BILL

Bill to supplement and vary the appropriation of the sum the issue of which was authorized by the Appropriation (Financial Year 2010) Bill, 2011 [*The Minister of Finance*]; read the first time.

Motion made, That the next stage be taken at a later stage of the proceedings. [*Hon. W. Dookeran*]

Question put and agreed to.

CONSTITUTIONAL (AMDT.) (CAPITAL OFFENCES) BILL 2011

Bill to amend the Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago to make special provisions with respect to capital offences [*The Attorney General*]; read the first time.

FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT (ADOPTION)

The Minister of Finance (**Hon. Winston Dookeran):** Mr. Deputy Speaker, I beg to move the following Motion standing in my name:

> Be it resolved that this House adopt the First Report (2010/2011) Session of the Finance Committee of the House of Representatives of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on proposals for the supplementation and variation of the 2010 Appropriation.

In so doing, may I point out to this honourable House that what is before us for consideration today covers six broad areas: firstly, the supplementation of the 2010 Appropriation, the variation of the 2010 Appropriation, the write-off of losses approved for fiscal year 2009; the write-off of losses approved for fiscal year 2010; transfer of funds between subheads of the same heads of expenditure for fiscal year 2009 and transfer of funds between subheads of the same Heads of expenditure for fiscal year 2010.

2.45 p.m.

The first proposal, Mr. Deputy Speaker, pertains to the provision for the supplementary funds of the order of $1.1 billion to fund urgent, critical recurrent expenditure to September 30, 2010. The second was for the variation of the appropriation for fiscal year 2010 in the sum of $568,842,187. The third proposal was for the approval of the write-offs in the sum of $6,575,467. The fourth proposal has to do with a write-off in the sum of $2,467,914.80. The fifth proposal was to note the transfer of funds between the subheads under the heads of expenditure in the sum of $646,325,916 for the 2009 fiscal year; and the final proposal was to note the transfer of funds between the subheads under the same heads of expenditure in the sum of $92,334 897 for the fiscal year 2010.

You will note, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the Finance Committee met on this matter and reported that this report be now laid before the House of Representatives. There are, indeed, two areas of increase in expenditure which were deliberated upon and now expressed in the Motion before us and there is one area in which there has been a variation of appropriation between different items.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the details of these proposals were circulated at the Finance Committee and discussed on Wednesday, January 12, where clarification was sought with respect to some of the proposed changes to the appropriation for fiscal year 2010.

In one instance, where the response was not readily available to the committee, a written response has since been circulated to all Members. In anticipation that, during the course of the debate these proposals will be addressed by various Members of the Government, permit me at this time to advise the honourable House on the proposals applicable to the heads of expenditure for which supplementary funding is being proposed.

Under Head 18, the Ministry of Finance has an increase of approximately $826 million that is being sought. This amount represents progress payments for the period November 2009 to April 2010.

Note that for the period November 2009—April 2010, in respect of the construction of the power plant by Trinidad Generation Unlimited at Union Industrial Estate, La Brea, these payments were made from advances from Treasury deposits with the expectation that the loan would have been mobilized from the external financial markets to replenish the deposit.

The 2010 fiscal year ended without the resources being mobilized so it became necessary to bring the expenditure on the power plant to account. As a

result, the sum of $826,064,606 is now required to retire those advances in accordance with section 17(1)(b) of the Exchequer and Audit Act, No. 69:01. This represents one of the outstanding Bills that have not been addressed at the time it should have been by the previous regime.

Under Head 36, the Ministry of the People and Social Development, an increase in the amount of $358.8 million is being sought. The amount represents increases in the level of payments under the senior citizens' pension, social assistance and disability grant. Consequently, an advance of $358,839,395 was issued from Treasury deposits to honour the commitments.

In the case of senior citizens' pension, the additional requirement was consequent upon the increase of the Senior Citizens Grant to $2,500, effective May 2010 and a subsequent increase to $3,000, implemented to the renamed senior citizens pension in September 2010. As a result, the sum of $358,839,395 is now required to retire this advance in accordance with section 17(1)(b) of the Exchequer and Audit Act, Chap. 69:01.

I venture to say, notwithstanding all the noises that have come our way as a result of this intervention to support senior citizens, this Government, perhaps, is now able to boast that we have provided substantial income for the senior citizens of this country as a first step towards a more comprehensive pension plan, which is now being worked upon.

It is necessary to have a variation on the appropriation in the sum of $568,842,137 for the 2010 fiscal year for two broad reasons. The first is with respect to the realignment of the provisions in line with the assignment of responsibilities to Ministers and the creation of new ministries as effected in the *Trinidad and Tobago Gazette*: one to retire advances from the Contingency Fund in the sum of $30 million for the conduct of parliamentary general elections and the local government elections in 2010 and to bring to account an outstanding sum of $36 million for which the Ministry of National Security had insufficient resources to meet, which represents the balance of disbursements made from the US Export Credit facility for the supply of four medium-term twin turbine helicopters.

Thirdly, to bring to account interest payment in the sum of $62 million made by the Central Bank of Trinidad and Tobago on behalf of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago in respect to three fixed-rate bonds, totalling $1.542 million sourced for National Insurance Property Development Company (NIPDEC) to finance the programme for upgrading road efficiency and for the procurement of

goods and services for the establishment of the Drivers and Vehicle Licence Authority of Trinidad and Tobago both of which fall under the Ministry of Works and Transport.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, these matters were dealt with in great detail at the Finance Committee meeting and I would not, unless requested, elaborate on the further details dealt with. They have all been enumerated and expressed in the supplement in the schedule of payments which accompanied the Motion before us relating to the Supplementation Variation of Estimates 2010.

This Motion has come in the context of Trinidad and Tobago's current financial challenges and, as you are well aware, this has been one of the major challenges that we in the People's Partnership have been able to confront head-on. We have done that in many different ways and in some ways it has created some additional noises, but we are sure that one of the important aspects of our deliberations in dealing with financial matters is to put the national balance sheet of Trinidad and Tobago on a safe and sound footing.

It is in that context that I want to raise just two additional challenges that have not become known to the public. One has to deal with the requirement on the part of the Government to honour a number of specific loans that have been created for the purposes of the previous government's expenditure.

Much that has happened in the public domain has not articulated the view that many of the investments that have taken place in the previous regime have been done through borrowing. What was left to this Government, upon assuming office, was to honour these borrowings and to extend them and to provide additional support wherever necessary for borrowings for the number of buildings that have been put in the country. I just want to outline a few.

This Government had to honour and extend a credit facility to UDeCott for the outfitting of offices at the Port of Spain Waterfront. Many are of the opinion that these buildings were built by public resources available to the past regime. The truth is they borrowed the money to do these things and this Government had to honour the commitment and the renewal of our commitment in this regard. For that particular expenditure, this Government had to underwrite $590 million to support that expenditure of previous times.

Secondly, the National Infrastructure Development Company (NIDCO), the National Network of Highways Project is another area in which substantial funds have been invested and financed through borrowings. With respect to this project, which was largely related to the Rapid Rail Transit Project, this Government had

to honour a loan agreement of $153,800 million to keep that particular facility alive and for work that has been done in previous times. That project, you will recollect, was of a total cost of near to $5 billion, but the loan facility that remained in our books with respect to the rapid rail project was to the order of $153 million.

Then there is the Ministry of Education Towers Project, also a project of UDeCott, for which this Government had to extend credit facility to the order of $561,440,000. In other words, $561 million had to be ordered. These were for projects started and done. Many were of the view that these projects were funded from the revenue of the country. They were funded from borrowings by the country.

3.00 p.m.

Another project of significance has to do with the UDeCott's Chancery Lane Project which required us to extend a credit facility of $720 million in order to honour that commitment of the past government. Since this Government had committed to continue with the commitments of the past and particularly the financial commitments of the past, it was necessary, therefore, in these projects I have identified, to provide $2 billion just to honour commitments of the previous government for expenditure which they undertook and which many people in Trinidad and Tobago felt were, in fact, being funded from recurrent revenue.

I thought I should lay this on the table at this time and this is only a partial list. As we go on we get more and more projects in which we have had to extend credit facilities. It was necessary for us to do so, so that we do not allow our credit to go into default, and in so doing, to protect the good credit name of Trinidad and Tobago. It was a substantial imposition that had to be met in a situation when the economic situation was not as good as it was before.

The other area that has created some challenge for which we are fully committed, has to do with the maintenance of the subsidy. While this Government is committed to so doing, it has now posed enormous strain on the Government's Treasury. My latest information is that over the year 2010, we have had to find over $3.2 billion in order to fund that activity. Much of this has been allocated in our Appropriation Bill, but we will require financing mechanisms to handle that.

I say that if only to establish the size, the complexity and the enormity of the fiscal challenges that were part of our stewardship over the last eight months. Not only did we have to maintain the social expenditure programme and to maintain the recurrent expenditure in the Government, we had to also honour these

commitments of the past within the constraint. I am pleased and proud to say that this Government, after eight months, has honoured every commitment of a financial nature that was imposed upon us—[*Desk thumping*]—and in that context it supports the view that a major objective of this Government's fiscal management was to put the national balance sheet back in order. [*Desk thumping*]

I have absolutely no doubt in my mind that, had we not changed course in this country, we would have had a collapsing financial situation. Thank God that the People's Partnership has come alive to try and put that in order. [*Desk thumping*] We have had to do this with great pain at times and at great cost, but we were assured that in so doing we are setting the foundation for a solid economic plan to develop over the next few years and that our own credit rating will be, in fact, supported by these measures.

It is important to understand that in honouring these commitments we had to not increase other things that could have been increased and to deal with the situation for which there is a lot of noise around at times. We are committed to handling the situation in such a way that, over time, we will be able to set the financial situation in place and then see the results of a growth strategy developing, and already we have begun to see that.

Another area that has been of some concern to the population—and some concern relating to the issue of the foreign exchange rate—we had two basic challenges: put the financial house in order and also ensure that there is stability in the foreign exchange rate. Those are the two basic requirements that informed our policy. A lot has been said about the foreign exchange rate and, very recently, the Member for Diego Martin West, in one of his outbursts, made mention that Trinidad and Tobago is about to face a devaluation. I would just like to put the situation as it is so that the population would understand how we have been carefully managing these issues.

In most instances, a country devalues when it cannot meet its foreign exchange commitments and has limited access to foreign borrowing. Trinidad and Tobago's level of foreign exchange reserves currently stands at US $9 billion. In addition, the country also has US $3.7 billion in the Heritage and Stabilisation Fund. This Government has also ensured that these commitments have been met.

In addition, Trinidad and Tobago has an investment grade rating and has unlimited access to loans from both commercial and multilateral sources. On this basis, Leader of the Opposition, there is no logic to the statement that the Trinidad

and Tobago dollar is about to be devalued. The statement flies in the face of common sense and elementary economic logic and, in our opinion, it is reckless. [*Desk thumping*]

Countries also consider devaluation as a means of strengthening the export sector. Devaluation will not help our energy exports where we are price takers. Exporters, as well as the IMF, support our view that the level of the exchange rate is not an obstacle to the expansion of non-energy exports. Thus, there is no cause for devaluation on trade grounds.

In addition, a devaluation is likely to place upward pressure on inflation and can hamper current attempts to bring the rate of inflation down, in line with the level of the country's major trading partners. One should also note that the country's exchange rate system is currently based on a floating regime, which means that the exchange rate can fluctuate within a band in response to changes in supply and demand conditions.

Dr. Rowley: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I thank the Member for giving way. Could the distinguished gentleman, the Member for Tunapuna, tell us from what document he is reading?

Hon. W. Dookeran: I am reading from my notes that I prepared. [*Desk thumping*] I am always careful when dealing with issues of exchange rates that I do not ad lib so that I do not create the kind of lack of confidence that your statement—[*Desk thumping*]—the Central Bank is committed to using the stock of foreign exchange reserves to maintain exchange rate stability. In the final analysis, statements about devaluation from public figures could be dangerous to our macroeconomic stability to the extent that they encourage individuals and businesses to hoard foreign exchange when it is not necessary.

I am just raising the real financial challenges against which this Appropriation Bill has been brought before Parliament for approval. In so doing, we must recognize what were some of the key challenges that we had to face beyond the fiscal and foreign exchange areas. You would recollect that some four months ago when we presented the national budget, we indicated a carefully-thought-out plan for the recovery of Trinidad and Tobago's economic situation, and in so doing we said we will start by setting in place the requirements for the resumption of economic growth. [*Desk thumping*]

In 2009, we had visited upon us a negative economic growth, and in 2010 we had a troubled economy trying to revive and recover from that extravagance that had taken place before. It is in that context that we outlined the new growth

strategy, and while I will not go into a full debate like we had during budget presentation, I should at least outline some of the basic premises upon which the growth strategy has been developed, some of which have to do with public sector involvement and a lot of it has to do with the private sector involvement.

The first requirement in trying to put our economy back on a growth pattern and to be able to sustain it has to do with the excess liquidity that is in the banking system, and that, therefore, requires us to have a new challenge to be able to allow the excess liquidity to be converted into business loans. It is a challenge for the banking sector; it is a challenge for the national community and it is a challenge for which I hope we will be able to put in place a policy framework to encourage it. Creating business loans through the banking sector is a number one requirement in setting the stage for recovery in the economic field.

The other area has to do with something that we have been facing for some time now and the fact that our non-energy sector continues to be a main user of foreign exchange, when, in fact, we should not try and convert to become a net contributor to foreign exchange. In very technical terms, this has been referred to so often in the statements on the economy that our non-energy fiscal deficit is growing each year. This is not a problem that started last year. It was, indeed, a problem over time, but what was of concern is that the size of the growth of the non-energy sector seems to be growing and growing.

Therefore, the time has come for us now to call upon the business community, working with them, so that we can convert the activities from merely consuming foreign exchange to at least supporting the creation of net foreign exchange. It is to that end we had put forth a very well articulated taxation environment. Many modifications have been made to the previous environment to provide a very attractive investment environment for the private sector to be able to convert their contribution to Trinidad and Tobago and become exporters.

I sometimes smile when I read some of the comments by some of the individuals who are, in fact, calling for more foreign exchange. They are the greatest users of foreign exchange, and there is nothing wrong with that, but they have no qualms in understanding that as a group there is need for them to have a private sector investment programme to convert their own contribution to Trinidad and Tobago from merely utilizing the resources of the energy sector to converting to the foreign exchange position of Trinidad and Tobago.

The policy framework has been put into place. The financing is available and now it requires some creativity. For too long, in my view, we have found a situation where the financing of Trinidad and Tobago has not allowed us to

encourage export-promotion in the way we should, and in the budget statement a number of steps were outlined—a number of specific tax measures were outlined—in order to encourage that environment. That is the second basis upon which the growth strategy has been predicated.

The third, and one that is well within the purview of the Government, has to do with the issue of the implementation of a Public Sector Investment Programme, and as you are well aware, during the budget debate we were able to allocate, notwithstanding the difficult economic situation, the sum of $7 billion for the Public Sector Investment Programme. Already steps are being taken in order to get that process in place.

You would recollect that not too long ago, one of the international financial institutions, the Inter-American Development Bank, having assessed the situation in Trinidad and Tobago, having seen the new energy that is emerging in Trinidad and Tobago's political system, having recognized that our policy framework is based on a solid recovery process, was able to provide us with financial support to finance the PSIP, and in the first tranche we had available to us US $100 million by the Inter-American Bank which has given very positive statements as to the future of Trinidad and Tobago.

This is not the step in the financing of the PSIP which we articulated in the budget. That is the third premise upon which we have developed our economic recovery programme.

3.15 p.m.

The fourth area has to do with the question of the energy sector and this is perhaps more medium term, but notwithstanding that, steps have been taken to do two things: to provide an environment that would support exploration, so that the question of supplies of gas and oil will not become an unlimiting fact as it was once. That regime has been in place and has already begun to attract investors in exploration activities in the energy sector. But beyond that, there is a need to attract investment in the sector in order to be able to articulate a greater confidence in the future of the energy sector. We have been able to do so with respect to one aluminium plant, and we will in due course be outlining the results of the deliberations that are taking place and a number of other energy projects.

What I can tell you as the Minister of Finance, every week, almost every day I am requested to meet with people from outside who have now been demonstrating a new confidence in this Government to invest in the energy sector. [*Desk thumping*] Of course, all these have to be assessed in the context of the

development objectives and that is what our technical people have been engaged in. That is the fourth pillar upon which the growth is going to be resumed and the recovery process will be built.

The fifth area, Mr. Deputy Speaker, has to do with what we call the service sector in Trinidad and Tobago. The service sector really comprises three very fundamental components. One is do deal with the area of finance; two, to deal with the area of the leisure industry which includes tourism; and the third, is to deal with the area of ICT industries. All three areas have had incipient growth in Trinidad and Tobago and it is our intention given the fiscal regime that we have put into place and the promotion of investment in these areas—I know that the Minister of Trade and Industry has had discussions with a number of people to develop further the areas of the service industry in Trinidad and Tobago, particularly, in the area of the leisure industry in Trinidad and Tobago. Those are the fundamental hard issues that we have to confront. We have to put into place those kinds of basic pillars upon which our growth has been based.

What you can see, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that this Government never runs from a problem. It gets on and deals with it head-on and provides a professional solution to handle it. [*Desk thumping*] That is why I have taken the opportunity to simply go over, for yet another time, some of the elements of the economic strategy that we have outlined. So much so, we still have challenges to overcome, but we are seeing some kind of light as we begin to see the articulation of this new policy framework, the articulation of the new confidence that is being built, and at the same time we are seeing the prospect for this country returning to an economic growth path.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will quote one paragraph from the Article 4 Consultation dealing with the issues before us, and this is what it said:

> The immediate challenge is to provide a policy mix to support economic recovery while completing the resolution of a large failed insurance company. The medium-term challenges are sharply raising fiscal savings to reverse the recent increase in public debt and prepare for the projected decline in energy results, while securing adequate investment and social spending to promote diversification and new economic space for Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the outline of the programme that I have just simply gone through for yet another time, is simply to set in place the fundamentals for recovery and economic growth. But we are doing so with a careful eye on the issue of social spending and, on the issue of providing social support. You would

recollect that in the budget debate we articulated that we had provided, I believe somewhere in the order of 18 per cent of our GDP on the social programmes. Many of these social programmes were articulated before our time, but we were careful not to deny the people any of the entitlements of the past while we change the prospects for more permanent kinds of entitlements in the future. [*Desk thumping*] That is why we will be working towards the redesigning of such a kind of approach to deal with the social programmes.

In spite of the fact that this Government has been saddled with enormous financial burdens on its Treasury, more than normal in a recessionary period where the growth has been reduced, in spite of that, we have been able to maintain the level of social expenditure in the fields of education and social support, and we have indeed increased it in the area of pensions in Trinidad and Tobago. If that does not inspire confidence for any independent person looking at Trinidad and Tobago, nothing will, and I invite the hon. Leader of the Opposition to take comfort that his Government in Trinidad and Tobago is in fact pursuing a different path, a departure from the past towards a more sustained future ahead of us. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do not wish to go into any greater detail. Many of these things have been outlined before, but I thought that I would just place this in the context of our challenges. Let me say that in terms of the thrust of this Government, it has been to do three things: to establish the recovery process as I have outlined; to support a sustainable programme for social development, and, at the same time, to maintain a sense of prudency in economic management.

We have put forward a programme to deal with the failed financial institution and, notwithstanding the fact that there are some who have argued that the programme is not sufficiently embracive and should be larger, and here I deal with the Clico issue. I must tell you that today when I read an article in the newspaper of January 14 on the business page of the *Trinidad Guardian*, "Judge approves US $7.2 billion deal for Madoff investors", dealing with one of the biggest schemes that failed in the world and generated the tremors in the financial sector, internationally— But when you read this document, you will see that they claimed US $20 billion and the judge eventually decided on US $7.2 billion. In Trinidad and Tobago, the way we have handled that situation, we have provided almost 80 per cent support to those who are affected by that crisis.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I say that in the context of what is happening globally, because what is happening globally is one that we must learn from, and within recent times we have seen the effects of not having a proper macroeconomic

framework reflecting itself in many countries of the world and reflecting itself here. We can now be assured that in Trinidad and Tobago we have been able to put the arithmetic of the budget in such a way that we can feel assured that we can set this country back on the path of sustained growth. There are many issues still to be dealt with and we are not totally out of the darkness. I want to stress that. It will take some time before we can see these particular plans articulate themselves in tangible ways. But in the end what we are concerned about is dealing with issues of inflation, to dealing with the issues of unemployment, dealing with the issues of poverty, dealing with the issues of economic growth and dealing with the issues of sustainable development.

Those are the commitments that we have outlined in the People's Partnership Government's manifesto. Those are the commitments that the people of Trinidad and Tobago voted overwhelmingly for. Those are the commitments that we intend to put into place and we have set the foundation to make sure that the People's Partnership manifesto in providing these objectives can be realized, but we are not in any way influenced by dreams that cannot be realized. We are doing this in a manner in which we are responding to the situation, confronting the situation and dealing with it as it comes. I am confident that this country will soon begin to understand how we are charting this course for economic recovery, and how we are putting in place carefully the elements for that recovery process to take place.

The Bill before us is but another example. In spite of all the problems that we are faced with, we have been able to come here not for any kind of Bill that will require us to have more revenue measures, not a Bill that will require us to increase necessarily our deficit, but a Bill that will contain the deficit and will maintain the debt position. I must tell you that we have to embark on financing some of our development projects, but we are interested in not financing what really are the dreams that are in someone's head, we are not about trying to finance churches, we are not about trying to finance high buildings, we are not about trying to finance something that people believe is the symbol of development, we are about financing the substance of development in Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I beg to move.

Question proposed.

Dr. Keith Rowley (*Diego Martin West*): Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I made a visit to Laventille last weekend and I thought it was simply to meet and talk with the people of Laventille, but I had no idea that such a simple act would

have generated such an important response from the Government of Trinidad and Tobago. Because all along we have been trying to find out what is happening with the business of the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

This afternoon, the Minister of Finance outlined for us the basis of the Government's management of our economic affairs, and he told us that it is based on "prudency." So now know why we are confused. All the time we are trying to find what is going on in Trinidad and Tobago under this Government, we now know it is "prudency."

3.30 p.m.

Because, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if they were elected to be thespians, notwithstanding the grandstanding of the Minister of Finance, what would have been said this afternoon is that "Mr. Malaprop" has spoken, because there is no such word as "prudency".

Mr. Imbert: Prudence.

Dr. K. Rowley: There is no such word as "prudency". So when we are talking serious business in this Parliament and the Minister of Finance tells us that the policy they are pursuing is prudency, I am concerned. [*Interruption*] And then—[*Interruption*]—as the main discourse of the afternoon—[*Interruption*]—Mr. Deputy Speaker, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Members, the Member would like to be heard in silence and that is his right based on the Standing Orders that we are using. Member for Diego Martin West?

Dr. K. Rowley: And then, Mr. Deputy Speaker, he goes on to prepare and lay the groundwork for a discourse on devaluation, and I hope that, having done so, all Members of this House will take the opportunity to discuss the issue of devaluation. Now, the basis of anything that he said that might have made sense had to do with treating with a misrepresentation that I said that the Government is about to devalue the currency. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am sure my speech in Laventille was recorded somewhere, but I can tell you without fear of contradiction, I never used the word "devaluation".

Mr. Sharma: Nonsense!

Dr. Moonilal: What?

Dr. K. Rowley: Not once. Not even once. I never used the word "devaluation". [*Interruption*] Mr. Deputy Speaker, please?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Members, please let the Member speak in silence.

Dr. K. Rowley: So, it makes me wonder; why would the Minister of Finance come and make the basis of his presentation of this Bill a total falsehood? Did he hear my statement? Where did he get that from? In fact, if he was following my speech in Laventille, he would have heard the following discourse. What I said in Laventille was that we as a country at this time are pursuing deficit financing and borrowing is easy at this time. Because our ability to borrow—there is a fact—is based on the soundness of our financial situation at the moment and, for a year or two or three, we will borrow.

But borrowing by itself is not the end of the story, because when you borrow you will then have to repay, and while borrowing now looks like a simple way out, we have to focus on the period of repayment which will begin to stress us in year three or four or five ahead of us; and what we have to look for then is whether we have an ability to repay without pain.

So when we borrow to support our expenditure level, we have to be sure that we have a revenue side to deal with the repayment of our borrowing; and since this Government has brought the economy to a halt and our economy is stalled, and we see no prospect of growth and we know of no growth taking place in the economy, we now have to be concerned that a time will come down the road where the borrowing now cannot be repaid and then we have to be concerned at that time about the dreaded "D" word. That is what I said.

On the basis of that, our Minister of Finance comes here and gives us a discourse—

Dr. Douglas: What is the dreaded "D" word?

Dr. K. Rowley: Let me tell you what the "D" word is, in case you all did not know. I want to take you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I would like to ask to crave your indulgence to quote copiously from documents I have in front of me to assist the Minister of Finance; because, according to the Minister of Finance, I am supposed to not mention the word "devaluation" or the "D" word—any "D" word—because the strength of our currency in this country would rise or fall based on somebody mentioning devaluation. That is what he is saying, you know.

Even when I did not mention it, he ascribes it to me, sets up the straw man and attacks me for it. I am the Leader of the Opposition in Trinidad and Tobago. That is my job. I get paid every month for that. I am not being—it is not a favour. I am

a hired officer of the State; and if an issue about our economy and our finances and our ability to earn foreign exchange is in front of us, it is my job to respond to it, whether the Minister of Finance likes it or not; notwithstanding the fact I did not use the word.

But I am simply saying, I reserve the right to speak about devaluation if I see it is required in a discourse I want to have with the people of Laventille, Carapichaima or Tobago. If the Minister of Finance believes that our economy will be protected only because somebody does not mention that dreaded word, then we now understand how the "prudency" works.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, here is the Leader of the Opposition being chastised for saying in Laventille that somewhere down the road, if we do not make sure that our economy grows so we could pay the money we are borrowing now that we could face the dreaded "D" word. Let me tell you what was published in the *Trinidad Express* newspaper on December 08. On December 08, this was published in an article written by Jason Julien, a financial analyst, under the headline, "Dollar Whine." Jason Julien had this to say:

> "Every once in a while the dreaded D word comes up—'devaluation'. By the way, let me take a moment to point out that technically our currency is a managed float versus a fixed rate system and as such any decline in the currency value is called a 'depreciation' and not a 'devaluation'."

The analyst goes on to say:

> "Both terms effectively mean the same thing but devaluation is used in the context of a fixed rate regime and depreciation in a floating rate regime."

Why did the Minister of Finance not take issue with Jason Julien when he published in the newspaper for all to see that devaluation is mentioned saying that devaluation and depreciation are one and the same? One and the same. He comes here and talks from beginning to end, carrying on his campaign speech, blatant malapropism as Government policy but, in the meantime, making no mention whatsoever of the substance of any useful debate in this Parliament. You see, Mr. Julien, in this article was talking about a decline in US dollars being put into the system by the Central Bank, and he said:

> "Unfortunately, these statistics mean that less foreign exchange has been injected into the system compared to the previous period."

And I will come back to that.

He had no comment to make then. He did not engage the analyst who published his opinion and his expertise in the papers. He did not put a zipper on his mouth and tell him to not mention depreciation or devaluation, but he comes to scold the Leader of the Opposition that I should not, in doing my duty, mention the word even when I had not mentioned it.

Then, Mr. Deputy Speaker, one has to wonder if he reads the newspapers in the country, because not too long before that, in another article in the *Trinidad Express*—this time November 24—Angella Persad, in this article says "Devaluation fears WORRY currency buyers"—not Angella Persad. This is an *Express* article headlined:

> "Devaluation fears WORRY currency buyers."

So if the use of the word "devaluation" by the Opposition Leader was going to trigger something negative, what did he have to say when this article was published on November 24? Hear what it says:

> "…investors and private individuals were looking to take US greenbacks out of the system and try to invest them in overseas facilities…"

In the meantime, whether he likes it or not, whether he whispers it or not, whether it is published or not, the exchange rate has moved from $6.30 to $6.45. That is a fact. That is a fact. If that is the extent of his movement, we do not know, but it has moved. I do not know if it is because of anything I said, or anything that was published here, but published in the newspapers:

> "Devaluation fears WORRY currency buyers."

He goes on to say—and the quotation here now is the writer talking about a conversation with the head of a local bank, Mr. Young; one of our eminent bankers in the country. Maybe the Minister of Finance must tell him what words he should use and what subjects he must discuss, because Mr. Young says:

> "…some people have always had the idea of devaluation of the TT dollar and this may have also led to pressure on the greenback, with individuals switching from TT dollars to US dollars as their currency of choice.
>
> He admits there is a backlog for currency because much has gone toward the country's trade bill but pointed out last week that the Central Bank was expected to inject about US $200 million in the system to ease the demand for US dollars."

He goes on to say that:

> "…sales of foreign currency amounted to $3.9 billion and in the first nine months of the year the Central Bank intervened…
>
> But the persistent tightness in the system continues to worry the business community."

That is the banker talking.

My colleague from Tunapuna, the Minister of Finance, is coming here to accuse me and have his cheerleaders thumping their desks. [*Laughter*] After his "prudency" statement, thumping their desks. What that tells me, we are in big trouble in Trinidad and Tobago, because we have a Minister of Finance who does not know what he is doing and there is nobody in the Government who knows that he does not know what he is doing. Right? He says that because I might have mentioned—which I did not do—devaluation last Saturday, the country is going to suffer; they all shouted across at me, "irresponsible", for what I do not know, but here is Mr. Young, who runs one of our most successful banks in the country, telling the world:

> "…the persistent tightness in the system continues to worry the business community."

That is published information in this country, and if that does not signal a concern of confidence, then I know that the Minister of Finance does not understand his job.

He goes on to mention difficulty paying their bills. I do not know who they represent, but my constituents tell me all the time that if you go to the banks to do any business of any kind involving US dollars, you have some issue. It may not be available either in time or in quantum; but they would like you to believe that if you turn away like the ostrich and put your head in the sand and do not mention the word, that they can come here and continue their campaign speech and we will believe all is well.

Then he goes on to say:

> "Investors become reluctant to get involved in a market in which there is such a persistent shortage of foreign exchange."

The question we have to ask ourselves is: are we embarking upon a period of such?

Instead of the Minister of Finance coming here this afternoon, since he wanted to discuss devaluation, and telling us serious stories about the nature of our currency; the band within which it will move; the availability and so on, and

discussing it in the context of what Mr. Young has been discussing it publicly, he comes here this afternoon and wastes a whole 75 minutes giving us the belief that if IDB public servants say he is doing well, then he is doing well. The Minister disregards what Angella Persad says; disregards what Richard Young says; disregards what the Leader of the Opposition here says, and listens to what some nameless, faceless person from the IDB says and reads some report and tells us all is well.

We live in this country. The only people in this country who believe that all or anything is going well are the 29 people in the UNC Government. [*Desk thumping*] They are the only ones.

Dr. Rambachan: Because we have faith in this country.

Dr. K. Rowley: Richard Young goes on to say:

> '"This persistent shortage gives rise to the question—it must.'
>
> He said…"

You are talking about 101 Economics? Finance 101? Richard Young gave you a lesson here. You did not read it.

> "He said in basic economic theory a product that is in short supply will usually rise in cost, and therefore if the US dollar is persistently in short supply there will be upward pressure on its value to the Trinidad and Tobago market."

That is Richard Young talking to the country, not the Leader of the Opposition. That is 101 finance. Right?

3.45 p.m.

Do not point your finger at me. I am simply doing the job of Leader of the Opposition. I would have liked you to respond to this and comfort the country that we are not entering a stage of persistent shortage and the concern that Richard Young published in the newspapers in the interview, that there is no basis for that.

We know the fact. We know what the US dollar value is today, the exchange rate. What does he think; that we came in here not knowing what it is? It is $6.45 today. Carnival is coming in a few weeks, what will it be next week? People will be running to take from visitors whatever US dollars they bring into the country and that could be the beginning of a black market and then the exchange rate will

follow it. The question I want to ask the Government: Is there a decision within the Government to allow the currency to move in that way and surreptitiously change and devaluate it? Answer that. Do not misquote me from my meeting in Laventille.

These are serious questions about how our economy is managed and no amount of demonizing me for something I did not say would change the fact that our affairs are being mismanaged. I want to tell you something, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Nothing that this Government says or appears to do should be taken at face value. Nothing!

This is a Bill adjusting the budget. The two most important pages in this document are page 140 and page 141. The Minister of Finance spoke at length, even fabricating stories ascribed to me, and made no mention of the only pertinent part of this document, page 140, that shows the increases in expenditure to be incurred, $1.745 billion. Page 141 shows the decrease in expenditure to be incurred, $560 million. So if you, having juggled around the Heads to satisfy the new ministerial configurations, at the end of the day are increasing Heads by $1.7 billion and, on the other hand, you are decreasing Heads by $60 billion, the net effect of that is an increase of almost $1.2 billion in the budget before us. The Minister of Finance does not mention that at all, at all—the only pertinent thing in the document.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when we passed the budget here, it was passed with the largest amount of expenditure in the history of this country. There was a revenue side that was very questionable and very shaky. From this position I pointed out—

Mr. Dookeran: Allow me to make a point. The increase in appropriation has to do with the 2010 appropriation; not the 2010/2011 appropriation and they have already been taken care of in the balancing of the 2010 accounts.

Dr. K. Rowley: Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is an increase in what the expenditure was. The Government still has to tell us what the true outturn of 2010 was. That is a different story for a different time.

The Minister spoke for 75 minutes on all kinds of things in a situation where we are varying the budget and there was not a word about our revenue challenges, especially our revenue challenge in foreign exchange where that challenge is resulting in movement in the currency. He is the one who started the devaluation story. It was the Minister of Finance who put devaluation before us this afternoon.

Having done so, let me draw your attention to a publication, a statement given to the country by the Prime Minister, centre spread in the *Guardian*. This is paid for, I presume.

The first thing in there, as we are talking about foreign exchange inflows and the relationship between the exchange rate and all that—I am quoting here from the Prime Minister addressing the country.

> In addition, there are developments which show that this country remains a preferred destination for foreign investment.

Where are those indications? Where are these foreign exchange inflows coming from? Which projects are bringing them in? I am not talking about expectations and hope for some nebulous time down the road. She answers the question:

> Panama has approached us for a partial scope agreement.

That is the Prime Minister's description of investment inflows.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, a partial scope agreement is simply one that you will sell in my market and I will sell in your market. As a matter of fact, what the Panamanians want to do is not to bring foreign exchange into our country but to sell us Panamanian goods. In this partial scope agreement, instead of having a whole Caricom agreement, they will have an agreement with Trinidad and Tobago and Caricom allows that to happen. How can that be viewed as some potential or existing inflow of foreign exchange?

The other proof is that the Vice-Minister of Japan recently visited Trinidad and Tobago. What does that represent in terms of foreign exchange? In the meantime, while it springs from the visit, the exchange rate is moving in the wrong direction. She then goes on to say that Ghana has approached us for help with respect to hydrocarbon development.

If we are going to Ghana to help the Ghanaians, I presume we are going to throw in foreign exchange in providing service to them. Where in the fiscal arrangements is that in the 2011/2012 budget? These are what have been put forward to us as the foreign exchange investment earnings potential and the country has to understand that.

I asked earlier within what time frame is the tightness of foreign currency projected to be. We want an answer from the Government. The Minister talked about the currency floating within a particular band. What is that band? What is your projection? It has moved from $6.30 to $6.45 without your saying anything

to us. There is concern about it in the country, but the Prime Minister volunteers to publish in the newspaper that there is no crisis of confidence in the economy. I presume then that she is answering the PNM who said that there is a crisis of confidence in the economy.

Do not try to answer us. Answer the people in the business community; the banker who cannot find people to lend money to; answer the people who have money in the bank and they cannot earn interest; answer those to whom the banks are saying: "We do not want your money because we cannot pay you any interest." In fact, very soon we may have to pay banks to hold our money; but you are publishing in the newspaper, for those who do not know or would not know, that there is no crisis of confidence in the economy; and, of course, take comfort in the fact that we have been approached for billion-dollar investments. Well, do not keep it a secret. Tell us what these billion-dollar investments are likely to be, so that we can at least have some confidence that something real is in the pipeline. Do not just tell us that you have been approached because we would not believe you because you do not speak the truth.

Let me demonstrate, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I do not make statements lightly. When I tell the Minister of Finance that we do not believe anything he says, look at what has happened here today which calls into question the veracity of the Government and more so the Minister of Finance.

Last Wednesday, we met in this Parliament. Let me go a bit further back. The Minister of Finance has in front of us today this variation of the budget and I hope my colleague, the Member for Oropouche, will tell me what the variations here have to do with 2011. Is it? But he told the Senate that he has paid $2.7 billion to contractors in the period September to November. You know that might have been a good thing, but the trouble is that we saw no evidence of it in the economy because we enquired whether this payment was made and we are finding out that we can find no significant number of contractors to whom that kind of payment was made.

I filed a question in the House and it came up for answer on Wednesday. The Leader of the Government Business got up and told us in the House, with great aplomb and cheers from his colleagues, that they were answering every question that day. I ignored that.

When question time expired, question No. 30 was not answered. Question No. 30 was the question about payments he said he made to contractors. When questions are not answered by 2.15 p.m., as you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they are to be circulated in writing.

I enquired one hour from 2.15 p.m. until midnight what is the answer to question 30 and, at midnight, I was informed by the Parliament that the Government had asked that question No. 30 be deferred. So there was no answer to question No. 30.

Before that, a strange thing had happened. We started answering questions, under the Government's guidance, from question No. 29 backwards.

Hon. Member: 'Doh' lie.

Dr. K. Rowley: That never happened?

Hon. Member: Yeah, but 'doh' lie.

Dr. K. Rowley: Please. So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, question No. 30, having not been answered on Wednesday, they said it was available for answer; because if they had answered all questions as they said, question No. 30 would not have returned to the Order Paper today. Having not answered it on Wednesday; having asked for a deferral on Wednesday, surreptitiously, while they told the country they were answering all the questions, you saw what happened. I am asking for an answer to question No. 30 and the Minister of Finance is trying to answer question No. 31.

Dr. Moonilal: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I thank the Member for giving way. On that day, there were nine questions on the Order Paper and the Government was prepared to answer the questions. The question and the answer were with the Minister. They had to draft it up properly to submit in a written form. That was not done in the evening.

You will recall that questions 30 and 31 were on the Order Paper, one for oral answer and one for written. They deal essentially with the same subject matter. This is why today the Member deals with the written answer. They are essentially the same matter and he was prepared to answer the oral question on Wednesday.

Dr. K. Rowley: Mr. Deputy Speaker, do not trust them. The more they talk, the more they demonstrate how untrustworthy they are. If you were supposed to answer on Wednesday and it turns from oral to written, the Standing Orders require that you circulate the reply, Sir. Today is Friday. There is no written answer and if they did not have it, the Leader of Government Business should have got up and said just what he said. That did not happen. I asked for the answer to question No. 30. In the end, no answer was given as to whether in fact contractors have been paid, the long and short of the story.

Even so, I have a series of questions for written answer that were supposed to have been answered. Question No. 18, since December 08, 2010, I have not seen

an answer; question No. 19, December 08, 2010, no answer; question No. 21, January 07, no answer. Yet they would get up every day and say that they are prepared to answer every question and praise themselves and bang the desks when they know there is no answer. They are not to be trusted.

In the discourse, in the time he wasted today, trying to accuse me of creating devaluation fears, when I did not do so. He could have spoken about the money which he had to pay contractors, or which he has not paid, or which he has paid, and at least let the country know what is happening about that business. He does not do that—sets about to have subterfuge, takes credit for things not done and fools the population, fools us, if we are available for fooling.

4.00 p.m.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is a kind of administration which is shocking, absolutely shocking. And they believe that shouting at us and throwing allegations at us, it somehow replaces the requirement to provide the country with good governance. Mr. Deputy Speaker, this Bill is in front of us, we are varying our expenditure, ministries have been reorganized but, [*Interruption*] 2009, 2010, 2011 they are essentially the same issues. [*Interruption*] Mr. Deputy Speaker, when they tell you that A is the first letter in the alphabet and you come back towards it later on, they will tell you it is not so, you did not hear well—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: Reply to the Minister's submission. You are saying nothing.

Dr. K. Rowley:—because it is a pattern, Mr. Deputy Speaker, where the Government comes and tries to tell you one thing when, in fact, something else is the truth.

The Government is treating with an issue and treats with it in a way to give you the impression that all is well when it is not well. Granted we are dealing with the 2009 records, but the Minister spoke about the current situation, giving us the assurance, notwithstanding what might have happened in 2008/2009, that we are now in a position where things are, in fact, improving.

All I am saying, Mr. Deputy Speaker, do not take the Government at its word, because, even as he is telling us it is improving, he could not be telling us that 2009 is improving. That has passed. These documents—the actions in there are 2009, yes, but the Minister of Finance created a new debate here today; a debate on devaluation. I presume it is about 2011 circumstance, not 2009 as I am advised by my friend from D'Abadie/O'Meara. In 2009 there was no issue in this country

about movement of the currency. He chose to use his office as Minister of Finance to give us some comfort. He chose to speak about no crisis of confidence in the economy. He could not have been speaking about the economy of 2009.

He is speaking about the economy now, the issue in front of us now. The question is, is there a crisis in confidence now? [*Desk thumping*] And that is why I am responding to 2011 issues. It is the Minister of Finance who brought that issue here today, trying to tell us that all is well when, in fact, it is not well. In fact, worse than that; we are in big trouble. The Prime Minister publishes on January 1, New Year's Day. "We start the year with this"—New Year's Day:

"A number of our diplomatic initiatives will focus on trade and investment."

That is the Prime Minister's promise to us New Year's Day. And I am assuming, it is not for 2008/2009, it is for 2011 and onwards. Do you know what that initiative is? Our initiatives in diplomacy, which will focus on trading and investment is the most unlikely Minister—the Minister of Tourism, right now as I speak is at the Oberoi Hotel in India—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Sharma: So what is wrong with that?

Dr. K. Rowley:—where he leads a team to bring tourists. The Minister of Tourism, going on a trip half-way around the world, carrying with him for a 45-minute programme, where he will speak for 10 minutes, and Orange Sky will play for 9 minutes—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: Orange Sky, boy.

Dr. K. Rowley:—Orange Sky, yes, Minister of Tourism—he is in India at the most expensive hotel in India—[*Interruption*]. Orange Sky is repaid now for their involvement in the last election. They get a trip to India, and they will play for 7 minutes, [*Crosstalk*] they will live at the Oberoi Hotel and [*Interruption*] I have nothing against India. I have against your futility in sending the Minister of Tourism who any tourist will run from [*Desk thumping*] and using taxpayers' money to repay your supporters with a trip to India, because that trip is a payback for the role they played in your campaign in 2010. [*Desk thumping*] I want the taxpayers in this country to know that their money is being spent on Minister Griffith and Orange Sky at a five-star hotel in India for a 45-minute programme, and that is what is going to bring tourists to the people of Trinidad and Tobago. That is what it is. [*Desk thumping*]

You understand? If you want to go to India—if you are going to India to the people of India to sell Trinidad and Tobago's culture, no soca, no steel band, no calypso, no Tambrin, no tassa, you send a rock band! [*Desk thumping*] "So we

gone to rock India to the tune of hundreds of thousands of dollars to play rock music in New Delhi and that will bring tourists to Trinidad and Tobago. That is the Government's policy. [*Desk thumping*] And that is why the Minister of Finance calls it "prudency", because that requires a new word in the vocabulary, "prudency".

But, of course, if you listen to them, when they talk about Minister Griffith's trip to India, when the Minister of Foreign Affairs wakes up to garble and gargle about what a wonderful thing we have done in India, he would not tell you that we are competing for a space in the rock world with American rock bands and British rock bands, and "we send" Orange Sky to sell Trinidad and Tobago; sell our culture. Well, when—and it is a pattern, you know.

The last Minister who used public money for that, used money from the sport account to bring Nicki Minaj to "hold up her crotch and cuss bad word". That is what the Government paid for. And the next thing we see is Nicki Minaj and the other ne'er-do-well, Rihanna, discussing their plans to move in with one another. That is what our young people are being shown, and that is what is held up to them, when Nicki Minaj and Rihanna will move in, and all their salacious details. The Government paid for that. [*Desk thumping*]

So, I am not surprised to hear I cannot speak in silence because the Member for D'Abadie/O'Meara has something to say, because the first and most important thing that he has done to date is to take money from the sport vote and bring Nicki Minaj here to show our young people how to misbehave. And now we can look at their lifestyles and see what is being advanced to them, paid for by the taxpayers of Trinidad and Tobago. All I am doing, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am simply alerting the people of Trinidad and Tobago as to what the Government is advancing as economic and financial policy for the people of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] That is all I am doing.

And then, as the Minister of Finance tries to respond—when the Minister of Finance tried to respond to me about the devaluation—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: The piano gone India. [*Crosstalk*]

Dr. K. Rowley: Mr. Deputy Speaker, when the Minister of Finance tried to respond to what I might have said in Laventille, what I did not say, and used that as the basis of his presentation today, listen to what he said:

> Finance Minister Winston Dookeran, responding to a statement by Opposition Leader Keith Rowley that devaluation of the Trinidad and Tobago dollar was on the cards...

I have already denied that, and I expect that, the decent man that he is, that when he replies he will apologize for misrepresenting me. But of course, the discourse was based on that. He goes on to say:

> My statement "flies in the face of common sense and economic logic."

I am assuming for argument's sake here today that I had said that, that devaluation was on the cards. So it draws the Minister of Finance out to make a response. He did not respond to Mr. Young who spoke at length about it. He did not respond to Mr. Jason Julien who spoke at length on it, he chose to respond to me, but it is the same subject, and hear what he has to say:

> The Central Bank is committed to using the stock of foreign exchange reserves to maintain exchange rate stability.

That is a commitment from the Minister of Finance of Trinidad and Tobago, that the Central Bank is committed to using the $9 billion we have to preserve exchange rate stability. We know that the exchange rate is moving. That is a fact. We know that. How much is it going to move by? We do not know. The years ahead, the weeks ahead, the months ahead will tell us. But what he has said here is that we will maintain stability by pouring U.S. dollars from the Central Bank into the system. And at an earlier time he had said that the Central Bank will increase its supply of U.S. dollars to the system to maintain that stability.

The question I want to ask the Minister of Finance today: has that happened? Is it happening? Because if the Central Bank did not do what the Minister of Finance said will happen, which is pour more U.S. dollars into the system, then the Minister of Finance is talking without the authority and influence. If, in fact, the increased flow of foreign exchange had gone to the system, and the currency still moved, then this should be a matter of great concern to the Government and the country. So when the Minister of Finance replies to his devaluation debate that he started here today, he must answer these questions, because a Minister of Finance is not an ordinary citizen. He is not even an ordinary minister. And it is not what the Opposition Leader says that will cause the currency to move, it is what you say and do or do not do. Understand that.

So when you say, exchange rate stability is to be preserved by Central Bank injections, that is monetary policy that you have espoused. Tell us if it is working. Is it working or is it not working? Because we could see what is happening with the currency. And do not come and tell me that some secrecy or silence on my part is how we manage the country's affairs. You look at Bloomberg, CNN, 24 hours a day they are discussing—all the discussions are about the U.S. currency

and its relationships and its trade matters are there, open and transparent discussions. Nobody tells people in the country, "Stay silent and all will be well", especially when you are required, or when you choose to place policy in front of us. He then goes on to say:

> Trinidad and Tobago has an investment grade rating.

That is true.

> And has unlimited access to loans from both commercial and multilateral resources.

True. But how long will this be the truth if things begin to go sour.

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

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

Question put and agreed to.

Dr. K. Rowley: [*Desk thumping*] Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I wish to thank my colleagues for the extension.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, he speaks correctly and truthfully that we have an investment grade rating, and that we can borrow now from commercial and multilateral sources. But the word "unlimited", having demonstrated that the Minister of Finance has a problem with the English dictionary, why do we feel that we have unlimited access to foreign exchange borrowing? Why do we feel that we will be able to borrow whatever we require as we go down the road? It is not unlimited. It is only insofar as we can demonstrate an ability to repay. And that ability to repay looks good now. It may not look so good next year, or the year after, if you do not get up and get this economy going.

You might be the only person in this country, in the face of gathering storm of dark clouds, seeing blue skies. And if you believe that all is well and that you have put this economy on a sound footing, and everything is happening the way you think it is happening, I am here to advise you today, it is not happening. And if it does not happen, our ability to borrow will be circumscribed. It is not unlimited. And the investment grade rating, which today allows you to borrow easily in the international market, you will not preserve that indefinitely.

That investment grade rating is based on the quality of our economy and the support that it has in our financial strength. And if that changes, your statement that we have unlimited access to unlimited foreign reserves is a nonsense.

4.15 p.m.

I am sure the Minister of Finance understands that. So, talking loosely to the country, trying to give them comfort in a time when there is a, to use the words of Richard Young the banker, "tightness in the financial situation", with respect to access to US dollars and a movement of the depreciation, not devaluation—I am using the other "D" word—of the currency and you are telling us: "Doh worry. We have unlimited access to foreign exchange borrowings." I started out by saying, yes, today, we can borrow, tomorrow that borrowing may become a problem, because borrowing has to be in sync with an ability to repay, and that ability for the country to repay is rooted in a connection to economic growth.

We are now in the middle of the second quarter of this fiscal year. I would love the Minister of Finance to contradict me today; that our revenue situation is not performing as he said it would when he passed the budget. If he contradicts me, I will be happy. I live here. I want it to go well. But, the evidence and the information is that we still have serious revenue challenges, and as long as we have revenue challenges, where we are having growth of expenditure or preservation of the expenditure level, whatever the reasons for doing it, if there is a dissonance between the expenditure and the revenue, then repayment of loans will be an issue, and that is when borrowing, which was sweet in your mouth, "ent" so sweet at the other end. Do you understand, Mr. Deputy Speaker? Let us, as a country, take no comfort in the glib statements of the Minister of Finance, who speaks today about today's issues, contrary to what we are experiencing, who seeks to say: "Okay, 2009 was bad. We have fixed it."

We heard today the Minister of National Security say that serious crime is down. I wish it were true. I would love to live in a Trinidad and Tobago where crime, serious or otherwise, is considerably down, and I wish the Government well in that exercise. But, let us not fool ourselves in taking what the Government says at face value, because we have demonstrated time and again that statements from these officials in the Government today can easily be a lie, as easily as they can be true.

What do you say to these fellows who told the steel band fraternity that "We will be more PNM than the PNM"? The PNM was giving you "$1 million first prize" and at the time when the PNM did that, they had a problem saying that we were wasting taxpayers' money giving pan men $1 million. But, when the election was called, they decided to be more PNM than the PNM. "The PNM giving you $1 million, we will give you $2 million". That was the commitment in an election campaign, made by nobody but the leader of the party, who today is

heading the Cabinet and is Prime Minister of the country. When it is time to pay on a commitment, the Government has justification to pay, because they put it before the electorate.

It was voted upon, and they could justifiably say: "We must pay this money and who do not like it, sorry for you, because the people were told this in an election campaign and they voted us into office overwhelmingly, so we are paying $2 million for Pan Trinbago's first prize for Panorama." What does the Government do with such substantial backing, with electoral support from a handsome election victory? The Government chooses to dishonour its own commitment made on a platform by saying: "You did not understand what we said. What we meant was, we would pay $2 million only for this year and after that, back to square one." What an insult to the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

That is like something that would not happen. My friend from Pointe-a-Pierre would understand this. A worker gets a salary of $100 and the boss, in a period of inebriation or some similar thing—but the boss had a good feeling and gives the worker a pay raise from $10 to $15. In this case, double it from $10 to $20, or any increase for that matter. The worker gets an increase in pay, and after the first fortnight, the boss said: "That increase in pay that you got was only for the week. Your pay has not really been increased. You have not now moved to a new income level. I was only talking about the next pay packet." How will the worker view—

Mr. Mc Leod: Surely you could have found a more sensible example than that.

Dr. Moonilal: No, he cannot.

Dr. K. Rowley: Now, I understand that my friend from Pointe-a-Pierre is really one of them. I thought he was on the periphery, but he is a real PP. He is really one of them, because if you offer me a raise in pay and then tell me it is only for that pay, it is the same thing as telling Pan Trinbago "We are going to increase your first prize"—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Mc Leod: It does not make sense.

Dr. K. Rowley:—from $1million to $2 million, and the normal thing—in fact, people who do not play pan, or who are not part of the pan fraternity, the taxpayers of the country, understood it to mean that the Government will now pay from the Treasury $2 million to the Pan Trinbago's winner of Panorama. That is how we understood it and all of us understood it. The only people who understood that it meant one year is the 29 people who were voted in on the People's Partnership.

Those are the only ones who understand that. Today, he mentioned the pension as part of his self-praise today, completely ignoring the fact that one of the most shameful acts ever done by a government in Trinidad and Tobago was to hold out to pensioners that they will get $3,000 across the board, no questions asked, as long as they reach age 60. That is what they promised on a platform. When they were confronted with their written and verbal commitment, they turned around and said that it was a misprint.

Today, the Minister of Finance comes here and raises that and he said: "Praise me, hail me Minister of Finance. We have given pensioners more money." They have more revenue, as he called it, completely ignoring the fact that, that is not what they held out to people when they went to ask them for their vote; completely ignoring the fact that this Government stands accused of being deceitful and untrustworthy with the people of Trinidad and Tobago who took them at their word that at age 60—life begins at 60. Once you have passed 60 years old, you would get a pension of $3,000, with no qualification. That was the promise they made, and no amount of self-praising for whatever you gave them will change that, and no amount of twisting and turning will convince anybody in this country that you did not promise Pan Trinbago a $2 million first prize as we go forward; while nobody had asked them for any increase.

Bear in mind, I am not aware that Pan Trinbago had asked these jokers or anyone for an increase in panorama prize. If Pan Trinbago had asked for anything, it was for sustenance of the steel band movement. How do you get that? The Pan in the Classroom Programme that they met in place existed when they went on the platform. That is what they are going to destroy. The bible—[*Interruption*]

Dr. Gopeesingh: Can I? I want to take this opportunity to now, as you address the issue of pan in the classroom, apprise the nation that the Pan in the Classroom Programme will not be stopped. The Government is heavily committed to the Pan in the Classroom Programme and the Government will work with Pan Trinbago in the Junior Soca Monarch Competition and in the Junior Pan Competition. The Government is heavily committed to that.

What created the problem was that the contracts for the music instructors are coming to an end in March, which the Government—as Minister of Education, I will take to Cabinet for a direction on how to proceed with that Pan in the Classroom Programme and the Soca Monarch Competition. None of these are going to be affected. The Government is highly committed to it. Thank you.

Dr. K. Rowley: I thank my colleague, the Minister of Education, for doing what he should have done long time, which was to clarify and make a definitive

statement, but I simply want to ask him—we have the tutors carrying on a programme, the programme exists and tutors are there, you are taking to Cabinet some consideration as to what to do with the tutors at the end of March—are the tutors likely to be dealt with the way that those people were dealt with in the Ministry of Education; the ones who had their contracts hauled in? Because, one of the things that the Minister of Education did was to void a number of contracts of persons who were in the Ministry of Education as support personnel to the teaching fraternity and many of them lost their jobs and are being asked to apply for jobs that they had for three, four or five years.

Is that to happen to the tutors in the music programme? Do you have a problem with the tutors who are there now? If you do not, why are you not renewing their contracts? What are we to expect from the Cabinet, a yes or a no? Based on evaluation? I do not trust what he has said. Nobody had asked them for a $2 million first prize. They volunteered that to win votes. What was in place was $1,000 per season stipend for pan players. They decided to interfere with that by reducing it because the Minister of Culture is saying: "I, the Minister of Culture, I have a problem with people paying pan men to play in preliminaries." I want to say to him, it is not your money. The people of Trinidad and Tobago have no problem with pan men getting $1,000 a season. It is not your money. It is not what you want. You are there to serve the people—spending their money—and the people of Trinidad and Tobago understand what these pan players do and what they contribute to our national well-being.

If the Minister of Culture has a bee in his bonnet about that, that ought not to allow the Government to come and destroy our peace and good order and cause all kinds of discord, because he has a problem with pan men being paid a stipend of $1,000 for getting involved in Panorama. Panorama is an investment in Carnival. Carnival, is an investment in our tourism thrust. The same way he has a problem with it, I have a different approach. It is an investment by the country, in an event which we can use to market ourselves. Nobody else in the Caribbean or the world for that matter, can market Trinidad and Tobago Carnival. It is our main attractor of persons who come to us and bring the foreign exchange that we so desperately need.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I heard the Minister of Finance end his piece by talking about the IDB and maybe I should do the same thing there. I wonder if he recalled when the PNM government sought to use the IDB to support our Public Sector Investment Programme. We invited President Iglesias to visit us here in Trinidad and Tobago. So incensed was the UNC that they decided to have him impeached.

They took steps to impeach the President of the IDB. We could not believe, for the life of me, what their story was. We are a member of the IDB from its inception. When we sought to borrow IDB money for the development programme here, the UNC Opposition decided to have the President impeached. He was here in person, facing that impeachment when he goes back to Washington, because the UNC was accusing him of supporting the Government of Trinidad and Tobago. Today we are being told that our fortunes, as we go forward now in funding ourselves as a programme that is to come, "Fear not, it is the IDB that will save us." Reliance on the IDB is what the Government holds out to us as the bedrock of their policy of prudency. Today, the world knows that new economic theory has been born in Trinidad and Tobago. New practice is there; the UNC "prudency" in Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Members, it is now 4.30 p.m. The sitting is suspended for half an hour. We resume at five o'clock.

4.30 p.m.: *Sitting suspended*.

5.00 p.m.: *Sitting resumed.*

Dr. K. Rowley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the few minutes I have left, I was hoping that the Minister of Finance would have been here, but I am sure our colleagues on the other side would advise him, and if he chooses to respond it would be useful to the national community, especially those persons who are analyzing and reporting to the national community. There are people in the country who have no axe to grind politically, and are sufficiently experienced or intelligent to be able to use information provided by the Government to analyze the situation and come to conclusions that are fair, reasonable and informed, and the national community will take comfort from what they say; such persons like the commentator from the Chamber of Commerce, the TTMA and the bankers would like to hear.

Since the Minister of Finance facilitated a debate here on a commentary, if you want to call it that, on the foreign exchange situation and the potential movement of the currency, where one expects that the appreciation or depreciation is going to be within some restricted ban as a Government spokesperson had said, we would like to hear from the Minister of Finance whether, in fact, the current movement that we are having is within that restricted ban, because, without that, there is going to be some further loss of confidence, because people are going to react to it, and that reaction could come in a variety of ways.

One way that it is already showing itself is that we know—notwithstanding what any Government spokesperson might say—that the economy is not humming along. We are not seeing economic activity commensurate with the demand for foreign exchange. That should be of concern to all of us, especially the Minister of Finance. What that means is that if foreign exchange is not going to the economic activity where it really should be going, it is going somewhere else, and that somewhere else could be one or two areas. It could be held in people's private accounts, wherever those accounts are, or it could be worse, going out of the country.

When confidence weakens—I am sure the Minister of Finance knows that, because notwithstanding what one might say, he is an average citizen, and the average citizen here knows that, once confidence weakens, persons who have access to foreign exchange would seek to hedge by trying to preserve their individual or corporate position by taking the foreign exchange out of the country.

We are in a situation where there is a strong belief that is happening and, certainly, that hoarding is happening. That is why, in the face of a declining economic performance, we are having foreign exchange issues in Trinidad and Tobago. It is quite unexpected and unacceptable for the Minister of Finance to say to the Leader of the Opposition or anybody else for that matter, that you do not even mention those matters, because to mention them is to cause a problem in that area. The problem already exists.

In fact, the Minister of Finance is quoted as saying that one should also note that the country's exchange rate system is currently based on a floating regime which means that the exchange rate can fluctuate within a narrow band in response to changes in supply and demand. Presently, we have supply and demand issues. That is a fact. We know what the band is up to now. I am asking the Minister of Finance, since he is here, is that fluctuation taking place within the narrow band of the projected policy that you are pursuing? The country wants to know that.

Secondly, the Minister of Finance went on to say that he warned that statements about devaluation from public figures could be dangerous to macroeconomic stability, to the extent that it encourages individuals and businesses to hoard foreign exchange where it is not necessary. Well, that is what is happening now. As the Minister of Finance, you cannot scold away influential persons from talking about it. As a matter of fact, if you are to treat with it in an open, efficient and effective manner, it will become the conversation for Carnival. It has nothing to do with me or what I may have said or have not said in Laventille.

What is happening here is, the Minister of Finance is laying the groundwork to say that the reason he has been unable, spectacularly, to not have any positive influence on the economic situation, and a possible runaway in the foreign exchange rate, is because "Somebody was talking about it, and because they talked about it, it ran away from me." That is unacceptable.

If that was the only area in which the Government is pursuing this line, we see the same line of argument in treating with public servants, senior public servants.

The Government launched an attack on public servants saying that, because the Government has changed, they are required to act against public servants, because those who are in posts are, in fact, carrying out PNM's policy and undermining the Government, and that will explain why the Government cannot perform, and went on to say that there will be a reshuffle of PSs because PSs are undermining Ministers. That is a Government statement in this country.

Dr. Moonilal: Who said that?

Dr. K. Rowley: I am now saying that you have said that. The Government's spokesperson and their lackeys elsewhere have put it out there that permanent secretaries are undermining ministers and that would explain their non-performance. The Minister of Finance has taken up the same approach saying that if there is economic non-performance, fiscal non-performance and currency management non-performance that is because of something that somebody had said. That is how he started this afternoon, and I would end on that note. That is abject nonsense. If they cannot perform, then their performance must be held up against their promise and their potential. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have a few minutes. Could you ask my colleague, Newbury Hill, not to disturb me, please? He has ample time and the debate is open and he could join it. He told me that he is coming to straighten me out, and I am waiting to be straightened out. I await your intervention.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are quite clear that the Government is about making excuses and, worse yet, the Government in dealing with persons who are instrumental in serving the country—presently the Government with no plan and very little experience is sidelining the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Finance. The most senior Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Finance is sidelined by the Minister of Finance. Let him stand here and say no. While the country's financial management is going to hell in a handbasket, this Minister of Finance is sidelining the most experienced PS available to the Government.

In their reshuffle of permanent secretaries, all they are trying to do is to put people who they perceive to be friends and supporters of the Government, in position. The Government is presently trying to make changes to put people in the office of the DPA who they believe would be supportive of the UNC, not the best public servant available or more senior. No! Everybody has to first pass a test; are you PP or not? Are you pro-PP or not? They are persecuting public servants on that basis, and the country is going to pay a price for that, because there is limited experience available to this Government. So we are not fooled by this fact about the statement about PSs are "interfering with Minister's performance" and they are "loyal to past Minister".

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are very cognizant of what is going on and we would alert the national community as and when we become aware of it. They could deny it as much as they want. The posts that are in the public service where they believe there is influence such as Head of the Public Service, the DPA and the Ministry of Finance, they are about persecuting public servants on the grounds that they are guilty of some misconduct or some lack of enthusiasm and, therefore, they would put who they believe are more suitable. Let them treat the public service like that and see what the outcome is going to be. In the meantime, it is the business of the people of Trinidad and Tobago that will suffer as our economy is suffering now.

Presently, the Ministry of Finance, led by this Minister of Finance and the other two who have gone thankfully silent, our economy is in trouble. The country is in trouble. The Minister of Finance must tell us today when he winds up, that is not so, and tell us truthful things that we can believe and leave here tonight, or tomorrow morning for that matter, and the country hearing you will say, "Okay", we have heard what we wanted to hear and, therefore, we can now proceed to contribute and partake in our economy."

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this Government believes that it has been elected to persecute and prosecute the PNM. That might be so, but as long as they see that as the sum total of their contribution to their tenure, the people of Trinidad and Tobago will be short-changed by this UNC coalition.

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

The Minister of Housing and the Environment (Hon. Dr. Roodal Moonilal): Mr. Deputy Speaker, thank you very much for the opportunity to join this debate on the Supplementation and Variation of Appropriation Bill, 2011. Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Member for Tunapuna, and distinguished Minister of Finance, has outlined in some detail the purpose and objective of the Bill that deals with both supplementation and variation.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is no secret that we are here to do two things; to deal with some of the matters arising from the realignment of portfolios, but also to clean up some accounting matters that were left by the former administration for both 2009 and 2010. In fact, it makes no sense to read at length the matters that have been distributed to Members, and the rationale for our meeting here today.

We are here as well to discuss some of the policy implications arising out of this Bill, and there are a few and the Minister of Finance raised those matters. Let me say at the beginning, like the Leader of the Opposition, I am not an expert in finance and economics, apart from EC 101 at the University of the West Indies I did not take that further. So, like my friend, the Member for Diego Martin West, I have not been trained in finance either but, unlike my friend the Member of Diego Martin West, I do not pretend to be. My intervention on matters of finance is very straightforward issues which I may not even use the correct jargon of the profession.

5.15 p.m.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, my friend, the Member for Diego Martin West, the relatively new Leader of the Opposition, finds himself in a difficult position. A colleague of mine, during the tea break, used a very useful analogy. He said this happens when you take two wicketkeepers on a short tour. If you go on a cricket tour and you take two wicketkeepers, but the tour is very short, you have a lot of trouble between one and the other, and that may explain some of the outbursts from our friend from Diego Martin West.

The last day this House met, the Member for San Fernando East, who no longer gives us the benefit of his years of experience and who periodically after the tea break would depart, hosted a press conference, I think along with the Member for Point Fortin. They make quite a dynamic duo emerging now. [*Laughter*] They speak for each other; they write for each other and they sit next to each other. I think both of them had a tag team press conference and sought to respond to matters raised, on that occasion, by the Attorney General. My friend from Diego Martin West, of course, has to respond and to seek to come back in the spotlight, [*Laughter*] having his job to lead the Opposition.

He is leading the Opposition where the Opposition is really within the Opposition. I say that because it is responsible for what we have heard. [*Crosstalk*] I want to get to his contribution to respond. In understanding the contribution from the Member for Diego Martin West, it is important to note that he faces the Opposition within the Opposition. That explains his contribution. I do not think it has anything to do too much with the Minister of Finance.

The Member for Diego Martin West came to this House over two decades ago. I do not think there is anything in the Bill that confuses the Member for Diego Martin West. If he pretends to be confused, it is because he has some other points to make and he has to do that to make those points.

This is a clear-cut matter. I cannot recall at this time exactly when he was fired by the Member for San Fernando East. I think it was somewhere at the end of 2008, so he would not have been in the Cabinet in January 2010, but he would have certainly been in the government.

Certainly the Member would have attended the parliamentary caucus and meetings of the parliamentary arm; unlike his friend, the Member for San Fernando East, who I am told no longer attends parliamentary caucus and parliamentary meetings. The Member for Diego Martin West would have attended and he would have known the business of the Parliament from there and he would have known that it was a decision of the government not to bring these matters to the Parliament in January 2010. They took a conscious decision in January 2010 that they were not going to come to the Parliament to deal with this matter.

In Cabinet Minute No. 33 of January 07, 2010, the government agreed that with the closing of 2009 fiscal year, all interdepartmental adjustment vouchers, et cetera, et cetera, there were matters to be dealt with to correct the accounts, to clean up the accounts, so to speak. It involved transfer of funds from subheads under the same Heads of expenditure. It involved the need to approach Parliament through a Finance Bill to properly close the 2009 accounts. This was very customary.

The Cabinet took a decision in January 2010 that since Parliament was asked to note, as a matter of courtesy, there was no legal obligation to convene the Finance Committee of Parliament in January and they would do so later in the year. For this Cabinet, later in the year never came, because they were booted out forthrightly on May 24. They took a decision to postpone Finance Committee in January 2010 and that never materialized. They could never have convened it because they lost the government.

That is 50 per cent of reason we are here, because we are now seeking, in January 2011, to clean up the books, to deal with the write-offs, to deal with the mess created by the former administration in 2009. There are also accounting matters for 2010, not 2011.

The point I was making was that the Member would know these things. When he referred to page 140 of our documents dealing with increases, these are matters arising for 2010 and not 2011.

Mr. Sharma: He misleads the House again!

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: I am very concerned for my friend from Diego Martin West, because he knows this and made it appear as though there was some grand increase in 2011 and we did not budget properly and we may not have known what we were doing, and so on, and he attacked the Minister of Finance, while these were matters to be dealt with in 2010 increases, that took place already, but we are cleaning up the books, cleaning up the accounts.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, he continued with that, and then introduced a huge debate over the word "prudency" and suggested that the Minister of Finance did not know the language and that was not a word.

Mr. Sharma: He is a total waste of time!

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Apart from that being a trivial issue, what is not a trivial issue is that the Member for Diego Martin West is a technical expert in something.

Mr. Sharma: What is that?

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: He is not from the social sciences. I think he has a technical background.

Mr. Sharma: Rocks.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: The word "prudency" is a word in technical circles well established. I have in my hand *Canadian Energy Law, Environmental Energy Law*, and they are saying:

"Prudency review required before deferred revenue can be recovered."

It goes on:

"The underlying cost did not undergo a full prudency review."

This is a technical word that deals with reviewing prudency reviews. I have another one here, *Alliance for African Women Initiative, Financial Prudency and Effective Financial Management*.

It is not my job to correct these mundane and trivial grammatical matters, but the Leader of the Opposition took this Mickey Mouse debate to discuss the word "prudency" and this is the Leader of the Opposition. [*Crosstalk*] If in this country people closed their eyes in a moment of madness, the Member for Diego Martin West could smell the Prime Minister's Office. Prudency is a well established

technical term. He would like to be within sniffing distance of the Prime Minister's Office. [*Crosstalk*] What you have done; you have me wasting my time with this as well. That was the level at which the Leader of the Opposition would go.

I remember well; it was October 2008 when the Member for San Fernando East gave a speech. He was standing on my right exactly here. He made a statement that day that I will never forget. He told the nation that "When the leader fall, all fall". In the PNM, the leader fell and I duly believe everything fell.

Mr. Sharma: "Look at Imbert; everything gone through."

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: This is what the Leaker of the Opposition spends his time doing. Prudency, that is his contribution.

The Opposition has a particular approach, not only to this debate, but to the politics in this country, and it is well known. What they do in this first phase, because they have nothing, no leg to stand on, they criticize the Government, but they want to build distrust. They are on a campaign of distrust, to tell the people, "You cannot trust the Government; if they say A is B; if they say X is Y." That is their campaign, [*Desk thumping*] and it is well known.

They talk about when the Government speaks on matters, only Government Members agree, nobody else. You know, last Friday I think it was, in the aftermath of that function, the state funeral, the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago and the Cabinet of this country walked the streets of Port of Spain. At every junction and every point there was applause, clapping and cheering. [*Laughter*]

Hon. Members: Aaaah!

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: That was not Penal Rock Road; it was not Goodman Trace. That was Port of Spain, where they have their constituencies. [*Crosstalk*] The Government was so well received, you would not believe. Every few minutes there was some cheer. Where were the Opposition Leader and the Members of the Opposition in their own constituency? They could not walk the road. [*Crosstalk*] And they want to say that this Government is unpopular and if we say this, nobody believes us. Nobody on the streets raised the issue, but it has to do with the campaign of distrust.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, "look what they do." The Leader of the Opposition came to the Parliament this afternoon. He said, "I want to tell you plain, I never used the word 'devaluation'." "I used the 'D' word and the media understood it to be

devaluation." He used the "D" word. This is the trickery; that is the prankster. So you say the "D", the media goes with it and you say, "I did not used the word." That is the approach to plant seeds of distrust, discontent in various areas, among various constituencies.

Today the Member for Diego Martin West did it again. There is no Government release or statement on permanent secretaries; there is none, but the Member sought today to sow that seed of discontent, of deception, that the Government was moving this one and moving that one and it was because of the PNM or this or that. That is rubbish. When the former Prime Minister sought to move Marlene Coudray as the City Clerk in San Fernando, the Member for Diego Martin West put up his hands and said, "I agree with that; good move." He agreed with that. When the Prime Minister used his office to remove the City Clerk in San Fernando, the Member for Diego Martin West said that he agreed.

Dr. Rowley: Me?

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Well, you did not say you disagreed.

Dr. Rowley: Logic boy.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: You were part of the government and the Cabinet. I did not read in the newspaper about interference with the administration, the interference with this one or politics, no.

The former Prime Minister of this country, on several occasions, pursuing and exercising his constitutional authority, changed around public officers and permanent secretaries. He did that at times with monotonous frequency. That is the constitutional authority of the Prime Minister. That is the authority of a Prime Minister.

The Opposition Leader would seek to use that to plant the seed of distrust, that the Government "blaming this one and that one". And blaming what? Lack of performance and achievement, but I am coming to that in a little while; I am coming to that achievement matter. At every turn, the Opposition is seeking to plant this seed.

So the permanent secretaries are there. The former Prime Minister, the Member for San Fernando East, moved permanent secretaries. He was very proud of exercising his veto powers on several occasions. When promotion arose, the Prime Minister, the Member for San Fernando East, exercised his veto power; nobody complained, with the DPP, nobody complained. Least of all, the Member for Diego Martin West, for a majority of that period, a senior Cabinet minister, said nothing, did nothing and pretended to hear nothing.

But today, he said, "Somebody put it out there." He is getting his evidence for this argument, because "somebody put it out there". What else did they put out there? That is how you carry about your business, by speaking about what somebody put out there and creating this discord? That is their modus operandi; that is where they are going.

The Member then gave us a discussion on economics. Do you know what is the danger in this country now? The danger is that both the former and the present Leader of the PNM are geologists who became economists. [*Laughter*] That is the danger we face now. We had it for 10 years; the "fella" was a geologist. I think he worked for two months in Texaco.

5.30 p.m.

I think he worked for two months in Texaco and then he became an economist, and look what happened—the same line the current Leader of the Opposition is going. I advise you, Sir, please, if geology and rocks and the science of the earth and so on is your area, stay there. You are a very bright person, like the Member for Diego Martin North/East—very distinguished. He knows a lot about a lot. He is a regular blogger and, you know, he can speak to some of these economic matters. I think he read a couple of magazines on economics and would be able to speak. But you should stay—I keep telling you, like in the Carnival, stay in your section. Do not come out of that section. He is talking about economics and attacking the Minister of Finance who spoke about the basis for devaluation and how that comes around. But the Member for Diego Martin North/East will have his turn to mislead us, so we would wait for that.

The Member went on and spoke about the administration is shocking and the lack of achievement; we are covering up, and went on to say we cannot perform, and raised issues with wasting money. I remember those issues he raised, about wasting money. But there was a dangerous statement in what he said. He said, reflecting on the Member for Mayaro, the Minister of Arts and Multiculturalism, "It is not your money". Do you know the implication of that? "It is not your money so spend it." That is a dangerous mind-focus. "It is not your money so spend it!" That is why that party wasted the first oil boom, wasted the second oil boom, because it was not their money, and they thought, "Spend it, it is not your money."

That is shocking. But under his administration, he knows—[*Interruption*] I will come to "better than that"; I have better than that now. The Member for Diego Martin West has been on the receiving end of a lot of attacks, but you know, the Member for Diego Martin West has friends here, but he certainly does

not have friends on that side. I want to tell him—and certainly not from the Member for Diego Martin North/East. He was waiting in the wings to become the Leader of Government Business. The first day he sat here he rose and condemned the Member for Diego Martin West. He said he is protecting—a mouthpiece for local contractors. Do you remember that? He is a mouthpiece for local contractors.

I want to come back to this issue of the use of public funds because you raised a lot of issues with that, and I want to stick on that. He raised that matter by looking at examples of the Government of the day spending, and policy with spending, and the Member for Diego Martin West knows the trouble he faced from the Member for San Fernando East. In this House he is on record as stating that the former Prime Minister was slandering himself and slandering his wife. He said that. It is on public record. He accused the Member for San Fernando East of slandering him and his wife, and persecuting him. That is what he accused the Member of.

You know, my friend, the Member for Diego Martin West, I have here in my hand a document here that speaks to the amount of money spent by a corporation that you are familiar with. It is called the Housing Development Corporation. I just wanted my friend to know when he talks about wasting money that the former Prime Minister used the Housing Development Corporation to castigate, to cast aspersions and to attack the Member for Diego Martin West. Indeed, they were trying to throw him in jail, eh. He spent his whole term in office trying to stay out of jail, and the HDC spent, in legal fees to persecute you, $2 million trying to jail the Member for Diego Martin West.

I would not call all the names, but it is quite useful, because you called it. In this House he stood on that side; he was in the fifth bench, somewhere up there. They paid Lloyd Barnette, QC, almost $200,000 to go to the Commission of Enquiry; they paid a firm by the name of Alexander, Jeremie and Company—let me repeat that—Alexander, Jeremie and Company. I am informed that they paid over $1.2 million to that firm so they will seek to build a case to jail the Member for Diego Martin West. They used taxpayers' money to try to lock him up; that is what they used. They used taxpayers' money for that.

Mr. Roberts: Their own colleague?

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Their own colleague; to attempt to lock him up. The Prime Minister of the day, the Member for San Fernando East, stood here and the Member for Diego Martin North/East, when the Prime Minister asked him, "Where the $10 million gone", the Member for Diego Martin North/East started

to pound the table, and then instructed officials of the Ministry in the HDC to spare no expense to get Queen's Counsel, Senior Counsel, junior counsel, medium counsel—

Hon. Member: County council.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: They might have taken the county council to go after him too—$2 million in legal fees, taxpayers' money. This money is not from a private source; this is full taxpayers' money. So the taxpayer of this country paid $2 million so that they could try to jail you; your own party—the Prime Minister, the Member for San Fernando East.

Today, we are cleaning up that mess, because those moneys were not budgeted for. We did not have in the Appropriation Bill "$2 million to jail the Member for Diego Martin West". We did not have that. They spent it, so now we have to clean up this financial mess as a result of that. So I thought the Member should be aware that, in supporting this measure today, he is helping to pay for the lawyers who tried to jail him.

While we are on spending, I just wanted to raise another matter, related. When we were in Opposition, the Member for Caroni East, I think, had spoken—I must now say had spoken day and night. The Member for Caroni East spoke at length, repeatedly, every Friday, on corruption, on mismanagement, on waste; this Member for Caroni East. Sometimes when he rose to talk, we could actually repeat the speech while he was talking, because he was coming every week at them.

What he had was information. Today I have evidence. We raised over the years the matter of Evolve Partners in a change management contract at the Housing Development Corporation where they were following around a particular State officer, a particular director for something called, change management, for which we have never, ever received any report, any change, any management—never received anything. The taxpayers have paid $2 million for that.

Mr. Sharma: What a shame!

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Two million dollars for change management and "we never manage and we never change".

Mr. Sharma: They only "tief".

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: That is what they did, and it happened under the watch of his successor, I think it was Minister Dick-Forde.

Mr. Sharma: Is that the big "C"?

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Yes, she defined herself in those terms.

Mr. Sharma: It should be a big "T".

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Well, you have to be clear on what the "T" is for.

Those consultancy services were in December 2009; consultancy to do nothing; $2 million; lawyer fees to jail the Member for Diego Martin West—$2 million, gone. That is where "they spend the money". When the Attorney General stood on this side of the House a few days ago, he announced that they bought eight pianos—eight—and the "piano man" had a press conference and the "piano man" said, well he left the piano there and so on.

The issue is not where it was left and where it was, the issue is what were your priorities. Was a piano the priority of the Member for San Fernando East? "Where the flute went?" Where is the flute? That is the issue. The issue is expenditure policy and priority. That is the more substantive issue. Whether we find the piano or not is irrelevant.

Mr. Imbert: "You find it long time."

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Whether the Member for Diego Martin North/East—in fact, "you do not have to sit down to play the piano, you could stand up."

The issue is not where it is; the issue is why did this country have to spend $5 million to buy pianos while you cannot get beds in the hospital, while people are crying for a box drain? Why? You hired a professor of flute, who, in two years, had one student of flute. That is the issue, and the Leader of the Opposition today is in a difficult position, because he was part of that. He carries part of that collective responsibility. The Leader of the Opposition carries a responsibility today for that corruption, mismanagement and waste. Today if we cannot afford the $1,000 for the pan man, "is because you buy piano; is because you buy flute and hire flute professor; is because they use all the money" to go to court to see if they could imprison the Member for Diego Martin West. That is their expenditure policy.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I wanted to place on record that the issue is one of expenditure policy.

Mr. Imbert: I thank the Member for giving way. He has the potential to be a gentleman—the potential. I would like the Minister of Housing and the Environment to tell this Parliament whether he is aware that the news media are currently chasing a story that this mysterious missing piano that was the subject of so much controversy in this august Chamber, that was said to be the proceeds of a crime, that this mysterious piano has been found exactly where it was left in the Diplomatic Centre. Could he please tell us if he knows that?

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Mr. Deputy Speaker, their information is who put it there and that is it.

Mr. Imbert: No. Have you found the piano?

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: I want to tell you what I am aware of. I am aware of a project manager in Mayaro. I am aware of that. That is the only thing I am aware of, and you are aware of the project manager in Mayaro as well. I am aware of the project manager in Mayaro and you are aware of that. That is what I am aware of. I am aware of nothing else. Let me move on because my friend, the Member for Diego Martin North/East, wants to keep me back here.

Another line that the Member for Diego Martin West, the Opposition Leader—and I want to tell you, the Opposition Leader is at pains now to carry another campaign, and the campaign is really—they started, when this Parliament was convened in June, by accusing Members on this side of boasting too much of our achievements. Do you remember that? They said all we were doing is boasting and saying "Done! Done! Done!" They accused us of that. Then when we stopped for a while, they come back and say, "Well, you achieve nothing". That is the campaign. That is the little trap. They are trying to tell the population that the Government is not achieving a lot; is not doing a lot; "we not performing", to use the terms that they used.

I have in my list in the seven short months we were in office, we have a 10-page document of achievements with, I think it is .1 spacing, "so it is not big space"—10 pages of achievement.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Election promises.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Oh, we were boasting about election promises? How we delivered, yes; you are correct. When the Leader of the Opposition makes a statement like, "we cannot perform, and have no achievements, and permanent secretaries", et cetera, because we were not achieving in office, this is a Government—let me respond to him—that in the short time we are there, we increased the minimum wage from $9 to $12.50. It was a UNC government that introduced a minimum wage in the first instance. Seven dollars, was it? Five dollars, minimum wage.

5.45 p.m.

In the 10 years that they were there, that minimum wage went from $5 to $9. In the seven months we are here, it went to $12.50. [*Desk thumping*] You understand.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there was a child who died, I think her name was Marissa Ramlal. Children die in this country because their parents cannot afford emergency surgery in Trinidad and Tobago after two oil booms. That is a fact. Today, under the Member for Siparia, in Trinidad and Tobago not one child will ever die because they cannot afford emergency surgery. That alone can get us re-elected. That alone, nothing else. The Children's Life Fund Bill was introduced and passed, so today in Trinidad and Tobago no child will ever die because they cannot get the money for emergency surgery. That, to me—I do not know about my friends opposite—is the biggest achievement of this Government in our seven months, that we will save the lives of our children.

I am not blaming Members opposite. Half of them were not here and the other half could not do anything, so I am not blaming them. But why could this not have happened when you enjoyed two oil booms? Why could you not do this in 1977? Why could you not do this by 2006/2007 when you had the billions from the oil revenue? Why could you not save the lives of children? Our constituents are in need of surgery. We went to the former Minister of Health—what is his name, the one who used to smile and laugh? Ramnarine Narace—that is the man—also known as Jerry. The policy was that you could only get TT $60,000 or US $10,000. After this country went through two oil booms, the Government of the People's Partnership had to come and protect the lives of children. That is our contribution. Anybody who does not believe, stand and say no, we did not do this. Say no! They cannot.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, another one for the children. We have provided laptops for Form 1 students, a campaign promise and a Government promise. They say that we do not have a policy. In fact, the last administration of the PNM used to say that too. We have passed a budget. A budget is our policy document. We have The People's Manifesto. We are operating with two-power packed policy documents: The People's Manifesto and our budget. Those are our policy documents. The people's Manifesto speaks about the pillars of development. You all should take a read. You have a lot of time. Many of you are not employed. Some may not be employable. They can read; they can spend some time. [*Interruption*] No, not all. The Member for Point Fortin is most employable I think. I think *Glamour* magazine may have an interest as well.

Mr. Speaker, we provided laptops for the students. We have opened the world to our Form 1 children, and when we opened the world to poor children—provision of a laptop, Internet—we expand their knowledge and their skill; we make them employable, knowledgeable. I am proud to announce that in the next cycle of home construction, which incidentally will begin in January, every HDC

housing estate of the Government will be WiFi complaint. [*Desk thumping*] So when the children go into the housing estate with their laptop, you do not have to pay money to all these expensive providers. A WiFi service will be established so that our poor children would access the Internet free of charge.

They talked about economic decline. It is normal with a transition from one administration to another that there is some assessment. Review of economic projects of investment, of decisions, that is very normal.

In 2002—when the Member for San Fernando East became Prime Minister, most of them were not here. In fact, most of them were not even in the PNM—there was a lot of controversy in the newspapers, in the press, that the economy was slowing down because every government will take its time to review investment decisions to assess, to see what they have, to do an audit of a development plan. That is quite normal. The Minister of Works and Transport has announced that the highway to Point Fortin will begin on January 26, this year. By the end of January, we will turn the sod for construction of a housing cycle for the construction of 1,800 units. WASA has allocated and is accessing over $1 billion for a new development programme to relay all the pipes to ensure we deliver water.

So WASA, Ministry of Works and Transports, Housing, this is what we are about. The laptops that have been provided. I had the joy of going into constituencies of Oropouche and Siparia and seeing the faces of these children—some of them came with their parents—when they received that laptop, how they embraced and hugged the bag. Why could you not have done that with the oil money you got in 2005? Why? Why? What was your priority? You wanted to buy the piano to play for the professor of flute. [*Interruption*] I am coming to him. He left. I cannot see him. This Leader of the Opposition has an uncanny ability to make some silly outburst. He started with "duncy" children, then went to the "hurricane Tomas was no big deal", then he came with the hamper debacle, then he comes with devaluation and then I lost count.

Dr. Rambachan: Prudency.

Hon. R. Moonilal: Yes, he comes with "prudency". I think it will be prudency to remove him as Leader of the Opposition. [*Desk thumping and laughter*] I think it will be prudency.

The laptops for the Form 1 children—the Minister of Education has already indicated that we have things in place for the next level of students coming in September 2011. That is solid achievement. When we came a few months ago and

indicated that the former Prime Minister had presided over an administration that had broken the law and violated the constitutional rights of citizens, it was a serious concern. A sitting Chief Justice said that the former Prime Minister had a shocking disregard for the rule of law. Can you imagine that? Now I do not want to call countries in the world, but this is our Trinidad and Tobago where a sitting Chief Justice said a former Prime Minister had a shocking disregard for the rule of law.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Prime Minister and the Government cleaned that up immediately. We introduced and passed in record time the Interception of Communications Bill, 2010. That is an achievement. [*Desk thumping*] We established a Ministry of the People. They were laughing in the campaign about that, made jokes about it. The Ministry of the People and Social Development—you know, all they talked about pension. Do you know what hurts them? That 72,000 citizens benefited from the increase of $3,000 pension [*Desk thumping*] 72,000 people. That was not eight people playing the piano or one man blowing the flute in UTT. That was 72,000 citizens who felt the immediate impact of the People's Partnership with an increase in their pension. That was it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker—Oh, the one I like very much because of my own background. I like this. The PNM, the former administration, paid lip-service to their commitments to the former Caroni workers. In record time—I believe it was in December—under the Minister of Food Production, Land and Marine Affairs, we distributed lands to 610 former employees which they could not do in four years. [*Desk thumping*] In record time we compensated farmers for flood-related damages. You remember there was a time in this country when they came, I think the former Member for Arouca—what is his name? He used to loud, loud, loud.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Jarrette Narine.

Hon. R. Moonilal: Yes, yes. Jarrette Narine. He came here and was proud to give $25 for compensation for farmers. They came to Oropouche with a cheque, and the cheque was for $7 to give for compensation. We have compensated farmers in record time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am not going to dwell too much on that. The Minister has spoken already. We appointed a Commissioner of Police, a Police Service Commission. We did that quickly. "Why they could not do that in three years?" This is in addition to road paving, bridge fixing and so on, because they accused us of not performing. We have initiated now—it will be law I think on February 18, so it "done"—where we have sought to protect our motorists and citizens using the highways and the byways by the Motor Vehicles and Road Traffic

Mobile Devices Regulations to ban the use of cellphones when driving. [*Desk thumping*] That is our progressive—that is what we did. You could not do it. You could not dream about that.

When the Member for Diego Martin North/East was the Minister of Works and Transport he could not do it. He was busy trying to remove the dragon from the top of the Red House or going to build a statue on the hill in Diego Martin somewhere. He was spending all his time doing that. I was shocked; a few days ago the former Minister of Works did not know what PTSC was doing. The former Prime Minister has admitted today in the newspaper that the PNM owes $85,000. They owe much more, but he has admitted to $85,000. I have a feeling that they will lose Balisier House in seeking to get that repayment.

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. [*Hon. C. Sharma*]

Question put and agreed to.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Thank you very much colleagues on both sides of the House. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am speaking to achievements and the list goes on and I must go on, because the Opposition Leader raised that matter of not performing, not achieving. He was quoting Julien or something like that and he was making these points, and if he says it often enough somebody may believe him. They may believe that rubbish.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, you will recall that we had the opportunity by December last, a few weeks ago, to distribute housing units for 82 persons—emergency cases. Do you know what was amazing? There were persons who had applied 40 years ago for a housing unit; 33 years. I gave keys to a recipient. I told the recipient that when she applied for a house, I wrote common entrance. I wrote common entrance once, unlike—

Patricia Lane had to wait 33 years for her home. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Sharma: What a shame!

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: When they came to us with their slip of paper, it was not from the HDC, it was from the NHA and the clerk who signed the paper was one Hazel Manning, clerk at the NHA in 1977/1978. "So dem in this business a long time of hiring family and thing." They did not start today. They are in the business a long time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Hazel Manning as a clerk signed somebody's NHA form in 1977/1978, and in 2010 they waited for the Member of Parliament for Siparia to become Prime Minister before they got the keys to their homes. [*Desk thumping*] What you said we did not achieve we did not do—then we brought out 200 persons who were waiting 10 years for a Certificate of Comfort. Imagine you cannot pound a hammer and nail into your roof because you do not have a Certificate of Comfort. You cannot take two "board and nail up" and fix the step. If you walk down the step "you fall down because if you pound two nails on the steps", they would tell you that is illegal, you do not have permission to do so; you not repair—

6.00 p.m.

You live, you sleep and you work in the context that you could be thrown out at any time. A backhoe could come, or a truck and bus, and carry away everything.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: That is how you all operate?

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Mr. Deputy Speaker, we presented over 200 Certificates of Comfort to persons in December 2010. That was the achievement, not buses that you all abused. In fact, the Leader of the Opposition and current leader of the PNM has been mandated by the Member for San Fernando East to pay back that money to the PTSC. [*Laughter*] It was in the newspapers today. He said, "I am sure that the Opposition will pay it back." He did not say that he is paying it. So that means that the first job of the Leader of the Opposition is with "prudency"—[*Laughter*]—to go and get that $85,000—[*Desk thumping*]—get that $2 million for PTSC.

Mr. Roberts: Yes.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Get that $2 million that you owe PTSC because I do not know; the Attorney General is looking at some legal options, and it may well include serving some papers at Balisier House to get that $2 million to the PTSC.

Dr. Rowley: You like Balisier House?

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: And Balisier House has nothing valuable to sell. [*Laughter*] "So you better organize your business." I want to tell you that a one-dollar fete will not help you.

Dr. Rowley: You like No. 1 Tranquility Street.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: A one-dollar fete will not help you to raise that money. But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Member for Diego Martin West is a man

who has handled a lot of important portfolios and he has handled big money ministries and so on. Not that you yourself handled big money, but a lot of big money ministries, and you should be able to raise $2 million to pay PTSC in due course.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, let me move on. The Minister of National Security spoke about the achievements of National Security. He spoke about all that he has done. I do not want to repeat that. It is on the record. Later in the proceedings, the Member for Caroni Central is expected to speak and he will tell us some more about the achievements of his Ministry and the grants and the contributions we have made to the underprivileged and so on.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, you will recall that we made a promise to open the Green Fund. We came to Parliament, and through the Miscellaneous Taxes Bill we changed definitions in the legislation. Today we are finalizing the legal notice for publication and the Green Fund will be open to all NGOs involved in the environment. That is our commitment. [*Desk thumping*]

They talk a lot about firing and firing. I want to remind you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that it is under the administration of the People's Partnership that we not only met and treated with URP and CEPEP and so on, but we expanded employment opportunities to the underprivileged in our community. The CEPEP, incidentally, has hired over 2,500 more employees. [*Desk thumping*] So what are you all talking about achievement now?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to promise you that they will not change their tune. Whether the tune is from the flute or not, they will not change that tune. Their campaign is to speak about the Government not achieving, so this will not change their minds, I know, but I am addressing the national community; because in the national community, there may be one person or two persons who might, in a fit of madness, believe what the Opposition is saying.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Ministry of Public Utilities can boast that in the short seven months—could you believe seven months? We have the data—500 houses, completed wiring for underprivileged and poor people; 12 water pipeline projects completed. Mr. Deputy Speaker, we confronted the main problem in this country, apart from crime, and so on—water. We have commenced work on the rehabilitation of the Navet trunk main, 29 kilometers of water main. A main conduit serving south and central will be rehabilitated.

Dr. Rambachan: Since 2005 they did not do it.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: We are waiting since 2005. They could not do it. Why? You know, it is not the profound and deep contribution. We have done the

small things as well. You know, it took this Government to decide to open some road and close it around Endeavour on the highway to have the traffic problem relieved. Today when you drive through Chaguanas and Endeavour and so on, you can move speedily because of a decision to close one road and open another one and make one one-way. Those are simple things but they bring relief to the public, the travelling public, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Across the board, our Government has performed—across the board. It is not only in the tangible ways that I have outlined here, paving roads and building bridges. You saw the Minister of Works and Transport opening a bridge I think somewhere in the east? What is the name of the bridge? It is a bridge up in the east somewhere. Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is not that.

Mr. Sharma: Balandra.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: What?

Mr. Sharma: Balandra bridge.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Balandra bridge and so on. It is not that alone. We have also dealt with the issue of equality, equality, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It was our privilege to support the many groups in the Divali season—

Mr. Sharma: Eid.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal:—to provide for those groups organizing Divali functions; enhanced contributions to them so they were better organized and enhanced their Divali celebrations. We did that. We increased the subvention to $1 million, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

To meet and treat with our brothers and sisters of the Islamic faith, an integral part of our national mosaic, we made an intervention. We facilitated the simplification of the process for the application and granting of visas to travel to Saudi Arabia for the annual hajj. Prior to this, Mr. Deputy Speaker, citizens of this country desirous of attending hajj in Saudi Arabia had to travel to Caracas to make visa arrangements. We did that for the Islamic brothers and sisters. You could not do it in 100 years you are there.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we do not want to talk at length about the contributions we have made to our brothers and sisters in St. Lucia and elsewhere to provide direct assistance for them during their troubled times. [*Interruption*]

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: PR.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is PR?

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Yes, PR.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Giving water, hardware and dry goods is PR?

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Why did you not go to St. Vincent?

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: The Member for Point Fortin collected all 100 hampers, I am sure. [*Laughter*] I am sure. Did you collect the hampers?

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Thank you for giving way. I want to let you know that I got only 50 hampers. [*Laughter*] Please let me know when I could get the next 50. Also, I found the distribution to be inequitable and you need to respond to that.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: No problem. Next year we will try to give you 51. [*Laughter*]

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Unfair.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: But the Member for Point Fortin disregarded the instructions from the Leader of the Opposition not to collect.

Mr. Roberts: Yes, she disregarded him.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: That is a flagrant disregard for your leader who told you not to.

Mr. Roberts: Her own leader is sitting right there.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: No, but her leader sent her.

Mr. Roberts: Yes.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: You see, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I just want to say one thing about that. The Member for Diego Martin West and new Leader of the Opposition finds himself in a difficult place. He began by saying, "Look here, you see these hampers? We do not want them. It is taxpayers' money and maybe it is a waste, and so on." Over the years, I want to tell you when I was on the Opposition Benches, I duly and diligently wrote the Prime Minister of the country and the Minister of Social Development. I wrote—I was on the opposition—for hampers.

I want to indicate to you, because that is something more that you did not know, that through the Prime Minister's Office, and at several times, but not all, the Minister—whoever was the Minister of Social Development—we received hampers. We did not go and say, "We do not want it. It is taxpayers' money." We received. Now I do not know if I received more or less, but we did—Members of the Opposition—because it is the custom that government, the relevant government agency, and so on, would procure these hampers and distribute.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, Members of the Opposition had no difficulty. We wrote the letters, we gave enough time, and not all the time, but there were some times we received and we accepted. But when the Member for Diego Martin West realized now that this thing was looking like "water more than flour", he said, "Okay, we could take the hampers, but we do not want to go down to Caroni and get them." Next time we will send those hampers to Goodwood Park. We will send them to your house? Glencoe? Up on the hill? The one with the big view of the sea.

Dr. Rowley: Glencoe.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Okay, next time we will send them not to your house in Glencoe. We will send them—

Dr. Rowley: Will the Member give way?

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: I will give way, but just wait. Mr. Deputy Speaker, on the next occasion, we will send them not to Glencoe, at your house, but we will try to send them—where do you want them? In the office? You want them by the neighbourhood shop? Anywhere we will try to facilitate, because these hampers, they are not political; they are to distribute for your needy constituents to distribute. So when you took that position that you would not take the hampers because of taxpayers' money and where they were being distributed, you denied your constituents—needy constituents—the joy and the gratification of getting basic foodstuff, dry goods, a little biscuit and so on, for Christmas.

I want to tell you, in all sincerity, I thought that was unbecoming, and maybe in the future it will not happen, but you owe an apology to the deserving citizens of this country who were denied hampers and these small gifts because of this decree from the Leader of the Opposition. I am extremely gratified to know that some of your members did not follow your lack of judgment on that occasion. [*Desk thumping*]

Dr. Rowley: I thank the Member very much for giving way. Firstly, it is quite incorrect to say that I instructed anyone not to receive any hampers; and, secondly, if you ever, ever in the future use taxpayers' money to buy anything, hampers or otherwise, for the people of my constituency, whatever you bought with taxpayers' money which they are entitled to, make it available to my office in Glencoe.

And finally, how do you explain the fact that you have been getting hampers every year and your colleague from Mayaro went on I95.5 and told the world that you, the people of the UNC, never used to get any hampers because the PNM bought hampers for themselves? How do you explain that?

Mr. Peters: Mr. Deputy Speaker, can I? Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have never received any hampers from the Government when I was in Opposition. I have never done that. Any hampers that I got were either what I used my own money to buy, or, "people in the groceries by me gave to me" not from the Opposition. They gave me absolutely nothing.

Dr. Rowley: Is the Member for Mayaro saying that—

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Hello, hello, hello.

Dr. Rowley:—he did not say on radio that the UNC—

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: I allowed you to intervene, now you want to—

Dr. Rowley:—that the UNC—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Hello. You can go by the corridor or by the toilet or something and talk to the Member. Hello, let me clarify this matter, because if the Member for Mayaro did not receive—

Dr. Rowley: He said the UNC.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: If the Member for Mayaro did not receive, it was because of the discriminatory treatment of your Government. That is why. [*Desk thumping*] They discriminated against him. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to indicate to you that this will not change that. I want to say to you, Sir, you had no problem when the former Minister of Culture was giving away scholarships like doubles to people whom nobody knew. Nobody knew them. Nobody knew who was getting scholarships. There was a secret list. A big book was published. You had no difficulty with giving away scholarships.

Did you ever say you should give away scholarships at the constituency office? Why did we not give away scholarships at the constituency office? [*Laughter*] Nobody knew you were giving away scholarships worth millions of dollars, but you have this difficulty with giving away a 10-pound bag with dry goods? This is the problem. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do not know. I cannot cast aspersions on the Leader of the Opposition. I cannot and will not. [*Interruption*]

No, I cannot say he does not like poor people. I cannot say it is because of his social class. I cannot say it is because of where he lives.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: What is this?

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, a hamper in the context of Christmas in Trinidad was most welcome by all the citizens. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker, let me move on. I just want to add one more achievement which is very significant. In the energy sector—I think later in the evening the Minister of Energy may speak to this issue. For years we have been speaking about the extractive industries transparency initiative, and this year, in the last seven months of this Government, we have indeed established the steering committee to chart the way forward by reviewing this initiative and creating an implementation plan. That was something being spoken about for years. [*Desk thumping*]

I will not continue. There are some matters involving legislation that other speakers will deal with. We have heard the Prime Minister earlier in the proceedings; the Anti-Gang Bill, the Bail (Amdt.) Bill. You know, I want to clarify one matter, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We are on achievements. The Opposition has—and you know, they know what they are doing. They have some experience. They know the mischief they are making.

Mr. Sharma: They are doing a lot of foolishness.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: They know the mischief. When we come to the Parliament with a Bill and say we want to go to a joint select committee, they say we do not know what we are doing; we want their help. When we were in Opposition, for years we were in Opposition, we argued in Opposition that we would like to be included; to participate in the making of law; to ensure that we have good law; to ensure that our heads meet and we produce good law from Parliament.

Today, when we ask them for joint select committees, they accuse the Government of not having a plan and policy, coming with bad law and wanting the Opposition Members to help. Mr. Speaker, in the 10 years I have been here, this is the laziest Opposition I have ever met. All we are asking you is to do your work. Your work is law-making. Your work is law-making and participating in Parliament and related committees to produce good law. When we come and our initiative is to go to a joint select committee, we would like to include your views with the views of others as well. There is a cultural issue here. This Government does not pretend to know everything, to be the authority on everything; that we know everything.

6.15 p.m.

We won a constitutional majority; this entire Bench full and half on the other side. We do not use that with arrogance. We would like to include Members of the Opposition, members of civil society, the NGOs and the trade unions.

Stakeholders help us to pass good law and we have the majority to do it. The Members opposite are arguing we are only going to JSC and there is meeting upon meeting and we do not have time.

Part of the enhanced governance approach of the People's Partnership is to produce good law based upon consultation and participation of all stakeholders. That is our objective. If you do not want to participate, fine. We will indicate to the nation that the Opposition has abandoned ship without court martial. Any time the Opposition does not want to participate in a JSC, we will invite civil society to come and join us to make law.

The Member for Diego Martin North/East can say go ahead because he wants to undermine his leader. Someone was delusional enough to believe they could be leader of the PNM and the internal politics of the Opposition is now affecting the running of the Parliament so it becomes our business. They should get their house in order. Every time we meet, three people speak and two hold press conferences. I do not know if to send a Speaker to the press conference now. We are hearing one thing in the House and another in the press conference.

I ask the Leader of the Opposition whether the Member for San Fernando East has his permission and authority to hold a press conference every day. When you are in Opposition, you have an Opposition Leader/Chief Whip. I cannot remember in 10 years that I could bolt up and go and hold a press conference. [*Interruption*] It has to do with us because we do not find the unity we require to make law; to conduct the business of the House.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, these are some of the matters I wanted to place on record, but I do not have enough time to speak of some other achievements of the Government. I would really have wanted to get through dealing with matters of local government and sport.

I just want to assure the Leader of the Opposition that we know what he is up to. He is up to a trick. They want to plant in people's minds that the Government is not performing and achieving and place doubt as to our capacity. However, after reading this list to you and to the national community, part of this 10-page document, I do not think anyone will take them on.

A fundamental issue in this Bill has to do with priority expenditure policy, cleaning up the books and the use of funds. This Bill has precious little to do with the financial year 2011. This deals with 2009 and 2010. I have said before and repeat and extend the conversation that under the former administration,

particularly under my friend, the Member for Diego Martin West, when he had the privilege of serving as Minister of Housing, we could not find a reflection of his self-righteousness in the policies of the housing ministry and the HDC.

At that time, in a note I had here earlier, apparently I made a mistake when I spoke about a contract for Evolve, I said it was $2 million. I was wrong. The contract for Evolve, for change management, I am informed, they were paid $1.7 million per month for 12 months at a total of some $18 million for the year. The sum of $18 million was paid to a consultant company to talk about change management that produced nothing. The sum of $18 million of taxpayers' money has gone.

We could have built a good few units with this. That was their experience. Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is not stopping here. We are now going to be looking for these directors and we want to tell them they got $18 million from the taxpayers. "Could you please produce the suitcase of work that you completed? If we do not get the answers we are looking for, we may take other action." The sum of $18 million has gone and we do not have a file and a piece of paper; a chit from a cash register to show what they did with $18 million.

On a previous occasion, I raised the issue of the former chairman of HDC who used some $700,000 from a credit card and could not account for it. To this day he has not repaid the credit card; we have not heard from him; we have not gotten back the money. He is apparently ignoring our request to return the money. It was allegedly used under emergency circumstances for some family matter. Today he is no longer there and the money is no longer there as well. [*Interruption*]

We are looking to get back the money. You assured me the man will return the money. You told me that this man is a man of some—[*Interruption*] You told me that there is an explanation. We did not get that money and we need that money to build the units.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to indicate to my friend opposite that he can talk from now to thy kingdom come, if he has any serious ambition to lead that party from where it is, he must come much better than with that foolishness we heard earlier.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I thank you.

Mr. Colm Imbert (*Diego Martin North/East*): Mr. Deputy Speaker, perhaps the Leader of Government Business could let me know whether the answer to questions 23, 24 and 25, which were all posed by the Member for La Brea, involving matters in his constituency and were due to be answered on

Wednesday, were circulated. I only received a strange single-page response to the questions that remained unanswered. That single-page response had some information on it which is inconsistent with the true facts. [*Interruption*] Yes, it is a term of art. It is at least 600 years old.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the only written response that we received was a response to a question I posed to the Minister of Finance with respect to payments, whether in cash or in kind, by state enterprises or state-controlled corporations and the answer was that there were none.

Mrs. Seepersad-Bachan: Member, will you give way? You will recall that it was 2.15 p.m. and the rest of the answers had to be circulated. I have forwarded those answers and if you want I will go downstairs now to find out from the Clerk of the House. I agree it was a bit late because I had it written and went downstairs to have my office email it again to have it circulated. I can check on it now.

Mr. C. Imbert: Thank you very much, Member for San Fernando West. The fact is that we left here at 4.00 a.m. on Thursday and up to that time, as far as I am aware, we did not receive the answers to question 23. [*Interruption*] He spoke about other questions. I am speaking about more questions that were not answered—23, 24 and 25. As of now—it is 6.27 p.m.—unless I am mistaken, we have not received those answers and, therefore, it is not correct for the Member for Oropouche East to declare with such pride that this Government is answering all the questions. It is simply not true.

Earlier, I had cause to ask the Member for Oropouche East whether the piano had been found. I noticed during the contribution of the Attorney General on Wednesday, when he was regaling us with tales from the unknown about this mysterious grand piano and clearly insinuating that a very expensive piano that had been placed on the compound of the Diplomatic Centre was missing—some piano costing $1 million—he regaled us with this tale of woe that this expensive piano had gone missing; that it was a matter for the police and the fraud squad and that investigations would soon be forthcoming to determine who had stolen this piano.

All of them, including the Member for Chaguanas East, banged the table and bawled out: "Where is the piano?" The next day, there was the headline: "Where is the piano?" with all of them screaming with joy at the alleged act of theft that occurred under the Manning administration.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am reliably informed, and the Members opposite can correct me—I will get to it. I have 75 minutes. This is just foreplay. I am reliably

informed that while the Attorney General was carrying on and the Members for Tabaquite, Mayaro and St. Joseph were banging the table asking where is the piano, the piano was right there on the compound of the Diplomatic Centre, right where it was when the Member for San Fernando East departed that residence.

6.30 p.m.

Imagine they consumed national attention for two days; front page, radio, on the talk show, the TV, all kinds of investigative reporting, carrying on. It made international news. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I subscribe to a news wire that gives me all of the important stories throughout the Caribbean, and that was right on the list. That is the *Express* story. "Where is the piano?" "It gone all over the Caribbean; all over the world." This time it is just a set of "pappy-show". The alleged stolen piano was there all the time.

I will just tell Members opposite, I know you want to score points, you know, but you need to be a little more careful in your public utterances, in your allegations of fraud; be a little more careful. Get your facts straight before you come and waste our time and the time of the entire nation—all this foolishness about a missing piano.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, earlier today I had sought your leave to make a personal explanation, and through a misunderstanding—let us put it that way. I know you are a decent man; I have known you for a very long time, and I do not think it was any deliberate intent on your part, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but through a misunderstanding I was not permitted to make the personal explanation.

I now see Procedural Bulletin, No. 1 of 2011, which has now outlined for the record and for perpetuity, I assume, that if a Member wishes to clarify a material part of his or her speech in a debate that may have been misrepresented, misquoted or misunderstood—I am reading from your bulletin, Mr. Deputy Speaker—the Member can do so by way of a personal explanation under Standing Order 20. It is a pity that I was not permitted to make my personal explanation. But I will now read into the record the document that I sent you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, earlier today. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this has everything to do with finance, because this debate today is about a motion where it says:

> "Be it resolved that this House adopt the First Report…Session of the Finance Committee of the House of Representatives…on proposals for the Supplementation and Variation of the 2010 Appropriation."

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the debate has also been widened considerably by the contributions made in particular by the Member for Oropouche East. So, Mr.

Deputy Speaker, I will now read into the record—[*Interruption*] I am not justifying anything. You need to learn. You need to be educated. Mr. Deputy Speaker—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: When you were in Government—[*Interruption*]

Mr. C. Imbert: It is a cyclical thing. Sometimes we are there, sometimes we are here. I have been here twice. You will be back over here, do not worry.

On Wednesday, January 12, 2010, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I stated in this House that the former PNM Government made a commitment to the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) in February 2010 that Trinidad and Tobago would establish a financial intelligence unit and implement compliance mechanisms in banks to monitor suspicious transactions.

I further stated that because the new PP Government did not fulfil this commitment and missed two deadlines, we as a country have been blacklisted in the international community, and as a consequence a number of foreign financial institutions are now unwilling to open accounts for residents of Trinidad and Tobago.

My statements caused some agitation among Members of Government, both behind me and in front of me. There was an uproar. I was accused of being alarmist. I was accused of misrepresenting the facts. I was accused of stating falsehoods. I was threatened that I would be pulled before the Privileges Committee by more than one Member opposite. The Minister of Trade and Industry, so confident was he in his misinformation, that he actually challenged me to name one such institution that is unwilling or refusing to open financial banking accounts, brokerage accounts for residents of Trinidad and Tobago—so confident was the Minister of Trade and Industry in his misinformation.

Subsequent to that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, a number of Government spokesmen made inaccurate statements with respect to this matter. The Minister of Finance told us that Trinidad and Tobago had been on the FATF list since 2005. The Attorney General told us we were on the list since 2010. Now this is a very serious matter. A blacklist is a list or register of people, organizations or countries, who, for one reason or another, are being denied a particular privilege or service. It is not something that should be trivialized, swept under the carpet or buried. The current situation affects the ability of citizens and residents of Trinidad and Tobago and businesses incorporated in Trinidad and Tobago to trade or carry out financial transactions. It is very serious. And I am speaking to you, Member for St. Augustine, because you are also a decent man and I know that you are going to take in what I am about to say.

Despite what some uninformed Members of the Government may think, because of the Government's failure to meet the commitment given in February 2010, we have effectively been blacklisted. And for the information of Members, the FATF blacklist is the common description for the Financial Action Task Force list of non-cooperative countries or territories, that is to say, countries which are perceived to be non-cooperative in the global fight against money laundering or terrorist financing.

The first FATF list was published in June 2000. Fifteen countries initially appeared on this list, and they were all regarded as being uncooperative in the fight against money laundering. There were five Caribbean countries on this list, including St. Vincent, St. Kitts and the Grenadines, the Bahamas and so on. Trinidad and Tobago was not on the first list of countries deemed to be uncooperative in the fight against money laundering. We were not on the 2000 list.

In 2001, Mr. Deputy Speaker, another list was published. Eight more countries were added bringing the total of blacklisted countries to 23. Trinidad and Tobago was not on this second list. By 2006, the only country in the world—because, as countries got on to the blacklist, they took steps, they improved their compliance mechanisms, they introduced controls in their banking system and they came off the list. By 2006, Burma was the only country on the FATF. [*Interruption*] Sure.

Mr. Dookeran: Could the Member identify the authentic source of that information on that list that he is talking about?

Mr. C. Imbert: This is—this information, as I said earlier, this was a personal explanation. This is culled from a number of official documents, including the FATF official website. I will be happy to share with the Minister of Finance, all of the source documentation, all of the articles, all of the publications which provide this information. But I assure you that if you go and do a quick online search, you will discover that all of this information is readily available on the Internet.

So let me continue, Mr. Deputy Speaker. By 2006 Burma was the only country on the blacklist. And in 2007 no countries were listed by the FATF as non-cooperative. And, therefore, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the statement made by the Member for Tunapuna that we were on the FATF list since 2005, is not accurate. In 2007 there were no countries on the list. In 2006 only Burma was on the list.

In 2008, Mr. Deputy Speaker [*Interruption*] I do not blame him, you know. He has very poor advisers. They have people from the university who do not do their work properly and give him bad advice, and he has other advisers. By 2008,

the FATF identified five countries of concern with compliance issues. Trinidad and Tobago was not on this list. So between 2001 and 2008 Trinidad and Tobago was not on the published list of countries deemed to be non-cooperative. Throughout 2008 and 2009, through a series of public statements, the FATF stated its concerns with the compliance procedures in a number of countries such as Iran, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Pakistan and São Tomé and Príncipe. These are some of the countries. Trinidad and Tobago was not on any of these official lists published publicly by the FATF.

However, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as the world got smaller, and as the global terrorist threat got larger, the G-20 countries continued to put pressure on a number of other countries throughout the world. An international scrutiny of financial procedures in countries across the world was increasing. As a result, the PNM government—the former PNM government in 2009 and 2010, because of this global pressure—we are not on any blacklist yet, but because of this global pressure, Trinidad and Tobago, under the former PNM government, updated its laws dealing with money laundering, proceeds of crime and terrorist financing.

And the Member for Caroni East, he is not here, but he will know this, because he was here, and he participated in all the debates when we did come at short notice, a lot of late-night debates, where there was one-day notice, two-day notice, where we had to push through amendments to the Proceeds of Crime Act, we had to push through amendments to financial legislation and terrorist financing legislation and so on. And we came here in 2009/2010 and we updated our laws to make them compliant with the requirements of the G-20—the G-20 group of countries and also the FATF. However, having updated our laws, it was not enough. It is a trite fact that you could have laws on the books, but unless you implement what is in the laws, then you have really not achieved very much.

So the FATF told Trinidad and Tobago in February 2010 that, "Yes, you have done quite a lot. You have made a lot of progress. You have updated your legislation, you have published regulations dealing with compliance within the banking system, but you are now required to establish a financial intelligence unit, and to implement mechanisms within the banking sector", Mr. Deputy Speaker. We were required to do that in 2010. [*Interruption*] I do not know what you have there, you know.

We were required, in 2010—we made a high-level political commitment to the Financial Action Task Force, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to implement compliance mechanisms within our banking sector, to track and monitor money laundering and terrorist financing, and we were also required to establish and implement and

fully commission and equip a properly functioning financial intelligence unit. And I am sure you know that to be true: that the high-level commitment given by Trinidad and Tobago in February 2010, that before the end of 2010 we would fully establish and equip a financial intelligence unit, and also implement compliance mechanisms within the banking sector.

The new Government, Mr. Deputy Speaker, was too concerned with public relations; PR, harassing Clico depositors, witch-hunting, "gallerying", enjoying the spoils of war, partying, feting, traveling, karaoke singing—[*Interruption*] "I ain' going there." I know about the karaoke singing—"I ain' know 'bout dat. I wasn' there." But I saw the karaoke singing. A lot of foreign travel; a whole j'ouvert band of them; they travelled to New York, and they went on tour of the state of New York; went to Queens, and they went to Manhattan and they went all over the place; "end up" in London. So they were too busy with "gallerying" and partying and getting involved with the spoils of war to do their work.

As I said previously, what the former PNM administration had done is put the person who headed the Central Authority in the Attorney General's office to be the interim head of the Financial Intelligence Unit so at least we could report to FATF that we have put a competent person in place as a temporary measure to head our intelligence unit, and he will be given the mandate to recruit professional staff and to set up the unit and to get it going. What did they do? They fired the man. As I said, they fired David West; fired him both from extradition and from the FIU. "What they do" in terms of compliance mechanisms in the banks? Nothing.

So, a deadline came up in June, Mr. Deputy Speaker, a compliance deadline came up, we missed it. A compliance deadline came up in October 2010, we missed it. What happened then? The Financial Action Task Force published a list of non-compliant countries; publicly identified 31 countries that had strategic deficiencies in terms of their procedures for tracking and monitoring money laundering—31 countries, and we have the dubious pleasure of being on that list. If you do not believe me, check it; go and check it now. But we have the dubious pleasure of being publicly identified, along with 31 other countries, with having made a high-level political commitment to establish a financial intelligence unit, and to establish monitoring mechanisms for money laundering within our banking sector, and having failed to fulfil our commitments. So we are now on a list of countries that are not compliant and have failed to meet required deadlines.

6.45 p.m.

Now, as I said on the previous occasion, that appearance on this published list has consequences. I gave the general definition of a blacklist. A blacklist is a list

of persons who are denied certain privileges, services, et cetera; who are identified as having something wrong with them. There is now something wrong with Trinidad and Tobago, because we are now publicly listed as having failed to meet the commitment given by the previous government in February 2010.

Mr. Volney: Relevance.

Mr. C. Imbert: I will get there very soon. Do not worry my good fellow. The Member for St. Joseph wants to know about relevance. We are talking about the financial system in Trinidad and Tobago. We got a very pious speech from the Member for Tunapuna about investment opportunities. I do not know if you were sleeping, Member for St. Joseph, during the debate. [*Interruption*] This is not a Bill—I would like to tell the hon. Member—we are debating the report of the Finance Committee. We are not debating a Bill. We are debating the speech of the Minister of Finance, which was wide-ranging.

During the address of the Minister of Finance, he told us that the People's Partnership Government is doing such a fantastic job that investors are coming to see him every day, okay. Now, let me tell you, through you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, Member for St. Joseph, what will happen to those investors, because of the fact that we are now among a list of 31 countries that are identified as being non-compliant and having missed deadlines given by commitments given by a former administration—because the Member for Chaguanas East, in his deep level of misinformation, blurted out at me: "Name one!" I found out all of this in December, when a number of persons came to me and told me that, as a consequence of the failure of the People's Partnership Government to commission the Financial Intelligence Unit and to implement the compliance mechanisms within the banking sector, a number of foreign financial institutions are refusing to open accounts and do business with persons and corporations registered in Trinidad and Tobago.

That is a fact and that has everything to do with what we are debating, because if foreign companies will now be unable to incorporate local subsidiaries and incorporate companies registered in Trinidad and Tobago, because these companies can no longer—[*Interruption*] I am coming to that. "Hurry dog eat raw meat." "Ah coming tuh dat!" If foreign companies can now no longer establish businesses in Trinidad and Tobago with local banking accounts and persons/investors can no longer come to Trinidad and Tobago and establish banking accounts in local banks, which can trade with foreign banks, then we are going to have a problem in this country.

I am giving a commitment. The Opposition Leader and I spoke about this matter on Wednesday, and I am giving you the Opposition's commitment, that if there is anything that is required to be done from a legislative point of view, if we need to do further amendments to the laws, if we need to improve the regulation, if there is anything that this Parliament is required to do, in terms of updating our legal systems, in order to get ourselves off that list, then we on this side as the Opposition are prepared to meet any night and any day to resolve this problem. We are giving that commitment here tonight.

I see the Minister of Finance shaking his head. You got some more misinformation from your advisors? Let me read it into the record. When I was told that a number of foreign financial institutions are no longer willing to do business with persons who have bank accounts originating in Trinidad and Tobago, I could not believe it, so I went online and started to email a number of well-known financial institutions in the United States; online brokerage houses and so on, and one by one the responses started to come back. I am going to read one such response into the record. For those of you on the other side who are so skeptical, I am giving it to you. Calm yourself.

I am reading into the record, a response sent by one of the largest and most highly regarded online brokers in the United States. If you do not believe that is true, I am going to give you the name, and any one of you can leave this Chamber now and go and check it out. I have checked it out myself, and the online broker, which I will name in a very short while, has been rated by Barron's. If any one of them has even a smidgen of financial knowledge, they will know that Barron's is a very reputable firm that examines and reviews a number of financial institutions in the United States and elsewhere.

This broker that I am about to name, has been rated by Barron's and Forbes. And for any of them who may wish to watch television and look at Fox News and Bloomberg television, they will know that Forbes is also one of the most highly rated firms that reviews financial institutions. The particular brokerage house that won, because I got many replies, is OptionsXpress. You go and check out who OptionsXpress is, but my research tells me that they have been rated by both Barron's and Forbes as one of the best online brokers in the United States. In fact, they are ranked first among online brokers in the United States. Here is the reply. I communicated with them seeking, as an experiment, to open an account as a resident of Trinidad and Tobago. Here is the response.

> Dear Colm, unfortunately we are—and this is dated December 20, 2010—"unable to provide you with a new account at this time…"

Here is the dangerous part of this reply.

> Due to regulatory concerns and/or risk assessments related to your jurisdiction, we are unable to carry accounts originating in Trinidad and Tobago.

I am not making this up. OptionsXpress periodically evaluates its ability to hold accounts for residents of particular countries and even the disturbing part.

> "While we do not expect that current circumstances will change for Trinidad and Tobago in the near future, we will certainly notify you if they do. In the meantime, we encourage you to maintain a pending account with us and use our free services in order to develop an understanding of the United States marketplace."

This is simply one response.

Virtually every single financial institution in the United States that I corresponded with gave me the same reply and told me that, based on the December 2010 review of countries around the world, Trinidad and Tobago is now on a list of countries that do not have sufficiently robust systems within their banking sector and they are unable to open accounts for persons and corporations resident in Trinidad and Tobago. This is not a joke, Minister. I see you laughing, Member for Tunapuna. You are laughing. This is a serious matter. You could say what you want. I have the original document in front of me and I have 10 more like this from financial institutions that have all written me and told me that, once you are a resident of Trinidad and Tobago, they can no longer do business with you.

So, Member for St. Joseph, you think all these foreign investors are going to come now?

Mr. Volney: That is personal to you.

Mr. C. Imbert: Personal to me? Oh really? Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Member for St. Joseph seems to have a problem with language. Let me read the relevant part of the letter again.

> Due to regulatory concerns and/or risk assessments related to your jurisdiction, Trinidad and Tobago, we are unable to carry accounts originating in Trinidad and Tobago. We periodically evaluate our ability to hold accounts for residents of particular countries.

Is that personal to me? That applies to every single resident of Trinidad and Tobago, including you. I have put these facts into the record. I do not know what the Minister of Finance has been told. You can continue to fool yourself, but you

are not fooling anybody on this side. As I have said, we in the Opposition are prepared to meet night and day to amend our laws and to fix whatever financial regulations need to be fixed, in order to resolve this problem. "Dey busy bussing mark about piano" and they are not doing their work. They are not attending to the country's business. That deals with that matter. "I see yuh bawling Oh Lord. Go ahead. Yuh bawling Oh Lord, you could say whey yuh want."

Mr. Deputy Speaker, let me go into the meat of the matter before us. One of the matters that up for debate today is a payment of $800 million for the Trinidad Generation Unlimited Power Plant. I think that is what it is called (TGU). I am not sure what the figure is, I believe it is TT dollars. Some history is required for this matter, because, again, Members opposite do not know everything. In fact, they are new and they have spent a lot of time as, the Member for Diego Martin West has said, having fun. But, "fete over" and it is time to work now.

The Trinidad Generation Unlimited Plant in south Trinidad was supposed to provide power for the aluminium smelter. It was sited in La Brea, or that general part of Trinidad, the south-western peninsula, for two reasons: one is to provide electricity for the smelter and secondly to decentralize the generation of power in Trinidad and Tobago. Because, in Trinidad and Tobago, we have two major power generating plants actually three now, there is one in Tobago. We have the Point Lisas Generation Plant and we have the Port of Spain generation. A new plant was commissioned about one year ago, approximately, or less than one year, at the Cove Industrial Estate in Tobago, thus providing Tobago with its own independent power generation capacity, making Tobago no longer dependent on Trinidad, assuming that the plant is working, of course.

If the new plant is not working, again, they have to depend on supply from Trinidad. But, the technocrats had long advised that it is not a good idea to centralize your electricity generation capacity in just two parts of Trinidad, that it was a much better idea, especially in the deep south where there is an industrialization process, to start establishing new electricity generation plants in other parts of the country, so that if Point Lisas goes down or Port of Spain goes down, at least you would have standby capacity in south Trinidad to deal with the southern area of this country.

7.00 p.m.

The Trinidad Generation Unlimited Plant was established for two reasons; one is to provide power for the smelter. I do not know if Members opposite know much about aluminium smelting. I am not an expert. I do not know where the Member for Oropouche is, but I am not an expert on smelting. I know nothing

about smelting. The Member for La Brea knows, but of the little that I know—the Member for San Fernando West will correct me if I am wrong—is that aluminium smelting consumes large quantities of electricity; the process of conversion from the alumina oxide into the aluminium requires large quantities of electricity; the smelting process. Therefore, in order to establish a smelter, it was necessary to establish an electricity generation plant dedicated for that project. I am told that the plant in La Brea is close to the smelter site. The plant in La Brea was going to produce approximately 720 megawatts of electricity making it one of the largest electricity plants in Trinidad, if not the Caribbean.

The contract between the Government of Trinidad and Tobago and the plant is what is called a take-or-pay contract. For the benefit of Members opposite, a take-or-pay contract is a contract where, whether you use the product or the service, you have to pay for it. So a take-or-pay contract was agreed to for the Trinidad Generation Unlimited facility in order to make it financially feasible. Presently, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago is committed to pay for the electricity produced by that plant.

I saw an answer coming from the Minister of Finance to a question that I had asked about the electricity plant. I had it here a few seconds ago. I saw an answer coming from the Minister of Finance in response to a question that I posed during the Finance Committee Meeting with respect to the exposure of the Exchequer to Trinidad—I am recalling from memory, and the Minister of Finance could correct me. I believe our exposure is somewhere in the vicinity of US $350 million or US $360 million. Am I correct? That is, annual exposure in terms of the take-or-pay contract for the Trinidad Generation Unlimited Facility is somewhere in the vicinity of US $350 million. Mr. Deputy Speaker, here it is.

I had asked the Minister of Finance a question with respect to the cost to the Government for the electricity that we must purchase from this plant. The response from the hon. Minister of Finance is that the Government would be required to purchase—I am sorry, it is US $36 million, over TT $200 million for the electricity coming out of the TGU plant in La Brea.

I am also told that, because we have cancelled the smelter, the infrastructure is not in place to utilize the full capacity of this plant. What I have been told is the current transmission infrastructure in that part of Trinidad can only accommodate a maximum of 460 megawatts of electricity. The plant produces 720 megawatts every time, and we are required to buy all of it. This was entered into by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago. So, the 460 megawatts was going into the grid and the remainder was going for the smeller. By cancelling the smelter, there

is now an excess 200 megawatts of electricity that cannot be used. What I am told is that it is going to cost up to TT $200 million to upgrade our transmission infrastructure to allow the electricity from that plant to be put into the grid.

So, this decision of the People's Partnership Government to cancel the smelter has serious financial repercussions for Trinidad and Tobago. As a country, we have to pay $200 million a year for electricity of which we can only use about 60 per cent, and the remaining 40 per cent cannot be utilized unless we improve the transmission infrastructure in Trinidad.

I am told that the Government is even considering not cranking up the plant with its full capacity, but just generating maybe 460 megawatts, or just letting the plant lay idle or whatever. This is what I am told is one of the various options that the Government has to look at. The fact remains that you could only use 460 kilowatts out of that 720 megawatts and, therefore, about $80 million per year is going up in smoke until you upgrade our infrastructure.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I can tell you that the upgrade of electrical infrastructure is not a simple thing. You do not wave a magic wand and simply put in the pylons and the high voltage cables. You do not just do so and "whosh" the new electricity grid appears. It may take a year or it may take longer than that to put in the necessary infrastructure to utilize the surplus electricity from that plant.

We did not hear any of that from the Minister of Finance. The Minister of Finance simply told us that $800 million is to retire Treasury Deposits that were used to meet financial commitments for the TGU plant. That is all he said. When he was explaining what that $800 million was for in the Finance Committee Meeting and in his speech today, he simply said that is to retire the money used to make the Government's contribution to the construction of the power plant in La Brea.

The last sentence of the Minister's reply is very revealing. It says:

> In conclusion, the decision not to proceed with Alutrint will mean that the Government would be required to purchase US $36.3 million worth of electricity per year should T&TEC be unable to sell the electricity to consumers and other industrial users.

Very cryptic! What he is really saying is that we have to pay $200 million, and you cannot sell it to consumers. We built the plant.

Mr. Volney: You put the cart before the horse.

Mr. C. Imbert: Now, I will excuse the Member for St. Joseph. He is an attorney. We were constructing the smelter. If you go down to La Brea now, you

will see the plant is half-built. We were constructing a facility in La Brea, and constructing a power plant to service that facility and we have these kinds of uninformed comments from the Member for St. Joseph; cart before the horse. Foolishness! Member for St. Joseph, I am disappointed.

The other issue that the Minister of Finance has skirted around is, there is another $300-odd million in—

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. [*Miss M. Mc Donald*]

Question put and agreed to.

CIRCULATION OF ANSWERS

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Members, the circulation copies of the answers to questions nos. 23, 24 and 25 were, in fact, submitted by the Hon. Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs in the soft copy yesterday. It is our understanding that these answers were sent via one email to the group address, containing the multiple email coordinates of all Members of the House of Representatives. We were therefore quite surprised to learn that you have not received them. We usually have no difficulties in our communicating with all of you by email, so this is something we will have to check into. I have therefore directed the Clerk of the House to print hard copies of these responses and circulate them to you as a matter of urgency. We appreciate your understanding and we seek to resolve the problem.

FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT

(ADOPTION)

Mr. C. Imbert: I thank the Deputy Speaker and all Members for extending my time, especially the one behind me. With respect to that point, the Standing Orders actually require the responses to be in writing and, therefore, I do not think an electronic copy yet qualifies as writing. In fact, the Deputy Speaker referred to it as a soft copy. I would like to get a hard copy, please.

Let us go back to the point. The Minister has also come to this House seeking approval for an additional $300-odd million for the Ministry of the People and Social Development.

Mr. Dookeran: Thank you Member. In dealing with the issue of the power purchase agreement between Trinidad Generation Unlimited, in the information

that was circulated to Members it is stated here very clearly, and I could read it just for information.

> In accordance with the power purchase agreement, the total energy generated by Trinidad Generation Unlimited is expected to cost $109 million per year when the facility comes fully on stream in January 2012.
>
> Under the purchase power agreement, T&TEC was to assume approximately two-thirds of the cost and Alutrint one-third of the cost. However, given the decision on Alutrint, T&TEC would in the medium term take up the load previously assigned to Alutrint.
>
> In conclusion, the decision not to proceed with Alutrint would mean that the Government will be required to purchase $36.3 million worth of electricity per year, should T&TEC be unable to sell the electricity to consumers and other industrial users.

That is the full extent of the statement.

Hon. C. Imbert: Thank you very much. Now, as I said, I consider the Member for Tunapuna to be a decent man. I have a different view of the Member for D'Abadie/O'Meara, who publishes his views in the newspapers. [I*nterruption*] Why? He attacked his leader in the newspaper. "Why I must not take advantage of that? Why I must give him a break?" Anyway, through you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, everything here is as you have said, but you have been badly advised for yet another time.

At this time, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago is subject to a ruling by the Regulated Industries Commission. They did not tell you that part. Whenever you impose an additional burden on T&TEC that is not part of their normal operations, the Government has to pay for it. So, this is just semantics. That is a ruling by the Regulated Industries Commission, which has been made law in Trinidad and Tobago. That ruling was made sometime in 2008/2009, and the Regulated Industries Commission, under the deceased Mr. Pantin—Mr. Pantin was the then chairman of the Regulated Industries Commission, and he was instrumental in that ruling.

As a result, if you go and check the Cabinet record—I know they are not showing you these things. Go and check the Cabinet record, and you will see there are a number of power generation projects and infrastructure upgrade projects with respect to electricity which the Regulated Industries Commission has said that T&TEC must not pay for and what the Government must pay. They can tell you what they want. The infrastructure does not exist to take up this electricity.

7.15 p.m.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I said before, at least $80 million of that $200 million will go up in smoke, because you cannot feed the customers. How can you charge customers for electricity that you cannot get to them, because you do not have the transmission infrastructure? What about demand? Did the person who wrote this note to you tell you that there was an additional demand for 720 megawatts additional electricity in Trinidad and Tobago? No, there is not.

I speak from a position of knowledge, because in the last administration the Cabinet had set up a subcommittee of Cabinet called Power Generation, and I was asked to be a member of that committee, along with a number of other committees. I am fully cognizant of the capabilities of T&TEC, the expenditure and income and the amount of the subsidy the Government has to give them on an annual basis. I am telling you, Minister of Finance, go and check your facts, because you are being mislead. That $200 million we have to pay for every year, it cannot be passed on to the consumers; for one very simple reason, the infrastructure does not exist and, secondly, the demand does not exist. You go and get some better advisors. You are constantly being misled.

Coming back to the $300 million, I noticed also that the Minister of Finance skirted around that issue and did not tell us whether all or some or a significant part of that $300 million was as a consequence of actions of the People's Partnership Government. I would hope in your winding up, Minister, you would tell us how much of that $300 million was as a consequence of election promises made: increase in old-age pension and various other promises made by the People's Partnership Government. Let us know, because you have not told us how much of that $300 million was as a consequence of the increase in old-age pension. Let us know. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Sharma: "You still talking nonsense?"

Mr. C. Imbert: I heard the Member for Oropouche East talk about the achievements of this Government.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, could you tell me how much more time I have?

Mr. Sharma: Two minutes.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Twenty minutes.

Mr. Sharma: "Even you fed up of yourself."

Mr. C. Imbert: When we demitted office there were a number of infrastructure projects that were in train. One of the infrastructure projects was the famous highway to Point Fortin. I can state, without fear of contradiction, that the tenders

for the Point Fortin Highway were received on or before May 07, 2010. We are in January 2011, so seven months after the tenders came in you are now going to start the construction of the Point Fortin Highway—seven months later? [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Sharma: "What dotishness you talking?"

Mr. C. Imbert: The Point Fortin Highway—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker, could you talk to the Members opposite?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, order!

Mr. Sharma: "You really making yourself a fool to continue."

Mr. C. Imbert: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The history of the Point Fortin Highway is necessary because I would say that a vast majority of the "little bit" they are doing, because they are not doing much, 95 per cent of the "little bit" that the People's Partnership is doing is all the work of the PNM. [*Desk thumping*] The record would show that—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Sharma: The record would show how foolish you are.

Mr. C. Imbert:—in February 2010, the National Infrastructure Development Company placed public advertisements in the international and local press—this was after all the planning and engineering had been done in the years before that—in the *Engineering News-Record*, *The Financial Times*, *The World Highways Magazine*, in the local newspapers and so on, inviting proposals for design/build services in relation to the extension of the Solomon Hochoy Highway to Point Fortin. At that same time, advertisements were placed for the extension of the Churchill Roosevelt Highway from Wallerfield to Manzanilla. Shortly after that, advertisements were placed for the highway to Mayaro and the causeway to Diego Martin.

Fourteen contractors indicated an interest in the construction of the Point Fortin Highway and 11 contractors indicated an interest in the extension of the Churchill Roosevelt to Manzanilla. This was around February 2010, a couple of months before the general election. The tender documents were picked up; the contractors did their procurement exercises and submitted their bids.

As I indicated, the bids for the Point Fortin Highway came in on May 07, 2010. The lowest bidder was a contractor called Construtora OAS in partnership with Halco in the amount of $5,000,285,400. So before May 07, 2010, tenders were received from three international contractors for the highway to Point Fortin and the lowest bidder was Construtora OAS. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Sharma: "Who ask you that?"

Mr. C. Imbert: Mr. Deputy Speaker, this man is just sickening. Would you tell him to stop?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Member for Fyzabad.

Mr. C. Imbert: I understand the role of the Member for Fyzabad. His role is to shout across at Members on this side. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Sharma: You have nothing to say.

Mr. C. Imbert: Mr. Deputy Speaker, will you please speak to the Member for Fyzabad?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The Standing Orders clearly indicate that a Member, when speaking, should be heard in silence. If you have to say anything, you can use behind the Chair or the tea room.

Mr. C. Imbert: The strategy of the People's Partnership is to put somebody like the Member for Fyzabad to shout and scream across the floor and to constantly attempt to interrupt the contributions on this side. I have known him for 19 years. That is what he has been doing for 19 years.

The fact of the matter is that the lowest bidder for that highway came in May in the amount of $5.2 billion. The Government "spin around, spin around, do all kind of simi-dimi, allow de thing to just germinate" for a period of approximately six months. They fired the international consultants. AECOM, one of the largest consulting firms in the world, were the consultants hired to do the procurement and supervision of construction.

In the way they did when they came in, they fired everybody. So they fired AECOM, they sent them a letter of termination. Then a couple of months later, they "ketch deyself" and say, "But wait nuh, we have fired the consultants who were managing the National Highways Programme and they have been working on this project for over a year. Unless we bring them back, we will not be able to continue the highways programme that was started by the PNM administration."

So they sent them another letter rescinding the letter of termination. "Dey bring them back. All kinda simi-dimi happen again; dey suspend them, then dey rehired them." All of this went on between May and around November, December. Then all of a sudden, the Member for Chaguanas West realized that the whole of 2010 had elapsed, he has achieved nothing except to have a retinue of paid associates within the media who follow him, who report everything he

says at the drop of a hat. "He say jump and it make front page." He realized that the whole of 2010 has elapsed and he has done nothing, so he has to now start to revive everything.

I am sending a warning to the Members opposite. I heard the Member for Tunapuna talk about using the IADB to finance your Public Sector Investment Programme. The IADB has very strict procurement procedures. You must invite tenders from every member country of the IADB. You must place it in the international media for 45 days. [*Interruption*] Mr. Deputy Speaker, Fyzabad again. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Member for Fyzabad, you have been named.

Dr. Rowley: Put him out!

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Kindly refrain from the asides that are disturbing the Member for Diego Martin North/East.

Mr. C. Imbert: I hope he understands what being named means. [*Crosstalk*] Gone again?

I want to tell the Minister of Finance something. You said you would use the IADB to implement your PSIP, but their procedures are very lengthy. I have heard and seen it published that the IADB has agreed to give us a pipeline of funds in excess of US $1 billion; I am not sure what the correct figure is, but something of that magnitude. It will take years to draw down on those funds.

The Minister of Finance spoke about US $100 million being made available. That is just 10 per cent of the total amount. The IADB has a strict requirement for feasibility studies before project implementation, a strict requirement that you must invite quotations from contractors from every single member state within the Inter-American Development Bank, and they have long lead times; they have waiting times and they have no objection procedures.

I want the Minister of Finance to tell me: is the highway to Point Fortin going to be financed by the IADB? Because the tenders were not invited using IADB procedures. I want the Minister to tell us whether the highway is going to be financed by the IADB, because I do not think it is possible. I know as a fact that the IADB procedures were not deployed for the invitation of tenders. In other words, not all 30, 40 or 50 countries of the IADB were invited to tender, that I know, therefore, that tender process is not compliant with IADB procedures.

I will like the Minister of Finance to tell us, in those circumstances, where are you going to get the $5.2 billion from to finance the highway to Point Fortin? I

would like the Minister of Finance to tell us: has all the land acquisition for the highway been done? Of course, I know the answer is no.

I would like the Minister to tell us why the Minister of Works and Transport did not follow the prescribed procedure, where you name the lowest bidder as the preferred bidder, you do not announce that they have been awarded the contract, because that gives right to legitimate expectation? The language of the procurement procedures are that you name them as the preferred bidder, so you do not create a contractual expectation, and then you negotiate over a significant period of time in order to make sure that the terms and conditions of the contract are in the best interest of Trinidad and Tobago.

I would like the Minister of Finance to tell me how long it took to negotiate the contract with this company, Construtora. I understand that it took three days. I would like to know. How could you negotiate a contract for $5.2 billion, with all sorts of complex contractual terms dealing with liability for delays, such as liability arising out of failure of the employer to give possession of site, because land has not been acquired, all sorts of complicated contractual terms dealing with currency fluctuation, all sorts of contractual terms dealing with the failure of regulatory agencies within Trinidad and Tobago to provide the necessary approvals—how can you negotiate a contract for $5 billion in three days? Because I am told that is what happened.

I would like the Minister to tell us why the Member for Chaguanas West did not follow the proper procedure. Why did he publicly announce that the contract had been awarded before the negotiations began? The Member for Chaguanas West has a way of saying, "I did not know". When you "ketch" him with his pants down, he says, "Well, I did not know; I do not have experience." The Member for Chaguanas West has all sorts of personalities, and that is one of them. When you "ketch" him offside, he says, "Well, I new to dis ting, yuh know; I did not know." So I ask you, because I intend to ask a question on paper. I would like you, Minister of Finance, before this debate ends, to tell us.

7.30 p.m.

The other thing, another project that we initiated in 2009—in fact, I had the privilege, on behalf of the Government, to turn the sod for the Aranguez Flyover in 2009, and at that time we had a completion date of November 2010. Well, of course, November 2010 has come and gone and the project is far from complete. But the Aranguez Flyover, which was initiated by the PNM administration, included as part of its design two parallel service roads between El Socorro and

Aranguez, on the north and south sides of the highway, and the purpose of these parallel surface roads was to allow the traffic lights at El Soccoro and at Aranguez to be removed, so that persons who are travelling along El Soccoro Road, from El Soccoro north to El Socorro south, would just go up towards the Aranguez area, go over the bridge—the flyover—come back down on the other parallel road and make their way north and south between El Socorro south and El Soccoro north, and similarly for the Aranguez area, so that the flyover cannot work unless the service roads are installed between El Socorro and Aranguez.

I understand the Member for Chaguanas West—I filed a question because the deadline had passed; the contract completion date was sometime in November 2010; November "come and gone". I filed a question in this House about 10 days ago asking the Minister to tell us what was the original completion date for the Aranguez flyover, including the service roads; what is the revised completion date and what is the reason for the delay. Do you know what his response to that was? He is opening the Aranguez flyover on Tuesday of next week. I would like to know, how can the flyover work when you have not constructed the service roads between El Socorro and Aranguez?

That is a classic bridge to nowhere—a bridge to nowhere! [*Desk thumping*] So all of you are going to get involved in a national pappyshow; go up on the flyover; drink champagne; throw confetti; do whatever you do; pat yourself on the back; lie to the country and say this is the work of the People's Partnership when, of course, the Aranguez flyover was designed, conceptualized, financed, commissioned and started by the PNM government. But you will go up there and you will tell the country, "This project is an example of the work of the People's Partnership and an example of the performance of the Member for Chaguanas West." "You hear lie? That is lie!"

When you are finished cutting the ribbon and "gallerying" yourself, you will not be able to use the bridge. All you could do is go south to north, south to north, but you will not be able to deal with the El Socorro issue. The traffic lights in El Socorro will remain and the whole thing will just be a useless exercise in public relations and posturing. That is just another example—

Hon. Member: We will invite you.

Mr. C. Imbert: I am not coming to be part of any "pappyshow"! I could say without any fear of contradiction that, if the PNM government was in office, not only would that project have been completed, but we would not insult the national population by giving them a half-baked chicken or a "half-pick duck".

Mr. Peters: "All yuh eh gih dem none."

Mr. C. Imbert: We started that project. "What nonsense you talking!"

With the few minutes that I have, there are a number of infrastructure projects: the widening of the Beetham Highway between the NP flyover and the lighthouse, started in either December 2000 or January 2010, so that three lanes would be completed along the Beetham Highway, all the way down into Port of Spain on both sides. The widening commenced in either December 2009 or January 2010. That project was supposed to be completed in September 2010. Why is it not finished? This great performing Government! Why is every project that you are involved in behind schedule; every project started by the PNM? You had everything given to you; everything in place: financing, contractor on board; designs completed; everything done. Why are all of the projects started by the PNM behind schedule and over budget?

I will give you another one: the improvement of the Diego Martin Highway between Victoria Gardens and Four Roads. That project was also started in the early part of 2010. That project is designed to complete the dualling of the Diego Martin Highway between Cocorite and the Petit Valley area. The project was scheduled to be completed in six months. We started it sometime around February of 2010. That project should have been finished September/October 2010. It is not even 50 per cent complete.

Mr. Indarsingh: Why you did not start in Maraval?

Mr. C. Imbert: I am coming to that. Then you have the Maraval access improvement project. You know, during the election time we had a lot of difficulty with some of the landowners in the Maraval area; a lot of difficulty given to us by landowners who refused to allow us access to lands to improve the intersection between Long Circular Road and Saddle Road to widen Saddle Road into Maraval, because that is one of the most traffic prone areas in the country.

But in the early part of 2010 we overcame the legal difficulties we were having with land acquisition. We served the requisite notices in accordance with the Land Acquisition Act; we gave notice to the relevant landowners in the Maraval area and we commenced construction. Would you believe, over a weekend, while the contractor was not on site, my opponent to the Diego Martin North/East general election, a fellow called Garvin Nicholas, who is now resident abroad—so he could open a bank account in the United States, because he "eh" living here. My opponent in the Diego Martin North/East election, put an electronic billboard right smack in the middle of the construction—an illegal

billboard right smack in the middle of the construction site for the widening of the Maraval Improvement Project. We had to remove it by force. No problem. We got him out of the way. He was beaten for the second time in a general election. He could come again. We will beat him for a third time.

But the fact of the matter is, everything was in place for the completion of that project long before the end of 2010. I pass by the Country Club area every day; several times during the day. I live in Maraval and I look on at the work and it is going at a snail's pace. The rate at which that Maraval improvement project is going, which involves a roundabout by the KFC outlet so that there will be a complete removal of the obstruction there and widening of Saddle Road to four lanes, should have been finished six months ago. What is going on? I hear a lot of talk about performance and achievements.

You have the Churchill Roosevelt Highway dualling from O'Meara to Santa Rosa. That was started in February 2010; it should have been finished in September 2010. The Member for Arima will know about that. Why is it when the Member for Chaguanas West took over, the man of performance, the Diego Martin Highway project, behind schedule, over budget; the Churchhill Roosevelt Highway widening, behind schedule, over budget; the Beetham Highway widening, behind schedule, over budget; the Aranguez flyover, behind schedule, over budget; the Point Fortin Highway stalled for six months?

I would like the Minister of Finance to answer these questions for me, because there is a lot of mythology in the People's Partnership Government and I understand why some of you all look at that "fella" a little funny, because the Member for Chaguanas West is all about form without substance; all about posturing.

[*By order of the Chair remarks expunged*]

I thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Just one thing before you go, Member for Diego Martin North/East. That last statement about a Member, I would like it—

Mr. C. Imbert: I apologize and I withdraw it unreservedly.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: And expunge it from the record.

Mr. C. Imbert: Yes, Mr. Deputy Speaker, he is not a disgrace, he is a failure.

The Minister of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development (Hon. Errol Mc Leod): Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for the opportunity to join this debate. I consider this debate, really, an opportunity to do a review of what we would have attempted; what we accomplished over the

six/seven months or so that we have been in office, but I am sure that the hon. Minister of Finance will respond adequately to the many questions that have been raised by the Member for Diego Martin North/East and others.

Mr. Imbert: I am sure he will.

Hon. E. Mc Leod: But I would like to ask one question of the Member for Diego Martin North/East.

Mr. Imbert: Would you allow me to answer it?

Hon. E. Mc Leod: Yes, sure. The Member spoke very glibly about infrastructural projects that were designed, managed by the PNM and that the People's Partnership Government has failed to deliver on. I would like to ask: when did the last government abandon the Brian Lara Stadium Project? When did you abandon that one, considering that you left office by virtue of our having won the election handsomely on May 24? That project was in trouble and it was abandoned a good while before May 24.

Mr. Imbert: I thank the Member for giving way and I see he is taking lessons from the Member for Tunapuna. On a previous occasion when I asked the Member to give way, he just said [*Gestures with hand*]—you know, so I am glad that things are improving that we can—the Member for Pointe-a-Pierre, he did not like what I was saying.

With respect to the Brian Lara Promenade—not promenade; you are talking about the stadium; the project in Pointe-a-Pierre, I am not sure it is in your constituency.

Mr. Baksh: Naparima.

Mr. Imbert: Yes. The boundary had changed. I remember that. I am on record in the Commission of Enquiry as making unequivocal statements about the performance on the Brian Lara Stadium; I am on record. You see, one of the things you cannot take back is the written word, and there is a transcript of the proceedings. There is absolutely no doubt that, as I have said, when the difficulties began to emerge on that project—

Hon. E. Mc Leod: I did not give you the opportunity to make a speech, you know.

Mr. Imbert: No, "I nearly finish".

Mr. Roberts: Make your point.

Mr. Imbert: Well, you know, I cannot make my point if the one behind there is quarrelling, you know. Tell your brethren to hush, "nuh". I have said on record

and I will say it again, that there is no doubt that when the problems began to emerge on the Brian Lara Stadium, the project manager and the state corporation that was in charge of the project took far too long to react and to take appropriate countermeasures to deal with the issues on that project. I am already on record in the Commission of Enquiry in saying that. Okay?

PROCEDURAL MOTION

The Minister of Local Government (Hon. Chandresh Sharma): Mr. Deputy Speaker, in keeping with section 10(11) I wish to move that this debate continue until its conclusion.

Question put and agreed to.

FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT
(ADOPTION)

Hon. E. Mc Leod: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and thanks for your attempt at answering. You see, there are a number of projects which one can identify as having been in serious trouble before we came here. The corporate headquarters of Petrotrin is one such project. You may claim not to have had direct responsibility for that. That has been shut down for more than 18 months now. I thought that I might posit my contribution against, what I consider to be an important background, influenced by our economic and financial issues which, today, are essentially the result of the profligacy of the former government and Prime Minister, particularly, engaged, as he was, in mysticism and whose excesses were essentially exacerbated by the global meltdown over which we have not ever had any control.

7.45 p.m.

You see, we must identify, in my humble opinion, the $500 million odd that we would have spent on a feasibility study for a rapid rail system while thousands of people are going hungry. We must identify the expenditure to show we were committed in the search for an executive jet.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: [*Inaudible*]

Hon. E. Mc Leod: I did not know you understood the word either. All of the study that we have done to remodel what can best be identified as the building of castles as we seek to set up ourselves or some of us as monarchs—I read the West Indian Reader, so I am familiar with the poem. "I am monarch of all I survey. My right, there is none to be dispute." While the monarch was engaging as he did engage, colleagues opposite perhaps could have said absolutely nothing in defence of Trinidad and Tobago in that regard.

They have essentially been trying to copy from everybody else, rather than call our people together and tapping into their own expertise and/or experience as we set about building models of our own. They tried to implant the Petronas model here. That is a model that the Malaysians developed to govern their energy sector. But that was expanded to include a whole lot more insofar as Malaysia was concerned, and the attempt would allow us to identify a particular guru here—I am not so much into the name calling and the finger pointing—who was identified as having expertise in every possible area that we could have talked about. So they spent a lot of our resources chasing after what other people would have spent many years to develop, and they were approaching the establishment of one megaenergy enterprise bringing all of the energy companies together—Petrotrin, NGC, NEC, NP and T&TEC—and setting up this guru as the lord over all of them and when the Member for Diego Martin West responded to the presentation by the hon. Member for Tunapuna, he talked about the young people employed, I think in the Ministry of Education, being dismissed and invited to apply again for those jobs that they held.

The plans that they have developed for the energy sector included the dismissal of thousands of oil and energy workers and that they will be invited to apply again for those jobs. Fortunately for Trinidad and Tobago—that was not going to be taken quietly by the people employed in the energy sector. So perhaps it was a blessing that the election was called and the people decided on a new dispensation to ensure the democracy of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are many tangibles and many more intangibles that can be identified as available achievements that by now, eight months after May 24, we have been able to realize. The Member for Oropouche East pointed to a number of achievements, one of which is the new minimum wage moving from $9 to $12.50 per hour. But I would like to identify it more on the business of the daily rate, so that employers will be made aware that they ought to do nothing to frustrate minimum earners in their being paid at least $100 per day. [*Desk thumping*]

I know many of them as being decent employers. I have been talking with them, but there are those who will try to reduce on the number of hours that these minimum wage earners are entitled to make, thereby reducing their pay of $100 per day and the new minimum wage really identifies with pillar No. 2 in our development process; pillar No. 2 talks to poverty eradication and social justice and we had promised that in our first 120 days we will begin the review of the process that will bring us to an improved minimum wage. We did start that

process in our first 120 days and given where I am coming from, with a labour background and all, I am extremely happy today to talk about this new measure that we have put in place by Legal Notice No. 291 dated December 10, 2010 and with the new measure taking effect as from January 01, 2011.

This House would no doubt be pleased to know that the Labour Inspectorate Unit of the Ministry of Labour, Small and Micro Enterprise Development, which is understaffed and which we are seeking to rectify, has been doing great service. The few officers in the unit have been going around the country, particularly to those places where workers have complaints about their employers not satisfying the requirements of the Minimum Wages Order and certain other benefits to which workers are entitled. In the eight months that we have been in office, the few labour inspectors that we have attached to the Ministry of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development have been able to recover some $48,000 owed to employees arising from breaches of the Minimum Wages Act and the Maternity Protection Act. Now we consider that to be a significant achievement as we continue to represent the interest of the people.

Insofar as our programme aimed at poverty eradication and social justice is concerned, we wish to also identify the Unemployment Relief Programme about which there is still a lot of dissatisfaction and I will not deny that. There is dissatisfaction about that programme, but we have been making progress and between June 01 and December 31, 2010, temporary employment opportunities under that programme increased by 27 per cent to 19,300 persons benefiting from that programme. Some of them are not being affected as they ought to have been affected by the rotation process. Some people have entrenched themselves and are continuing to pose difficulties to the orderly transformation of the programme, but I am sure that it will happen.

8.00 p.m.

Much of the expenditure incurred in the URP can be identified in some cases as being contrary to the social objectives of the programme. One example of this is the employment of near 100 project evaluation officers. Now, one would think that a project evaluation officer would have some qualification and experience, and so on, to evaluate projects; whatever the project is; a construction project, dressmaking, whatever. [*Laughter*] But of the near 100 persons so employed, the manager with responsibility for that particular unit knows only about some 27 or 30 of those people, because that is the number, according to the records, that reported for work regularly. Where are the others?

Miss Hospedales: Shame on you, Sir.

Hon. E. Mc Leod: What?

Miss Hospedales: Shame on you.

Hon. E. Mc Leod: Shame on me? I am trying to correct a system that was badly polluted by you and others. It is in this regard, therefore, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that we have commenced a restructuring of the programme to reduce some unnecessary administrative costs, thereby directing such savings to providing more relief opportunities where such relief opportunities are needed; where they are really needed on the ground and at the grassroots level.

That restructuring is also engaging our attention in agriculture and food security. As a matter of fact, we are in very well advanced discussions aimed at partnering with farming organizations and associations in agricultural production. We are also moving to the introduction of a community contracts programme to promote entrepreneurship by the creation of micro and small businesses at the community level, and among NGOs, small contractors, sporting and church organizations aimed at improving the community infrastructure, such as the construction of access roads, bus sheds, box drains—and about that the programme is very familiar—kerbs, footpaths and slipper drains, as well as upgrade to basketball courts, steel band theatres, the painting of Government buildings, community centres, and so on.

Another important achievement, Mr. Deputy Speaker, has to do with the promotion of the ILO's proclaimed decent work and country programme of action. We are about preparing a draft policy at this time on decent work and a programme of action for Trinidad and Tobago based on ILO's proclaimed standards on jobs—decent jobs for all—as a response to the global economic downturn and the accompanying financial crisis.

We have so far commenced the process of developing our own response with three consultations already. The first one was with the unions, and all of the trade unions attended. That was in August. The second one engaged the employers. That was held in October. And only last Tuesday, the third one engaging Government ministries and the Tobago House of Assembly was held at the Trinidad Hilton.

Early in February, next couple of weeks indeed, we will be bringing these three social partners together—the employers, the trade unions and Government ministries—and we will have one final attempt at bringing the views, ideas, and so on, of these three important stakeholders, bringing them together. We want to

find a confluence of ideas, and so on, and then we set about putting down our policy and our programme of action which we will take to the Cabinet for approval, and then we will do what is expected of us by the International Labour Organization as we proclaim Trinidad and Tobago's decent work policy and country programme.

The consultation with the social partners, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and our stakeholders, particularly the workers' representatives, shored up a vast—I want to describe it very appropriately. It shored up vast energies, energies wanting to be harnessed for constructive contributions to building a sustainable and competitive economy, rather than amassing weapons of mass destruction, as somebody would have very irresponsibly said recently.

I wish to assure this honourable House and all of Trinidad and Tobago that the trade unions in Trinidad and Tobago are as concerned with the orderly development of this country as Members on this side and opposite ought to be subscribing to; and we should perhaps consider expressions such as would identify weapons of mass destruction as being irresponsibility demonstrated when one becomes uncontrollably frustrated.

That is not all, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because certainly, there is a lot more to the Ministry of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development than conciliation; and talking about conciliation, I would like it put on the record and that perhaps it will get into the consciousness of the country at large, that the Minister of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development has no *locus standi* in negotiations involving public servants and the CPO.

After the Public Services Association and the CPO fail to agree, any misunderstanding or disagreement will go not to the Ministry of Labour but to the Minister of Finance and then to a special tribunal of the Industrial Court. Am I not correct? Yes. And I say that because there are those who are asking, "What is the Ministry of Labour doing about this? People are marching on the streets, and so on and so on." Of course, the Minister of Labour, as part of the Government, must be concerned about that and must have a view, yes—

Dr. Rowley: Moral suasion.

Hon. E. Mc Leod:—will bring his experience and advice to bear on the process.

Dr. Rowley: He will not listen to you.

Hon. E. Mc Leod: You would not believe that he does listen to me.

Dr. Rowley: He does not show it. He likes bad advice.

Hon. E. Mc Leod: Well, I think both of you have something that you want to settle. I am leaving you all to that. You certainly have a whole lot more experience than I have in this place.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are also at the moment giving critical, very critical consideration, to the Employee Compensation Bill that we are preparing to take to the Cabinet and then to bring to this House as we seek legislation to repeal and replace the Workmen's Compensation Act, which is really archaic. That is one of the intangibles at this time that I thought that I might identify.

We recently held a most successful round of consultation with all of the important social partners and stakeholders on the question of the Maternity Protection Act, Chap. 45:57, and at this time we are bringing important recommendations made at that consultation together as we formulate a position that we will take to the Cabinet before we come here to the House with draft legislation to give effect to the amendment of the Maternity Protection Act providing leave of 14 weeks; an improvement over the 13 weeks that a number of workers have enjoyed for some time now.

We are also currently in the process of examining the OSH Act, 2004, Act No. 1 of 2004, amended in 2006, to bring about some important amendments to that piece of legislation so that we can have the framework that will provide very effectively for the safety and health of workers and, as a matter of fact, all of our people. For the first time, we have been able to hire a Deputy Executive Director. We did this last October, and we are currently examining applications from those who have responded to our need for an Executive Director, following the demission from office by the Norwegian person who last held that position. It is quite a lot, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I should take just another 10 minutes or so.

8.15 p.m.

Last December 11 to December 22, the Ministry engaged in the interview of a number of people applying for inclusion in the Commonwealth Caribbean Seasonal Agriculture Workers Programme such as we enjoy with Canada. We joined that programme in 1967; one year after the Jamaicans joined.

Last October, I travelled to Alberta and Ontario to visit with the near 900 workers from Trinidad and Tobago who are employed in that seasonal programme. I am told that it was the first time that a Minister of Labour from Trinidad and Tobago had visited with those workers to examine the conditions under which they are employed. Everybody else, I am told, had been visiting.

The Jamaicans, for instance, have 6,000 workers employed there; the Barbadians just about 120; Grenada, an insignificant number of about 70; the Mexicans are in their thousands; and the Phillipinos are in their thousands. On my four-day visit there, I met with nearly all the workers from Trinidad and Tobago who were still there. I also met with the Canadian Government Agency that oversees that programme. I met too with some of the farmers and managers of the programme.

I wanted essentially to see the conditions under which our nationals were made to work on these programmes. I left Canada a very proud man and Minister of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise to have learnt from the workers, the government agency and the management of the farms that, among all of the migrant workers employed on these farms, the workers from Trinidad and Tobago are the most productive and the best. It held out a lot of hope for our people.

I immediately began a kind of engagement that would see us, perhaps in the next few months, qualifying for a couple hundred more Trinidad and Tobago citizens to work on those programmes. I am really very proud. Sometime next week we are going to be talking with some 750 of them as they prepare to go to Canada. All of that continues to engage us as we try, in many cases with very narrow means, to deliver as we are all called upon by the hon. Prime Minister to deliver, deliver, deliver.

I have already mentioned those aspects of our programme that identify with the poverty eradication pillar and I would just now like to inform the House that the Enterprise Development Unit of the Ministry of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development is preparing its programme, which we are discussing with experts from India, with regard to the establishment of our community business incubators. Those discussions are progressing quite well and it is our projection that, by the time the hon. Minister of Finance reads the next budget, we would be in a position to identify at least four small business incubators in areas yet to be determined in Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is a whole lot more that can be identified with regard to our achievements and I am sure that there would have been a whole lot more that we would have been in a position to plan had our financial and economic circumstances been better. Certainly, if we were here in 2008/2009, many—

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

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

Question put and agreed to.

Hon. E. Mc Leod: Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker and colleagues. I was making the point that, had we the good fortune and the kind of resources we knew this country possessed up to 2009, Trinidad and Tobago today would be a much better place than it is.

This country continues to cry out for effective management. It continues to cry out for the inclusion of all our people at the centre of our development: It cries out for decency, honesty in our governance and it cries out, most of all perhaps, for commitment to Trinidad and Tobago. If we can galvanize all of that, I have absolutely no doubt, as we say and as I would have said on so many occasions in the trade union movement, we shall overcome. I am sure that we, the People's Partnership Government, will overcome the obstacles that are in our path and we will return Trinidad and Tobago to the happy place it once was.

I thank you and hon. Members for the opportunity, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

ORAL ANSWER TO QUESTION

The Minister of Housing and the Environment (Hon. Dr. Roodal Moonilal): Mr. Deputy Speaker, as discussed earlier, the Minister of Finance is prepared to respond to question 30.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Members, previously on the Order Paper we asked that, along with Questions to Ministers, question 30 be stood down. However, the Leader of Government Business has asked that we revisit that.

Question put and agreed to.

Contracts with Local Contractors (Greater than $1 million)

30. Dr. Keith Rowley (*Diego Martin West*) asked the hon. Minister of Finance:

With respect to contracts greater than $1 million entered into with local contractors for the supply of goods and/or services to Ministries, the Tobago House of Assembly and State Enterprises which are funded by the Treasury, could the Minister state:

(a) The total sum of certified payments made to all contractors during the period September 01, 2010 to December 01, 2010, for works done prior to June 01, 2010;

(b) The total sum of certified payments which exist and have not been paid as at December 01, 2010?

(c) The outstanding sums owing for works completed which are currently being evaluated but for which certification is yet to be established?

The Minister of Finance (Hon. Winston Dookeran): Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for allowing me to respond to this question from the hon. Member for Diego Martin West. May I also indicate to the hon. Member that the data he requires has posed a challenge to be very specific in terms of all the information and indeed requires some collation. Notwithstanding that, I have before me today the information on the matter.

With respect to (a), the answer I have to date, as we continue to collate and disaggregate this data, is that from June 2010, the first full month since the People's Partnership assumed government, to November 2010, the Government paid out $2.6 billion under the development programme. Of this sum, $1.3 was paid from the Consolidated Fund and a further $1.3 from the Infrastructure Development Fund. Details by ministry are available and I can supply this information if required.

With respect to (b), the total sums of certified payments as at December 01, 2010, available to me are 24 submissions out of the 48 departments that are included. The figure is $238.9 million.

With respect to (c), the outstanding sums owing for works completed which are currently being evaluated but for which certification is yet to be established, here again the data I have covers 24 of the 48 departments involved and the figure is $173.87 million.

8.30 p.m.

Dr. Rowley: Mr. Deputy Speaker, supplemental question to the Minister. With respect to the specifics for the period September to December, when it was said that $2.7 billion were paid to the clamouring local contractors, how does that square with this figure of 2.6 billion for the entire period you speak about? And does this figure include foreign contractors as well?

Hon. W. Dookeran: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I did round off the numbers, and it did amount to $2.6 billion. It does not include foreign contractors, local contractors, but it involves all payments that have been made in the development fund and the Infrastructure Development Fund. So there is need for a bit of disaggregation to answer the specific question you asked as to contracts over $1 million.

Dr. Rowley: What I am really getting at, the cantankerous motive before us is the request for payments from local contractors, who are claiming that they have not been paid, and the response that was made in another place was that they were, in fact, paid $2.7 million—[*Interruption*]—$2.7 billion, and I am saying, now that you have said that you have paid contractors $2.6 billion since June, can you give us any idea how much of that was paid to local contractors during that quarter?

Hon. W. Dookeran: When I get full disaggregation, I can provide that information to you specifically.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Members, thanks a lot. I just want to make a small statement. Statements made in the Parliament must be done with the procedural rules in mind. When procedural rules cannot be adhered to, Parliament must be informed. Explanations and decisions will follow thereafter. Parliament must be informed when questions are to be deferred.

Okay, Member for La Brea.

[*Desk thumping*]

FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT (ADOPTION)

Mr. Fitzgerald Jeffrey (*La Brea*): Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Before I commence my contribution, I just want to inform my very learned and experienced constituent from Aripero, Member for Pointe-a-Pierre, I was just informed by text that some of my monthly staff at the URP office in Point Fortin were given dismissal letters today. I just ask you to investigate that for me, please. I think it is a cause for concern. My question, Mr. Deputy Speaker—[*Interruption*]—if, in fact, they are not performing, I have no problem in sending them home, but if they are working hard, and I think they are, I think it is something for you to investigate.

I also want to refer a little to the responses we got to questions Nos. 23, 24, and 25, and I think, really and truly, it is an insult to the people of La Brea, and indeed the south-western peninsula. Those questions, we asked for the name of the investor for a particular reason, because we are told that there is a polypropylene to plastic plant that was coming to La Brea, and we knew quite well that the polypropylene to plastic plant that the last government was involved in was not destined for La Brea. Therefore, I think it is quite dishonest to come to this House and talk as though it was coming to La Brea, and so on. That is first point.

The second point, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for questions Nos. 25 and 24, the response is almost identical throughout, and again, we do not know who is the investor. Mr. Deputy Speaker, the people in La Brea hate "mamaguism". They hate this thing about tomfoolery. In 1995 to 2001 we had that experience. What we want is something concrete. When we look at the variation of appropriation and so on, my question is: what is there for the people of the south-western peninsula? I have included Fyzabad, Siparia, La Brea, Point Fortin, Oropouche, all those areas. I am not selfish to just look at La Brea alone. Therefore, I think that when we come into this House, let us be serious, because you are dealing with people's lives. You are talking about the future of a nation. You are talking about young people who are looking for hope.

My learned friend from Pointe-a-Pierre spoke about a review of the Government's performance over the past eight months and I would just like to recall in 1980 the US presidential election debate with President Ronald Reagan asking the population, "Are you better off now than you were four years ago?" The question could be asked now to the people of Trinidad and Tobago. Are you better off now than you were before May 24, 2010? And we know what the answer will be. Ask Watson Duke and the PSA; ask FITUN, with Abdulah and company; ask Pan Trinbago and the steel band fraternity; ask Clico policyholders; ask the Maxi-taxi Driver's Association. You ask your constituents and they will tell you the answer.

We are also asking them, has your hearing improved since the 2010 general election campaign? Because during the election campaign, all kinds of promises were made, and they were denied; denial—they never said that. We want to know whether or not the people are hearing better now.

Before I go even further, "yuh know, this Government does make mih laugh." I heard the Member for Oropouche East, and indeed the Member for Tunapuna. You know, the way they talked about this waterfront "with all dem tall buildings and so on, it does make yuh wonder, that, wait nah, this is really a PNM ting, boy?"

But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to go to the budget speech of Monday, September 24, 2001, and the budget presenter is the hon. Gerald Yetming, and this is what he had to say:

"The third initiative..."

Because they had five:

> "...entails the development and promotion of Trinidad and Tobago as a major hub for conference tourism in the region. This initiative involves the

> construction of an International Conference Centre, consisting of a 400-room Marriott Hotel,...a National Centre for the Performing Arts…"

The same NAPA building:

> "a shopping complex; The Association of Caribbean States office tower; office buildings; and a 1,400 space car park."

That was 2001. So you could just imagine if the UNC had won election in 2002, that would have been a done deal. You would have had the waterfront developed. You would have had the NAPA building and so on, but it is the PNM who built it, and suddenly it is a bad word. On that same budget presentation, Mr. Yetming says this:

> "Work is in progress on several other energy and energy-based projects including:
>
> - an Ethane Based Petrochemical Complex"—and you know what is the second one?
>
> - "an aluminium smelter plant"—in 2001.

You see, listen, it is a bad thing. And, you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, sometimes I cannot really fault the people of the Congress of the People because they were not there. But the members of UNC, they were there, including the Member for Oropouche East, and they wanted the smelter then, but it is bad word for La Brea in 2001. They also mentioned about corruption, as though under the UNC "things was nice, oh, they spotless." But listen, the Minister of Planning and Development who was then an Independent Senator, Sen. Mary King, this is what she had to say:

> "This Government..."—that is in 200, "eh". It was not the PNM then.
>
> "This government, as no previous government, has been plagued with numerous allegations of corruption and the large construction programmes defined in this very budget demand...better management and monitoring systems be put in place..."

Not only that; I will not go into the details, but it is worth the while for those opposite to go into the *Hansard* record and check on her contribution, because she had some nice things to talk about the Member for Chaguanas West. I will not go through that here, because he is not here. I will hold it back for another time, because, Mr. Deputy Speaker, those who have sins must not throw stones.

Dr. Moonilal: Those who have glass houses.

Mr. F. Jeffery: "I put in my own ting. Doh worry; I know wah I'm saying."

May 24, 2010 could be regarded as deceitful day. May 24, 2010 could be safely called deceitful day. It was a day when a massive con job was done on the population. And we know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, former Prime Minister and President, Mr. Arthur Napoleon Robinson, talked about moral and spiritual values. And we know as well that former Prime Minister Basdeo Panday talked about politics having a morality of its own, and we could see, with all the deception, it has really and truly a morality of its own.

How could they look at people in the eye and talk about this pension thing? I thought that the Member for Tunapuna would leave it alone—that was an aberration and so on. But to come and bring up this again about this pension as though, well, "Listen, we delivered", when, in fact, we know quite well they said that people who attained the age of 60 would receive a pension of $3,000, no questions asked; and we know that is not the case. "So wha yuh boasting about?" That was not a campaign promise that you kept.

Coming to look at the minimum wage, you know, it is a pity we "cannot play tape" in the Parliament. On the campaign trail it was not 12.50 they were promising the people—$20 minimum wage. Suddenly, they never say that. On the platform—as a matter of fact, Ms. Ria Taitt, the highly respected journalist of impeccable integrity, quoted the political leader of the People's Partnership as saying in the election rally at the Aranguez Savannah, on May 22. This is what she said:

"Today, I pledge to you as well that all the competitions..."

"All eh", all the competitions:

> "which showcase the talent of our land, whether it be...Chutney Monarch,... Soca Monarch, the Panorama finals, in all these competitions...I pledge to you today, that in true equality and justice, that the first prize for all these competitions will be $2 million..."

Mr. Peters: And it would be.

Mr. F. Jeffery: And this is how we will rise together. Every creed and race, we will rise.

Mr. Peters: They are getting that.

Mr. F. Jeffery: When Vice President Byron Serreette raised it with the Minister of Multiculturalism. This is what he had to say. And I am quoting from

Wednesday, 12th January, 2010 where the hon. Winston Peters is reported as saying nobody ever say that. You talk about deceit?

We see in a real sense that even in the whole situation of crime—you know, they malign us with this crime thing. They are boasting that the reduction in crime is because of the People's Partnership.

Mr. Peters: Could you give way?

Mr. F. Jeffery: Mr. Deputy speaker—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Peters: Could you give way?

Mr. F. Jeffery: No. You will have time. You will have your time in the sun.

8.45 p.m.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sen. Kevin Ramnarine, in another place, was boasting about the reduction in crime in July 2010 as evidence of the People's Partnership acting on crime and that it is working. Do you know why? In July 2009, homicides were 42. In July 2010, it was 31. They—[*Interruption*] right it is because of the People's Partnership. Not recognizing that from January of the same year, 2010, there was already a reduction in crime from the previous years. We also know as well that in 2009 there was a reduction from 2008. When the figure came up in the month of November, it was 23 in 2009.

In 2010, it went up to 43; no James Philbert as Acting Commissioner of Police, no Peter Joseph as head of the SAUTT. We had a multi-million dollar Canadian Commissioner of Police. It went up to 43. Do you know what happened? In 2011, no James Philbert as Acting Commissioner of Police, no Brigadier Peter Joseph. As at January 11, it was reported that there were 16 homicides already. And you are talking about the crime plan working? Do you know what is even more interesting? We are told by the Commissioner of Police that a crime plan would be given in March. What happens between now and March is another question.

This thing about deception is real. It is really real. Let us look at the NAPA. We were not going to raise it, but they raised the whole question about the NAPA situation. We had a Foreign Affairs Minister saying one thing and the Archbishop—we were there when the Archbishop mentioned that no one told him that he had to deliver a homily. We heard that. We had the problem with all the things, the dirt, the water, the fire and so on. Do you know what we were told by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Member for Tabaquite? The Archbishop was told—I ask the question: who should we believe? I leave it right there. Who should we believe?

Mr. Deputy Speaker—[*Interruption*] you could say what you want. It is all right. We also heard about the question with the hamper. I am not going into that because I mentioned that on Wednesday, the hamper distribution, that faux pas.

Dr. Douglas: Everything you said you mentioned already.

Mr. F. Jeffrey: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am asking for protection under Standing Order 40(b) from the Member for Lopinot/Bon Air West. He is harassing me in the back here.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The Member for La Brea has asked for protection from you all. Since you are sitting behind him, I understand why. So, kindly—

Mr. F. Jeffrey: I have a few points still to raise. First of all, there is the question of the On-the-Job Training situation in our country. We know of a number of young people who are involved in the On-the-Job Training Programme. At this point in time, many young people have been applying for the On-the-Job Training Programme and are not getting into the On-the-Job Training Programme. This is a cause for concern in 2011.

In addition to that, what about the scholarship programme for those persons who get first-class degrees? They were supposed to have gotten scholarships to go on to do their masters and their doctorate. There are several people from the La Brea constituency who have applied for the scholarship and not a reply has been given. No response has been given. There are several people from the La Brea constituency who attained first-class honours and they cannot access the grant which they were supposed to have gotten to go to university abroad.

I also want to make mention of the water. I listened well about the improvement in the water situation, as though that was the People's Partnership's baby. As a matter of fact, I am sure the Member for Pointe-a-Pierre would be able to substantiate that, because on my campaign trail we told the people that by the end of 2011 they would be getting a 24/7 water supply in the La Brea constituency. When I hear the Minister mention the innovation in water, as though it is the People's Partnership's thing, nothing could be further from the truth. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Mc Leod: We did that for you?

Mr. F. Jeffrey: For the people of La Brea, Fyzabad and Point Fortin. [*Interruption*] Good.

I want to mention as well, that in my constituency, we are affected by the 560 school clerical staff who have been sent home. There are several people from my

constituency who have been affected by that. Similarly, there were 107 from the Sport Company of Trinidad and Tobago who were sent home. At Vessigny, we have a sailing club and those people have been sent home. I am saying here and now that I am a nationalist. I am for equality through and through, and when these things happen it is cause for concern.

I ask the Member for Tunapuna, we had a nice discussion recently—I hope that the promises go through so that the people of the southwestern peninsula's—I am not saying La Brea alone—needs could be adequately addressed, because we are people too. I thank you.

The Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs (Hon. Anil Roberts): Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. "All yuh wake up and pong something nah. What happen tuh all yuh?" Let me deal with my friend from La Brea, because he was very entertaining. He is "ah nice fella." The Sport Company of Trinidad and Tobago, the total employee is 102, so 107 people could not have been sent home. The sum of 35 people was sent home. So, please, if you are in politics read "ah 'lil bit", but do not mislead.

Secondly, you were a schoolteacher and a principal. Ronald Reagan did not win "no election" in 1980, so how "yuh" quoting from Ronald Reagan 1980? Check your facts.

Moving right along now to the Member for Diego Martin North/East, who is not here, I would have preferred him to be here. He said—"yuh know what ah" like about the Member for Diego Martin North/East? He is very intelligent and he knows exactly how to give half "ah" story. When he was discussing and asking the Minister of Finance, Member for Tunapuna, about how much money to pay for the TGU contract and that it was $300 million, and because we stopped the smelter we have to take on all of that, what the Member for Diego Martin North/East did not tell the population was that the take-or-pay contract with TGU, the power plant was negotiated and signed while a High Court judgment had squashed the Certificate of Environmental clearance, therefore, in a lawful society there was no possibility of any smelter.

Unless he is admitting that the former PNM government would have gone against a High Court ruling and disobeyed the law. There was no CEC. Therefore, there was no smelter. Therefore, any government that negotiated a take-or-pay contract for electricity specifically to supply a non-existent smelter that was debarred by law can only be described as incompetent at best. So, he did not give the full story.

Furthermore, the Member for Diego Martin North/East talked about procurement; a man who stood in this Parliament when the entire local fraternity of contractors and architects was screaming out about where the feasibility study was for this rapid rail. How many people would use it? Where would it pass? How would it affect the maxi taxi? How many of us would give up "we nice Jaguar car an thing to go on ah rapid rail?" These questions were not asked. He stood on this side, right in front here, when he was on this side and he said the feasibility study had been completed and, therefore, all our local contractors were suffering from sour grapes. Well, it soon turned out that phase one of his rapid rail was an expensive $575 million feasibility study. And they talk about deceit?

Furthermore, let us deal with the Member for Diego Martin North/East again. He just came and attacked the Member for Tunapuna saying—and flashing some piece of paper. I do not know where he got that piece of paper from, but he was claiming that a company called OptionsXpress is not taking local money. Once "yuh" live in Trinidad and Tobago "dey" not doing business with you because "we blacklisted". Now, it is rather irresponsible for a Member to do that. Options Express is an online stockbroker, just like Ameritrade and ETrade and the like. Just like all other online brokerage companies, the issue is—and everybody who has a local credit card would understand—our local credit cards have not gained worldwide acceptance as yet. "We working on dat". We do not have worldwide acceptance, but with these brokerages like OptionsXpress, you can do business with them and trade by wire transfer. So, again the Member for Diego Martin North/East should do better than trying to mislead.

Now, let us go to the Leader of the Opposition, the hon. Member for Diego Martin West. First and foremost, he spuriously attacked the Member for Tunapuna for using the word "prudency". But, the Member for Oropouche East showed him that he was totally wrong and yet he would not be mature enough to apologize. But, it is all right, we expect that from him. Then, in his deliberations and his contribution, he said he "waked" up. Well I would like him to come here and "waked ah lil' bit", so that we could get the debate going.

9.00 p.m.

The funny thing was the word "prudency", which was correctly used by the Minister of Finance, the Member for Tunapuna, and it had a very good effect. When the Member for Tunapuna used that word, for the first time since this Parliament has been convened, I saw communication between the Member for Diego Martin West and the Member for Diego Martin North/East. The Member for Diego Martin West looked excitedly across at the other three Members and

told the Member for Diego Martin North/East to Google it, check it. I was like: "Is this something serious coming?" It was prudency. Then the Member for Diego Martin North/East looked across the other three Members and said: "You see I should be closer to you." So, at least the Member for Tunapuna had done something by using the word "prudency".

What the PNM General Council could not do—the PNM membership, the constituency and the party groups could not bring the Member for Diego Martin West and the Member for Diego Martin North/East together, but the Member for Tunapuna has done it tonight by using the word "prudency". [*Desk thumping*] I commend him.

Then the Member for Diego Martin West went on to talk about PSs. He said somebody somewhere put it out that, "the hon. Prime Minister and the Cabinet reshuffling PSs". Now, is this a responsible gentleman who would love to be Prime Minister at some time? He is quoting from a *Newsday* report on page 5, six days ago. The entire report was based on sources said. The only source I know which is worth anything "we going and eat that when this debate finish up dey in Curepe."

So, for the Member to come here and mislead the Parliament when he knows that his leader and former Prime Minister, the Member for San Fernando East, who we all know is still the leader—just ask the Member for Point Fortin come down to about the Member for Laventille East/Morvant, and then this side might go so, and the Member for Port of Spain South about 80 per cent, but if you get that same offer you would go so too.

Just ask them when the Member for San Fernando East was Prime Minister, not only did he shuffle and move PSs and transform the name of "Permanent Secretary" and turn it into an oxymoron, he had former Minister Rahael moving from ministry to ministry with his PS. "He used to walk with he PS. From health into agriculture he walked with he PS." Then he created another thing. Under the PNM regime, he created contract PS. "So when you reach 60" in the public service you have to retire, but they developed something where Cabinet could extend a PS by contract, and now they are talking about PS!

Mr. Sharma: What a shame!

Hon. A. Roberts: How did that demotivate the public service by knowing that everybody worked hard all their lives, and all they had to do was to move up and get promoted, and then they meet the PNM, and "the PNM say": "I like you, boy. Leh meh gih yuh ah contract"? Shame on you!

Now, the Member for Diego Martin West, I forgive him because he is a geologist, and this debate is "not about rock and stone". When the Member looked at the Minister of Finance, an educated man in economics, and asked him what is the monetary policy of the Government—my goodness, monetary policy is handled by the Central Bank which is an independent institution. Any little Form 1 with a laptop would know that. He is asking a man responsible for fiscal policy, what is his monetary policy. I think he should ask Ewart Williams.

He then went on to ask the Minister of Finance what was he quoting from, and the Minister said rightfully from his notes. He did his research—hard-working, investigative facts—and he came with his notes. He then went on to say that the Minister was just talking off the top of his head without quoting from a document, and it is only the people in the People's Partnership who are saying that we are doing good and the economy is going good, but the economy has stalled, and everybody knows that because people are suffering.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the last time I checked, the Governor of the Central Bank, Ewart Williams, is not a People's Partnership person. Hot off the press, January 14, 2011, today! The last time I checked, Ewart Williams was not appointed by the People's Partnership. He is not a COP, a UNC, a TOP or anything like that. In fact, the last big time we noticed him, he was sitting in a meeting with three Clico shareholders making a deal on behalf of us, the people. You had Monteil, a shareholder of Clico; you had Mr. Duprey, a shareholder of Clico and you had Karen Nunez-Tesheira, the former Minister of Finance and the then Member for D'Abadie/O'Meara, another shareholder, who has 10,400 shares in Clico and never disclosed them to anyone, but purported to negotiate on behalf of the citizens of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, and you all have the audacity to come and talk about deceit!

Well, let us go through this now, because we would all agree—the whole population would agree that the Central Bank is an independent, a political institution. Well, Ewart Williams and the Central Bank project for 2001 that Trinidad and Tobago's economy shall grow by 2.3 per cent—"We are stagnant boy, we stick, we going backwards, and nothing is happening." You appointed the Central Bank Governor, not the People's Partnership, and he is saying that the forecast for 2011 is 2.3 per cent growth.

The facts also show that in 2009 under the People's National Movement, with a man who does not know about fiscal and monetary policy, the economy shrunk by 3.5 per. It is like some of the suit that we see over there—"the Member for La Brea, shrink, the Balisier reach by he neck." You all shrunk the economy in 2009

by 3.5 per cent, and then coming here to talk about we are stalling the economy! Well let me tell you that the results are in—growth of 0.1 per cent, which meant that the Minister of Finance and the People's Partnership Government have stabilized the downward spiral that you all had us in. [*Desk thumping*]

Let me continue from a nice independent document. The Member for Diego Martin West went on to say that he went up in Laventille, but he did not say devaluation, he used the "d" word, but somehow, when the papers put "devaluation", he never corrected it. He left it there, because he was so hurt that they misquoted him and they were so irresponsible to put such a damaging headline that totally misrepresented his opinion and what he said that he did not bother to correct it.

Let me also say that he is talking about the exchange rate that is out of control and there is so much pressure. Well the exchange rate as of December 10, 2010; guess what it was? Mr. Deputy Speaker, $6.39 for one US. Do you know what it was in April 2010, just before the election—before the Reverend Pena so beautifully helped us come into Government and save the country? Do you know what it was? It was $6.38, and in December 2010, it was $6.39, and the Member for Diego Martin West talks about devaluation. "Please, if you all come here to party, lime and play go and rest nah, but do your research and talk facts." They are talking about deceit, lying and fooling people. That is all they do. Look the facts are here; independent report today from the Central Bank Governor.

Furthermore, the Member for Diego Martin West went on attacking the Member for Tunapuna and Minister of Finance saying the economy is in shambles—nothing is paying; nothing is going and nobody is earning anything and people are suffering! Yet, in 2009, when he was not in the Cabinet, because he was fired, but he was in government with the rest of them under the hon. Member for San Fernando East, the Heritage and Stabilization Fund was $2.996 billion and represented about seven months, import cover. Do you know what it was in December 2010 after the People's Partnership Government came into office in May? It was $3.701 billion, an increase of US $800 million—but, "everything bad"—and 12 months, import cover, and he is talking about the economy is in shambles.

Now, moving right along, let us get to the Appropriation Bill, after I have dealt with a little housekeeping matter. Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are here to discuss the Finance Supplementation and Variation of Appropriation Bill, 2011. The need for this appropriation is because of the secrecy of the former regime,

corruption, nepotism, lack of corporate governance, incompetence and many other reasons. That is why we are here. Luckily on May 24, 2010, the people voted for change and they got change.

They changed the leader from a gentleman who wanted to build big buildings, because he went to Dubai—it did not matter what they were for; it did not matter what congestion; it did not matter about plan, they just build them so that people would say "Woooo, skyline nice"—and now we have moved to a Prime Minister who has changed the focus to people. That is why when you look at the Bill, you would see an increase in allocation for the Ministry of the People and Social Development; you are going to see an increase for the Ministry of Education and an increase for culture. These are ministries that impact on the people.

So there has been a change of leadership. The Prime Minister of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, the hon. Member for Siparia, came in immediately and removed the illegal Coat of Arms off the Prime Ministerial vehicle. [*Desk thumping*] She then created a Cabinet of independent-minded thinkers who have already achieved in their private lives and, therefore, in the words of the former minister, Mervyn Assam, they were not hungry. [*Interruption*] "Yes, Obama looking for another hug." Just now he is coming back here. "You cool yourself!"

The hon. Prime Minister is running her Government and the policies are being implemented with consultation across the board, unlike the former regime who would tell you, "Yuh doh want smelter, take three". [*Interruption*] You see, you are not paying attention. I am going to deal with you. The hon. Prime Minister has brought humility to the office. She walks with the people; she talks with the people; she relaxes and she thinks about children. You have given one leader a rest and put another leader who is tinkering for support—begging for you all to support him. Do you know what? It is unbelievable!

When the People's Partnership Government for Christmas, in the spirit of goodwill, wanted to give people a hamper, he said, "Do not take the hamper." When we want to give little children who cannot afford laptops when all of our children have laptops and your children have laptops—they do not want to give the little poor children—as he would refer to them—the "duncey-head" children—but I would never say that. How could you call our children "duncey"? That was the whole policy of the PNM and we will get to that. They were all about foreigners; everything foreign is great; and everything local is bad. That is them! They do not even like themselves. They do not want to give the poor little children laptops. I could tell you that the Minister of Education has started delivery and will continue delivery until every child in Form 1 gets a laptop. [*Desk thumping*]

This is why we are here to discuss the Appropriation Bill; a change in 2020 vision to localizing it—respecting local contractors, architects, consultants, artistes, athletes, farmers, local people and local manufacturers. That vision has changed and, therefore, we need to come for an appropriation. We welcome foreigners if they can add value and can do things that our locals are not qualified for, but when you "bring foreigners for traffic plan"; to run the port and the crime plan which has failed dramatically as illustrated earlier by previous speakers, foreigners for every single thing under the sun, it means that when you look in the mirror you really do not like what you see.

9.15 p.m.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, on this side, we are proud of our people, each and every one of them, and where they are suitably qualified or they have companies or they produce goods, we are saying to support locals so that our GDP will increase. We will take advantage of the multiplier effects and grow the economy even bigger than the 2.3 per cent forecast by Ewart Williams.

With the change in vision, there is no property tax. Imagine, the former Minister of Finance, from my constituency—it used to be her own—where over 75 per cent of households have done some form of renovation, piloted a Bill to tax the people. She should have been the last representative to agree to that, to accede to that. This People's Partnership Government said, "No property tax," and there is no property tax. [*Desk thumping*]

We said no smelter. The Member for La Brea could beg and beg and beg, and not make sense, but the economics of smelter of 125,000 tonnes, when everywhere else in the world—the smallest producer is in South Africa with three million tonnes. By the time La Brea had finished making a rim, you had to spend $100,000 for four rims, rather than when you got it from Russia with Alcan and Sural producing 20 million tonnes, obviously there are economies of scale.

Even Alcoa who wanted to come here said that it made no sense to build a smelter plant that had a capacity smaller that 351,000 tonnes. But the PNM was coming with a pipsqueak smelter. The problem with a pipsqueak smelter is that you do not make money, but the cancer is the same. So they want to kill people with brogues and that is the change in vision. No smelter, we said so and there will be none.

We also said no feasibility study, no ridiculous rapid rail that did not make sense. How much would it cost to run? Waste $575 million. How will it run?

"Where it would pass? How many maxi taxis will it put out of business? Who say dat Trinbagonians like to give up dey car? Only allyuh. But people like me, we like we own car." [*Crosstalk*]

Moving right along—corporate governance. This is why we are here, because of the total lack of corporate governance by the PNM regime. How does this hon. Prime Minister and this Cabinet operate? We ensure that no person or citizen will sit on more than one board. "But on your side, Calder Hart on 10 board; Ken Julien on six board, Frank Look kin on four board; Rao doing he own ting." Where is Rao, by the way? So there will be no more Monteil buying from himself to himself, Home Mortgage Bank. And then allyuh say, 'Well, there is no illegality'; and then he make a $20 million on top of it for $110 million of shares that he buy from himself, to himself." That will not and cannot exist, because of the good corporate governance structures being put in place by the People's Partnership Government. [*Desk thumping*] The people voted for change.

Corporate governance, let us talk about it. The Sport Company of Trinidad and Tobago—we hear the misinformation from the Members for La Brea and Diego Martin West that 107 persons were fired. Let me just say restructuring, 35 persons, okay. Whenever someone loses their job, nobody takes pleasure in that, but we have to protect the Treasury. You all do not care. You want to talk about fender bender. How do you pronounce it? Treasury is when you respect it. "When allyuh in it, it is Treshry." [*Laughter*]

When you respect it and understand that the Sport Company of Trinidad and Tobago—as I was saying, if people lose their job, it is never something to celebrate, but we have to streamline and restructure. Under the former PNM regime, this is their idea of corporate governance and protecting the "Treshry": certificate of incorporation, non-existent for the Sport Company. [*Interruption*]

Miss Mc Donald: The children are listening.

Hon. A. Roberts: "De children listening, yes, and let them listen to this, because they will learn never to run a business or country like this, because then you get Calder Hart, we cyar find him, Yuh get Rao, where he is, yuh get Ramlal from SLIU, yuh get EMBD, yuh get T&TEC, yuh get Petrotrin with Malcolm Jones and $9 billion disappear." Let the children learn so they will never make the mistake of governing like the PNM. Let them learn. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Sport Company spent over $700 million since 2004. "You want to hear how they run this country?" No certificate of incorporation; no change of address; no change of directors at any time; no annual returns, since

2006 was the last time; non-compliance with Investment Unit, Ministry of Finance, last audited statement, 2006; no annual returns ever filed; no AGM within the last four years; no strategic plan; no bylaws. "And this company spending taxpayers' money?"

This is what the PNM was doing. People voted for change and "dey get change" and that is why we have come here for this appropriation. [*Desk thumping*] No board-approved human resource policies and procedures; no board-approved procurement policies and procedures; no board-approved policies for stadia and facilities operation; no board-approved financial policies and procedures. Then you had people with two O levels somehow hired as senior engineers and signing off on multimillion dollar contracts. Restructuring? Yes, we have to. The list goes on. "I cyar go too long, Mr. Deputy Speaker."

Nepotism in hiring—you have a man, Jevon Birch—I have to call these names, because this lady is now talking. I heard she is very close to the Members for Diego Martin Central and North/East. Her name is Margaret Birch-Sampson. She made claims in the newspapers that this was all political victimization. I learnt last week that she was a PNM; I did not know, nor did I care. She admitted political victimization. Let us talk about that.

Margaret Birch-Sampson—she got a letter of appointment to the position of Acting Chief Executive Officer, with effect from April 01, 2010, under the PNM. This appointment letter was signed by one board member, Mark Singh. The Executive Chairman has resigned, the Executive Director has resigned. This one person, Mark Singh, appointed this Margaret Birch-Sampson to act as CEO to sign cheques for millions of dollars going "down de road". "April 01, exactly, well dey really fool de people, but dey saying de people doh believe us. You all really living in a dream world."

There was no board approval found in board minutes for this position, nor was there a resolution approved for this action or the position. "She get CEO by this one board member write a letter." Then on May 21, 2010, three days before the election, she was given, on top of that, the Acting CEO's salary, a full-time consultant salary. She was hired in the same company, drawing another salary as a full-time consultant; letter signed by the same Mark Singh.

Mr. Sharma: "What is happening to this PNM in truth?"

Hon. A. Roberts: In this said contract under "Scope of Services", it states:

"The full-time consultant would be contracted for a period of one year, in the first instance. This subject is an ongoing reorganization."

The said contracts said:

"The client shall pay to the full-time consultant a fee of $37,000 per month."

On top of her CEO salary, which was allowances and ting, was $40,000 to $45,000. "So she collecting $45,000 here and then getting $37,000 over there, and that is Diego Martin Central new FBI informant information, he boasting, very close. Well I like that yuh close to him."

Going ahead now, moving right along from, that we go to corruption; this is why we are here with this Appropriation Bill, because of the deficit spending brought about by mismanagement of another boom by the PNM. What was amazing was that one of the PNM's Ministers of Finance, Mariano Browne, when asked by the former Opposition—this is squandermania; "you are wasting money on palace; waterfront gone over by $1.3 billion, Tarouba move from $272 million to $1.1 billion"—they were asked these questions.

After that, when the year came and for the first time the PNM government had to go into deficit spending of $7.2 billion, Mariano Browne went on television, "did press conference" to redefine deficit spending. Do you know what was his new definition of deficit spending? Sorry, let me correct that. He was accused of squandermania, wasting money. Do you know what he said? Squandermania is when you spend more than you earn. That was Mariano Browne.

Then I asked the next year, when PNM went into deficit spending, I say, "Well, Mariano Browne, by your definition, allyuh in squandermania now?" So you see why we are here, because really and truly, I do not understand how you could have sat and let this go. This is not for the new ones who have now arrived, but those who were there. How could you do that?

The reason we are here is also rank incompetence. Imagine you had a lawyer who was a lecturer, who wrote a book on ethics, as a Minister of Finance. We have an economist, a studied man, a man who spent his life in economics. As the Minister of Finance; this is what the people voted for, a change. You had people who just could not fulfil their portfolio.

"Then all of a sudden, $2 million come out. She break, she eh break, we doh know what going on. She roll over. You see why people voted for change and dey get change? You had in Social Development the Member for Diego Martin Central, and now you have Dr. Glenn Ramadharsingh, who really helping people across de board; every place, all over de country." [*Desk thumping*]

"Yuh had" in Works and Transport the Member for Diego Martin North/East, now you have the Member for Chaguanas West. "Yuh" see why people voted for

change? In "de" Ministry of Foreign Affairs you had the Member for Point Fortin, whose greatest achievement was putting a hip hug on Obama. Now we have the experienced Rambachan.

"In Energy yuh had former Minister Conrad Enil. I doh know where he was, Tecu or something, and now you have, Madam Minister, Member for San Fernando West, lecturer engineering, with more than two O levels, in the Ministry of Energy and Energy Affairs. This is de change dat people voted for." This is why we are here, because as we get inside, we find more and more evidence and instances of gross incompetence.

Secrecy—remember this appropriation has to deal with what the PNM should have dealt with in January 2010, but they thought dey were going to be there till 2020 and beyond, did not know that Pena told the Member for San Fernando East to call an election, and now they are on that side. So doh come here and say that we are forced to come here so quickly to make an appropriation. We are doing the work that you all did not do, dat you chose not to tell the population.

You sat in your little quiet Cabinet and made a decision to hoodwink and, deceive the population; and the Member for Diego Martin West coming here to talk about deceit. Shame! [*Crosstalk*]

Then the Member for Port of Spain South stood in this Parliament and when asked about $45 million in scholarships, how they advertised, where it went, who gets, how you qualify, said it would be a breach of privacy, so she cannot divulge "dat". Privacy with public funds and you all talking about deceit, $45 million? Children did not know how to get, where to get; people did not even know Community Development had so much money. "And sitting down here and talking about deceit and we deceive and we not performing?" If performing is what you all did, "I glad we not performing, because we eh go do dat." We will offer and advertise scholarships so all our citizens could have an opportunity.

We will not allow Calder Hart, a Canadian, to rape the Treasury. We will put corporate governance structures in place and streamline efficiently and get the economy rolling, as it is already.

9.30 p.m.

And here it is today, imagine—joke of jokes. I have to pause. "Lemme go dong low for this one." Joke of jokes today in this Parliament; Members on the other side had the audacity to get up on several occasions and accuse this

Government of not answering question 30 or question 21, 22, 23? We answered all! We are still waiting on 118 answers from the PNM in the last government. You all really have no shame! No shame, whatsoever! That is why you could sit there and make all sorts of excuses when none of you all knew that the Member for San Fernando East was spying on each and every one of "all yuh", and each and every one of us and each and every citizen. Did we keep that secret? No! When we found out, the Prime Minister came and started—

Dr. Browne: Mr. Deputy Speaker, on a point or order.

Hon. A. Roberts: What point of order? He did not call any point of order.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: What is the point of order?

Dr. Browne: Mr. Deputy Speaker, 36(5), imputing improper motives to a Member of this Chamber.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Member for D'Abadie/O'Meara, just quote it differently. Okay?

Hon. A. Roberts: No problem, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Miss Hospedales: You cannot say that.

Hon. A. Roberts: I withdraw. Member for Arouca/Maloney, "you wake up"? I withdraw, but I would say that none of you knew that the only person in charge of this secret SIA unit that had the capacity to monitor telephone calls—that none of you knew that the only person who knew about it and was meeting with them was the Member for San Fernando East. They did not know; I did not know; the population did not know. Did we keep it a secret? No. The hon. Prime Minister came to the Cabinet and discussed it with us; told us her information and allowed each and every one of us to give an opinion and we all decided, unanimously, that the people must know, because the people are the bosses and we are the employees. [*Desk thumping*]

"You all" did not understand that. That is why "you all" are on that side—impartiality. The people voted for change and change they got. You have a Member from the Government before the Committee of Privileges because the Speaker is impartial. But we sat down for years as Karen Nunez-Tesheira, former Minister of Finance and Member for D'Abadie/O'Meara, told this Parliament that she never broke a deposit. There was clear evidence that she broke it. Not only did she break it, she broke it twice and paid the fee of 37 per cent, but no Committee of Privileges for her.

We had the hon. former Prime Minister, the Member for San Fernando East, when he was sitting here, he told the Speaker that he had matters of public, urgent, national importance. The former Speaker stopped the debate and allowed the former Prime Minister to "stand up" for 66 minutes and let him attack the Member for Diego Martin West who was over there. The former Speaker in this House allowed the Members opposite, when they were in government, "to go in Woodford Square", stop Parliament, have an extended break to go and address an illegal gathering in Woodford Square. This is what people voted for, for change and the change is what they are getting. The reason we are here for this appropriation is because of the secrecy and the biased nature of the former regime.

I would also tell you that earlier today the Member for Diego Martin West showed flagrant disregard for the Standing Orders and contempt for the House by discussing a matter that is sub judice in this House at the Committee of Privileges, but I would not go further on that.

Now in crime—

Dr. Browne: Mr. Deputy Speaker, on a point of order; Standing Order 36(5), imputing improper motives to a Member of this Chamber.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I will have to get the *Hansard* to check it.

Dr. Browne: Would you like me to indicate what he said?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: What did he say?

Dr. Browne: Mr. Deputy Speaker, thank you for the invitation. The Member indicated that the Member for Diego Martin West displayed contempt for this House today, imputing improper motives.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Okay, Member for Diego Martin Central, that is not imputing improper motives; that is just an observation. There is no impropriety that was said by the Member for D'Abadie/O'Meara. That is overruled. Go ahead.

Hon. A. Roberts: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to humbly ask at this juncture for extra time, please, because everybody who has been in this House who has read their Standing Orders understands that you cannot speak about substantive issues before the Committee of Privileges and the Member for Diego Martin West did it today. I left it, but I am just saying, that shows a disregard for the rules and Standing Orders of the Parliament. That is the point I am making, not imputing. I am giving you facts.

When that side was in government, you could never get a debate on crime. They did not want to talk about it. Ask the former Leader of Government Business, the Member for Diego Martin North/East. Any time a Member of the Opposition—they brought Motions; they tried to get matters of urgent national importance, public interest; never worked. Any time they wanted to discuss crime, never! This Government, under the hon. Prime Minister, hon. Kamla Persad-Bissessar, at every juncture, we take the opportunity to discuss crime and crime prevention measures with the population to keep them abreast. No burying our heads in the sand and hoping it will go away. We will deal with it and that is what people voted for. [*Desk thumping*]

Furthermore, May 24 came, and this former PNM regime was about to purchase defective OPVs. They were making all kinds of excuses and saying that we want to stop the ability to contain the coastline and security, and so on. The fact of the matter is, "De boat an them doh work. We not buying ting dat doh work!" But you all want to buy a battle-ready arsenal that the computer-aiming system is not working? So "wha yuh go do?" Float around the sea and say, "Ay, ah have ah gun", and "when boat coming at 100 miles per hour packed with cocaine and gun, you "cyar" shoot it?" This Government will not waste taxpayers' money to allow somebody to get a commission. We will not do that! So that is what people voted for and that is why we have appropriation, changing of the vision, changing of the governance.

In seven months this Government has brought to the Parliament the Anti-Gang Bill, the Interception of Communications Bill, the Anti-Corruption Bill, the constitutional amendment to deal with capital offences, the Evidence (Amdt.) Bill, the Firearms (Amdt.) Bill; more legislation in seven months than they brought in eight years. Then we are talking about transparency.

I am glad the Member for Diego Martin North/East "reach back". He had the audacity to talk about procurement. The former regime came into government on December 24, 2001 on moral and spiritual values, claiming corruption. They said that they were coming in to tighten up legislation, improve corporate governance. Eight years later they were voted out and they never brought forward the legislation on procurement. Imagine that government did White Paper, Green Paper and then "give it to Calder Hart" to ask for his opinion and it "stick" right there with him in Fort Lauderdale. It never saw the light of day in this Parliament. Within seven months the People's Partnership Government has laid procurement legislation in this House.

Dr. Rambachan: Within 120 days.

Hon. A. Roberts: Within 120 days. Thank you. And when we talk about procurement, I am going to give you a story of the former government, the PNM regime, and by doing that I am going to read a little for them, a bedtime story at 9.38 p.m, from the Uff Report: "The Report of the Commission of Enquiry into the Construction Sector, Trinidad and Tobago." Let us read a little.

> "Brian Lara Cricket Academy.
>
> Turner Construction International LLC (Turner) of New York had been approached in the early months of 2004 when a meeting took place in Trinidad at Chairman level…"

The Chairman was who? Calder Hart.

> "between UDeCOTT, Turner and the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs with the Prime Minister..."

So at the beginning of this fiasco—this is why this is the story of the PNM under the Member for San Fernando East. From the outset, "you ever hear" a Prime Minister meeting with consultants at the start of a project to conceptualize it? No. But that is the PNM's way.

> "The planning of the project was based on a 'fast track' approach."

Remember World Cup "they say" was coming—brown package.

> "In February 2005 TAL"—which was the consultant—"submitted an estimate of cost for the Stadium in the sum of $272m..."

Right now, ladies and gentlemen, Members of Parliament and the national community, the incomplete white elephant called Brian Lara Stadium is now $1.1 billion and "it not finished yet". There are also questions about 70 per cent of the welds, the steel structure holding it up.

Let us continue with the Uff Report.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Members, the speaking time of the hon. Member for D'Abadie/O'Meara has expired.

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

Question put and agreed to.

Hon. A. Roberts: Thank you, colleagues on both sides of the House. This is our greatest sporting hero, our icon, our world record holder. Now, remember,

they were fast-tracking, because World Cup was coming; but then, no World Cup. It could not be made. "World Cup gone"; West Indies lost, but do you know what? They kept fast-tracking. Read this:

> "They had also overlooked or decided to ignore the fact that, after the ICC announcement on 21 September 2006, there was no longer any deadline to be aimed at as the stadium was no longer in the running for the World Cup events. UDeCOTT's staff and Board, as at 2 October 2006, remained set on pushing ahead with the project despite the potential problems that were soon to become manifest."

And the story goes on and on, but I would pause there because we have a bit more interesting stuff to get through.

I listened intently as the Member for Diego Martin West used the following statements continuously during his contribution. He said: "We won't believe you because you don't tell the truth", referring to the Member for Tunapuna and the other Members of this side. He said: "Don't trust them". He said: "They are not to be trusted". And then the Member for Laventille East/Morvant chimed in, "Tell Tunapuna doh lie!" Then the Member for Diego Martin West came back: "Tunapuna must apologize". We deceitful—we on this side—all words of the Member for Diego Martin West.

Well, let us "see who deceitful". You all ready?

Hon. Members: Yes.

Hon. A. Roberts: "Leh we see who deceitful, nuh". I have here an article from the *Newsday*, Monday, 10 January, 2010, quoting the hon. Member for Diego Martin West and Leader of the Opposition. He says:

> "…the dismissal of over 100 workers from the Sport Company of Trinidad and Tobago..."

Number one, not true—35. The Sport Company "is only" 102 workers. Right? First thing. But that is a small thing.

> "and condemned Sports Minister Anil Roberts for politicising the issue.
>
> Accusing Roberts of engaging in 'total bacchanalia', Rowley continued: 'Not a report…"

Listen carefully; Leader of the Opposition:

> "Not a report. Not a proper comment. Nothing before the Parliament. Nothing from the Cabinet but a Minister speaking out of the corners of his mouth and the back of his neck."

I remember the first time I ever stood to speak in this august House, it was a 20-minute statement based on a report I received from the Central Audit Committee of the Ministry of Finance which was requested by the former Minister, and I commend him for that. He saw things wrong in SPORTT and he asked the Ministry of Finance to investigate. I received that report and that report showed money missing; no tenders committee; no approvals, sole select tender for different items from $20,000 up to $1 million; a Caribbean Games expenditure of $85 million without a Caribbean Games; the Hasely Crawford Stadium roof morphing and growing by 1,000 square metres so that the contract could match, $2 million flag, and so on.

So there was a report in Parliament. But Diego Martin West, what did he say? No report! Nothing in Parliament!

So there was a report, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and it was laid in Parliament.

9.45 p.m.

Furthermore, Mr. Deputy Speaker—and this is where it gets very interesting, so please pay attention. I shall quote from the *Hansard* of February 10, 2010. I will not tell you who it is. I will tell you at the end, but let me quote:

> "And I must say, I am singularly unimpressed with the Sport Company insofar as service to my constituency.
>
> The first thing this Sport Company did that was bad, it broke the project up into pieces. Instead of awarding a contract to build the complex, it set about it to award to build it in pieces. So they awarded a contract to build the foundation and the contract itself was efficiently done. But let us say it was done. The foundation has been built since 2008 and no amount of representation on my part—Mr. Speaker, I am driven to use foul language; I have not done so yet. Right now if you go there, we are still in the foundation; grass; bush growing there…I will tell you worse than that, it is the only major sporting facility in the Diego Martin area. It is the home of Merry Boys Cricket Club.
>
> We have now gone 2007, 2008, 2009; we are now in 2010; we are still in the foundation and we have a Sport Company."

"I wonder who saying this, boy?" February 2010. The Member of Parliament continued:

> "I cannot understand for the life of me how anywhere in Trinidad and Tobago, you could be building a little playing field with a little pavilion and 2008, 2009, 2010, and the foundation—in fact, I tried to assist them. When they

> were halfway through the foundation I kept in contact with the Sport Company and I kept asking them: 'have you awarded the contract for the superstructure'? Because they will have to take time to fabricate the steel; do that now so that when the foundation is finished, you could move smoothly in from foundation to superstructure. No way. They have not done that and I am sure if the Minister enters the debate this evening, he would be hard-pressed to tell you or to tell us what the position is there with that."

Then someone jumped in. Former Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West, former Minister of Sport jumped in:

> "Give me a chance and I would explain it."

But this Member continues. He said:

> "I would, gladly".

He took his seat and Mr. Hunt came in and said:

> "Just to inform the Member that the design that the Sport Company prior to 2007 entered into was going to result in a pavilion that was larger than the Hasely Crawford Stadium. It had more rooms. It was not a practical design."

This was Minister Gary Hunt answering a Member. Then the Member continued in response to the former Minister of Sport:

> "Mr. Speaker, therein lies my answer. You see I was not lying? What kind of agency will award a contract on the Diego Martin playing field for a pavilion bigger than the Brian Lara Stadium? What group of mad men will do a thing like that? So you see, the creation of the Sport Company did not insulate us from that kind of dotishness? You understand me? I did not even know that. It is worse than I thought, because to have awarded a contract as described by the Minister, tells me that something is radically wrong with the people running the..."—the Sport Company—"or the ability"—of the Sport Company—"to award contract in the first place."

"I wonder who say this. This sounding like me, but ah wasn't in Parliament, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I now reach. Ah just come." This person continued. He said:

> "I would love to join those who have been satisfactorily served by the Sport Company. But I cannot. If I had to identify the worst performing state enterprise, it has to be the Sport Company."

Dr. Keith Rowley, Member for Diego Martin West.

> **Hon. Members:** Ooooh!

Hon. A. Roberts: So who lie? Who deceitful? Because in the *Newsday* on Monday, Minister Roberts politicizing. Not a report. "Roberts engaging in total bacchanalia!" Not a report, not a proper comment. Nothing before Parliament! Nothing from the Cabinet! But a Minister speaking out from the corners of his mouth. Where was he speaking out of when he was here on February 10, 2010 telling you that the Sport Company was the worst organization, which meant "it worse than UDeCott, it worse than EMBD, it worse than UTT, it worse than Petrotrin, it worse than SLIU in T&TEC, it worse" than all those? The same Member for Diego Martin West who has the audacity to come here and say "we fooling the people". "He just make Leader and, boy, I am glad he dey because for the PNM ah think dey better bring back Sando East; whey Diego Martin West making Sando East look good. But I ain't done there, Mr. Deputy Speaker." How much more time do I have?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Twenty minutes.

Hon. A. Roberts: Twenty minutes? "Okay. Good! Ah going good. Oropouche East, you will be proud of meh. Ah managing time good." Let us continue with the Member for Diego Martin West because he went off on a tirade attacking the Minister of Finance. He was in his pious best. He was like a Pharisee preaching to the sinners about procurement, about lies, about deceit, about governance, about serving the people. Well, he will not come back now.

Let me talk to you about a file: Code name T2J:2236/2002. "None of all yuh doh know what ah talking about". But the Member for Diego Martin West watching it on TV knows what I am talking about. This is a file from the Ministry of Planning and Development. "You see, the Diego Martin West attacked the Minister of the People and Social Development, Member for Caroni Central, and this Government for giving out hampers." "How dare we give poor people hampers? How dare we waste taxpayers' money to give the people—the people who does pay their VAT and tax to help them out for a Christmas, he took offence to that."

Dr. Moonilal: Shame!

Hon. A. Roberts: Well, he is the leader of the grassroots. The PNM is the grassroots party. It is about the poor people. Yes man, he is the grassroots. Well, I now take you to a notice of grant of permission to develop lands subject to conditions: to Shore Lands Development Company Limited; Trade Zone, El Socorro, Extension Road, San Juan. Very interesting! "For all yuh who don't know, this Shore Lands is down close to where the Member for Diego Martin West lives; you know, by his office right there by La Horquetta. You go down ah

bit just pass the plaza, you turn left. Dah is where it is. You will see dey have two tall, tall, tall, buildings there and many people wondered how come they went up." Renaissance Towers**,** remember that? Well, before that there was a little small kind of hotel there, two-storeys, three-storeys.

For example, some people over the years, including the former owner, had applied for Town and Country approval. For example, in 1991 somebody—I will not call their name—applied to do a 115-room hotel, eight 2-bedroom condominiums three storeys high. Permission was refused because in that area there were only two storeys and so on. It was like the cotton silk and the environmental impact and the sea, so it was denied.

Do you know that in 1993 somebody else was granted permission for a 3 4-floor building? No big thing. That was all right. But let us fast-forward a bit now to November 07, 2003. Remember, people were complaining that they did not want any big buildings in this area. That EMA had problems with approvals, the country planners had said, "Listen, this is not working. This is not good. This cannot go"—[*Interruption*]

Miss Mc Donald: On a point of order. Mr. Deputy Speaker, 36(1). I am following what the Member is saying, but I am trying to tie it back to what we are doing.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Continue.

Hon. A. Roberts: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I would tie it for you because we are here to discuss the Appropriation Bill which you all did nothing on—your secret—and in the debate you have all come up, especially the Member for Diego Martin West, as very pompous and pious as if they are the Archbishop themselves or Mother Randoo. Very pristine! So if he is pristine, let us see if he is pristine. I have already showed who is deceitful by *Hansar*d. Not my words, his words. So follow me now.

He did not want to give poor people hampers, but on November 07, 2003 someone got approval for 15 floors against the advice of all the technocrats and the public servants. All the experts said, "No, you cannot get that." We have the reports here for various reasons. Not only because of the construction, but because of the area and impact on the sewer system, water system and electricity and so on, they said no. But somebody got approval to go up in the sky 15-storeys. Now, who is one of the directors and owners of this company? The Member for Diego Martin West had stated, and it has been reported, that he wants former Minister John Rahael to be the chairman of the PNM. Interesting! "Dah is PNM business. All yuh vote for who all yuh want."

Joseph Rahael, son of John Rahael, was given permission against the advice and recommendations of all the public servants and the EMA. He was given approval for the Renaissance Towers by ministerial intervention. Now the question is: who was the Minister in 2003? Who was the Minister of Planning in 2003? I answer: it was the hon. Member for Diego Martin West. He do not want to "give poor people hamper", but he is giving his friend and future chairman of the party an ability to earn hundreds of millions of dollars, going against the advice of all the public servants, all the recommendations. Ministerial approval by former Minister of Planning, Mr. Pious, Mr. Attack Tunapuna, Mr. know All, Mr. Do Good, John Rahael. We read the point and here it says, the outline planning approval was granted, Reference No. 2236/2002-7/11/03 by the T&CPD only after ministerial intervention. Who intervened? Mr. I "Waked up", Member for Diego Martin West. So do not sit there, stand there and play like he is Mr. Clean and Mr. Nice and attacking the finance Minister, attacking all of us, and saying we lie to the people. [*Desk thumping*] This is why you are on that side and we will remain on this side.

Let me also tell you while we are on it, because poor people cannot get hampers said Member for Diego Martin West, but Rahael could get an approval despite all the protestations and legitimate recommendations of the public servants. He could get that. On top of that, the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs, building that I am now occupying as Minister, we are paying $300,000 a month. Poor people cannot get a $300 hamper, but we are paying $300,000 a month. Do you know to whom we are paying $300,000 a month? John Rahael, the next chairman of the PNM who the Member for Diego Martin West wants. You do not want to give poor people hampers, but you could stand here and talk about we are grassroots' government. Do not come here with that. We are here because of your incompetence, your lack of governance, lack of transparency [*Desk thumping*] and we will remain here because the economy is growing, crime is coming down, we are getting the art and multiculturalism, foreign affairs, trade and industry, works and transport, Office of the Prime Minister, energy and housing. We are here to serve the people, not serve our partner "who we swing golf with". [*Desk thumping*]

With that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I now take my seat in a calm, relaxed fashion because we have accomplished to let the whole population know who is the hypocrite, the deceiver, the deceitful—not us. That is here, Sport Company. Oh, nothing wrong! Roberts politics, quoted in the *Hansard*. Then "not giving poor people hamper", about "giving his partner thing" to go up high. But God does not

sleep because I heard "thing lean" and "project stop". God does not sleep. Bring back Sando East, save the PNM, save the PNM from the Member for Diego Martin West.

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

10.00 p.m.

Mr. Nileung Hypolite (*Laventille West*): Thank you kindly, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I sat here for the past probably 65 minutes or so listening to the Member for D'Abadie/O'Meara, and the Member for D'Abadie/O'Meara went on and on and it was a very nice show; good show, one must say. It was such a good show, one has to probably ask oneself whether or not it was a show for the people of the COP to see whether or not he can outshine the Member for Tunapuna. [*Desk thumping*] [*Laughter*] No, we have to ask ourselves that.

We also need to ask ourselves the question whether or not it is a "bush bath" he really needs. A "bush bath", as he said—[*Interruption*] Well he said he needs a "bush bath".

Dr. Browne: He said it.

Mr. N. Hypolite: We have to ask ourselves whether this show is all about that. Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Member for D'Abadie/O'Meara stood there and he spoke about every Ministry except that of the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs—every ministry.

Mr. Roberts: What?

Miss Hospedales: That is right. You were not listening?

Mr. N. Hypolite: Mr. Deputy Speaker, he spoke about the Sport Company, separate and apart from the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs. He spoke about the Sport Company. Just in case those behind me do not know, the Sport Company is totally different from that of the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs; two totally separate entities, just in case they behind me do not know that.

Miss Roopnarine: What is the point? Get to the point.

Mr. N. Hypolite: Mr. Deputy Speaker, what the people of Trinidad and Tobago want to know is the plans, the programmes and the policies coming out of the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs. What is the vision for our young people? What are the achievements? You know who I admire, Mr. Deputy Speaker? The Member for Pointe-a-Pierre, because he stood earlier on today and he went through his Ministry and he identified with some of the achievements and with some of the plans.

Mr. Roberts: You want to give me 10 more minutes?

Mr. N. Hypolite: But what the Member for D'Abadie/O'Meara, the Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs did was stood and talked about everything. He stood and tried to identify with problems that he believes would have been linked to that of the People's National Movement when we were in office. That is all. And he comes time after time and does the same thing, just identify or try to identify with issues or problems; try to identify with situations and try to link them with the People's National Movement administration.

What we want, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is to know what are the plans—the plans, the policies and the achievements coming out of that particular Ministry.

Dr. Douglas: Make your point.

Mr. N. Hypolite: Mr. Deputy Speaker, he made mention of only 35 persons from the Sport Company being sent home, but from all indications that was the end result. What started the whole thing was the 100-plus persons who were sent home, but when they realized that the whole matter was handled badly, they had to retract most of those letters. They speak about deceit. They speak about not telling the truth.

Dr. Browne: Great deceivers.

Mr. N. Hypolite: They speak about a number of those things, Mr. Deputy Speaker. They speak about distrust, but then let us look at the situation with the pan men of whom, during their campaign, their election campaign, they spoke about giving the pan men a $2-million first prize. They went back on that. They went back on that, Mr. Deputy Speaker. They spoke about the pension, age 60. Life begins at 60. They went back on that. They spoke about no job loss, but when you look at what is taking place today, you are seeing people being sent home, being dismissed from their jobs on a daily basis.

The Member for Oropouche East made mention that the situation with the Permanent Secretaries and their reshuffling really and truly did not take place, or is not in the pipelines. I ask myself the question, then why is it that, in the *Trinidad Express* newspaper of January 12, one can identify with the PS from Ministry of Works and Transport indicating that she will be moving from the Ministry of Works and Transport? And why is it that the advisor to the Minister of National Security had to stand and indicate how good a job the PS from the Ministry of National Security has been doing and, as such, should not be moving out of that particular Ministry? Then you have Minister Jack Warner indicating that he has no problem with that decision.

You further have an explanation given by the Cabinet, and in fact, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is what the *Trinidad Express* wrote:

> "The explanation given by Cabinet was that"—the Permanent Secretary from the Ministry of Works and Transport's—"reputation for hard work and efficiency, and the Government's focus on reducing crime, made such a placement necessary for proper implementation of the Government's initiatives."

Key, "the explanation given by Cabinet", not an explanation given by John Harry or the clerk in the Ministry, but by Cabinet.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we as a country need to get the economy going. We really need to get some kind of movement within the economy. We need to get that trust being built once again by that of the investors, by the businessmen, and even by our own selves. I am reading today's *Mirror*, only to realize that there is an article:

"Millions will be lost—if Royal Caribbean Cruise Line ducks Tobago"

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it went on:

> "According to a Tobago hotelier who preferred not to be named, although the hotels will be affected, it will be the taxi drivers, vendors and other stakeholders who normally benefit when cruise ships call at Tobago."

What the article is getting at, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is the mere fact that some $6 million went missing from one of the cruise ships that docked in Port of Spain sometime ago and they have been asking the Ministry of Tourism to hand over that $6 million; and to date, that $6 million is still in the hands of Ministry, or wherever, but not in the hands of Royal Caribbean.

What Royal Caribbean is saying is that if this money is not handed over, they will stop all transactions with Trinidad and Tobago, meaning that some 15,000 to 20,000 passengers who will normally dock on the Tobago shore will no longer be docking there. We need tourism business, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We need to sort out these things, because it is situations like this that can assist the movement of this economy; tourism.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I listened to the Member for Pointe-a-Pierre and he spoke about the developments and the successes of his Ministry. I am pleased to hear about what he is trying to do with the Unemployment Relief Programme. I read in the newspaper earlier on, and he made mention also, that one of the things that he is trying to do is to move the Unemployment Relief Programme into agriculture. Fantastic.

All I need to ask of you, through you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that there are some people who have been sent home since October/November and they were promised one month's salary. If you can facilitate those persons as soon as possible, that is all; as soon as possible, because these are poor people. These are people who would have worked in the programme as monthly-paid employees and they got a letter one morning indicating that they were no longer working at the URP office.

Dr. Browne: Wickedness.

Mr. N. Hypolite: The Permanent Secretary wrote a letter, and the letter ended by stating, "Accordingly, you will be paid the equivalent of one month's salary in lieu of notice." So, Minister of Labour, facilitate these people. I think they would be happy. I think they would be pleased to know that there is somebody outside there looking out for them.

I also wish to state that while we have the Clico issue and the $75,000 and the battle between the policyholders and the Government, we also have the issue where the agents are now being sent home. I have a letter here from a couple of agents who received these letters of termination—termination of their contracts. We have to remember that an insurance agent builds a certain amount of confidence with his client, and that client/agent relationship actually is what keeps that company afloat.

10.15 p.m.

It is that same agent that goes to that client and sits and convinces that client that this is the best way to go. Now that we have a situation whereby the policyholders are collecting $75,000 and the remainder of the money over a 20-year period and they are not happy with that, they are not contented, they are disenchanted, we hear all kinds of comments being made about that issue. We are now faced with the situation where the agents are being sent home. Mind you, the Prime Minister indicated "No job loss".

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have another issue with the regularization of PH cars. Just about a week ago, the maxi-taxis decided to strike and with these maxis striking the PH vehicles—mind you, we are in full support of the regularization of PH vehicles; in fact, the whole idea of the regularization of PH vehicles started under our administration. They met with the Minister of Works and Transport at that time and we had a plan, but the plan did not only take into consideration legalizing PH vehicles, it was about regularizing the PH vehicles in addition to an entire transportation programme that would have included the rapid rail. This

means that if a situation like what took place with the maxi-taxis had taken place, people would still be able to move from point A to point B.

It also included the maxi-taxis, the PTSC buses and the regular taxis. We recognized that there was a need for community taxis. This is where the whole talk started with the PH persons to come up with some way, after discussions and consultations with the regular taxis; even the PTSC buses, with a plan to see how best they could fit into the whole programme.

One reason for doing that was to avoid situations as per another article in today's *Express* where a woman escaped a kidnap attempt: "Cops hunt for PH Driver". We are saying that the Minister needs to handle this situation very carefully. We just cannot legalize PH vehicles like that. It is against the law, one; insurance companies do not grant insurance policies to PH vehicles to transport persons for hire. There is no insurance policy that offers insurance for a PH vehicle to transport persons for money. Those are some of the issues that we need to look at very carefully before we start legalizing PH vehicles.

We have seen many activities among the trade unions quite recently. We have seen the public servants, the PSA, protesting. We have seen the staff at the Eric Williams Medical Sciences Complex protesting. We have seen UWI lecturers protesting, steelworkers protesting, Cipriani Labour College staff members protesting and one of the reasons, if I can remember carefully, on the platform of the UNC-led party at that point in time, for the People's Partnership Party going up for election, is that they would have formed this people's ministry to avoid all this protesting and tyre burning and stuff like that.

But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, every Tuesday morning you can see 2,000, 3,000, 6,000 persons up and down the roads of Trinidad and Tobago protesting through the PSA. Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is all the trade unions protesting. We even have a Government Senator protesting—and he is proud on the one hand to be protesting against the Government's action and, on the other hand, he is sitting comfortably as a Senator smiling. They speak about deceitfulness. That is deceitfulness.

The Prime Minister said, "No job loss", but we are seeing persons from the HDC—and probably the Member for Oropouche East can correct me—but at one point in time there was this thing called Colour me Orange where a number of people were sent home.

Dr. Moonilal: I do not want to interrupt my friend the Member for Laventille West, but the Colour me Orange Programme, as you know, was started before the election by your administration and it was a short-term work programme. By December it was returned and we increased the employment by 150 persons.

Mr. N. Hypolite: Thank you, Member for Oropouche East. Do you have persons from Laventille employed in that programme?

Dr. Moonilal: Yes.

Mr. N. Hypolite: It is nice to know that. Then you also had the situation where litter wardens from Tunapuna were sent home. I do not know if anyone can shed light on that one; if they were rehired. Quite recently also, we had a number of other persons from that same corporation who were also sent home.

We had a situation where the clerical workers from primary schools were sent home. Legal counsels, head of SIA, former police commissioner, forced out very quickly, two weeks before his time was up; and, quite recently, members of the Sport Company. They speak about deceitfulness; not telling the truth and all those different things, it is the Prime Minister who said, "No job loss".

If there is no job loss, how can the unemployment rate move from 5.2 per cent to somewhere well over 7.5 per cent? For that to happen it means that unemployment took place; someone was sent home. Someone was asked to go home. [*Interruption*] No, you will stand and start with another show. We do not want a show.

We want to look at agriculture. When we look at agriculture, we need to look at food security. We have to remember that when we look at food security we must take into consideration the large farms. We on this side would like to know the plans and policies with respect to the large farms. We would like to know the plans and policies with respect to the Trinidad and Tobago Agri-Business Association (TTABA). We would like to know the plans and programmes for National Agricultural Marketing and Development Corporation (NAMDEVCO). These are the things we would like to know and not just come here and carry on a show talking about the PNM doing this and that. It is time that Members on that side realize that they are the persons who run this country at this time and they must come up with policies and plans and let the people know what they are; rather than coming here and talking about the PNM or trying to get into the PNM's business.

My friend, the Member for D'Abadie/O'Meara, who wants to be the next political leader of the COP, must understand that we on this side do our business totally different to how they do it. We do not go media house hopping to talk about—we support our political leader. From number 12 to number 1, we support our political leader. This is how we do it in the PNM. We do not go media hopping.

We have to understand also that, under the Ministry of Public Utilities, there was a programme called the National Social Development Programme (NSDP) which assisted a number of people with things like wiring of their houses, the paying of their electricity bills and even their water bills. We would like to know the status of that programme. We would like to know the plan, the status and the policies in place with respect to water for all. We are now hearing about water for all once again. We want to know. We do not want the Government Members to come to this House and only talk about the PNM.

The PNM had its time. We were there and May 24, as they would say, the people wanted a change. They are now in office, but it seems that we are still in office and they are the Opposition. They continue to talk about the PNM and they are not bringing their policies to this House.

Mr. Roberts: I am not seeing the Balisier. Lift up the tie.

Mr. N. Hypolite: I do not need to lift up this and that. That is for you to do because you are on show when you come here. You wanted to ask a question. I will give you the opportunity to ask a question.

Mr. Roberts: Thank you very much, Member for Laventille West, for giving way. You spoke about the unemployment figures moving from 5.2; not to over 7.5; it is at 7.5. Are you aware that there is a six-month time lag on that? If it has increased, that means that it increased under your watch.

Mr. N. Hypolite: Thank you so kindly for the question. The fact is that, under this present UNC-led Government, you are seeing people on a daily basis being sent home. The Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs has indicated that under the Sport Company he has sent 30 persons home. So at the end of the day, you all are sending home people left, right and centre and you do not have a policy.

10.30 p.m.

What the people of Trinidad and Tobago want is a plan for this country moving forward. Between May 25 and today you have not heard of any plans. What you are hearing are some of the policies, the programmes that the PNM would have put in place. That is what they are working on.

In Laventille West we have been asking for some simple things: community centres; not one community centre has been touched in the Laventille area. When I am speaking about Laventille, I am speaking about Laventille East, Laventille West and even Port of Spain South—not one community centre; not one.

I have a community centre on the Beetham; 85 per cent completed; some simple things to do to complete that community centre; nothing; recreation

grounds, same thing. In February of last year we had started an accelerated programme, and things were well in place to see the restructuring of a number of recreation grounds and a number of other programmes within Laventille; restructuring, upgrading—because there was some restructuring also to be done. We were also to see the implementation of the telecentre—the building identified, funding identified, everything identified. Even under the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs, funding was identified for the upgrading of those recreation grounds; to date, nothing.

I do not know if it is that other constituencies, other than Laventille East/Morvant, Laventille West, Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West and the others along this bench here, are getting work done within their constituencies—upgrade of their community centres and upgrading of their recreation grounds, but I can speak about Laventille West. Nothing is taking place. And we are asking for our fair share. They spoke about fair share—fairness among all. What we are saying is, we want fairness also. We want to see work starting on our community centres. We want to see work starting on our recreation grounds, on our roads, our drains, our early childhood schools. We are people also.

The people of Laventille, the people of Diego Martin, the people of La Brea, the people of Point Fortin, we are all people of Trinidad and Tobago also, and we need to get services within these constituencies also. And I am asking those Members on that side—the Member for Moruga/Tableland was asking what were we doing? My dear friend, we did so much that you, right now, are just completing what we had started, because you all have done nothing, since you got into office—nothing at all. No, I want to change that. They took a screwdriver and took out two screws from a car, took out the Coat of Arms and put on a P, PM1, and they say, "Dah is plenty tings done".

They say, come along with them and we will all rise, and that is exactly what is taking place. We are seeing the rise in crime, the rise in protests, the rise in food prices, the rise in unemployment, the rise in inflation, [*Desk thumping*] the rise in uncertainty by that Government, the rise in a government not to be trusted, the rise in a government that is committed to dishonesty, the rise in attacks towards the Muslim community, the media, freedom of speech, our democracy and, of course, the judiciary. "We rising."

Mr. Deputy Speaker, again for the Member for Moruga/Tableland who believes the PNM did nothing, we have NAPA, in which every Monday morning "is a big fete". The same NAPA that they wanted—the same NAPA that they had problems with, the same NAPA right now "they are having a party" every Sunday

morning. The Hyatt, I am certain most of them, if not all of them, when they leave here, whatever hour it is, "going across to the Hyatt". [*Desk thumping*] "That is the PNM thing, my dear friend." The Financial Towers; all of them want their Ministry in those towers right now. All of them want their office inside there. The Government Campus, Uriah Butler Interchange, that is a PNM thing. The Aranguez interchange, you heard my colleague, my friend from Diego Martin North/East, who made mention of it. They do not do anything. They have not done anything; nothing. They are just following.

Community centres: the Chief Whip can tell you how many community centres we would have done; how many you all would have done, and the number of community centres that we have given to those on the other side, the Member for Mayaro, do you know how many community centres he received under our watch? I cannot get the Pelican Extension Community Centre completed, and they talk about they did so much in seven months? Let us not forget the Early Childhood Centres; UTT; houses, over 26,000.

Mr. De Coteau: Really?

Mr. N. Hypolite: Yes, really. You do not know? "You from Moruga." Free education under the People's National Movement, free medication; increase in pension; and I am certain my colleague from Diego Martin Central can tell you and will tell you all about the increase in pension. The amount of social services that we would have delivered to this country, transportation for our elderly, free transportation when it comes to the PTSC buses, come on, my dear friends, come on. And you all say the PNM did nothing? I can go on and on and on and on and on with what the People's National Movement would have done for this country.

In fact, if it were not for the policies of the People's National Movement, the programmes of the People's National Movement, none of them would have been sitting here today, because they all benefited from the People's National Movement. Each and every one of them benefited from the People's National Movement. [*Desk thumping*] Oropouche West is in shock, as if she did not go to school under People's National Movement. [*Desk thumping*] Oh, come on.

I will like to see that this UNC-led Government, instead of coming into this House and only trying to bash the People's National Movement, of which the people of Trinidad and Tobago already know exactly what is taking place, that they sit and come up with a plan—instead of trying to fight among themselves, sit and come up with a plan, come up with a policy, come up with a vision to move this country forward. If not, be mindful, the People's National Movement is standing by to do just that. I thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Minister of Education (Hon. Dr. Tim Gopeesingh): Mr. Deputy Speaker, this evening we are discussing the Finance (Supplementary and Variation of Appropriation) (Financial Year 2010) Bill, 2011. In this Bill, there are considerations for financial year 2008—2009, and financial year 2009—2010.

When the Leader of the Opposition made his presentation earlier on this afternoon, he predicated his presentation based on a few areas, but one of the main areas was the question of borrowing. He said that under our stewardship now, we are looking after the country's finances by borrowing, and indicated that we have to repay. We definitely have to repay. But I want to take this House through a situation on the finances of this country, which we have inherited from the last administration, which we definitely have to repay now.

The foreign and local debt for Trinidad and Tobago under the last administration is close to $25 billion. The foreign debt never came down over the last eight to nine years, and the local debt increased by about $2 billion to $3 billion. Then this government, the last administration, through a number of the 15 special purpose companies and the 37 state enterprises, ended up, as at fiscal 2008—2009 owing, or giving guarantees close to $19 billion, and letters of comfort for close to $18 billion.

So $25 billion for local and foreign debt, plus $19 billion for guarantees and another $18 billion for letters of comfort, close to $62 billion. The last administration took this country down that pathway of owing close to $62 billion from just those three areas alone. And the Member for Diego Martin West had the audacity and the temerity, without any moral authority, to begin to draw inferences from this Government which has only been there in the financial situation that we are discussing for four months.

We are discussing financial years 2008—2009 and 2009—2010. That is up to September 2010. We came into office on May 27, so we had only June, July, August September—four months. What did we do to contribute to the negative aspect in the four months? Absolutely nothing. In fact, I want to take this House back to the *Hansard*, you will see it, when the Minister of Finance at that time, Mrs. Tesheira, indicated that at the end of financial year 2009, which would have ended on 30th September, we would be owing close to $7.3 billion. We would be in deficit financing of $7.3 billion. When we took over in June, the Minister of Finance was able to bring this down, as of September 30th, by over $3 billion. In other words, the deficit financing, which was predicated by the last administration under the last Minister of Finance, would have been $7.3 billion. Our prudent

Minister of Finance brought that down by almost $3 billion, and, therefore, brought growth to the economy in just four short months to more than $3 billion, and brought what we were going to owe from $7 billion to $4 billion.

10.45 p.m.

And they want to accuse us of financial imprudence? Here it is that the Minister of Finance moved expeditiously to reduce the amount of deficit financing, which we would have had in that budget, and brought it down by $3 billion in four short months. This is the competence of a People's Partnership Government, and this is the competence of our Minister of Finance, under the stewardship of our distinguished Prime Minister. That administration has no moral authority to speak about anything dealing with finance whatsoever.

I want to take this country tonight, and for those who would see it in their future again, to the situation of the financial state that last administration brought us into. I spoke—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Member, do not think this is anything against you, but from what has happened Wednesday night to tonight, I have to suspend the sitting for 45 minutes for us to have dinner. You were on your feet the last time and you are on your feet again this time. Dinner is here.

10.47 p.m.: *Sitting suspended*.

11.30 p.m.: *Sitting resumed.*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: You have 40 minutes.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: So, I spoke for 5 minutes already. Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Before we took the break, I was discussing the whole question of the financial situation for the nation and what we are faced with at the end of fiscal 2009/2010, which ended on September 30.

During the break, I was able to go down to the library and get the Office of the *Auditor General Report of the Auditor General on the Public Accounts of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago for the Financial Year 2009,* which included October 2008 to September 30, 2009. The Auditor General's Report for September 2009 to September 2010 is not available. I want to give this august House financial information, which belies the statement from the Member for Diego Martin West when he tried to claim that in our four short months of financial accountability from June to September 30 our governance is shocking and not to be trusted and there is a revenue challenge of dissonance between expenditure and revenue.

The first thing I want to quote from the Office of the Auditor General's Report is the question of the financial balances up to 2009. I would quote from page 75 of the Auditor General's Report and give you some 2005 figures and the balances on the exchequer account at the end of the financial years 2005 to 2009. In 2005, there was a deficit of $3.046 billion; 2006, a deficit of $4.707 billion. It kept climbing in 2007 and there was a deficit $5.757 billion, another $1 billion more; 2008, $5.683 billion and a big jump from 2008 to 2009 went $10.789 billion in deficit. The balances of the exchequer accounts at the end of the financial year 2009 was a whopping $10.789 billion in the negative. That was the state in which that administration on the other side left this country as at September 30, 2009. And it would be perhaps even worse if we had gotten the figure from the Auditor General from 2009 to 2010.

Let me give to this House a comparison between the revenue and expenditure over these years to show how the PNM administration always spent more than they received. That was their philosophy and that was their mode of governance. They spent and wasted; more waste than expenditure.

In 2005, the total revenue was $29.8 billion. Their expenditure was $30,006,829 million, more than they received. In 2006, the revenue was $37.6 billion. Their expenditure was $39.2 billion; a surplus of 16.8 in the deficit. In other words, they spent $1.6 billion more than they have received.

In 2007, their revenue was $40.46 billion and their expenditure was $41.538, spending $1.07 billion more. In 2008, they spent $95 million more and in 2009 their revenue was $40.16 billion and they spent $45.32 billion. They spent $5.165 billion more in fiscal 2009. And this is why the hon. Minister of Finance has found it extremely difficult when we came into Government at the end of May 2010, to sort the financial situation of this country out. I could understand what quagmire they found the financial affairs of this country. Every year they keep spending more than they received. So, therefore from just five years, they spent close to $10 billion more than they received over the five-year period. Is that the state of governance that they want to question me about? They spent more than $10 billion more than they received in five years and have left the country with a balance from the exchequer's office more than $10 billion in deficit.

At the moment, I just want to indicate the loans circulation, because the Member for Diego Martin West—I am glad that he is here—said that our Government is not to be trusted. We have a reliance on IDB and we are pursuing deficit financing. Who pursued deficit financing? For five years they had deficit financing every year totalling more than $10 billion from 2005 to 2009.

I want to go to borrowing. He said borrowing is easy. I want you to listen, Member for Diego Martin West, to the state that your administration took this country, as far as borrowing is concerned. Local and foreign loans borrowing: with respect to local loans for 2005—2009, the local loans stood at $9 billion in 2005; 2006, $10.718 billion; 2007, $12.82 billion; 2008, $12.41 billion and 2009, $14.87 billion. That is just the local loans that keep climbing. Every year, they borrowed more and more locally. With respect to external loans from 2005 to 2009, in 2005, it started at $8.37billion and in 2009, it ended at $9.72 billion. There are also loans serviced under Head 18 of $4.9 billion, with a total loan, local and foreign, of $29.54 billion. In the five years that I am giving you from 2005—2009, they did not reduce any of the loan payments.

11.40 p.m.

So, at the end of 2005 the total loan was $18.26 billion and at the end of 2009 it was $29.54 billion. In five years, they moved the loan portfolio for local and foreign loans—how much they owed—from $18 billion to $29 billion; $11 billion more just in local and foreign loans. That does not stop there, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I want to go into the question of guarantees, letters of comfort and promissory notes. That is the moral authority that they are trying to give to this country. The People's Partnership has been in Government for four months, June—September, and they are trying to make the statement that we are pursuing deficit financing and borrowing easy and we have to repay. "How much they put us to repay?" Do you know what they have put us to repay, Mr. Deputy Speaker? The guarantees that we have signed as a nation $18.06 billion.

Let me go into the guarantees and show you some of the areas—letters of guarantees by the State as of September 30, 2009. The Airports Authority, $1.32 billion in guarantees; the Port Authority, $911 million in guarantees; the PTSC, $466 million in guarantees; the Regional Health Authorities, $176 million in guarantees; WASA, $3.938 billion in guarantees that the State had to sign for WASA. What has WASA done?

One of their own PNM people went into there and he said that WASA is corrupt. Do you remember when the chairman, Shafeek Sultan-Khan, went into WASA and he said that there was widespread corruption? I think the Members on the other side should hang their heads in shame. They should not even dare to get up and speak about anything on finance in this country. You have no moral authority whatsoever. That should not be a word in your vocabulary. At no time must you ever speak about the finances of this country. You must hang your head

in shame for what you have done to this country. [*Desk thumping*] You have raped the Treasury of this country. The PNM administration went into the coffers of this country and the poor people of this country suffered for the lack of beds, the lack of good care at hospitals, the lack of social services and the lack of schools.

The Trinidad and Tobago Electricity Commission was guaranteed $1.39 billion. What my hon. colleague, the Member for Oropouche West and the Leader of Government Business has to accept now is, the Housing Development Authority (HDC) has guarantees of $2.58 billion. Where is the Minister of Housing and the Environment going to be able to recoup this money to be able to pay the State back for letters of guarantee? Do you know what is the total state in terms of the guarantees?

I want to ask Members on the other side what is Taurus Services Limited. Taurus Services Limited—probably you all never heard about Taurus Services Limited. Taurus Services Limited is the company that was formed when a former government senior minister's debt was written off. If he owed $100 he was asked to pay $22 to the $100 or 22 cents to the $100. The National Commercial Bank (NCB) as an offshoot went to Taurus Services and one of their main men—a minister of the former government and close confidante of the Prime Minister and who ran the country for a lot of times Taurus Services was formed to facilitate him. Do you know what the guarantee is now for Taurus Services? It is $2.7 billion. [*Interruption*]

Dr. Rowley: You were charged—

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Yeah, you go back with that old foolishness. [*Crosstalk*] You go back with that old foolishness. [*Crosstalk*] You were charged with National Quaries as well. My wife had to defend you. My wife had to defend you in National Quarries, so do not come with that; do not come with that. Gopeesingh, Martineau, Edwards & Company defended you. Do not go their Keith.

Dr. Rowley: Mr. Deputy Speaker—

Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Do not go there at all!

Dr. Rowley: Mr. Deputy Speaker, Standing Order 36(5). Mr. Deputy Speaker, on a point of order.

Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Trinidad and Tobago Mortgage Finance—what is your point of order?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Member, the Member has raised a point of order.

Dr. Rowley: "He gone mad!"

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The Member has raised a point of order, Standing Order 36(5), which is imputing improper motives to him. I do not know the facts about who defended who. What I am saying here is that, if the Member is correct in what he is saying, I do not know the facts. Every Member in this House, when he or she makes an accusation, is responsible to determine the state of fact. If you cannot bring it to the House now, you would have to withdraw it and bring it at a later date, but if it is a statement of fact, the Chair does not realize that statement. So, if it is so, if you cannot bring it now, you are allowed to bring it at a later date to justify it, but you would have to withdraw that statement.

Dr. T. Gopeesingh: I would not go there. Mr. Deputy Speaker, what I have said there, he heard it, he knows the truth. I do not need to go there anymore. I do not need to go there. I am telling this House that there was a matter that Dr. Rowley, the Member for Diego Martin West, was involved with the National Quarries, and he had to go to court to have that matter sorted out. [*Crosstalk*] That is all right, but do not come with this thing about the North West Regional Health Authority.

I stand now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I was totally exonerated in the Magistrate's Court. The Chief Magistrate at that time said that there was no charge to answer; no cases to answer. The then Prime Minister, at that time, Mr. Manning, went to the High Court and appealed it. The High Court, under Justice Myers, said he should not have even entertained the matter in court and there was no charge. [*Desk thumping*] That was the vindictiveness of them to try to bring my whole years of professional integrity down, but no PNM could ever do that to me. They will have to go through days and nights. Do you know what? The costs are now being assessed by the Judiciary. I am receiving costs. My lawyers are going to receive the cost as a result of what they tried to do to Dr. Gopeesingh.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, they have no moral authority to talk about anything. Five of their ministers were before the Integrity Commission. Ask them what has happened to the matters! The Member for Diego Martin West was before the Integrity Commission as well, and on a legal technicality—whether it is a legal technicality or not—somebody got off; whether there was direct sending off of information so that it would have affected the entire matter, it caused something to happen where he got off. But do not go there! Do not try to attack me. I would come back at you with vengeance. I would come back at you with vengeance. [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Members: Ohoooo!

Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Verbal! Verbal! Verbal! Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will move on. The Trinidad and Tobago Mortgage Finance Company, guarantees were signed for $300 million—the guarantees that the PNM administration—they do not like to hear the truth—put this country through. They have signed guarantees to the tune of $18.3 billion for all the corrupt state enterprises and special purpose companies that they run for nine years.

As at today, three of their chairmen of state enterprises and special purpose companies have fled this country. [*Desk thumping*] Where have they gone? We can call the names! Calder Hart has fled, Ramlal has fled, Uthara Rao has fled and the lady who owns the church has fled. I will come to corruption and how they mismanaged and corruptly spent "the people money". The PNM administration destroyed the Treasury in this country. They "empty the Treasury" and our Minister of Finance is finding difficulty in managing it at the moment because of what they did.

I would go now to letters of comfort. This nation must hear what the PNM put this country through. Mr. Deputy Speaker, $10.59 billion in letters of comfort, and this is an addition to the $18 billion of guarantees. I spoke about the guarantees for the Housing Development Corporation already and hear the letters of comfort which they have signed; another $450 million; Airports Authority, $625 million; the Water and Sewerage Authority, in addition to the nearly $4 billion for guarantees, $1.246 billion in letters of comfort. So, nearly $5.3 billion in guarantees and letters of comfort for WASA.

They have increased the workforce at WASA from 2,700 when the UNC demitted office in 2001, when the election was stolen from the UNC. Do you know what it is now in 2010? It is nearly 4,700, more than 2,000 workers more in WASA with party groups and party hacks filling WASA, and the poor chairman now is finding it difficult to manage WASA to meet the recurrent expenditure, because it is filled with PNM party hacks. That is what that administration, the PNM administration, did with this country from 2001—2010.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, what the Minister of Finance brought on—the Finance Bill from the Finance Committee—we have difficulty in meeting our requirements now to govern this country. The Regional Health Authorities: The letters of comfort—$2.78 billion; MTS, $400 million; the National Helicopter Services, $153 million; UDeCOTT letters of comfort, $4.3 billion; Evolving Technologies, my colleague, the Minister of Trade and Industry, is having

tremendous difficulties relating to what eTecK has done to this country—letter of comfort of $220 million; BWIA, in those days, letter of comfort, $237 million; Nidco, $592 million and Nipdec, $788 million, a total of $10.59 billion in letters of comfort.

It does not end there. Loans, $29.5 billion; guarantees, $18.06 billion, that is $47 billion and letters of comfort $10.57 billion; promissory notes, $2.4 billion, nearly $60 billion that that administration put this country through. I am just giving you figures for five years, 2005—2009. The 2009/2010 figures are not before us in this Parliament. We do not have them available from the office of the Auditor General.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, over $60 billion is owed in this country at the moment. That does not include what happened in Petrotrin with World GTL. Petrotrin now owes close to $18 billion; principal and interest payments, and we will have to be paying that until 2021.

11.55 p.m.

We have mortgaged the lives of our children and our grandchildren in this country. That administration did it. For years our children and grandchildren will have to pay for the sins committed by that administration; $60 billion in loans, guarantees, letters of comfort, promissory notes and another $18 billion owed by Petrotrin.

Hear the type of loans they took, with interest rates of 9 per cent. My colleague, the Member for Pointe-a-Pierre, will tell you that World GTL did not put any money into that issue whatsoever. Petrotrin guaranteed World JTL and they borrowed money on the external market at nine.something per cent in the first tranche, when it was low and the second tranche they borrowed it at 6.5 per cent. And they want to question why the Minister of Finance is borrowing money from the IADB at 1.5 per cent, with a five-year moratorium not to pay. They are questioning how we are borrowing money at 1.5 per cent and they borrowed at 9.5 per cent. What a shame and disgrace.

Hon. Member: Shame!

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Shameful, disgraceful! Who ran this country? What type of Finance Minister and what type of governance did you have? And you want to question the governance of this People's Partnership administration? You could never question that. You talk about reliance on the IADB. We have to rely on the IADB because you made a mess on the other side. [*Desk thumping*] The

Minister of Finance has to go to the IADB because we would need some financing to take care of the $60-something billion mess that you have left in this country.

I have not finished with Petrotrin. The company has a case before it in the International Court where they stand to lose another $10 billion. If Petrotrin loses that case, do you know how much they then have to pay? Mr. Deputy Speaker, $18 billion in loans and interest and another $10 billion if they lose the case. Petrotrin alone has to pay the $28 billion. They have mortgaged the lives of our children and grandchildren. They have no moral authority to ever, ever speak about finance at all in your lives, not at all. Not a word of finance should emanate from the mouths of any one of you across on that side. They should be ashamed to even think about the word, far less to say it.

You should have stayed home for this debate, because you have nothing to offer this country. [*Desk thumping*] This Bill should have been passed long time. You should not have even been present here, because you have nothing to offer; you have no sense of value. You cannot even spend a cent, all you want to do is borrow, borrow, borrow. "You pay back anything yet?"

The debt to GDP ratio—the GDP was about $160 billion at one time. The GDP has fallen to $135 billion now. If we owe $62 billion and Petrotrin is $18 billion, that is $80 billion; $80 billion over $135 billion, we have passed close to nearly 60 per cent of the debt to GDP ratio. We have passed the threshold of what you would call a good State. We are now in the area of a failed State. Debt to GDP ratio hovering close to 60 per cent, and the Member for Diego Martin West "want to talk about" ours is a government not to be trusted. Yours was a government not to be trusted and that is why the people voted you all out. [*Desk thumping*]

The people were fed up with your dictatorship and your inability to govern this country and 450,000 told you resoundingly that, "We are fed up with you, get out", and "We do not want you anymore." You will languish in Opposition for years to come. You will have to stay there for years to come.

Our governance is shocking. In four months, the Minister of Finance was able to bring down the deficit that you had projected of $7 billion, to $3 billion less. The deficit stood close to only three.something billion dollars. In four short months, this is what he was able to do for this country. We are finding difficulty in giving this country, because you have wasted and wasted and ill spent the money year upon year.

You remember when the Governor of the Central Bank was telling you, "Doh spend this money; you are overheating the economy, inflation is rising." The

whole monetary policy that the Central Bank Governor was giving to you all, you did not heed it at all and you went on with your fiscal imprudency. The Member for Diego Martin West was talking about prudency. It is fiscal imprudency and fiscal mismanagement and fiscal waste and fiscal corruption; that is what you all engaged in for nine years. The people of this country were fed up and they were just longing for salvation to come and the People's Partnership came on and here the people are. They have breathed a sigh of relief. They have now exhaled and they are breathing beautifully in this country now under the People's Partnership Government. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I just gave the state of the financial situation of this country. This is not the Member for Caroni East or the People's Partnership Government saying this. This is the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago giving the facts. I can give you the book and you can look at it. They are ashamed to look at it, because it is very revealing. They will not look at this, because they will get blinded. [*Crosstalk*]

These are the facts and figures of the Auditor General's Report of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago for the financial year 2009. I gave you some figures from 2005—2009. The write-off on losses in 2009 amounting to $6,675 billion and the write-off of losses in 2010 amounting to $2.467 billion on pages 29 to 34 of the Finance (Supplementation and Variation of Appropriation) (Financial Year 2010) Bill, 2011—Mr. Deputy Speaker, do you know what has caused us to be in the situation that we are in? Let us examine the projects that they undertook as a government under the Public Sector Investment Programme, borrowing, guarantees and letters of comfort. Let us start with some of the projects.

Mr. Sharma: Every one was theft, theft, theft!

Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Every one was corrupt, corrupt, corrupt and theft, theft, theft; there is no question about it. [*Crosstalk*] I will go into them. Let us start with the waterfront project. It was undertaken by UDeCott. That is the PNM's flagship. They said their flagship cost $1.8 billion. Do you know what the true cost of the waterfront project was? The Minister of Finance was telling you that they had to extend letters of credit all the time to pay. It is not the State owning it; the State has to pay debt credit to someone else. Mr. Deputy Speaker, $4.2 billion was the cost of the waterfront project.

We have to pay a certain amount, every six months for 17 years, and that amounts to $4.2 billion for that waterfront project, which you all claim is the Hyatt. [*Crosstalk*] The rooms there are the most expensive—[*Crosstalk*] and the

towers—$4.2 billion for that waterfront project. [*Crosstalk*] "What Trinidad and Tobago Government wants with Hyatt Hotels?" Is the hotel business not supposed to be in the hands of the private sector, managed by the private sector? Do you see any government owning or investing in the Sheraton and all those other things? Look at the Hilton; do you know how much we spent at the Hilton? It cost $745 million so far to repair the Hilton Hotel, that administration; you could have bought two new hotels. They have already spent $745 million. Go to Hilton now, what can you see, any difference from what you saw 10 years ago?

They purchased Vanguard Hotel in Tobago for $341 million. So Hyatt $4.2 billion; Hilton, $745 million, that is $5 billion, and Vanguard Holding, another $340 million; three hotels and Trinidad and Tobago spent $5.3 billion. The Vanguard Hotel is rusting as a result of the salt and sea blast in Tobago. "What are we doing in hotel business?"

I move on now to the Tamana InTech Park, the University of Trinidad and Tobago (UTT). It was formed as a private company in Trinidad in 2005. When we were in Opposition we kept on asking them when they would incorporate UTT by an Act of Parliament. The tsar of the UTT decided that he would continue to evade the Integrity Commission and the Integrity in Public Life Act. He went to Senior Counsel so he could help him avoid going to the Integrity Commission. Senior Counsel advised him to ensure that the Board of UTT remained private and does not have any representative from the Corporation Sole, so he kept it private. From 2005—2010, UTT became the "tiefdom" and the fiefdom of the tsar. He was the tsar of the energy sector and he became the tsar of UTT.

We have no difficulties in forming UTT as a technology university, but you want to duplicate everything from the University of the West Indies, and they even ventured into medicine and piano music. [*Crosstalk*] Do you know that they took $320 million to do a cardiology programme and they had nothing to do with cardiology at UTT?

They spent over $1 billion in Tamana Park, and our Minister for Trade and Industry will tell you that in the Tamana Park they have something called Alutech. Mr. Deputy Speaker, $300 million was invested in Alutech in a partnership with NEC and Sural Company. Sural put no money into it. What were they trying to do? They were making rims for motor vehicles, alloys and so on. Ford and the other companies, tell me if they would come and buy rims and alloy wheels from Trinidad and Tobago? That was what Alutech was doing, $300 million spent already.

Tamana Park, unfinished, they do not have a clue what they are doing. What is the value output that you expect from Tamana Park, one.something million dollars? They already had the O'Meara complex. How could somebody believe that people would go to be educated quite in Wallerfield? When they reach Wallerfield they would be tired, because it would take them two hours to reach and two hours to come back; four hours of the day wasted. How could you consider setting up a university in Wallerfield? That is PNM thinking. That is why the people never trusted you. The people knew you had no ability to govern whatsoever and that is why they voted you out; no vision whatsoever.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, $200 million for the Maritime Complex down in Chaguaramas; $200 million for that. When the Vice-President of Finance decided to spill the beans on UTT, he was fired, and dismissed. No matter what he tried to do to win his case, he was pushed further and further and further down. Eventually the person who squealed on UTT, who said it was a hotbed of corruption, was made to suffer. I do not even want to think about it, because I spoke to him many times. He died in pain. [*Crosstalk*]

12.10 a.m.

This is what the PNM and the tsar of UTT did to this person.

Mr. Sharma: It is not UTT. It is "You t'ief t'ief."

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: In fact, my colleague is saying that UTT means, "You t'ief t'ief". That is what it has been. [*Desk thumping*] "You t'ief t'ief". [*Laughter*] Let us go to the Scarborough Hospital, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The Scarborough Hospital started at $120 million as it was supposed to be built. Do you know where Scarborough Hospital is now? Seven hundred and eighty million spent already and the Minister of Health has to be coming to Cabinet to ask for more and more money to try to finish Scarborough Hospital and we do not know what the end cost is going to be.

Mr. Sharma: A bed is US $100,000.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: So it moved from $120 million.

Mr. Sharma: The most expensive.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: My colleague, the distinguished Member for Fyzabad, calculated it. I know he always calculates the cost of hotel beds, one—[*Laughter*]—and he calculated the cost of one bed at Scarborough Hospital. How much is it, Member?

Mr. Sharma: It is US $100,000.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: It is $100,000 for a bed at Scarborough Hospital. So Scarborough Hospital went from $120 million to $750 million so far and still counting. With respect to the Brian Lara Stadium—

Dr. Moonilal: Tsunami shelter.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I pause at this moment. As his name came to my mind, I reflected on today. My colleague from Diego Martin West and myself from this House were at the funeral of a distinguished cricketing icon—

Dr. Rowley: I want to disassociate myself from you. I am not your colleague. [*Laughter*]

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: You attack me, it is all right. We are not going back there.

Dr. Rowley: You just leave me out of your story.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Do not attack me. Do not attack me.

Dr. Rowley: Talk for yourself.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: I warned you about it already. Do not try to go somewhere you ought not to have gone. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I was there—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hold the thought. The speaking time of the Hon. Member for Caroni East has expired.

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

Question put and agreed to.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Thank you very much, colleagues. Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is one time they could not stop us from speaking, because they had the majority and they always stopped us, but we are not going to exercise our majority. Let me go on a sober note. I personally, and on behalf of the People's Partnership Government, want to extend our sincere condolences and deepest sympathy to the family of Mr. Michael Conrad Carew, otherwise known as "Joey", whose father nicknamed him after Joey the boxer. He was a cricketing legend in Trinidad, having played for Trinidad and Tobago for many years, and carried Trinidad and Tobago to victory in two successive years, in 1971 and 1972, against countries like Barbados when they had distinguished players like Wes Hall and "Collie" Smith, and a number of distinguished players.

Dr. Rowley: You do not know what you are talking about.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: I know what I am talking about.

Dr. Rowley: Joey never played with "Collie" Smith.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I had the honour and pleasure of being captained at Queen's Park Cricket Club for six years by Mr. Joey Carew, and today I want to express my personal feelings, and I am sure my colleagues join with me—

Mr. Sharma: On both sides.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:—on both sides, by expressing our condolences to Mrs. Marion Carew, David and Michael Carew, and their other brother, Mr. Brian Charles Lara.

Dr. Moonilal: Ambassador.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: I had the honour of meeting Brian Lara when he was aged 12, which was in 1978 around there, when I was demitting cricket, and to express the feeling, I saw it today when Mr. Brian Charles Lara expressed the fact that he was a son of Joey Carew. Joey Carew, therefore, helped in producing one of the world's—or probably the world's greatest batsman to ever live in the history and annals of cricket, ever, Brian Charles Lara.

Mr. Sharma: Why was he not ever made captain?

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: In fact, the saddest thing is that he was never made a captain of the West Indies team and he would have probably been one of the best captains of the West Indies team. He was astute. He thought about things long before you could even think about it, and I remember the six years that I spent with him under his stewardship as the captain of Queen's Park Cricket Club from 1973—1978, and I am very grateful to him to help in the question of leadership and discipline which I got in playing cricket under him for a number of years. So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I was speaking about the Brian Lara Stadium.

Dr. Rowley: If Joey was not dead already, he dead now.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: And $250 million was earmarked to be the cost for the Brian Lara Stadium. It is now $1 billion, and still counting, and we do not know when it is going to be finished.

Dr. Moonilal: Concrete pavilion.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: That was a stadium where that administration allowed UDeCott to pay $100 million to the contractor before any bidding and any tendering took place. So, Brian Lara Stadium went from $250 million to $1 billion and still counting. It was scheduled to be built for the 2007 World Cup; it was advertised on all the World Cup letters—

Mr. Roberts: And it is coming again. [*Laughter*]

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: And World Cup is coming again. When is it? In 2012 it is in England—one white elephant. You know what it was called by the PNM?

Dr. Moonilal: Tsunami shelter.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: They called it the tsunami shelter. So I do not know what flood was going to take place in the constituency—what was the constituency?

Mr. Peters: San Fernando East.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: San Fernando East. It is under San Fernando East. He wants to take everything down into his constituency, so he took the Brian Lara Stadium into his constituency. I understand there is flooding there now because it is flooded with corruption down in that area. [*Laughter*]

Let us talk about the National Academy for the Performing Arts (NAPA), which my distinguished colleague, the Member of Parliament for Mayaro and Hon. Minister of Arts and Multi Culturism, has to deal with now. There was a government-to-government relationship between the Government of Trinidad and Tobago and the Government of China, signed by us in about 1997, for $100 million to build the two centres—a soft loan, probably less than 2 per cent, or 1 per cent, so US $100 million; TT $630 million. The performing arts building in Port of Spain alone, around the Savannah, cost $1.2 billion. The one in south is still being constructed and we do not know what the cost is; another $700 million to $800 million.

Mr. Peters: And could only hold 800 people.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: The one in north could hold only 1,200 and the one in south only 800.

Mr. Peters: Eight hundred when it is finished.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: So what was supposed to cost $630 million under their administration, it is now costing close to $2 billion, Mr. Deputy Speaker. So that is what the Member for Diego Martin West said. We are pursuing deficit financing; borrowing is easy for us; the country has to repay. We have to repay that mess. That money was borrowed.

I read out all the loans for guarantees and letters of comfort and promissory notes that were signed to pay for all the mess, the construction, for what they call development. Pie in the sky; buildings in the sky is what they called development,

Mr. Deputy Speaker. And it is because they left the building empty and the People's Partnership Government now has to save them by going and occupying the building to help save the rent that we would have to pay outside. They had no clue about what to do with it.

Chancery Lane complex, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Peters: Yes, do not talk about that.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Recently, we found out that we have to have a guarantee loan reengineered and restructured. The Minister of Finance had to do that recently. You know for how much? It is $743 million for the Chancery Lane complex; $743 million.

Dr. Moonilal: Towers falling down on people.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Then the oncology centre, a hundred million dollars spent already on the National Oncology Centre, and you see grass—not even the foundation completed—and tall savannah grass growing on the foundation. One hundred million dollars wasted on the oncology centre and the people are suffering for years. Almost 3,000 individuals every year, citizens, have need for some form of radiotherapy and chemotherapy and treatment for cancer, but yet still, the oncology centre which they promised to build since 2001, and government-to-government relationships had been formed already, nine years later, only the foundation—no, not even the foundation built.

A hundred million dollars spent and thousands of citizens have been suffering for the last nine years for the lack of cancer treatment. Nine by 3,000 is nearly 27,000 people have been suffering and many died awaiting treatment, Mr. Deputy Speaker. They are so shameful, they have to go and do private deals with two centres that came up in Trinidad to do radiation treatment, and these were done in the space of two years; the Brian Lara Cancer Treatment Centre and the other cancer treatment centre in south that took only one year to be done.

The private sector did it, maximum two years to build two centres, and this Government had nine years, spent $100 million already and nearly 27,000 people were unable to get the treatment that they deserved if the National Oncology Centre was built. What a disgrace. What a shame. Hang your heads in shame, my colleagues on the other side.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have given a state of the national financial situation at the moment. I have given you a picture of the projects that they said they were going to build and they built, and the massive cost overrun and widespread

corruption and nepotism emanating from the bowels. There was a stench, Mr. Deputy Speaker; a malodorous stench that emanated from the administration and from the governance on that side. It was pure putrefaction. [*Desk thumping*]

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon: Could you repeat that?

Mr. Sharma: I wonder if UTT ever used that word.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: And no matter how we tried to disinfect that malodorous situation, we are still finding it difficult because it has been so great and over-powerful that that stench still permeates the atmosphere and the people of Trinidad and Tobago are still suffering and being nauseous as a result of what has happened and what they have done. Mr. Deputy Speaker, the people of Trinidad and Tobago seem to be very uneasy about the fact that none of them has landed in jail as yet.

Dr. Moonilal: Yes.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: The people of Trinidad and Tobago want to see blood. They want to see some of them in jail.

Mrs. McIntosh: Which people? Who are you talking about?

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: But, we are not like them. We are taking our time and doing careful forensic investigation, and we will present the facts to the police and the DPP when the facts are there to be presented. Therefore, the people of Trinidad and Tobago must know that we are a responsible People's Partnership Government and we are not going to do anything irresponsible, but the facts are coming fast and furious about their widespread corruption and nepotism that have existed for so long.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I only give you the corruption from 2001 to 2010. That is just a tip of the iceberg.

Dr. Moonilal: Go back to 1956.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: I could go back to the fifties and the sixties to show the lock joint scandal, and the 1970s to show you where Francis Prevatt and John Ou Wai had to go to Panama and live, and unfortunately they could not come back to Trinidad and one died in Panama. I could have gone on to tell you about the 1980s with the Eric Williams Twin Towers cost overrun; the Hall of Justice overrun by $500 million; the Eric Williams Medical Sciences Complex, under SODETEG, was supposed to cost $500 million. It cost one point something billion dollars in 1986.

So we had a cost overrun of projects at that time of almost $3 billion in the 1980s. You could imagine what that value is now in 2010? What was $3 billion then is probably equivalent to $30 billion now. That was the cost overrun in the 1980s, and then came the 1990s. You know Labidco and Project Pride; with respect to Labidco, the DPP at that time sent a 2,000-page document in 2002—about $250 million misspent in Labidco—and the Police Commissioner and those at that time, for the last eight years, have done nothing. The facts are there in that 2,000-page document incriminating four of their senior members of their Government at that time, and nothing was done. It was kept under the cloak of secrecy. No further thing done for eight years. Labidco; $250 million when four of their former Ministers of Government were incriminated in Labidco.

Project Pride, another hundred and something million dollars spent and not even a brick laid nor a bit of mortar put on to the ground. That is the history of the PNM. I have always said they have invented corruption, they have masterminded corruption and they have perfected corruption, Mr. Speaker. It is in their DNA. [*Interruption*]

Mrs. McIntosh: You taught us. We were very good students.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will end my contribution by indicating that we have, as the People's Partnership Government, a major responsibility now to clear up the corrupt mess they have left this country in. I empathize with my colleague, the Minister of Finance, and his team. I empathize with him because he, obviously, is finding difficulty. Up to today, we do not know. It has not even been brought to him completely how much money the contractors are owed in this country because of widespread corruption, and bills are coming to him almost every day. Bills are coming to us in our various ministries as well and we do not know what work has been done.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this was a Government—and I could speak from the education sector for a few minutes now. With regard to the education sector, this Government embarked on a policy—how much time do I have again?

Mrs. Mc Intosh: None.

Mr. Roberts: "Talk, you are going good."

Mrs. McIntosh: I thank you.

Mr. Sharma: Talk.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Fourteen.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Mr. Deputy Speaker, the last administration, with two Ministers of Education, they said they were embarking on construction of

schools and they had a massive project, that they wanted to construct X number of schools. When we were in Opposition, after about three or four years, we were not seeing any schools at all that had been completed. We began to ask, "Where are the schools?" The Minister of Education began to say, "Well, we have built 10 or 15," and we asked where were they? Were they in Mars? We could not see them.

Up to today, my colleague, Minister De Coteau and myself, we cannot see any secondary school that has been completed by the last administration from 2001 to 2010, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We visited five schools recently. I want to ask the Hon. Member for Diego Martin West, when his hon. Prime Minister stood on this side and he was on that side up there and he asked him, "Where the money gone," and the Prime Minister opened his arms and said, "I want the Member for Diego Martin West to say where the money gone. Where the $10 million gone;" not an answer then.

So I want to ask now where all the money went that they said they were building the schoolings with. And you know the cost of the schools? A hundred and seventy million dollars for a secondary school, $40 million for a primary school, and $5 million for an early childhood education centre. My colleague, the Member for St. Augustine, the Minister of Legal Affairs, opened a school recently, an early childhood education centre in Spring Village, and that school is a beautiful school, an early childhood education centre costing less than $900,000.

Mr. Sharma: Wow!

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: And you are building early childhood education centres. When we built early childhood education centres under the distinguished leadership of the Minister of Education at that time, our distinguished Prime Minister—when she built early childhood education centres that were $150,000 and $200,000, "they said it is cowshed we were building"; but today, 203 early childhood education centres are housing students when we built those at less than $200,000.

Mr. Peters: They say they are building 600 early childhood education centres.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: One hundred and seventy million, and you know, they put air conditioning—

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar: They were building for how many millions?

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: One hundred and seventy million, and the early childhood education centres they are building for $4 million and $5 million now.

Mr. Sharma: We built them for $250,000.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar: Each?

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: For each school.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar: How much?

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Five million to six million dollars.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar: That is right. And we were building them for $250,000.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: And we were building them for $200,000; maximum $250,000.

Mrs. McIntosh: What school you were building for $250,000? What school?

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: You know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I got Cabinet permission to go to a conference in Chile recently, about two months ago, and at that conference there was a whole meeting on private sector/public sector partnership in terms of construction of schools. When I told the people from Brazil, Mexico, Chile and the South American and Central American countries, and even our partners from Jamaica and Barbados, that it was costing close to $170 million to build a secondary school, which is close to US $26 million or $27 million, they laughed at me and I felt ashamed. I said, "But why are you laughing?" They said, "Dr. Gopeesingh, how can a school cost you US $26 million when we are building schools in Jamaica for less than $4 million US?" Central America, Mexico, Brazil, the people with "all this amount of money" laughed and said, "Well, something is going wrong in your country."

Dr. Moonilal: Call the PNM.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: That is the PNM. And you know what? They put some sort of sophisticated type of air conditioning for this that has to run with natural gas, and up to today they do not even know whether the natural gas is coming to the schools. [*Laughter*] It is costing $15 million to put up the air conditioning units and they said they are going to build 600 early childhood education centres by 2012. From 2001—2010, they built 22, and they said they were going to build 600 by 2012.

Dr. Rambachan: The Koreans took the $60 million and they are gone.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: The Koreans took $60 million and they went away with it.

Dr. Moonilal: Haji Construction.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Haji Construction.

Dr. Moonilal: Condemned.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Mr. Deputy Speaker, nobody did an analysis to determine whether you need 600 early childhood education centres. We have 200 already. We have 60 students in early childhood education. That is 12,000 children we are taking care of. There are 200 primary schools which are less than 70 per cent populated. We have close to 25,000 to 30,000 places in primary schools that are emptied that have not been utilized now because the birth rate has fallen.

In those 200 primary schools, we can put in some areas there for early childhood. We will take care of another 12,000 children. So that is 12 and 12; 24,000. We have 10,000 more to take care of, because there are 34,000 children between ages three to five. Seventeen thousand is the birth rate per year. In those 10,000, we are engaging in a public sector/private sector partnership with the people who have kindergartens and nurseries. We are going to help them improve their infrastructure. We are going to help them provide material and help train their teachers. It is only 150 of those schools we need and we are going to take care of our 34,000 children between ages three to five with early childhood education. [*Desk thumping*] And we will now have universal early childhood education, Mr. Deputy Speaker. [*Desk thumping*]

You know how much that is going to cost? If we spend $1 million for one primary school, that is going to cost $200 million; and if we add $500,000 for another 200 schools in nurseries and kindergartens, that is another $100 million. So that is $300 million. Let us say maximum we spend $500 million. These 600 early childhood education centres were going to cost $3 billion. They would have had to outfit them, which would cost another $500 million, and they have to pay the teachers, which would be about $250 million per year.

So what they were planning to spend, which they could not have done, was nearly close to $4 billion and they might not have achieved anything for another 10 or 15 years. It is our desire and our pursuit, and we are going to succeed, to bring on early childhood education at less than $500 million, Mr. Deputy Speaker, one-eighth of the cost and in less time than they would have ever dreamed about. This is just one analogy of how they misspent the money, how they had no ideas, they had no thinking and they had no vision. It is Vision 2020 they said and their 2020 vision was to build schools in Mars because we never saw them.

Dr. Browne: No, no, that is not true.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I close, it is sad to see what we have had to inherit as a People's Partnership Government, what they handed

down to us and the state of the Treasury, what it is in today, that the Minister of Finance has to work day and night to try to bring this country back to financial equilibrium.

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

Mrs. Paula Gopee-Scoon (*Point Fortin*): Mr. Deputy Speaker, my first recommendation is that, along with the reshuffling of the Permanent Secretaries, we should have a reshuffling of Ministers, because the display by the Member for Caroni East tonight was deplorable. [*Desk thumping*] It is difficult to believe that this is the person who is responsible for the education of our nation's children. [*Desk thumping*] That this is what he offered tonight.

Dr. Browne: Put him in health.

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon: Furthermore, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the nation is concerned about these 16 children who were sent home from Cocoyea Government School ill today, and the Minister of Education took his full time, spoke at length, and mentioned not a word about these children.

Hon. Members: Shame, shame.

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon: No sympathy for the children, for their parents, or anything like that, and he said that this is a caring Government on the other side, not so at all. The Minister spoke and said that this country is waiting to exhale.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: It has exhaled.

Dr. Moonilal: It exhaled on May 24.

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon: Nothing could be further from the truth. Here is the *Guardian Business Paper*, Thursday, December 30, 2010:

"Waiting to Exhale

Economy short on spending, borrowing and investment. Waiting to exhale."

Dr. Rambachan: Who wrote that? Anthony Wilson?

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon: I would say that the statement by the Member for Caroni East was quite in order. This country is waiting to exhale. I go to the letter of the day, talking about waiting to exhale, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in the *Trinidad Express*, Friday, January 14, 2011:

"Faith, trust of Government going downhill"

I quote from it:

> "The performance of the People's Partnership Government to date has been nothing short of disappointing…the population was duped into believing they were …different…" [*Desk thumping*]

And the person went on to talk—this is a member of the public, Kenneth Sylvester commenting—[*Laughter*]—and he is speaking about the composition of the State boards, ambassadors, et cetera; a number of outstanding appointments yet to be done. He goes on to talk about Jack Warner seeming to be the Government himself, "Like salt, in everything". He also went on to talk about Herbert Volney, Justice Minister:

> "Is there really…need for such a ministry? What about John Sandy…" [*Interruption*]

This is the view of the public, today.

> "What about John Sandy, are we satisfied with his stewardship of the National Security Ministry…?"

And they go on and they speak of the Prime Minister:

> "Kamla, the people voted for you, they felt as a female, a mother, a sister, you would have brought a greater sense of compassion and humaneness to our system of governance.
>
> You…are only concerned with self and not service.
>
> We will not forget to treat with any perceived shortcomings on your part when the next election bell is rung—sooner than you think."

Dr. Moonilal: Who wrote that?

Mr. Roberts: Who wrote that? You and Patrick? [*Laughter*]

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon: And it goes on to say—the article ends:

"I wonder if Percy still is 'doing so'."

That is the voice of the population. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Peters: Who wrote it?

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon: I want to respond to the Member for Caroni East and he spoke—[*Interruption*] I seek your protection, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Go on.

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon: I want to go right into the Member for Caroni East's contribution with regard to the state of the economy, because he seems to think we left it in a state. [*Interruption*] Yes, "east" apostrophe "s". That is what I meant. That is all. Okay? The economy at a glance. I want to tell you what the economy was when we handed this Government over to the People's Partnership on May 24—very simple. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Partap: You sure you want to say that?

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon: I am telling you. [*Interruption*] I am going to correct that statement. [*Laughter*] Mr. Deputy Speaker, low unemployment rate; [*Desk thumping*] low public debt; [*Desk thumping*] current account surpluses; [*Desk thumping*] high level of foreign exchange reserves; declining inflationary pressures; [*Desk thumping*] GDP per capita of US $18,600. [*Desk thumping*] That was the state of the economy when we handed it over, in fact, when they took it from us. [*Interruption*]

Dr. Rambachan: What happened to poverty?

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon: Let me get to the exact figures. Unemployment rate, 6.7 per cent as of May 2010. [*Desk thumping*] And we are waiting on the figures now but I am told that it is going anywhere—[*Interruption*] It is definitely double digit. It is double-digit and we are expecting the figures to be released soon on that one. Unemployment rate, 6.7, compared with what I expect, double-digit.

Debt to GDP ratio, 48 per cent—that is what it was, very manageable when we handed it over to this Government. [*Desk thumping*] When one examines the state of the debt to GDP ratios of many countries at around mid-2010—I looked to the US, to the UK, to Jamaica and to the rest of the Caribbean, and Trinidad and Tobago's debt to GDP ratio was the lowest of them all—[*Desk thumping*] lowest in the region; lowest compared to the United States; lowest compared to the UK; lowest compared to many countries in Europe as well. [*Desk thumping*]

Gross official reserves, when we handed over the Government to the People's Partnership—

Dr. Moonilal: When you lost the Government.

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon:—US $9 billion; Heritage and Stabilization Fund, US $3 billion; [*Desk thumping*] import cover, 11.5 times; headline inflation, single digit, 9 per cent. [*Desk thumping*] As of October 2010, Mr. Deputy Speaker, headline inflation, 12.5 per cent, compared with 9 per cent, May 2010. Food inflation as of May 2010, 19 per cent; [*Desk thumping*] as at October 2010, 26.7 per cent. Core inflation, May 2010, 4 per cent; October 2010, 4.7 per cent. Those are the figures, Mr. Deputy Speaker. They speak for themselves—compare them.

So that what we have instead, we have handed over to the Government in May 2010 a very, very, I would say strong economy, but from the campaign trail, the Members, in their efforts to gain control of the Government, began making very irresponsible statements on the economy whilst they were on the campaign. In a

sense, they sacrificed the economic well-being of the country from then. By declaring bankruptcy, they were saying that the Treasury was empty, and those words continued even when they went into office.

Miss Hospedales. Yes, that is what they did.

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon: What did they do with that sort of irresponsible behaviour? They were turning off investors. They were making employers nervous. The business community is nervous. The business community is crying out, and I will go to that because I was with the Member for Chaguanas East this morning at a Chamber of Commerce meeting and he can speak to the fact that the business community is concerned about where this economy is going.

Mr. Cadiz: What?

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon: In the first seven months in office, this Government signed very few contracts with the local businesspeople. How did they expect to stimulate this economy? There was no spending in the first seven months—no spending. The Government is supposed to be the biggest spender. This is how you stimulate the economy. There was no spending by this Government.

Businesspeople were at a loss as to what to do. Funds are available from the banks but there is a deficit, and when there is a deficit, there is an assumption that there is some kind of stimulus and that money is directed to varying sectors, but the businessmen do not know. There was no indication from this Government as to how that deficit was going to fuel the economy. There was no indication.

What has happened is that many of them have had to cut production; those in the manufacturing sector and those in the retail sector. They have had to lay off employees as well. So the end result of the irresponsible behaviour of the Government which started on the campaign trail and which continued when they assumed office, bad-mouthing the economy that the PNM left for them, ended in loss of jobs for the people of Trinidad and Tobago. That was the end result of the irresponsible behaviour of this People's Partnership Government.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I gave you the core figures, the main figures, the main economic indicators, to tell you, to explain where we were and how well we were doing. I am speaking as well about a financial system that was quite strong, in that, commercial banks, despite what was going on in the rest of the world, commercial banks in Trinidad and Tobago showed a great degree of resilience. Insurance companies—and I am not talking about Clico and British American. I

am excluding them. They, too, were profitable in 2009 and when we left the government as well. In other words, we left a pretty good financial system in place.

And when the International Monetary Fund (IMF) mission visited Trinidad and Tobago in October/November 2010 to conduct their financial stability module under the Financial Sector Assessment Programme, the mission's preliminary report detailed progress in financial regulations for banks and insurance companies. In other words, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we left the economy in a good place and we left the financial system in a good place. [*Desk thumping*]

We were able as well to strengthen the regulation and supervision of banks through the passage of the Financial Institutions Act as well in 2008. In addition, the framework—and we spoke a lot about CFTFA—I hope I said it right—and FATF, because we left in place as well a framework for anti-money laundering and counterterrorism financing with the establishment of the Financial Intelligence Unit under the FIU Act of 2009. What the Government has done since then is to retard what we have done with regard to the FIU.

Generally, looking entirely at the macroeconomic environment, I would say that we left this economy in a good place and it is the People's Partnership that came in and did nothing for the first seven months—[*Desk thumping*]—and allowed the economy to stagnate. That is what they did.

Mrs. McIntosh: And blaming the PNM.

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon: Blaming the PNM. This morning, I had the pleasure of attending—

Mr. Peters: Yesterday morning, you mean.

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon: Last morning, yesterday morning, whatever you want to call it, I had the pleasure of attending the meeting at the Chamber of Commerce at which the Governor of the Central Bank spoke, along with the President of the UTC, and also, the Minister of Trade. I must commend Angella Persad and the CEO as well, Katherine Kumar, for the fine job they are doing. They had a fine turnout of persons from the business sector as well. These women are really very strong. They are fashionable but they are competent. That is important. That is what we look for in real women.

Angella Persad, in her opening remarks, spoke on behalf of the business persons and expressed some level of anxiety about looking forward in terms of the economy and made reference to the Prime Minister's announcements of economic measures; a wave of economic measures. A wave is what she said—that word rings a bell—a wave of economic measures.

The Central Bank Governor went on to speak about the performance in 2010 and he did mention a slight improvement, a slight pickup in the fourth quarter of 2010, but the overall 3 per cent decline of which the Member for D'Abadie/O'Meara spoke. But generally, he felt that in the energy sector the performance was okay. My view is, a better word would have been "sluggish". [*Laughter*]

But the real issue was in the non-energy sector where the performance declined 10 per cent. There was a 10 per cent decline and the concern with that is that 95 per cent of the labour force in Trinidad and Tobago is employed in the non-energy sector and, therefore, that means serious unemployment, hence the reason for the prediction that we may probably have unemployment in the double-digit range. Not that it is not double-digit now in many of the rural areas, because the rural areas are forgotten by the People's Partnership Government. [*Laughter*]

I am speaking about Point Fortin and La Brea.

Dr. Rambachan: You have poor representation down there. You are not doing a good job if the rural areas are neglected.

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon: I will come to the performance of the People's Partnership Government when it comes to my constituency and you would assess for yourself.

He went on to talk about the fact that there are still positive characteristics and that some sort of recovery was expected, especially in the face of the global recovery which showed itself in 2010 and which is expected to be stronger. He spoke about the outlook for commodity prices being fairly good, so that I think we could expect some kind of buoyancy with regard to prices as well, although the gas situation, in my view, remains a little unclear. Again, there is a concern—there is the usual concern, he said—in the non-energy sector and based on that, there is the need for some sort of domestic demand if that is to improve at all.

In that vein, there was further discussion on the construction sector and the fact about that being that the sector needs a boost; and once we have a boost in the construction sector, we are going to find that the unemployment rates are going to improve. A suggestion was that we start the boost in the construction sector by first paying the contractors. I do not want to go into details about the contractors—

Mr. Peters: Go in. Why not? It is you who owe them.

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon:—because I think there is a divergence of views of whether they were paid and how they were paid, et cetera.

Mr. Peters: It is you all who left them so without paying.

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon: If we are told to improve the non-energy sector, it also means that there is a need, a strong need, to enhance small business development as well. He went on to talk a little about the foreign exchange situation and that the Central Bank was going to act quite responsibly in the face of the 12-month cover which we already have.

Mr. Peters: You came to give us a report here?

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon: But the concern was really about the leakages in the economy—sorry, the leakages in the foreign exchange. Why this is an issue, the leakage in the foreign exchange, is because there is no trust and confidence in this Government, and no trust and confidence in what you have done for this economy in the last seven months, in that business people have been extracting funds from Trinidad and Tobago, and the only way that they are going to continue to invest or return any of those funds is if there is some sort of semblance of responsibility by this Government with regard to improving the financial sector.

Mr. Peters: Thank you. We will do that.

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon: This is serious business, Member for Mayaro.

Mr. Peters: I am serious. I just told you we will do it. You gave us advice.

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon: With regard to the discussion about whether or not there is likely to be a devaluation, and so on, whilst there was no pronouncement on that word, "devaluation", I think what one was able to glean from the discussion was that the population, perhaps, can prepare itself for more flexibility in the rate, and that is what, perhaps, we can expect; greater flexibility and a true floating rate.

But it comes back, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to confidence and trust, and the fact that business people have lost all faith and trust and confidence in this economy. If there is to be any growth at all, any growth at all is going to have to come from efforts, strong efforts, by the Minister of Trade, the Minister of Finance, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Minister of Energy as well. Basically, that is where it is, but I think there is a concern as well that the People's Partnership has no real strategy for diversification. [*Laughter*]

There was a lot of rhetoric in the budget—[*Interruption*]

Dr. Browne: Or revenue generation.

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon:—a lot of rhetoric in the budget, but in the seven months, nothing has been realized at all; and the view of the Chamber is that economic diversification is critical. Tourism has decreased enormously. We know

the situation in Tobago. It is very, very bad and it is unlikely that any positives are going to come from the current Minister of Tourism. I think the trip to India is a wastage, a complete wastage, of public funds and he should have been here having discussion with his experts on how to fix the business in Tobago.

I mean, we are hearing that a PR person is going to be coming to tell you all—to tell the Government what to do about tourism in Tobago, and I hope that that person would, in fact, confine their recommendation to the tourism industry and he will not be here to make other recommendations on PR.

Mr. Roberts: That is the THA. That is not us.

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon: Generally, the strong message to the Government will be implementation of initiatives, less talk and more implementation, adherence to strict time lines, a political will and diversification. I had a look recently in the newspaper at an article about BMI, a report on Trinidad and Tobago, and the headline is:

The PP cannot devise credible strategy for diversification.

This is not the PNM who said that. This is the BMI. I will tell you who they are.

BMI is a company, an organization, that conducts country risk and macroeconomic forecasts across 175 markets, so that they are very responsible people in the field of macroeconomics. Here is what they have had to say about this Government.

> A leading business forecasting firm has expressed doubt about the ability of the People's Partnership administration to create a long-term plan to boost growth in the non-energy sector because of the difficulties it perceives in the Government building consensus on the way forward.

This is the view from an organization outside of Trinidad. We know the view of many of the people within Trinidad and this is the view of the BMI organization.

Dr. Moonilal: Who is BMI?

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon: Business Monitor International.

Mr. Roberts: Head office, Balisier House.

Dr. Moonilal: Market Square, Point Fortin.

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon: And they went on to say:

> "Unfortunately, we doubt T&T's new government can devise a credible economic strategy that will boost long-term growth…" [*Interruption*]

You do not want to listen to the truth, but this is the voice of the experts. [*Laughter*] [*Desk thumping*]

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon: You need to listen instead of "tee hee hee", you know.

> "Unfortunately, we doubt Trinidad and Tobago's new government can devise a credible economic strategy that will boost long-term growth in the non-energy sector. As a result, the economy will remain overly dependent on oil and gas production…"

This is their view.

> "Moreover, although the economy is nowhere near facing a balance of payments crisis…"

And we owe that to the PNM Government.

> "we believe the country's external accounts are in a process of structural shift with lower volumes of both imports and exports set to become the norm."

And BMI went on to say that there was still cause for short-term optimism, and that Trinidad and Tobago's decision to cut the petroleum profits tax will help to bring the country in line with tax rates and competing investment, and this was his view on the economy. Generally, they ended by saying that:

> "…this picture is beginning to change as the outlook for the major driver of economic growth, the energy sector, begins to slow."

What this says, more than ever, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that the people of Trinidad and Tobago voted for change and change is indeed what they got. A change to the stability which our Government had left and handed over to them when they took office in May 2010.

The major problem I think everyone has come to realize with this Government with regard to the economy is that there really is no plan. If that is the case and you have not had time to sit and devise a plan, my suggestion is that you use Vision 2020.

Dr. Moonilal: What?

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon: And in the event that you find Vision 2020 is too long in coming, and you say 10 years, well you can look at it, make your changes and perhaps come up with a five-year plan.

Mrs. McIntosh: That is what they have been using.

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon: All countries have a plan. I was reading in the *Beijing Review* of China's plan for the next five years, and they have a focus for particular areas; five areas: industrialization, urbanization, knowledge information, infrastructure modernization and economic mobilization. But they have a plan and that is the point. They have a plan. The PNM Government had a plan which we were following and the problem why there was stagnation in the economy for the last seven months is because you came into office, you had no plan and you did not take the time to put a plan into place. [*Desk thumping*]

I think at this point that is pretty straightforward as to where we are and where you are with the economy, but there are a few things from the Budget 2010 and from the Finance (No. 2) Act, 2010 that I wanted to raise and I would like some clarity on, perhaps, from the Minister of Finance in his winding up. One of them is the property tax, in that the Government made an election campaign promise—I think it was called "Axe the Tax" or something.

Miss Hospedales: Yes, "Axe the Tax".

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon: There was an announcement that the Property Tax Act, 2009 would be repealed and that the former land and building tax will be reintroduced at previous rates and previous values. When we came around to the Finance (No. 2) Act, 2010, I was a little disappointed that that was not addressed, the whole question of the new tax, because the previous land and building tax had, in fact, been repealed.

The question I want to put to the Minister of Finance, Member for Tunapuna, is: when will we get this piece of legislation? Because the concern is that in the budget, I remember there were revenue projections for 2010 of $73 million, however, in 2011 the figure rose to something like $174 million, leaving a difference of about $100 million with no sort of explanation as to where that $100 million would come from.

There is obviously no automatic introduction or reinstatement of the previous legislation, so that the concern is: where is that money coming from and when will the legislation be put in place? If it is that you have said that there will be no increases in property values and rates, where is the $100 million going to come from? The whole question of the open air plan, is that going to be part of it? Is that where the $100 million is going to come from, the open air plan?

I think the business people would want to know about that, particularly those in the manufacturing sector; those in Point Lisas, and so on; or whether it is going to come from the increased assessed value of residential homes. But I believe that

there are a lot of questions that need to be answered and if you are a responsible Government you would want to know what is happening with that.

There is another question which I want answered, which is—[*Interruption*]. I know you are answering everything 100 per cent.

Dr. Moonilal: Yes.

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon: Another question I want answered with regard to the ESOP in that—I am not sure I can put my hands on it. Hold on. Let me come back to that; to the ESOP as well. Those are the two areas that I think need to be addressed very early. I believe we need to have a piece of legislation for the ESOP as well, but I am going to come to it. I am going to find it and explain my expectations with regard to that.

The other concern arising with regard to finance and the economy is the soundings from the Government, or the lack of soundings, to the population about austerity measures, almost as if this Government is afraid to face the truth on particular matters. It is because the 2010 Budget was an election promises budget, and, in order to convince and to please this population, no new taxes were introduced, and in fact there was a waiver of the land and buildings taxes.

1.10 a.m.

In a sense the people would have been happy about that in that there were no solicitations to the public about expenses, control of expenses, new taxes and that sort of thing. The point is that this was irresponsible action on the part of the Government because these are the sorts of measures that a government needs to address if it is acting responsibly.

In the discussions, there were no warnings to ministries about trimming expenses or anything like that. As a matter of fact, what we had coming out of the budget are a series of large expenditures and excessive spending on PR measures and on satisfying the election promises, so that a lot of money was spent on laptops and, in the social services, giving out of food cards, grants and hampers. Even the press benefited from luxury hampers; and then a significant part of the budget is on trips. This Government has gone on extensive trips and one even has to look at the trip to India now, with a contingent of about 12 or 13 and the Orange Sky band; wastage, but again just PR and satisfying their followers.

Perhaps, with all the expenditures incurred, that money could have gone toward purchasing the OPVs, which are still so badly needed. I do not know when they will come to their senses that we do need them. The money could have been

placed in the construction sector to provide the much needed stimulus in the building of schools and community centres. At least we could have seen some levelling with the unemployment rate.

None of that happened because this Government did not want to take any harsh decisions. It did not want to live in the real world and act as any responsible government would act. In fact, their motivations were quite political and vote conscious and in many ways the country has suffered as a result. So I am quite disappointed in that.

I am also somewhat disappointed on where we are with regard to energy. We have had a lot of talk from the Minister and Member for San Fernando West about downstream industries. I do not think this Government has managed to get even the upstream right. So they are talking about the future with regard to downstream, but they have not managed to take control of upstream as yet.

I say so because I truly wonder what goes on around that energy table. There are now a number of inexperienced people around the table. [*Interruption*] I am not going to give examples.

Mrs. Seepersad-Bachan: You should. Member, will you give way, please?

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon: I am not going to give any examples.

Mrs. Seepersad-Bachan: Well, do not cast aspersions on people.

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon: You will have your turn to speak. A very relevant question would be—I take that back Member for San Fernando West. In a sense I give the Government credit for having the good sense to retain a number of persons who had worked in the energy sector at very senior levels and they are around the table. I am saying that the inexperience is on the Government's side. [*Interruption*] You can think about it and assess it yourself. It is our view.

A very relevant question would be: how do you really jump-start this energy sector? There have been many incentives touted about, but quite frankly nothing has happened in the last seven months. I believe that the incentives that were proffered thus far are insufficient to ensure any sort of meaningful acceleration in the foreseeable future or in the immediate or medium term. I really cannot see that there will be any sort of acceleration in the energy sector at all.

The Minister did give a number of incentives in the budget of 2010. This is a position that the PNM had taken before and we are concerned about the need for expansion in the exploration programmes and the creation of incentives. [*Interruption*]

The Member for San Fernando West is saying we did nothing when that is not so. I sat on the energy committee as well and the Government had undertaken a number of initiatives and I can detail some of them. There was a review of fiscal incentives for deep water—that started with the PNM; a review of the supplemental petroleum taxes to small petroleum operators—that started with the PNM; a review of incentives for marginal or small field drilling activities, enhanced oil recovery and heavy oil, and that started with the PNM; a review of the production-sharing contracts—that started with the PNM; a review of the taxation regime for downstream industries—that started with us; the development of a special fiscal regime for downstream projects—that started with us as well.

We were concerned and that is where all the incentives emanated. You came into office and you brought them to the table and made the announcements. I have no problem with that, but I am saying that we recognized; we took cognisance of what was required and did what was required. We began the research and the initiatives with regard to accelerating energy activity.

For instance, there was the deepwater block and the incentive with regard to attracting investors in that area was the reduction of the PPT from 50 per cent to 35 per cent. Then there was a decision to revert to the conventional 1995 model of the production-sharing contract. It is the People's National Movement administration which took that decision. We took that decision.

In any event, Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs, you listed that as an incentive, but that is not a benefit to the contractor. You know that. All that ensures is that the Government can meet the production-sharing contracts. It means nothing. It just means that we are responsible for paying their taxes, et cetera. You need to come up with a more aggressive incentive if you are to attract anybody at all. You have done nothing in the last seven months.

A couple of contracts were awarded for the shallow areas. These contracts were given to Centrica, which is an arm of BG, so that is not really a new company that is coming in. Two other contracts were awarded to some venture capital companies, but that really does not affect the economy in any big way because they are venture capital companies, so you are not going to have a number of employees coming in here and homes being rented and so on. It is not a real stimulus when a venture capital company comes in.

The question I want to ask about British Gas is: why were they not awarded that contract? They have been an excellent contributor to Trinidad and Tobago, both in terms of the economy and in terms of British Gas being an excellent

corporate citizen. The concern also is for all of the statements about alternative energy projects, the solar, wind, et cetera. Yes, you detailed a number of incentives, but I do not believe—

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. [*Miss M. Mc Donald*]

Question put and agreed to.

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon: Thank you to my colleagues and Mr. Deputy Speaker. What I tried to do is to return to the real debate and not the level of discussion that was taking place.

We were talking about the alternative energy projects and I stand in disbelief as to whether the Government can take a spin in this area. Yes, they have listed the incentives, but my view is that you do not know how to kick-start this. You have said that there are proposals on the table. So if there are proposals on the table, I would like them to come clean with the people and tell us what these proposals are. We have a concern in the south, in La Brea and in Point Fortin, as to the future prospects for industrialization, the Alutrint smelter plant being cancelled by your Government. So I would like you, if you have proposals on the table, to name them.

From all indications, from the reply to the questions on the Order Paper, you have none. I have gone through the questions and it is just a repetition of words about local content and corporate social response. At the end of the day, it is a lot of rhetoric, but you have not named any companies or proposals that you have on the table. We are still awaiting a petrochemical policy and nothing has been said about encouraging gas markets about Train X or anything like that. We want to hear some news on that.

We also want to hear a little more about the downstream policy. Overall, there is no plan. We need to hear some specifics with regard to LNG and iron and steel fertilizers, plastics, instead of these sorts of airy-fairy comments we got in the budget. We need to get down to specifics now. Mention was made about the ammonia and derivatives project. What I want to ask of you as well is: what progress has been made on that project?

One cannot talk about the economy and attracting investors and inspiring trust and confidence if one does not speak about crime because it is severely affecting

the economy. It is affecting the arrival of investors. Crime is affecting tourism in Tobago as well. The disappointing thing is that, instead of this Government focusing on crime on the ground, it has moved to focus on white-collar crime with the setting up of the corruption commission. I said in my contribution on Thursday morning that this is a very costly and unnecessary exercise in terms of manpower, administration, buildings, training, mobile resources, technology and so on.

If you look at how much you will spend over a five-year period on this corruption commission, you could have more than paid for the OPVs and ensured that you had proper border controls. As it is, the Commissioner of Police has come into this country and you are beginning to waste his time. I understand you were asking him to look for the pianos, and the headline today, of course, is that the pianos have been found. That is something that the Attorney General has referred to the Commissioner of Police.

The Commissioner of Police is also wasting his time on investigating the contract of buses used by the People's National Movement (PNM). Is that not a waste, bringing a foreign Commissioner of Police to the country to deal with an $84,000 bill which the PNM incurred?

I am really concerned about crime. We just had a long debate on that. It is a concern for us. [*Crosstalk*] There are some other issues I would like to touch on and one of them—[*Interruption*] Member for Fyzabad—Mr. Deputy Speaker, I need to have some protection from the Member for Fyzabad. Mr. Deputy Speaker, please. Can I have protection from the Member for Fyzabad? [*Interruption*] He was already named.

There are a couple little issues I have with this Government which I must raise before I close. With regard to the funeral of Sir Ellis Clarke, I am not going to speak about the ceremony or anything like that; I am leaving that alone. The expenses for the funeral, if I am to tie it to the budget at all, were quite reasonable. I have no problem with that, but this Government seems to have a knack of wanting a return on everything it does. It was the same thing with hurricane Tomas when they gave some assistance and needed something in return. It was the very same thing with the funeral. Yes, we paid for the State funeral, but they needed something in return and what they did was shocking. They took the funeral procession and turned it into a publicity event which was entirely irreverent and lacking in—I am not dealing with the Clarke family here; I have gone straight to the procession. It was rather disrespectful and shows that this Government lacks decorum.

This Government seems to think that all the world is a stage and it is not. They seem to want to make a catwalk out of everything. They were distributing hampers and they made a catwalk in the middle of all the hampers. What you did on the day of that funeral was that you turned Frederick Street into a runway.

I realize at this time that this Government does not want to face the truth and face reality. I would like to mention a little issue in Point Fortin. I will be brief. [*Interruption*] The fact that the Minister of Health has now delayed the start of construction of the Point Fortin Hospital to the last quarter in 2011 is deplorable and absurd.

The civic centre project has also been stalled. I have only now learned from the Minister of Community Development that the funding has not been finalized. [*Interruption*] Mahaica Oval in Point Fortin; no word from the Ministry of Local Government; no progress made with that. Coronation Park, the Member for D'Abadie/O'Meara—

Miss Mc Donald: Mr. Speaker, Standing Order 40(b) and (c). The Member is wrapping up. Let us hear her please.

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon: The Minister was very verbose, but at the end of it, nothing is coming from the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs with regard to Coronation Park and it is not on the horizon.

The University of Trinidad and Tobago (UTT) campus in Point Fortin, I expect we now have to wait on the enquiry. I understand that the sod will be turned very soon. I know it will start, but I cannot tell if it will ever end in Point Fortin.

Housing: we still await a day for the distribution of the La Fortune Estate. The water taxis: I understand that the Member for Chaguanas West has now announced another three-month delay. Basically, the situation in Point Fortin is very, very bad with regard to unemployment. It is double digits and we have gotten no positives from the People's Partnership.

In the interest of time, I choose to end my contribution. I would like to take my full time, but because of the hour I will end now. Basically, I want to end by saying that we handed a very strong economy to this Government on a platter and they did nothing with it for the seven months and it is disappointing.

With regard to Point Fortin, the response has been deplorable and, therefore, the people of Point Fortin will speak out in the way they know best in response to this Government.

The Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs (Hon. Carolyn Seepersad-Bachan): Thank you, colleagues. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for the opportunity to make a contribution to this debate on the first Finance Report, 2011 session of the Finance Committee of the House of Representatives on proposals for the supplementation and variation of the 2010 appropriation.

I just want to start where the last speaker ended. I really want to ask the last speaker, the Member for Point Fortin, what she has done for her constituency during her time. Every project that she has mentioned, whether it is the highway to the hospital, for the eight years that the PNM stayed in power it did absolutely nothing but talk about it every single day.

Member for Point Fortin, you have made this mistake more than once and I need to correct you. Let me do it today. You have started. You should be ashamed to say you were on the energy subcommittee of Cabinet. Let me start with the issues she raised about the upstream industry. We did nothing. All I did was bring it to the table. I keep hearing from that side, every time they speak about the Minister of Finance, that he is misguided; he is receiving poor advice. From whom? The technocrats, the public servants? Who are we, when you talk about the inexperience? You all are embarrassing the very same public servants that you all claim you want to defend. You all should be embarrassed by the way you all behave, here this evening.

I cannot understand—and you are right, Member for Point Fortin. You would have noticed that she was correct. We do have a number of advisors and technocrats who have remained from the last administration. We were not victimizing anyone. We believe in using the right expertise for the right job. That is how we will get performance. That is what we campaigned on and that is what we will maintain.

Let me start with this issue on the upstream sector that we did nothing about. I want to repeat what I said in the debate on the budget presentation. I went and looked for it. During their eight years, this upstream sector—let me remind you that between 1995—2000 we moved the gas reserve position in this country from 8 tcf to 22 tcf. When we left office, we had 28 years of reserve. What is it today? Do you have any idea? We have 10 years' reserve. We have gone from as much as the 22 tcf right down.

Exploration wells: when they took office, they did so much for that sector and they had so much expertise. Yes, the Member sat in the energy subcommittee of Cabinet, but why did she not ask the question when they started government in

2001/2002? They started with exploration wells at 16. Where was it when they left? Next to zero. Development wells were 140 wells when they came into office. Where was it when they left office? A mere 18. How many rigs in this country? We had six rigs when we came into office. "How much footage they drilled?" Fourteen thousand. When they came into office, it was 106,000 feet drilled in this country.

You are talking about upstream; let us talk about your bidding round. What did you award during your eight years? Let us see. On November 30, 2006 they signed four and that is for the eight years that they have been in government. It is also important to note that one of them with whom they signed, Total, withdrew from Block 2AB. ONGC-Mittal also withdrew. They went to the next bid round that came after that for the deepwater. Do you remember?

Would the Member like to tell us what happened to their last bid round when they left office? I will sit and let you answer. Do you know why? Not a bid! It was a complete failure and that was the fiscal regime they used and wanted me to bring to the table. They could not be crazy with that. I would have had a failed bid round. We had a shallow-water round that closed on September '08. I am pleased to announce that we are going to award four. We have a deep-water round that is closing on the 18th. [*Interruption*] I was giving you the opportunity, but you did not want to answer.

Let me explain why it was a complete failure. It was a complete failure because they had introduced—I sat in the Senate in those days and I remember telling the government—many of us told the government—that they would be a complete failure in their exploration thrust because they introduced something called a taxable PSC, which we knew was going to make Trinidad and Tobago uncompetitive in terms of attracting investors to the upstream sector. That is exactly what led to the low turnout in their bidding rounds.

The second issue—you talked about production because you said—let me continue on that point. You said as well that when we came in we took these points. When we came in, the first thing I had to signal to the industry was that there were no more taxable PSCs. I wanted the investors, all the upstream companies, to come forward and tell us. So we had a consultation. We made it very clear that there would be no taxable PSCs—but they bid on the taxable PSCs. That is what we had to do.

Let me explain something to this honourable House. The reason we had to get all that into the Finance Bill in December was that people were unwilling to sign

the contracts for the shallow-water round before January 01 because they wanted to ensure that those taxable PSCs came out of law. That is what you need to understand, Member for Point Fortin.

When we did come in, there was a shallow-water round that was launched. [*Interruption*] When we came—Member, give me a minute. [*Interruption*] Are you going to give me a chance? When we came into office, they had launched a bid round sometime in April with the same shallow-water blocks and we called the industry and asked if they were going to bid. The indication was negative because they were not happy with the fiscal regime. What they did, which was very irresponsible, is that they launched that bid round without changing the fiscal regime. They started it. They said they would explore and they started researching something.

Let me tell you what their research came up with. When I came into office I looked at the research and it indicated that they were thinking about introducing something called an in-lieu-of concept. That is where the Member is getting confused. You were a member of the energy committee and it is amazing to hear your explanation. It just tells me what went on in that subcommittee of Cabinet. Nothing! You all did not understand.

Let me just say, Member, through you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you were exploring the idea of the in-lieu-of concept. I wanted to be fair so we gave it a try. When we analyzed it, it could not work because companies coming from other jurisdictions would not have been able to treat it as taxes in their home jurisdiction, therefore, it would have been a disincentive to them. That is why even what you had on the table and you were thinking of could not work. When we came into office, we met taxable PSCs and we were told that if we went forward with those taxable PSCs, no one was going to bid. Let me get that very clear.

The second issue I want to raise with this 1996 production-sharing contract is that when we realized that the in-lieu-of concept could not work, we recommended that we go back to—I came to Cabinet and Cabinet accepted the recommendation that we return to the 1996 production-sharing contract because it gave us success. From 1995—2000, we were able to move our reserve position from 8 tcf to 22 tcf using that said method.

1.40 a.m.

And, what Member—[*Interruption*] no, I will give some credit. [*Interruption*] You were not going that way. Through you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, one issue that

they did have on the table which they were exploring, and I knew there was some comment coming out of it, was the whole issue of an open biddable matrix. We kept the open biddable matrix, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

But let me go now to crude production. I remember sitting in the other place and in this place and the debate was when they brought the fiscal regime sometime around 2005, and you took away all the capital allowances. The Energy Chamber made the point that, if you did that, you are going to slow down crude oil production, land-based crude oil production. So said, although we said that—"look the Member for Pointe-a-Pierre shaking his head." He remembers that. We stood here several times and said that if you do that you are going to kill the industry. No sooner said than it happened. You all changed the regime. What happened? Do you know you dropped from 145,000 barrels of oil a day down to 100,000 barrels a day? People kept begging you, go back and change the fiscal regime. Let me tell you something, Member, through you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. [*Interruption*]

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Let me hear your plan for raising it.

Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan: We came. We went to Cabinet and we reintroduced all the capital allowances. We adjusted the SPT rates, Mr. Deputy Speaker, so that we could have given the incentives for the mature and marginal fields.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, that was included in the budget for this year 2010/2011; just the same way that the PPT rates for the deepwater area are 35 per cent, which was not on the table when we came in. Let me tell you how we arrived at the 35 per cent, so you will understand. The whole—all the cost recovery [*Interruption*] I am answering you—and the PPT rate, when we did our analysis we went to Wood Mac, and from Wood Mac, we were able to determine how competitive Trinidad and Tobago, in comparison to other jurisdictions such as Brazil, the Gulf of Mexico, Indonesia and other countries, was.

And do you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when we did the analysis, our take was close to 85 per cent? When we were able to adjust the regime, we were able to come into the band of 74/75 per cent, which was around the band of the same range as Brazil, Indonesia and the Gulf of Mexico. And this is how we were able to arrive at what PPT rates we needed, what are some of the SPT rates we needed, and what are the cost recovery rates.

Therefore, Mr. Deputy Speaker, on coming into office, we recognized right away that in order to get the upstream business going and to get back our exploration thrust, which we said we were going to do—if you read our

manifesto, you would see that in the energy sector our policy was at an aggressive exploration thrust for Trinidad and Tobago. Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have done so. We spent the first three months; we revised the fiscal regime in order to boost not only marine exploration but also to boost what we call land-based crude oil production from marginal and mature fields, both offshore and onshore.

And let me go to this bid round. [*Interruption*] No, no, let me finish. I will get there, Member for Point Fortin. No, no, you do not like to hear the answers. You do not want to deal with facts. But you know— [*Interruption*]

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: I want the facts as to where you are going.

Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan: You talked about all these companies, nothing big, and this and that or the other. Let me just say something, Member, all over the world it is a trend now. We are opening up this country to business to everybody. It is not restricted to any one or two companies, and that has been the trend of the PNM administration. Trinidad and Tobago is open for business to everybody. [*Desk thumping*] May the best bidder win. May the best man get the job.

This was evaluated by the technocrats at the Ministry of Energy. There was a technical evaluation team and an oversight committee. And I want to say what we did. I went through the methodology in this House in detail. We established a minimum benchmark. If you could not meet your minimum benchmark, then you cannot get the bid, because we are giving away the block at next to nothing.

And I want to say something about British Gas, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I want to understand something. The Member was a member of the energy subcommittee of Cabinet for, I do not know how long. During your time, Member, are you aware if British Gas ever won a bid in this country? Are you aware, Madam—through you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the hon. Member for Point Fortin, is she aware if they ever won a bid in a bid round? That tells me how much she really understands, and she was on the sector.

These all—even during their time Canadian Superior was one of the companies. It is a smaller operation, and it is the smaller companies, because they are less bureaucratic and less red tape, they are more efficient, and they are the ones who are discovering all over the world. You could go and check that, and you will see those trends. So, when you are coming to tell me about Centrica, and it is just another arm, you are not right, "eh". "She say Centrica is another arm of BG, eh". So nothing wrong. Centrica is another arm of BG, so it is the same thing. I really do not understand where the Member is going. She does not understand

what she is speaking about. And that is the problem we had for the last eight years, and that is why this energy sector, Mr. Deputy Speaker, languished the way it languished.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: It did not languish.

Dr. Rambachan: "You cyah walk in Siparia shoes." You cannot! Class is class! "Yuh" jealous of Siparia!

Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan: Mr. Deputy Speaker, let me tell you [*Crosstalk*] when they are speaking about the energy sector and the slowdown—[*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Members, the hon. Member for San Fernando West has said "Deputy Speaker" at least ten times. Do you know why? She cannot get her thoughts together, because both sides are throwing her off. Give her a chance to speak; she is going quite well.

Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan: The *Hansard* cannot hear us.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: "You quarrelling about the PNM."

Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan: You know what is amazing with the people of the other side? They make a set of comments, and when you respond to them with the facts they cannot take it. They could never take it when you present them with the facts, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Because, I want them to understand, you know, I listen to them sometimes, and I have answered the first set of questions on the bid round. When they talk about the growth in the energy sector, over the last eight years—I want to put this in context.

During the 1995—2000 period, there was LNG Train 1 negotiations, which they started, and they gave the 10-year tax holiday. When the UNC Government came in, in 1996, we completed those negotiations and Train 1 started during the period 1995—2000. We completed the negotiations for Trains 2 and 3. We started in 2002/2003. The then PNM government came in and they started Train 4. I want to explain something to you. What you did is, you took the natural gas which was found, which we took a lot of time with and exploration, which we are doing now an aggressive exploration thrust, to be able to move our gas reserve position.

We went from 8 tcf to 22. What you did is, during your time with all those projects coming on stream, you actually utilized all the gas, without replacing a single drop of gas. You did not prove up a single drop of gas in this country, and you want to talk, but you used up all. And when you used it up, you monetized, you took all the revenue and you squandered it. What did you do with the money from the energy sector? [*Desk thumping*] What did the PNM—did you build the

Point Fortin Hospital? No. Did you build the highway from San Fernando to Point Fortin? No. What did you do with the money? Did you diversify the economy of Trinidad and Tobago with that money that went through? No, you did not. So let us get it clear. Let us get the facts clear.

You actually moved from two—Mr. Deputy Speaker, under the last administration, they moved from 2 bcf a day to 4 bcf today. In order for us to continue to do what we have to do, and to continue to maintain the projects as they are, we have to find 1.35 tcf of gas a year, just to replace what we are consuming. And how do we do that? We have to explore. We must have, at least, five to seven exploration wells per year. And this is why we closed one on September 08, we are closing the deepwater on February18, and we will have a continuous exploration programme for the next five years, which you did not have. So what you are talking about? [*Desk thumping*] You did not have. You did nothing. You did nothing for your eight years.

Mr. Sharma: "Dat is plan."

Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan: Right? We continued to see—and you know what? The reserves continued to decline precipitously, and that administration did nothing. They just used, used and squandered.

Mr. Peters: And abused.

Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan:—and squander and squander everything. So let us talk, "nah", because she talks about—let us start here, because I want to deal with this TGU issue that everybody has been raising this evening, including the Member for La Brea. Let me start with this troubling issue of this 826 million that has to be brought to account between November 2009—April 2010, as started here in the appropriation. I wonder—you know the Member for Diego Martin North/East, he is not here, talked about the decentralization of power generation and the smelting process needs a lot of power, et cetera, and the financing requirements, and the whole works went down this evening on TGU. But, you know, the Member for D'Abadie/O'Meara made a very important point.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: He could make an important point?

Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan: He made a very important point. You continued to build a plant to generate power, when you very well knew that the Alutrint smelter was cancelled because of the court order quashing the CEC. Mr. Deputy Speaker [*Interruption*] but that is to tell you—

Hon. Member: "It did not cancel at all."

Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan: Mr. Deputy Speaker, when we go into projects—I want to say something—it will be on the basis that we have proper agreements to ensure that the maximum value of these projects redound to the people of Trinidad and Tobago. There is no risk that these projects will be cancelled because of lack of consultation with the citizens on environmental concerns, and we do not have to have a court come in to quash a CEC Order. That is the way we will do business in this country. [*Desk thumping*]

I want to deal with this issue of TGU, because I keep hearing, so many points made today, and what we are going to do about the power, and all of that. In January 2009, at the height of the global financial crisis, TGU was ready to execute what they call the EPC contract with Ferrostaal, who was engaged to do the construction of the Union Estate Power Plant. Failure to execute, the then Government felt that if they did not execute that contract, the cost of the project will go up. And as a result of that, being the godfather of the energy sector, they decided, "Well, you know what? We will fund this entire project."

It is important for us to note that we had another equity partner by the name of AES is this project. Government's participation was supposed to be 40 per cent and AES was supposed to be 60 per cent. You know what ended up happening in this particular project, Mr. Deputy Speaker? It turned out that even if we looked, and if we talked about a debt-to-equity ratio of, let us say, 80:20, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago ends up financing the entire—close to US $700 million for this plant. That is what they did. And you know what? We had—because you know why? AES could not meet its commitments. Due to the financial crisis AES could not meet its commitment, and therefore could not make its own equity contribution. Only Trinidad and Tobago—only the Government of Trinidad and Tobago could find its way to continue with this project, by funding the entire amount to this day. And you know what? But we still have AES. AES is still there. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Jeffery: Member, will you give way?

Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan: But you know what? Let me just tell you. AES has contributed to date $19 million while the Government of Trinidad and Tobago—and just know I am speaking of US dollars—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Jeffery: Member, will you give way?

Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan: Just now, wait, let me finish—US $653 million by the Government, AES is $19 million. Out of that 19 million, if I look at that ratio, it means that AES really has less than 3 per cent of this project. And you

what, Mr. Deputy Speaker? You know what was a familiar thing around that time? Out of that $19 million which represents less than 3 per cent—you know 6.6 million, you know what they call it? They called it in kind. Right? It is equity in kind, because it is not a cash payment. Only $12.4 million was actual cash. So, when you are talking about this $1.2 billion you are telling the Minister of Finance that we have to find, it is because of you. [*Desk thumping*] This is why we have to bring $826 million today, to fund TGU, because of your decision. You have all this money so you alone could fund all of this.

Let me go on, because, one of the other things that they talk about is the whole issue of whether or not, you know, the Union Estate—what are we going to do with this power? They construct this plant, they fund this thing, with no real, meaningful project for it, and then now they come to talk about what are we going to do with this power? Well let me just tell you, Member for La Brea. Currently, the installed capacity is approximately 1,350 megawatts for Trinidad and Tobago. The maximum demand right now is about 1,341 megawatts. So, therefore, Trinidad and Tobago Electricity Commission (T&TEC) is in a situation where the installed capacity is roughly equal to the maximum demand.

There is something called spinning reserve. That is a capacity that you need available in case a machine goes down or you have a forced outage. So, we always talk about spinning reserves of 25 per cent. So, in fact, we do need another 300 megawatts. If I take this 720 megawatts produced by TGU, the first 420—[*Interruption*] hold on—was already assigned to T&TEC and there is transmission capacity for a first 420. There is another 220 megawatts that was assigned to the Alutrint project, but what we are saying here is that negotiations have started with T&TEC to determine if they would need to take this extra 220 to fit that spinning reserve.

In addition to that, there are a number of turbines at PowerGen and they are old and inefficient, and in that context T&TEC has been negotiating a reduction in the capacity from PowerGen. Because, if you look at even the Power Purchase Agreement PPA, you will notice that even under this agreement that they are talking about between TGU and T&TEC, for the first 420 megawatts, because of the price of gas that you got here—and I keep making this point in this House, so let me make it one more time—based on the conversion cost—because, you know, I see many of them writing me up for revealing what is a gas price—it is clear that if you compute the gas price you will end up with 85 cents per million BTU. Do you know what T&TEC pays currently?

T&TEC pays, based on their other PPAs, $1.18 plus 12 cents. So, therefore, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it makes sense for T&TEC to look at reducing their consumption, their demand, from other purchase power agreements in order to ensure that it is cheaper. So, when the Member for Diego Martin North/East, who has gone home, talked about RIC, and you cannot impose this extra cost, I did not know where he was going, because, as far as I am concerned, that is a decision between T&TEC and the generating company, to determine where best they can purchase power at the cheapest price, and they will do so. So, coming to talk about whether we are going to impose and all of that, it may make economic sense.

Furthermore, Mr. Deputy Speaker—because this has been the trend with this Government—if you look at Alutrint, let us take Alutrint, because they are always talking about Alutrint. This Alutrint complex is made up of four projects. One is TGU, which has almost been completed—in fact, they are delayed, because the contractor EPC had always claimed that they had problems, whether disruptions to the work, and so on, and therefore they are running late. They are not going to complete the plan until 2012. So that is the TGU. You have the dock facilities and the material and storage handling facilities. This Government never stopped that. The Member for La Brea knows that? They never stopped that. We continued the works on the docks.

Mr. Jeffery: You would not give way.

Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan: We continued the works on the material and storage. What we did is we ensured that, while we were completing the works, it will be made available; it can be used for any other purpose. And I have said that repeatedly. Furthermore—[*Interruption*]

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: What are the other purposes?

Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan: I just want to ask this question. Let me ask this question. You all keep saying that we stopped this aluminium smelter; everybody stopped this aluminium smelter. Can you tell me how far the aluminium smelter reached?

Mr. Jeffery: You would not give way.

Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan: You want to? Go ahead. I will give you a chance.

Mr. Jeffery: Hon. Member, you mentioned that the Alutrint smelter was closed; the contract was closed down. I am saying to you that the contract was not closed.

Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan: You see? That is misleading the country. You could not continue to do any work on that aluminium smelter, because you had no CEC for the construction of the aluminium smelter. It was quashed. You see, that is what you all are confusing. Through you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the docks continued under construction. The material and storage facilities/handling facilities continued under construction. The aluminium smelter, for your information, Mr. Deputy Speaker, through you—let me find it, because I want to find exactly what has—I had a presentation here that was done.

Mr. Jeffery: It was not cancelled.

Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan: It was not cancelled or it was?

Mr. Jeffery: It was not cancelled.

Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan: It was the CEC that was quashed, and as a result of that court order you could not continue with the project. But it stopped during your time.

Mr. Jeffery: You said it is contract that was cancelled.

Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan: You all give this impression that probably a smelter went up. Do you all not get that impression?

Hon. Member: Yes.

Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan: And somewhere along the line, it stopped somewhere. Do you know of the works that have been done so far on that aluminium smelter—I do not know if Members understand this, but all that has is soil compaction? Do you know all that has been done is some testing? They drove some piles for testing purposes? And you all carry on like if there was a big construction and something happened there and then it stopped. And the most important part is that it stopped under their time. Whatever work was going on, on the Alutrint smelter, stopped during their time, because of a quashed CEC Order, because of a failure on your part, by your administration, to consult with the people of La Brea where it relates to environmental concerns. That is what happened. You failed to consult.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: They had plenty consultation.

Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan: You failed to address the environmental concerns and, therefore, this is why you have a quashed CEC Order. They cannot take the facts. They cannot take the facts on their side.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, let us talk a little about Alutrint because we keep hearing about Alutrint. Again, another facility, 60 per cent was supposed to be owned by

the Government and 40 per cent by Sural. Could you guess a similar story like AES going through a financial crisis, have no money to put in the project, and as a result of that, they made available 93 per cent? The Government had to end up making about 93 per cent of the equity funding for this project. The Government ended up with US $17.6 million. Mr. Deputy Speaker, do you know what is important? Sural's contribution is US $5.6 million. Do you know what that is? Do you think the $5.6 million is in cash? Do you know what it was? It was in kind; not a cent. Again, the people of Trinidad and Tobago, the taxpayers' money; all the money coming through the energy sector, that is what you were doing with the money; not building Point Fortin Hospital or a highway to Point Fortin. That is what you were doing with the money. "An borrowing ah set ah money."

The Member for Caroni East gave a good description of the borrowings of the former administration. That seems to have been a trend that went on for quite a while. If you notice, that is the same issue with World GTL, when they started off with GTL, Petrotrin to own 33 per cent and World GTL Inc. will own 66 2/3 per cent; they come together to form World GTL, Trinidad and Tobago to own this plant. Guess what again? Could we guess? GTL put in anything? "Not ah cent." Petrotrin ended up funding, putting in all the money, on behalf of World GTL. This is why we are in the situation we are in today and then they want to come and talk. They want to ask why we are in the situation we are in today? Come on, man. This is why—they knew. Since 2009 they knew what was going to happen. They knew they could not handle this economy.

They were happy when they lost this election [*Desk thumping*] because they could not handle this. They created this mess and they did not want to clean it up. They did not want to clean up this mess, but sit on that side and criticize. That is what they have done.

She says what are we going to do, and how are we going to deal—part of the problem with the former administration is that you get a project and anything—the Member asked about what, Train X? I want to ask the Member if we have gas for Train X. Based on our current reserve position, Member, why did you all cancel Train X? You cancelled Train X because you did not have the natural gas for Train X.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, many of the investors that pulled out of this country is because of the problems of our gas reserve position, and we are seeing that problem today. We are. We do have a proposal, and there is a recommendation before the Cabinet of Trinidad and Tobago, for an ammonia and downstream derivative project. But I want to tell you, it was very challenging for us to agree

and to finalize that agreement. The NGC had to work very hard. Because, let us face it; let us understand it, you had a time when gas prices were very high. Today gas prices are low, globally. With the coming on stream of Qatar, the coming on stream of shale gas, prices are low. So we are facing stiff competition globally for these very same projects.

In addition to that, we have reached the age, and you know it; we have reached the time where all cheap gas has gone. The cheap gas is finished and exploration cost is going up. So, we know that the gas price and the acquisition cost are going to increase. So we now have to be innovative because the companies and the NGCs have to operate with a very small margin; a high acquisition cost and low sales price.

One of the challenges is, how do we—when you are putting up a plant, an investor in a downstream petrochemical plant needs 20 years. And that was the point that we made over and over for the last eight years; that if you do not prove up your gas reserves you are going to run into problems at downstream projects, and, as a result of that, you have the problem that when you come to the 20-year terms, you cannot negotiate, because you do not know what will happen beyond 15 years. We do not know. These investors, they want a gas price that will carry them straight through for the 20-year period, and they want a gas sales contract for 20 years, but we do not know what will happen. We may find gas, yes, but we do not know at what cost it will come in. We do have exploration going on aggressively to address that situation.

Let me deal with the Member, because of what she is saying in terms of what we are doing. Because of those challenges we faced, our strategy is one where we will maximize the value or maximize the extraction value of every gas molecule we utilize. For every cubic foot of gas, we have to ensure that the value extraction is maximized. Therefore, this is why what we are doing is as much as possible to go all the way downstream.

As a result of that—in order to do so, we had to develop, in order to be transparent and open as well, an evaluation framework. As a result of that, Cabinet approved an evaluation framework that allowed us to focus on the benefits we want to derive. We recognized the gas price was not the only important factor, and NGC was informed that not at all points in time we will be able to maximize the gas price, but we must be able to maximize other—for example, the degree of value added. With respect to environmental issues, for example, we must ensure that we are not acting unfavourably to the environment in terms of how we develop key skill sets and the local talent, and in addition to

that, develop plants, go into plants that will allow us smaller plants that will allow for local equity participation in Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] That is what we mean by local content.

That is why, when we are negotiating, these are the things we are negotiating for, and this is how we have allocated. Our points were based on that. As a result of that, this is why we held a melamine conference. In five months' time we are going to be designing smaller plants downstream of melamine, Member for Point Fortin, through you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Why? This is how you diversify the economy; by linking the energy sector, straight into the manufacturing sector of Trinidad and Tobago. It makes no sense just producing ammonia, selling ammonia and methanol and employing 60 people, when there is no benefit to the people of Trinidad and Tobago. And this is how we were able to do it. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when you go further downstream, down the value chain, we developed more of the higher level skill sets in technology, finance, human resource and engineering, and those skill sets are what we call transferable skill sets that will assist us in developing other sectors of the economy. And that is why you will not find us going into a project that will utilize only foreign labour or foreign engineers and develop only foreign skill sets. We must maximize at this point. [*Interruption*]

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Member.

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. [*Hon. W. Peters*]

Question put and agreed to.

Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Thank you very much, Members, colleagues, on both sides of the House. I thank you very much. I hope I have given the Members opposite a little lesson on what we need to develop this economy, and how we diversify, which is what they should have done eight years ago, but they did not, Mr. Deputy Speaker. But we will accomplish it.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Member.

Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan: In addition to that, the project must be one that will allow for the community—it must have what we call the community social—the corporate social responsibility. [*Crosstalk*] There must be a corporate social

responsibility, because each of these projects must ensure that the community can benefit from such a project. That is why we will not have the problems when we evaluate a project that is going to go into La Brea. When we are finished with that project and it goes to La Brea, we know that we have a deliverable project that will be implemented within 36 months, and not one where the community will be objecting to it, or the courts will step in to quash a CEC.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Member, would you give way? Member, would you give way?

Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan: I do not have much time.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Tell us the projects "nah man."

Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan: You all know you do not come to this Parliament—you never did it—when we are in negotiation stages, you cannot call the names of investors, and you will not push me to do that here. I will not be unorthodox. [*Desk thumping*] As I said before, and I will say it here again, Members, through you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when we announce the start date of a project, we know that that project will be delivered in 36 months. Do you know why? Or 48 months, whatever the time frame as specified, because we will have a signed gas sales contract with take-or-pay penalties, that if they do not complete that project, they will pay the penalties. What went on in their time? Every year they are announcing projects. Every year, this project, that project, plastics, and they are forcing the upstream producers to produce more gas, and guess who gets saddled with the take-or-pay penalties for not taking that gas? It is the National Gas Company of Trinidad and Tobago; the taxpayers of Trinidad and Tobago.

Let me tell you something: a responsible Government, when we are ready to announce the start date of a project, we have a deliverable project where all the details worked out, and not mere announcements. That is how. This is why we had a detailed evaluation framework. The NGC will have a signed contract with the downstream company, the investor, so that, at the end of the day—and we are signing contracts with investors and no one else, because at the end of the day when they do not deliver, we can hold the investors accountable; not what went on during your time, Member.

Imagine, your standing committee on energy approved all that nonsense that went on. Today, the NGC is facing take-or-pay penalties for all the projects that did not come on stream during your time. You could blame us for that for seven months that we are here? "Who have all the take-or-pay penalties?" The Member

for Pointe-a-Pierre will agree with me. It is because of your irresponsible actions under the last government that caused that. It did not happen under this Government. It will not happen. [*Desk thumping*]

Within the next week or two you will hear an announcement on ammonia and downstream derivatives. We are also moving forward with a maleic anhydride project using butane from the Phoenix Park Gas Processors Limited. The negotiations are ongoing right now between PPGPL and the particular investor for the contract; sales contract for butane.

We are also looking at a polyethylene and polypropylene, because the Government of Trinidad and Tobago—and I do not want to call names; I have the names here, but I am not calling the names, and the other side will not push me to do that, because it is unethical. We have discussions ongoing, we have negotiations ongoing and I will not compromise those negotiations. You are not going to get me to do that, Madam.

Through you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, at this point in time we are continuing with the discussions on a methanol to olefins. As I indicated, and it was indicated in the answer, the last government did—there was a project on the table in 2009 from LyondellBasell and Lurgi—Lurgi being the licensor for the technology—and they knew very well that in January 2009, during the 2009 period, that LyondellBasell filed for bankruptcy, and, as a result of that, that project was no longer on the table.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: And whose fault is that? Not ours.

Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan: It was under your time. You gave the impression—[*Interruption*]

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: They went into bankruptcy.

Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan: They went into bankruptcy; but you know what you all did? Let me just tell you what you all did, which is irresponsible, you all went ahead announcing that this project was still ongoing, when you very well knew that they went into bankruptcy and there was no project—the same thing that went on with Essar Steel.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: They came out of bankruptcy.

Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan: During that time—they are out of bankruptcy now, and they are saying it is still not on their priority at this point in time as they restructure.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: It happens.

Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan: They have to restructure, and when they restructure completely, then they will determine. Member, you asked the question. Let me answer. The second one, Essar Steel, was another one—it is another project. Essar Steel, while they were busy announcing Essar Steel and making NGC go and purchase steel for the construction of a port, they very well knew that Essar Steel had pulled out. That is what started the CMMB problem, because they had to go to CMMB—NGC had to go to CMMB and use the funds they had there to pay off for the steel that was imported, close to a billion dollars. But they continued.

Look at the irresponsibility of this government; knowing that project was not on the cards anymore, you went ahead constructing a port and terrorizing fishermen in Claxton Bay. I could never understand that. Why? You knew that the project was not on the table anymore, and that was the purpose of the port. That was your energy subcommittee of Cabinet that took all those decisions. It was your energy subcommittee of Cabinet that actually approved, let me tell you, approved all those payments by WGTL, "eh, ah want to tell yuh, eh".

You see all those payments that went through for WGTL and all those increases, every time they have to keep increasing the budget from $10 million to $15 million to $100 million to $500 and something million US dollars today? Tenfold? You ever hear a project increase tenfold? That energy subcommittee that the Member for Point Fortin sat on was the one that approved all those increases. So, do not talk about being responsible and irresponsible. [*Crosstalk*]

Listen to this, "eh", listen to this. Imagine this is what you would be saying, that they were not competitive, so you will negotiate with a company to go into a WGTL project—[*Interruption*] wait, Members—to go into a WGTL project, you never did a due diligence on the investor, you never ensured that the process was verified, you did no process verification, you did no technology verification, you did no end verification to see whether the catalyst would work, you did no feasibility study as well, and then telling me that they had to do something? That is how you do something? Waste money? Put Petrotrin in the debt situation they are in today?

Linking energy to manufacturing—let me go on, because there is another issue, because you asked, because we did hold a melamine conference, and we are looking at a number of derivatives, and I know I am out of time, but most important, what we are trying to do is, the natural gas is to be used as a fuel, as opposed to the raw material, and where you will have minimal infrastructure as required, compared to the large energy-based projects, relatively small capital

expense with greater potential for local participation, modest utility requirements, minimal land requirements and subsequent community impact, less complex to establish than organic industries, and a greater range of application for manufacturing products. This is how we will develop.

By going downstream of the melamine, we will be developing a number of model designs as a package, which we will be able to hand out to manufacturers, and we are doing that in June of this year. Manufacturers will be getting their packages with small plants with the marketing, because what we have recognized, after the melamine conference, is that we have to do some research work to understand where to find the markets, because Trinidadians and Tobagonians, we need to do some research work for them. So we will have to find the markets. We will have to come up with the design of the smaller plants, and when have those packages done, through the National Energy Corporation, we will be able to hand them out to manufacturers.

There are some others that I wanted to mention here. La Brea is always talking about—I wanted to tell La Brea that the Brighton dock and storage will be used by various companies for marine services. I did indicate during the budget debate, I mentioned that there was a company that wanted to sign the MOU, well they have, with the National Energy Corporation, to use the port and storage facilities for the processing of 500,000 tonnes of iron ore material in the first year with the potential of up to two million tonnes in subsequent years. Additionally, up to 80 per cent of the aggregate required for the construction of the highway from San Fernando to Point Fortin is expected to be handled by that very same Brighton port.

We have several proposals for the use of the land at UIE, the union estate, and these have been received. However, it is anticipated that an integrated project for the historic development of south-western Trinidad, will ultimately be advanced. As you know, as we speak—because she mentioned—I had a list of projects as well—sorry, Member—Member for Point Fortin, you mentioned as well the renewable energy. We are looking at—I think you have heard us speak already about the HESS Programme, that is Home Energy Self Sufficiency Programme, where we are trying to encourage consumers to get involved in purchasing a solar water heater—a solar panel, and generating some of their own power, and feeding that on to the grid.

During the next couple of months, where renewable energy is concerned, we are trying to ensure that we are able to upgrade through the RIC, T&TEC, the Ministry of Public Utilities and the Ministry of Energy, that we are able to get the

feeding tariffs in place and the net metering, so that will allow people who enter into this pilot project to be able to sell to the grid, to supply the grid, and when there is excess they are able to net it off against their bills.

In addition to that, a request for proposal has been issued to shortlisted companies to conduct a pre-feasibility study for the establishment of a manufacturing facility to produce components along the renewable energy technology value chain in Trinidad and Tobago. Companies which have indicated an interest—"ah doh really want to call de names". I have six companies here that want to—and there are several Spanish companies. In fact, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we do have a national consultation ongoing, and, in accordance with the national consultation, all what I have said here about going downstream, and in terms of our exploration thrust, these came out on Tuesday and Wednesday of this week. It is clear that the people of Trinidad and Tobago share those views as well.

In addition, next week we will be doing at NAPA a national consultation on renewable energy, and there are a number of delegations that will be coming forward. If the Members opposite are interested in knowing what is happening and all those who are interested, they could come to that national consultation and they will be aware of the interest in the renewable energy sector of Trinidad and Tobago. We were able to generate that interest by the incentives that we have been able to put into the budget, through the Finance Bill. I am not going to be bothered with calling names and so on.

The last point I wanted to make—[*Interruption*]

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: You have none to call. That is the fact. You do not have any to call.

Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan: You had so many. You know what is amazing? They had so many names to call and none materialized. I want to deal with this subsidy payment. Allow me a few minutes to deal with this subsidy payment. Do you know when we came into office—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Members, the sitting is suspended for half an hour.

2.38 a.m.: *Sitting suspended.*

3.02 a.m.: *Sitting resumed.*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Member for San Fernando West, you have exactly [*Interruption*]

Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan: How much time do I have, Mr. Deputy Speaker.?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Fifteen minutes.

Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I just wanted to quickly summarize what I was saying in concluding, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The importance here with the downstream industries, as I was just explaining to Member for Point Fortin, is that at the end of the day, the industrialization thrust has to be different from what we had before, because if we continued with the same programme of putting up these mega projects, which only generates a few jobs, develop few people, and does not allow for local equity participation, we will not be able to maximize the value for every cubic foot of gas. This is why we are trying to develop the plants in such a way, in packages that will allow for local investment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I really want to move now to the subsidy payments. When we came into office, what was interesting is that the government of Trinidad and Tobago, the then government, had an outstanding subsidy payment, just to NPMC alone, of close to TT $2.5 billion. If you are not paying your subsidy on time, we have problems. One is, it starts affecting the financial health of all the companies, such as Petrotrin, NPMC and Unipet. And, in fact, Petrotrin is always struggling to meet what they call the covenant ratios for the bonds that they have trading internationally and, as a result of that, we are always under pressure to ensure that they are able to meet their covenant ratios.

When we came into office, I was amazed to see how much of that subsidy payment was outstanding. In addition, companies such as NPMC and Unipet, they end up with a very huge liability on their books, and, in fact, right now, the NPMC board has approached me on the issue of this subsidy payment outstanding and the impact, the negative impact, it is having on our books.

Now, I raise this issue again; during the eight years, recognizing they had their experience—the former government experienced high oil prices and high gas prices, and they knew the problem with the subsidy. So therefore, what we are doing now, to provide an alternative to liquid fuels, we are introducing the CNG programme. And the reason why I have to refer to what they did is because, over that time—when I came into office, the same Member opposite, I kept hearing, oh, they had CNG in place; they were going—they were about to do the CNG project. Everything they were about to do when we came in on May 24. They were just about to do every single thing that we did. It was on the table at the same time.

So somehow they had set up everything on May 23 to get going, and then, May 24, there was a change of government. I never understood that. Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is why at this point in time we have set up the CNG Task Force, and, in addition to that they have identified a number of new sites for what we call the CNG dedicated stations, and, in addition, stations with mixed CNG and some liquid fuels.

But very important, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that the high subsidy, a high percentage of that subsidy payment, which the Minister of Finance struggles with every month, is because of diesel sales. And as a result of that, we are going to be tackling the fleet owners, the PTSC buses and so on, and within the next couple of months we have a plan in place to convert these fleet owners and these buses—the commercial fleets—so that we could start to make a dent into that subsidy payment. We may not see the effects exactly this year, but from the next fiscal year we will start seeing a reduction, a gradual reduction, in the subsidy. It was—[*Interruption*]

No, we are not, because we always said, we will not raise the price of fuels, especially diesel, because if you raise the price of diesel, as has happened during your time, when you raised the price of fuel, you cause inflation, and you increase the cost of transport for the very same schoolchildren. So we are not doing that. We will provide an alternative, which you could not provide for eight years. [*Desk thumping*] You could not provide it.

You went into the modernization programme and you never put CNG in place. You construct stations, and at the end of the day you have NP and Unipet coming to beg every day: "I need an increase in margin", because you did not ensure that they find an alternative revenue stream. Let me tell you that modernization of the retail marketing network will have three objectives to it: one, to provide that alternative in CNG; two, to provide an alternative revenue stream through the convenience stores, which they eliminated, they eradicated over their time, and thirdly, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to address the environmental issues at all those old service station sites. We will continue the programme that they cancelled in 2001, and we will get it done in the five-year period. This is why I know my— the Member from Point Fortin, she is making so much noise, because at the end of the day—[*Crosstalk*]—because they know they have achieved nothing.

On taking office, what is very surprising to me, a lot of money went through this country; a lot of money made out of the energy sector, and interestingly, who will I see on the PSIP programme but NGC and NP. What is NP doing on the PSIP programme? To collect money from government to build services stations? If NP

cannot take a bankable project to the bank, then they have no right in the business. And as a result of that, PSIP went to zero for them. You know what, the—[*Interruption*]

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Who is investing in the CNG station?

Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan: You know how many people want to invest? A lot of people want to invest, but it was the failure on the part of the board, the management of NP, and the Government to ensure that they were bankable, feasible, economically viable projects, and they are. They are projects. And there are people who want to invest. But, in terms of that issue, what was interesting was when I was going through the Finance (Supplementation and Variation of Appropriation) Bill, even for the Ministry of Energy and Energy Affairs, those companies are forever begging to get subsidy payments. I was surprised to see in our own figures where, out of the 49 million—they had a 49 million in the subsidy account in 2009, and do you know they were told—my understanding is the then government instructed the Ministries that they had to cut back.

So the former minister, or the former Prime Minister, or the former Energy Subcommittee of Cabinet took a decision to tell NP "Hear what, you see that 49 million you owing in subsidy to NP and Petrotrin, do not spend it there. Take it and send it to NP to spend on what they call the service station upgrade programme, because they could not get money from PSIP." That is to show you the management, the responsibility of that government. But you have a subsidy mounting every day, which you are not clearing, and you have Petrotrin struggling every day, because they are running at a loss every time they cannot receive those subsidy payments.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I close, I just want to mention that, at this point in time, we have started the national energy consultation. We will be having a session on alternative energy next week at NAPA. We will be having a session in Tobago on governance and transparency, et cetera. We will be having a session in Sangre Grande to deal with the mineral sector, and the intention of this exercise is to have that single policy document that tells how the sector is governed, how it operates and whether people of Trinidad and Tobago would have been able to participate in that issue and be able to develop this document. It lends for transparency in operations of the sector. It allows for the investor readiness and the international profiling of the energy sector of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, before I forget this, I just wanted to mention one other point before I close, and that is for the Member for Point Fortin. She had made this comment, I think during the budget debate and I did not get a chance to

respond to her, and that was the Loran-Manatee field and she talked about how it was all there and ready, and we just moved in to come and sign off. I want to remind the Member, as the former Minister of Foreign Affairs, she should probably tell the nation why they were trying to sign that unitization agreement since two years ago and they could not get it signed. They should explain why, during the Summit of the Americas, they went with the document to meet with Mr. Chavez, and have it signed and it was refused—[*Interruption*]

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Can I explain?

Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan: And then, Mr. Deputy Speaker—[*Interruption*] wait, Mr. Deputy Speaker—and then you know what? February of 2010, you attempted again to go to Caracas. You tried to get a meeting to get a signing, and there was no signing. And you know when I was informed? I have been informed of this by the journalists of this country. So when they are talking about Loran-Manatee and what they did and what they did not do, they should say, "Yes, we have signed a unitization agreement, and we have moved forward with the other blocks, the other fields."

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have a steering committee meeting next week, and we have a ministerial meeting the following week. As the Member for Point Fortin knows that we take some time to negotiate; we will be the unit operator. At this point in time we will be negotiating the unit operator for the Loran-Manatee field.

As I conclude, I just want to quickly state, we have been able to move forward with an aggressive exploration thrust for this country, to ensure that we are able to prove up the reserves in our gas and oil. In addition, we have put a fiscal regime in place to allow and ensure that we are able to boost oil production, both land and marine for both marginal and mature fields.

So far, over our seven months, we have been able to come up with an evaluation framework and a negotiating mechanism for the new downstream project. People are interested, investors are interested in coming to this country to invest, because they want transparency and open—they want decision-making, they want quality decision-making, they want certainty, and they want specified time frames. They do not want what they had in the past.

This diffuse decision-making, you do not know if it is the tsar of the energy sector that was making the decision, you do not know if it is the energy task force, you do not know if it is NGC, NEC, you do not know if it is the Ministry of Energy, you do not know if it is the Prime Minister. You do not know. But today we have

a structured system in place, and we know where the decision-making is taking place. The Ministry of Energy will report to Cabinet and Cabinet will approve, and the investors are interested in knowing that when we set time frames we achieve what we say in those time frames. They were very happy that we said, when he closed the bid on September 08, we would have a decision within two-and-a-half months and we did. We had an announcement of the awards within two-and-a-half months in this House.

We are also, as I said, with the alternative energy, CNG, to be able to deal with the issue of subsidy. And I wish the Members on the other side will stop talking about the increase in fuels. We will not increase the price of fuel unless we have a proper alternative in place, because, once you increase the price of fuels, you will end up increasing the price to the poor consumer outside there; the child who has to take the bus to school, and the mother who has to get to work, or the father. [*Interruption*] No, we will get it, because you did not have the political will.

The other side never—you were never serious. You said you were putting CNG, but yet still you buy all your PTSC buses as diesel. Why did you do that if you know you were going to CNG? You did not have the political will to execute that project. You had no political will to move into the renewable energy sector. Do you know why? You gave no incentives. As I indicated in my budget presentation, because of the incentives that we have given through the budget, Trinidad and Tobago is now recognized as one of the countries actively involved in renewable energy. We were not there before.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: What is that new label?

Hon. C. Seepersad-Bachan: Renewable energy. Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are moving forward. We have set ourselves some targets, and as I said, we are moving forward with our pilot project on HESS.

We promised the nation that we would do a national energy consultation to develop a national policy on energy which the people of Trinidad and Tobago will be able to participate in. I want to tell you, those consultations have started, and the way we have conducted them is to ensure that the people of Trinidad and Tobago can come and make their contribution. We did not put it at the Hyatt. We did not put it at Paria Suites. Where did we put it? At the City Corporation offices. Go to NAPA; go to the Sangre Grande regional office; go to Tobago, because that is where the people of Trinidad and Tobago must feel that they are part of, because the hydrocarbon resources of this country belong to the people of Trinidad and Tobago, and they must be able to have a say.

Gone are the days of the back-room deals. Gone are the days of the back-room deals of yesteryear of the last administration. There is no secrecy any more. This is why we will move forward with the EITI, with the Implementation of the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative, because we are committed to transparency in this sector.

As I conclude, the new thrust of our downstream development is to ensure that we are able to diversify the economy of Trinidad and Tobago, and we will do so by linking into the other sectors of the economy.

I know I have troubled many of those on the other side. I thank you for this contribution. Thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

Mrs. Patricia McIntosh (*Port of North/St. Ann's West*): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I rise this early Saturday morning, at the wee hour of 3.18 a.m. chilled to the bone and a bit tired, but still privileged to make my contribution to the Finance (Supplementation and Variation of Appropriation) Bill, 2011 for the financial year 2010.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am afraid I cannot defend the positions taken by my honourable colleagues, Members for La Brea and Point Fortin, by responding to the very spirited, yet informative presentation by the Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs, since energy is not my domain. I shall stick to the area in which I am very comfortable, and competent, which is education.

I must say, when the Minister of Education, the hon. Member for Caroni East, spoke, he lost his calm and dignity. [*By order of the Chair remarks expunged*]

Mr. Gopeesingh: Thirty-six (5).

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The point of order was raised, 36(5), but you also contravened 36(10), the conduct of a Member in this House. I want that expunged from the record, and kindly withdraw it.

Mrs. P. McIntosh: When I heard the contribution of the hon. Minister of Education, I quickly deleted from my own presentation a few statements that I thought were slightly distasteful for fear of coming over as corny as he did, for want of a better word. And that is certainly not the type of image that I should like to present before this honourable House nor before the public. And I certainly believe that my constituents, my students, my family, my friends would be sorely disappointed had I pursued in the vein of the Minister of Education.

Trinidad and Tobago seems to be in financial doldrums. We are experiencing a progressively weakening economy, in part due to a wider global economic downturn, falling oil and gas prices, further aggravated by our own domestic financial burdens such as the Clico debacle and the demands of labour, a situation that is causing this UNC-led coalition to reel under severe financial pressure.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, my concerns are the following: wastage of public funds; inequitable distribution of goods and services and diversification of our economy. In respect of wastage of public funds I examine the Government's laptop project. A lot was said about it by many speakers: the Member for Oropouche East, of course the Minister of Education, et cetera. This Government spent $83 million and mounting, I will say why, on the purchase of laptops for SEA students. This laptop project is nothing short of a fiasco, and a colossal waste of taxpayers' money at this time when our economy is severely challenged. In essence, the idea of giving laptops to students is not a bad one, but at this point in time, where we are experiencing such a scarce economy, I believe this is a very poor idea.

In my budget contribution in September 2010, I identified many alternative and effective strategies that could have been implemented to integrate the use of ICT in the curriculum. But this Government did not wish to heed this piece of advice, because it was more important for them to (a) fulfil a campaign promise, and, (b), for the newly elected Prime Minister to go abroad and boast at an international forum—I think it was a United Nations forum, I stand corrected that her Government was well on the way to developing a highly technological society and that they had given out laptops to thousands of students; a very expensive PR exercise in an economic downturn and a colossal waste of taxpayers' money. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I challenge that the laptops are not being used for the purpose for which they were primarily intended, that is, for smart [*Inaudible*] practice in schools. The Minister of Education claimed yesterday that 79 out of 152 secondary schools are using laptops. I would like to respectfully request of the hon. Minister whether he could name those 79 schools that have successfully integrated ICT in their curriculum through the use of those laptops, and could he also state what, if anything, is therefore happening to the laptops in the remaining 73 schools? But if he does not know, I feel I could inform the hon. Minister of exactly what is the situation in schools.

Many principals are telling their students to leave the laptops at home. They are not prepared to have them in the schools. The overall infrastructure is not in place for their use in the delivery of the curriculum. The teachers are not trained.

The heads of the departments—not all of them—have received three days, and three days would constitute approximately four hours of training per day; 12 hours of training in all—some of the heads of department, and their mandate was to return to the schools and teach the teachers. But you see, the hon. Minister was never a part of the system. He has just arrived. So he does not understand the culture of schools, and he certainly does not understand that the training of teachers does not happen like that.

Hon. Member: What about Minister De Coteau?

Mrs. P. McIntosh: It has to be driven from the top—from the leader. The leader has to fire the process. And if that is not done, the laptop, the training, the everything, will remain just where they are. It is a process that takes time, dedication and commitment, and for the hon. Minister to say that the laptops are being used in the schools, what are the children doing? Playing games on them? Surfing the net if they could, if they have Internet access at home? Mr. Deputy Speaker, not only are the teachers not trained, the technical upgrade has not been done; not even started. It is a long process. There had been no physical upgrade to accommodate the laptops, and no security measures have been put in place.

Is the hon. Minister aware that in many schools there are several laptops packed up in corners, laptops that were not collected by students who either did not take up their places, or parents who simply refused to accept them given all the conditionalities attached?

Hon. Member: Give us one school.

Mrs. P. McIntosh: Several schools. That is for the Minister to find out. Mr. Deputy Speaker, they are just laying around doing nothing; a colossal waste of taxpayers' money. I shall not be helping the hon. Ministers to do their work.

The hon. Minister, in his budget contribution, said that the laptops were costly, because the Government ensured that they were outfitted with the most sophisticated features. Why then is it that these machines do not even possess a CD or DVD drive, yet the students were given a CD with their laptops? And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, most texts now come in CD format. This means that the parents—[*Interruption*]

Dr. Rowley: No port?

Mrs. P. McIntosh: No port; no CD drive.

Dr. Rowley: All that money?

Mrs. P. McIntosh: All that money. They said that the features were there; very sophisticated. Their parents now have to go out and purchase an external

drive to use even the CD that the Ministry of Education gave them with the laptop. And this Government is so very proud of these very expensive laptops. They say it is one of their flagship achievements which is actually, in my opinion, at this time, in this difficult economy, a colossal waste of taxpayers' money and a fiasco.

3.30 a.m.

I want hon. Members on the other side to know, sometime after the budget debate, the hon. Member for D'Abadie/O'Meara had expressed the wish that I do not want the children to have laptops, and that is not the truth. We will arrive at a time in Trinidad and Tobago and, indeed, in the world, where everybody will own a laptop just as they now own a cellphone. Laptops will become commonplace, and that would be good, because we, indeed, would like to arrive at the status of being a very highly technologically literate society. So I am not against it; I am just questioning the implementation of this programme at this time.

At yesterday's sitting, the Minister of Foreign Affairs said that a family in his constituency was so happy to get the laptop; and I believe him, and they should be happy. Anybody would be happy with a laptop. When Parliament gave me my laptop, I was very happy. I took it home very proudly. Ownership of a laptop is something to be happy about. It connects you to the world, to the universe, to everywhere. But these machines were intended for the purpose of integrating technology in the curriculum to improve pedagogical practice in schools. Use at home was an extra bonus, but they were meant for the schools, for teaching and learning.

I had advised the Government in my contribution in the budget debate that the requisite physical or technical infrastructure was not in place to accommodate these laptops and to effectively and efficiently facilitate teaching and learning in schools. I proffered several recommendations of alternative strategies to effectively and efficiently integrate technology in the curriculum at a much cheaper cost at a time when our country is in a financial crisis.

But there was a campaign promise to fulfil at all costs, and the Government spent all this amount of money on their laptop project and the cost is still escalating because they are still looking at training, technical upgrade in schools, and this technical upgrade cannot successfully be implemented without a complementary electrical upgrade, and this is very, very costly business.

I have been through this process and electrical upgrades cost over $1 million in most schools—been there, done that. I have spent over 30 years in education and I am intimately familiar with the entire system and the hon. Minister cannot

fool me. Furthermore, the Ministry of Education has to look at security in schools and a host of other related factors. I challenge that the end cost would be formidable and the hon. Members on this side will certainly hold the Ministry of Education and this Government accountable to the public of Trinidad and Tobago. I would like the hon. Minister of Education to know that I am monitoring and scrutinizing this laptop situation very closely.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Thank God for you. That is very nice of you.

Mrs. P. McIntosh: The issuing of laptops at this time is like putting the cart before the proverbial horse.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Thank you very much for your efforts.

Mrs. P. McIntosh: There are so many other needs that could have been addressed in schools. I understand that a bare minimum of money is being spent to barely maintain schools so that they can be operational, and schools need ongoing maintenance. It is like the house. Every year the PNM instituted a vacation repair programme where schools were repaired. And it was necessary, because a school population is sometimes over 1,000 students per day and schools need to be maintained, but there is no money to maintain them.

The Government could also have invested money in upgrading the OJT programme and reinstating the many needed clerical assistants who have found themselves on the breadline, also the indispensable contract remedial teachers who provide invaluable specialized assistance in literacy and numeracy in schools, where student academic performance is disturbingly low and where students demonstrate poor ability to read and write. Case in point is Belmont Secondary School in Belmont and the Servol Learning Centre in Cascade, both in my constituency.

Government sends SEA students with extremely low scores to these schools and the Government provides very little or no assistance by way of qualified teaching staff competent to teach these children, and furthermore, it neglects the upgrade of the compound and fails to provide an enabling environment for creative learning and teaching. This is the reality.

Hon. Member: Did the PNM train teachers?

Mrs. P. McIntosh: The PNM did, because all those remedial teachers were employed under the PNM and since this Government came in, they snatched them all away, and the clerical assistants.

I would like to look at the Pan in Schools Programme. One hundred pan tutors did not have their contracts renewed. This action on the part of this Government has serious implications for student acquisition of pan-playing competencies, serious implications for the livelihood of these tutors and serious implications for the future of our national instrument, the steel pan. This Government is creating an unhealthy balance in our society. It is creating a cultural and social vacuum and I declare that nature abhors a vacuum. For the sake of our beloved country of Trinidad and Tobago, we need to provide equal opportunities for the advancement of every aspect of our culture and for the advancement of every single member of our citizenry. Wherever I spy inequality in distribution of goods and services, I shall speak about it without fear or favour.

Continuing in this vein, I should like to speak now on the fiasco of the distribution of hampers over the Christmas vacation—50 hampers for PNM constituencies and 100 or more for UNC-led coalition constituencies. On the 22nd of December, 2010 at approximately 11.30 a.m. I received a call from one Mr. Thomas from the office of the Minister of the People and Social Development informing me to collect 100 hampers from Xtra Foods Supermarket in Grand Bazaar. Approximately three hours later, I received another call from the same Mr. Thomas, apologizing, saying it was not 100 hampers, but 50 and explained that he was new to the job and was told that the Minister had a limit and that he could not exceed this limit.

Dr. Browne: What Minister was that?

Mrs. P. McIntosh: The Minister of the People and Social Development. So that all constituencies will now receive 50 hampers. On both December 23 and 24, all the daily newspapers carried reports on the hamper event with all the PR and hype and with pictures of the Prime Minister amidst a field of hampers. It was reported that each constituency received 100 hampers at a cost of $300 each. Now this made things difficult for constituencies that received hampers because they wanted to know why 50 hampers were delivered and not 100.

I examined some of these hampers that reached my constituency. They contained one small bag of flour; one small bag of sugar; a small bag of rice; a small pack of milk; one small bottle of peanut butter; one small bag of biscuits; a small bag of marshmallows; one small tin of juice, and last but by no means least, a calendar with a picture of the Prime Minister.

Dr. Browne: In the hamper?

Mrs. P. McIntosh: In the hamper. These items most definitely do not add up to $300 and the last item, I think it cost nothing.

Many bags were missing items.

Dr. Moonilal: Like what? What items were missing?

Mrs. P. McIntosh: Everything but the calendar with the picture. The unsuspecting public, the poor taxpayer, is being conned of his hard-earned money. To make matters worse, we had to deal with the unfair treatment meted out to PNM representatives who went to collect their lot. Some returned empty-handed, others, after waiting at the Preysal—

Dr. Browne: Mr. Deputy Speaker, on a point of order.

Dr. Gopeesingh: But that is your colleague. You are making a point of order on your colleague? [*Interruption*]

Dr. Browne: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Are you making a point of order? What is the point of order?

Dr. Browne: The point of order is 40(b). I am not able to hear the Member because the Member for Fyzabad is speaking.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Member for Fyzabad—continue.

Mrs. P. McIntosh: Some returned empty-handed, others, while waiting at the Preysal Community Centre for almost five hours, were instructed to go to Xtra Foods, Chaguanas, to get the 50 hampers. They returned to Port of Spain and the environs after 10.00 p.m. that evening.

All of this, those representatives of the PNM had to endure while the UNC-led coalition counterparts collected their 100 or 150 hampers with great facility. This unjust and inequitable distribution of goods and services, using public funds, must stop. All members of our citizenry must be treated equally. This is the message that our hon. political leader attempted to convey to the public. I have here to respectfully defer to his judgment, wisdom and vision, for insisting that our society advance in a spirit of justice and equality.

It is not that he was against giving the hampers; it was not that at all. It was the injustice of it all and the unequal distribution. We shall not allow members of the People's National Movement to be treated with indignity and I support my political leader in this regard.

I should like to continue along the line of using public funds for public relations for cheap political gain. Under the PNM administration, schools are always encouraged, or were encouraged, to commemorate every single religious,

cultural and national event, but there was a process. Religious observances were commemorated by firstly a prayer and recognition of the solemnity of the event, which students were encouraged to observe with respect; and secondly, an appreciation of the other aspects of the culture, for example, fashion or food, or both.

In all of the sharing of the hampers—a very good gesture; providing for the needy at Christmas—not once did I observe the Prime Minister attending the opening and blessing of a crêche which symbolizes the true meaning of Christmas, the Nativity, the birth of Our Lord Jesus Christ who came into this world to save us from hell's damnation, which is exactly what this UNC-led coalition is visiting upon this wonderful country—not once.

All this Government is interested in doing is using taxpayers' money for PR and sending subliminal messages, reinforced by the likes of items such as calendars with a picture of the Prime Minister in hampers.

I am hearing about a possible intention of the Prime Minister to stage some PR Easter stints.

3.45 a.m.

As a Christian in the first instance and as a practising Catholic in the second instance, I am pleading with the hon. Prime Minister to leave the holy observance of the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ alone. Easter is the most important and most solemn event in the Christian calendar, a time when we dedicate ourselves to introspection and spiritual renewal as we celebrate the risen Christ. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am appealing to the hon. Prime Minister, please do not use taxpayers' moneys to politicize this very important and holy occasion.

If I were to assess this UNC-led coalition Government by its deeds and actions, I would describe it as a very divisive force, using the public purse for its public relation stints with absolutely no qualms about exploiting religious or other national events for cheap political gain. This has got to stop.

I noted in the Variation of Appropriation for year 2010 that several ministries received increases. I noted with particular interest—[*Interruption*]

Mrs. Seepersad-Bachan: Member, would you give way?

Mrs. P. McIntosh:—that the Ministry of Housing—[*Interruption*]

Mrs. Seepersad-Bachan: Member, would you give way?

Mrs. P. McIntosh: It is late and I do not want to give way—and the Environment received an increase of $241,297,792, the Ministry of Works and Transport an increase of $62,129,425 and the Ministry of Labour, Small and

Micro Enterprise Development also received an increased budget allocation of $5,450,700. What this means to me in my capacity as parliamentary representative for the constituency of Port of Spain North/St. Anns West, is that there will be increased opportunities for my constituents in particular, and my constituency in general to receive housing, developmental projects, road construction and repair and jobs in CEPEP and URP.

There exists an urgent need to generate employment to help stimulate the economy, and a stimulating economy would in turn create more jobs. Many of my constituents are suffering. Many of them reside in low-income areas and many have lost their jobs. This UNC-led coalition likes to chant, "Serve the people, serve the people, serve the people", but they are not serving all the people. Rather, they have been selective in their service to the people. [*Desk thumping*] I know the hon. Minister of Works and Transport has brought wonders in Central—[*Interruption*] Yes, those are the comments that people will make, people who do not see the suffering of people—Trinidad. Please, hon. Minister, let us spread the goods and services equally throughout this country, and let us serve all the people, all the people, all the people.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to speak on economic diversification, and please permit me to remind this honourable House of the meaning of economic diversification. The financial dictionary states that diversification is "an investment strategy in which you spread your investment dollars among different sectors, industries and securities within a number of asset classes".

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I ask for your protection and I would like to state that when the hon. Member for San Fernando West was speaking for all of her 75 minutes or more she was allowed to speak, and now I am speaking—[*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The Member has asked for the protection of the Chair. I would like to give her the protection of the Chair. At the same time I have taken this opportunity—but I will let you continue—that Standing Order 33(6):

> "Except with the leave of the Speaker, a Member shall not read his speech; but he may read extracts from written or printed papers or books in support of his argument, and may refresh his memory by reference to notes."

A ruling was made as of January this year. Members can refer to extracts, but not fully read the speech. Now, I noticed Wednesday and today you are reading your speech, but I would like to recommend to the House that, based on the Standing Order I have just read, reading of speeches should not happen unless it is with the leave of the Speaker. Continue.

Mrs. P. McIntosh: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have been consulting my notes, looking up and speaking to you, both on Wednesday and today. [*Crosstalk*] I am asking to read my definitions. I do not think I can quote definitions without reading them.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I would allow you to go ahead.

Mrs. P. McIntosh: The financial dictionary states that:

> "Diversification is an investment strategy in which you spread your investment dollars among different sectors, industries, and securities within a number of asset classes".
>
> "The Economist Harry Markowitz says that, 'Diversification is not putting all your eggs in one basket'."

This famous cliché means that, and I quote:

> "…diversification is to create a portfolio that includes multiple investments in order to reduce risk."

Professor Le-Yin Zhang of the University College of London noted in her presentation (2003) and I quote:

> "Economic diversification is the process whereby a growing range of economic outputs are produced."

She further explained and I quote:

> "Economic diversification…can be the diversification of markets for exports or of income sources."

So therefore, diversification in its simplest sense refers to:

> "…when a country has incomes from many different sources that are not directly related to each other. It can be the production of various (export) products or the export of one or a few products to various countries."

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in the *Business Guardian* of January 06, 2011, the hon. Minister of Trade and Industry outlined new incentives for exporters, citing diversification incentives. The Minister said and I quote:

> "Diversification was very difficult to achieve, especially when the economy is, and has been, based on natural resources."

He further stated and I quote:

> "However, it must be done and the Ministry has a number of sectors that we are working with to assist in the diversification process."

Some sectors the Minister outlined are shipbuilding and repair, the fashion and garment industry, printing and packaging, horse racing, regularization of the gaming industry, the yachting industry and the film entertainment sectors. While I support the hon. Minister—[*Interruption*]

Miss Mc Donald: Mr. Deputy Speaker, Standing Order 40(b) and (c). We would all like to hear. Yes, it is almost four o'clock. She is really trying to complete her contribution, but they are not allowing her. Please? [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The Member for Port of Spain South has asked that we invoke Standing Order 40 (b) and (c), Members should be heard in silence. Now, for the whole night, yesterday also, the crosstalk has been allowed until it has gotten out of hand. What I would like to suggest is to let the Member read her speech without any interference.

Mrs. P. McIntosh: While I support the hon. Minister's notion of diversification, I would like to suggest that we look at diversification in its form of agriculture. We have the potential for a budding cocoa industry. Cocoa production is rising on the global scale and Trinidad and Tobago's cocoa is in very high demand.

Hon. Member: True.

Mrs. P. McIntosh: Global cocoa production is projected to increase from 3.7 million tonnes in 2008 to 4.5million tonnes in 2012 and 2013.

Trinidad also has the right soil and climate conditions for an excellent pineapple industry, and pineapple is the most favoured internationally. We also have a tilapia industry that already exists in this country and the consumption of tilapia is estimated to grow from 1.5 million tonnes in 2003 to 3.5 million tonnes in 2010.

Mr. Speaker, all these initiatives will assist in growing our economy and relieving us of the scarce financial situation that we have found ourselves in. Such an investment in agriculture would assist people to plough the land, reap the land and afford individuals the chance of making money, thereby stimulating the economy from the soil, so to speak, upwards.

I make these recommendations in the interest of the country and in the interest of easing this financial situation in which we find ourselves.

I thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

The Minister in the Ministry of Works and Transport (Hon. Rudranath Indarsingh): Thank you. Mr. Deputy Speaker, if I was a cricket commentator, at the end of the day's play I would have used remarks to the effect that the

Government batsmen have flailed the Opposition bowling to all parts of the ground [*Desk thumping*] based on their inability to bowl a good line and length and a sense of accuracy. As a result of their inability to bowl a good line and length and have pinpoint accuracy, and two captains giving directions to the fielders on the wicket, they have been all over the place and inconsistent in their whole approach to this particular debate.

In fact, I am deeply disappointed in the display and delivery of the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West in relation to her approach as it relates to the issue of Christmas and the approach to the Prime Minister in this particular area.

4.00 a.m.

Her approach seems to send a message that she is bent on sowing seeds of distrust and, under the Constitution of the country: one has the right to engage in freedom of worship and freedom of association. If someone wants to associate with a Christian religious festival or a Hindu or Islamic one, that is the right of the individual.

The Prime Minister celebrated Christmas in a grand way and we all know that it is a period for giving, sharing and paying attention to the children and those in need. The whole approach of sharing, giving and caring was displayed very clearly in relation to how the children were treated by the Prime Minister, and more so the People's Partnership Government, across the length and breadth of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the inconsistency and the delivery of being all over the place, on all sides of the pitch; one minute on the off side, down the leg side, short of a length and so on, was clearly displayed in the approach by the Members for Point Fortin, Laventille West and the Member for Diego Martin North/East. In fact, within recent times, Members on the opposite side seem to have grown very close to the trade union movement and labour movement. We must not allow them to get away with their acts toward labour and the people of Trinidad and Tobago over the last nine years.

The Member for Laventille West, in his contribution, made reference to his concerns about workers in the URP and pointed in the direction of a number of protests taking place in Trinidad and Tobago. Could the Member for Laventille West tell us his position when his government instructed the management of PTSC to pursue a policy of decertification against the Transport and Industrial Workers Union and the Communication Workers Union, when their policy position was one of decertifying and attempting to disenfranchise workers who were participating in the collective bargaining process?

He alluded to his concern for the development of the tourism sector in Tobago and he wanted to see the development and growth of the sector in our sister isle. I wonder if he was able to give the Chief Secretary of the THA any kind of advice as it relates to the handling of the overall situation, as it relates to the Greens who had that traumatic experience in our sister isle during their period of vacationing in that particular area.

During his contribution, in his passion for speaking on behalf of the workers of the URP and so on, he focused on the fact that workers in URP were being relieved of their positions, from a monthly-paid point of view, and he was concerned about the payment of gratuity and so on. I do not know if the Member for Laventille West is in a position to tell this House why the Member for San Fernando East removed him from being in charge of the URP during his tenure in the Government of Trinidad and Tobago.

The Member for Point Fortin, in her attempt to provide a sense of economic analysis to this House, was beaten to a frazzle by the Member for San Fernando West and I think that her attempts to bring some sense of balance in relation to her contribution on the energy sector were dismissed with dispatch. The Member should have been fully briefed by the Member for San Fernando East when she wanted to get into the energy sector in dealing with those on this side.

We are in this situation today and, as a result of being in this economic situation, we have come back to this august Chamber seeking an appropriation to the Finance Bill, 2011. It is simply because of the failed economic policies, the squandermania, wastage and inefficiency that prevailed under those on the opposite side for the last nine years. Today, they are concerned about the economic diversification of the economy of this country.

The Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West is concerned about the development of the agricultural sector through cocoa, pineapple, aquaculture and so on. I do not know if you are aware that Caroni (1975) Limited was not a company that focused primarily on the production of sugar. Caroni was rum, rice, citrus, aquaculture, dairy, livestock and the list goes on. What was the policy position of your government at the time in relation to Caroni (1975) Limited and the development of the agricultural sector? You should have preferred to give some kind of advice to your political leader and then Prime Minister as it relates to the economic diversification of the economy of Trinidad and Tobago.

That has been the track record of the People's National Movement as it relates to the development of the agricultural sector in Trinidad and Tobago—lip service, lip service and one of simply statements of intent without following through and

ensuring there is implementation and delivery, consistent with the PNM philosophy of promises not ever materializing. We have to understand that the People's Partnership Government is fully committed to the delivery of goods and services to all the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago. I want to reiterate, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are fully committed to the delivery of goods and services to all the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago.

Yesterday we listened to the Member for Diego Martin North/East who seemed to be very concerned about the completion of projects and the time delays of projects in Trinidad and Tobago from an infrastructural point of view in relation to the Aranguez overpass and the widening of the Beetham Highway in the vicinity of Sea Lots. What hypocrisy and forked tongue coming from the Member for Diego Martin North/East. Clearly he is short on memory because when he belonged to the government of Trinidad and Tobago and his boss was the Member for San Fernando East, I wonder if he enquired when the Tarouba Stadium would be completed; when the Scarborough Hospital would be completed and when the towers at Chancery Lane would be completed.

If we go back in history, did he track when the Hall of Justice, the Mount Hope Medical Sciences Complex and the Caroni Racing Complex, Project Pride, Labidco, just to name a few—did he track the commencement and completion dates in relation to these projects under the governments of the People's National Movement? I could go on and on here this morning focusing on the legacy of those on the other side in relation to cost overruns and their inability to complete projects within time and within budget.

The last nine years under those on the other side were symbolized by wild corruption and a Prime Minister, a Cabinet and a government which were unable to rein in this whole issue of wild spending, wastage and inefficiency because it was all a family affair at all levels. The squandermania, wastage and corruption were arrested by the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago on May 24, 2010. They decided that they had had enough of this and as a result we are here today debating this particular legislation, this money Bill.

It is important that we understand the historical importance of a Bill of this nature. Erskine May, in the Twenty-third edition of *Parliamentary Practice*, states that:

> "The financial control of the House of Commons is exercised at two different levels. So far as policy is concerned, it authorizes the various objects of expenditure and the resources to be used and the sums to be spent on each; it

> also authorizes the levying of taxes. On the level of administration, it satisfies itself that its expenditure decisions have been duly carried out—in other words, that the amounts it has authorized, and no more have been used for the purposes for which they were granted, and for no other purposes."

So according to Erskine May and under our present legal system, the power to approve finances rests here in the Parliament.

Just a few days ago, we debated a Bill on anti-corruption. The fundamental principle of that Bill was cemented in enhancing good governance, corporate ethics, transparency and accountability in public affairs and as such we are here today to seek a variation of our initial Appropriation Bill. In so doing and in keeping with the true Westminster tradition and convention, we are prepared to account to the people and have no problem in doing so. The motto of the People's Partnership is service and delivery with transparency and accountability.

Since May 2010, it has been delivery at the Ministry of Works and Transport. In fact, the Member for Diego Martin North/East, during his contribution, indicated that the Minister and Ministry of Works and Transport have been a failure. To the contrary, since May 24, 2010 we at the Ministry have been able, in quick time, to transform it from the ministry of nothing that works. We have been able to reimage, repackage and redirect the Ministry of Works and Transport to one of getting the job done. I simply want to take the opportunity here today to remind those on the other side of some of the achievements of the Ministry of Works and Transport in relation to infrastructural development and servicing and delivery to the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

From the point of view of improving the national infrastructure, the Minister of Works and Transport has been able to focus on emergency road rehabilitation projects along the culvert crossings along the Solomon Hochoy Highway. We have been able to change 12 culvert crossings in less than eight months and each time a particular one had to be changed, it was done in record time and also within budget.

In addition to the issue of the culvert crossings along the Solomon Hochoy Highway, there are other projects, from a road rehabilitation point of view, which have taken place throughout the constituencies of Trinidad and Tobago; whether in Arena Road, Caroni Central, Pierre Road off the Caroni Savannah Road in the constituency of Chaguanas West, Papourie Road, Lalbeharry Trace in the southern jurisdiction of Trinidad or in Calcutta Road within the confines of the

constituency of Couva South and in the area in and around the Queen's Park Savannah. I am reminded by the distinguished Minister of Local Government and Member for Fyzabad that there is also Cuchwan Trace.

From a national infrastructure improvement position, we have been focusing on the construction of an additional traffic lane from the flower shop to the Aranguez intersection and this project scope includes the widening of four lanes from the mulling canal to Aranguez, the construction of standards with inner and outer shoulders and the rehabilitation of an entire existing third lane. In the constituency of Caroni East, we have begun the St. Helena bypass project which involves the creation of an alternative access route from the Caroni South Bank Road to Golden Grove Road to alleviate traffic congestion through the village of St. Helena and, more specifically, the St. Helena Junction. The construction of this new road will also improve the Piarco International Airport's rating based on the International Civil Aviation Organization guidelines.

In addition, I want to take the opportunity to indicate that the PURE Unit of the Ministry of Works and Transport continues to manage the Aranguez to El Socorro project, the creation of access routes on both sides of the Churchill-Roosevelt Highway to complement the newly-constructed Aranguez overpass. We, from the point of view of the Minister of Works and Transport, will be focusing on ensuring that there is the development of the National Transportation System via the Public Service Transport Corporation of Trinidad and Tobago.

Since coming into office, the People's Partnership Government has introduced, from a phased point of view, 85 new buses to service various routes across the length and breadth of Trinidad and Tobago. The new additions have related to the creation of 38 new routes, giving a total of 141 routes operated across the length and breadth of this country and in the process creating 20,936 new seats to the travelling public of Trinidad and Tobago.

The addition of these new routes have seen members of the public being able to access travel from the Port of Spain hub at South Quay, which is now seeing routes into the Laventille Road/Morvant Junction from the San Juan terminus to El Socorro; from Port of Spain to Piarco, Oropune Village and areas such as Sangre Grande, North Manzanilla, Chaguanas, Mamoral, Chaguanas, Charlieville, Munroe Road, Point Fortin, Granville, Couva, Esperanza, Railway Road, Phoenix Park and San Fernando. A new service has also been introduced to address the transportation of students to the University of the West Indies, St. Augustine Campus, from the point of view of Sangre Grande to UWI, St. Augustine and from San Fernando to UWI, St. Augustine.

We have been focusing on dealing with the physically challenged in our community and in our country and we have initiated the purchase of 24 special buses to service the differently-abled individuals through the length and breadth of Trinidad and Tobago. The acquisition of these 24 buses will bring much needed relief to the hundreds of differently-abled citizens whose movements are severely restricted arising from the existing low levels of service for this particular sector of the citizenry of Trinidad and Tobago.

We have been able to ensure that there is the development of the traffic warden system and we have been instrumental in piloting the Motor Vehicles and Road Traffic (Amdt.) Regulations, 2010, which makes it, come next month, illegal for persons to drive or have charge of a motor vehicle on any road while holding or using a hand-held mobile device; all in our quest to address the issue of carnage on the roads that we have been experiencing. With the passage of time, the cable barrier system along the Solomon Hochoy Highway will come into play from a developmental point of view.

We have heard from the Member for Point Fortin about her own passion to see the commencement of the highway from San Fernando to Port of Spain and Point Fortin. She is concerned also about the construction of the Point Fortin Hospital. It is a pity that over nine years, when they held the reins of power and the mantle of the government of Trinidad and Tobago, she was unable, being a senior member in the Cabinet of that government, to get the highway from San Fernando to Point Fortin off the ground.

Now, come January 26, 2011, the People's Partnership will ensure that the sod is turned to commence the construction of the highway from San Fernando to Point Fortin, ensuring employment creation, ensuring that the contracting sector of Trinidad and Tobago, from a local point of view, would be able to benefit in terms of their involvement in this $5 billion-plus project that will add to the national infrastructural development of Trinidad and Tobago and also ensure that the issue of the road network and transportation system are improved in a very focused way from the point of view of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago.

We have made it clear that we have come back seeking this variation because of the failed policies, mismanagement and inefficiencies of the last administration.

4.30 a.m.

It is of critical importance that in our quest to deliver to the people of Trinidad and Tobago that we have the support of the Members of this House, to ensure that

we meet whatever commitments and delivery we have to pursue in developing and improving the quality of life of all the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago.

From where we stand, we are committed to ensuring that the developmental process continues at a pace, Member for Arouca/Maloney, so that you and your constituents could stand to benefit from the delivery of goods and services across the length and breadth of Trinidad and Tobago, so that we could all have a society that we could continue to be proud of 10, 15 or 20 years from today, under the People's Partnership Government and the leadership of this particular administration.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I thank you.

Miss Alicia Hospedales (*Arouca/Maloney*): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity to contribute to this debate on the Finance (Supplementary and Variation of Appropriation) Bill, 2011. The Member for Couva South started his contribution on batsmen, umpires and bowlers but, by the time he was finished with his contribution, Members on his team were actually sleeping, fast asleep, bowled away by his contribution. If there were any spectators looking on or listening in, one thing would be sure is that every Member would surely be traumatized. It was quite difficult—traumatized listening. It was difficult listening to the Member babbling about things that just really did not make any sense at all.

The Member talked about the freedom of religious practices, but I would say to him that he should give advice to the Member for Tabaquite next time he decides to go on television.

The other things the Member said really just sounded like noise this hour of the morning. It is amazing that Members on the opposite side would joke about and even politicize matters relating to the seriousness of the state of our economy. Rather than take a serious approach to accounting for their stewardship though this country, they ramble on, as they are in a comedy fest, to deflect from providing answers as to why the economy is at a standstill.

On May 27, the UNC-A would have gotten an economy running on the strong economic management of the last People's National Movement administration. But, because they lack the foresight, they fail to realize that the fuel that was needed to stimulate the economy needed to be refilled. They lack vision. They do not have a plan and they do not have the competence to provide new fuel that will stimulate our economy, as a result, the economy contracted by 0.9 per cent by the second quarter in 2010 and construction activity in 2010, by the second quarter as well, contracted by 8.9 per cent.

Mrs. Seepersad-Bachan: You all were there in the second quarter.

Miss A. Hospedales: Do you know what second quarter is, Member for San Fernando West? The question that I would like to ask relates to: where is the implementation plan for the growth strategy for developing the economy that was proposed by the UNC-A Government? Where is your growth strategy for developing the economy? They proposed free trade zones, the infrastructure development and the new economic space. Where are these things that you promised in the budget speech? The Member for Tunapuna would have made significant statements about these things in the budget statement in September. Where is the effective management of the industrial estates and the developed economy space for Tobago, which was mentioned again by the Member for Tunapuna? We have not heard anything about it since September 2010 and we are now asking where these things are. Where are the plans for the energy sector?

We heard the Member for San Fernando West talk about this, that and the other, but we have not heard their plans for the energy sector. More specifically, where are the plans for the petrochemical and downstream industries? All we have heard is noise and babbling emanating from Members on the other side and none of them chose to tell us where these plans are. They chose to tell us nothing today. We still have questions that are unanswered.

Is this lack of vision, failure to implement the projects and lack of competence a part of the prudency policy that the Member for Tunapuna referred to yesterday? Is this the substance of development that they are intending to create for the people of this country? [*Interruption*] "Prudency" is the word that was coined by the Member for Tunapuna. If you were in the Chamber you would have been listening. The Member for Tunapuna suggested that their prudency policy focuses on five pillars that address areas of concern by the population. The Minister of Finance and Member for Tunapuna failed to highlight the issue that would have been comprehensively allaying the fears of members of the population.

Members on the opposite side appear to be in denial about the reality of the concerns of the people of this country. Some of the concerns voiced by members of the Arouca/Maloney constituency and members that represent— and it can be found in every constituency throughout this country—include unemployment, high food prices, double-digit inflation, low and inadequate wages and no closure to the issue of the Clico depositors, which the Member for Tunapuna, again, would have said in his budget statement in September 2010, that they will settle

this issue quickly. Today, this issue is still pending. There is no closure. Other concerns expressed by the population have to do with devaluation of the TT dollar, increased hardship and poverty, the politicization and preferential treatment in the delivery of social services.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to pause for a cause. In the Ministry of Social Development, under the Targeted Conditional Cash Transfer Programme, there was a step-up component of that programme and the Member for—this step-up programme has now changed to rise up. We have seen even so the politicization of the distribution of hampers by the Ministry of the People and Social Development.

Other concerns expressed by the members of the population relate to high crime. The Member for Point Fortin pointed to the fact that crime significantly impacts upon tourism, the low confidence of international investors and the fact that people are not coming to Trinidad and Tobago. They are not investing in Trinidad and Tobago. These are some of the concerns that the people of this country have.

The Members on the other side are singing to their own tune. If you want to name it, it is "Chase Investors Away". They are singing to their own tune and they are in denial, not recognizing that the economy is at a standstill. The people of this country deserve to get answers to their concerns. The Member for Tunapuna said that they will deal with unemployment and poverty. But, what poverty alleviation plans do you all have? You have no plan whatsoever for poverty. During the 1995/1996/1997 period, poverty was 33 per cent at that particular point in time. We have not heard from you. We have not seen a plan. We do not know what your poverty alleviation plan is.

The Member for Tunapuna also said that they will deal with sustainable development, crime and inflation. Dealing with these things is not evidence of your capacity to address these issues. We need to hear about their strategies to maintain the stability of the economy to alleviate poverty. We need to hear about it, Members on the opposite side. We need to hear how you intend to reduce the unemployment rate and further the development of the people of this country. We need to hear about those things and we have not heard about them. You made mention of them briefly in passing, since September 2010 and we have not heard anything about these things at all, to date. We need to hear about these things. We know that they do not have the answer and that is a fact. They do not have the answer to these questions. They do not have a plan. They do not have vision. They have nothing in place. They continue to demonstrate that they are the coalition of the incompetent. That is what they are.

Several months later, we are here debating yet another Finance Bill, but questions are raised again, during the budget and before debate, about the cost to get out of the Alutrint project, which have not been answered. The proposed plan for the operationalization of the International Business Centre, which we heard of; a big, elaborate plan, we have not gotten any answers to that. We have not heard anything about it since then. Is it their lack of performance and evidence of their sustainable programme for development? Is this lack of performance evidence of your sustainable programme for development?

During the second quarter of 2010, the agricultural sector contracted by 15.1 per cent. We have not heard them say how they intend to simulate investment and even so to encourage production in the agricultural sector. We have heard nothing and we need to hear. The people of this country deserve to get an answer from you. They continue to fool people, fool the people, fool the people, claiming that they have a genuine care for the development of the agricultural sector. What care? We have not heard of their plans. We do not know. There has been no implementation. The people of this country, again, deserve to hear from the Members on the opposite side. They need to hear from the Government. We need to know what your plans are, because, so far, you have no plan, no vision. You have nothing in place.

In September 2010, during the budget debate, again, the Minister of Finance said that they must achieve the revitalization of the agricultural sector. Their Government is committed to increasing food production and expanding agriculture, thus encouraging sustainable development in the agricultural sector.

Seven initiatives were identified, but we have heard nothing, again. We have heard nothing about these. We have heard nothing about its implementation. We have heard nothing. Nothing is being done. The Member for Pointe-a-Pierre tried to present his proposed contribution on agriculture, but we are yet to be convinced about this proposed plan.

We are yet to be convinced about this proposed plan. Mr. Deputy Speaker, for me, it was all about using nice words, and I would describe his contribution as just a flop.

4.45 a.m.

The Member for Pointe-a-Pierre failed to tell us—he talked about wastage and so on—how State funds are currently being wasted under the Unemployment Relief Programme. The Member failed to tell us about that. The Member for Pointe-a-Pierre failed to tell us where are the URP gangs that have been assigned to work in communities. We are not seeing them. They are invisible.

Long ago, I used to look at a cartoon called *Casper the Friendly Ghost*. These people are just ghosts. We do not see them; they are not working. You probably need to do an investigation into that matter, Sir. We do not see them again. The Member for Pointe-a-Pierre needed to tell us how they have achieved the implementation of flawed hiring practices and have strengthened their links to questionable characters under the Unemployment Relief Programme. Is this part of their track record for restructuring? The Member spoke at length about restructuring, but is this part of their work programme for restructuring?

One thing we know that they are good for is aggravating the public. He talked about labour and so on, but they have been aggravating the public servants and falling back on their promises and perpetuating falsehoods. We have heard it over and over again. They will say it and then they will come and say it was not them, they did not say that. The Member for Diego Martin Central is reminding me that even a Government Senator was in an illegal march.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, because of their policy of "prudency", as stated by the Member for Tunapuna, we are seeing no growth in the tourism industry; no sustainable jobs. They promised all these things in the budget statement. They said there would be growth in the tourism industry and sustainable jobs would be created in the tourism industry. They promised all these things for the tourism sector, and there has been no increase to the contribution of tourism to the GDP. All we are seeing is decrease, decrease, decrease, and a lack of vision as demonstrated by the very thoughtless investment of a trip to India by the Minister of Tourism, Member for Toco/ Sangre Grande, and his entourage of rock singers who went to promote our culture. I do not know what rock has to do with our culture. Mr. Speaker Deputy, this is a laughable initiative. It is really very crazy.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Member for D'Abadie/O'Meara said that his Government is the change that people voted for. Again, I have to say that the change the people voted for is really for a coalition of incompetence, or is it the coalition of deception? This Member was quick to make false accusations, pointing fingers at others, when he has yet to account for who will pay for the ministry's vehicle that he crashed. Who will pay for it? He has yet to account for that. He is yet to answer and tell us who will pay for that vehicle that he crashed. What is the real story? We need to know, we need to hear.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Members on the other side do not seem to be aware of the inputs or things that are necessary for improving efficiency in operations. I am saying this within the context of the observation made in the Schedule relating to the supplementation of variation of estimates. There are significant decreases in

the allocation of money for items that are necessary for the effective operation or functioning of staff in the various ministries. There is a decrease in the allocation for repair of equipment; in the allocation for material and supplies, for office supplies and stationery; purchase of office equipment; vehicle maintenance; refurbishment of offices; repair and maintenance of government buildings; training for staff, and in the allocation for institutional strengthening.

There has also been a decrease in the allocation for contract employment and short-term employment, and this is another confirmation of the fact that the UNC-A Government's goal is to decrease the number of contract workers who work in the ministries and, as a result, they are going to increase unemployment, increase poverty and increase hardships for people in this country. [*Desk thumping*] They would do anything to say that they have reprioritized their spending at the expense of the staff of the ministries who work diligently to deliver the programmes and services.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, they speak of change, and when I think about the word "change" they have been speaking about it continuously, I say it is a word that is dressed in deception. [*Desk thumping*] It is not a word that is really genuine. They openly abuse the terms moral and ethical authority to make people believe that they are without blemish; they have done nothing bad; they have done everything really well and they have functioned and implemented everything.

Mr. Sharma: Oh Lord, the same speech again!

Miss A. Hospedales: We have listened to the ramblings of the Member for Caroni East who reminded me of a song—all Members on the opposite side remind me of a song that I heard when I was about seven years old. I used to attend Sunday School by a gentleman name Mr. Percy. I am sure if the Member for Mayaro was here, he would remember that song that says: "Teacher Percy say if you tell ah lie yuh going to hell as soon as yuh die." Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Members on the opposite side need to know that. They need to understand that it is important to tell the truth.

Just imagine the Member for Caroni East stood up here and told so many untruths. The children are looking at him. [*Desk thumping*] You are the Minister of Education and you should be setting the right example for the children of this country. You should be setting a good example for them.

Again, I am telling the Members on the opposite side that they need to tell the truth at all times. Children are looking up to you as role models, and when you do not do what is right and speak the right thing they are going to adopt that

behaviour. [*Interruption*] He is going to take vengeance on the Leader of the Opposition. Member for Caroni East, you need to be careful of what you say, because the children are listening to you.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do not want to be much longer. In ending, I would like to say that Members of the UNC-A Government need to answer these questions for the population. They need to tell us about their plans; they need to tell us when they intend to implement those plans and give us time lines. The people of this country deserve to have a new government. They are waiting to exhale and waiting for you all to stop your public relations gimmick. It is time for you all to get to work. They are waiting for you all to start working.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I thank you.

The Minister of Local Government (Hon. Chandresh Sharma): Mr. Deputy Speaker, thank you very much. I think as Members of Parliament on both sides of the House we owe each other encouragement; we owe each other some kind of big brother, big sister relationship. I really want to adopt the Member of Parliament for Arouca/Maloney. [*Desk thumping*] In her many months here she has learnt absolutely nothing. It is the same speech Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and now Saturday. That is overdoing it. [*Laughter*] You have to change some words; you have to change your outfit; and you have to do something different. [*Laughter*] You cannot come here day after day with the same thing. You must remember that the proceedings are televised, and people are seeing this all over the world.

Even the Member for Point Fortin has improved today. She said very little; full of gas. In fact, one of the things we must be prepared for is that when we leave this Parliament, we must have a future. The Member must open a gas station, she has endless gas. She has for CNG and the other kinds. I wish you well.

Now, one of the worst things that a Member of Parliament could do is mislead the national community. There is absolutely no need to be economical with the truth, you would be caught. You cannot mislead day after day. Speaking in the Parliament is not about scoring points. The Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West discovered that a while ago. This is not about scoring points; it is about uplifting lives and adding value. You cannot come and say all kinds of fancy things that would capture the emotions of the people for five minutes and mislead the entire nation. I want to return to the Member for Arouca/Maloney.

We all subscribe to the economy of this country, and we say to ourselves that the authority for how the economy is going is the Central Bank. The Governor of the Central Bank whom we all respect, because he is a professional—an article

appeared in today's *Express* newspaper and it was on the seven o'clock news last night—"Governor—economy to grow". This is in simple English. This was written for the majority of the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

So when the entire Opposition, starting off with the Leader of the Opposition, I said to him today privately, "Keith yuh losing yuh fire". This is not how we conduct business. I was so surprised, because the Member for Diego Martin West and I joined this Parliament together in 1991, and he has remained at the level he entered in 1991. [*Laughter*] I am surprised. You have not grown.

The few days the Member was sick, the Member for Diego Martin North/East sat in that Chair. I do not know how the Chief Whip put up with him. Let me teach him something. He must learn. You are not too big to learn. If you have to demonstrate to this country that you have the smallest iota of leadership—read your Standing Orders, which one do you want? Is it Standing Order 40(b)? You do not know what Standing Order 40(b) is. Listen to what I am saying. The Central Bank Governor, you know who he is, Mr. Ewart Williams, predicts the local economy will grow in 2011 and this recovery will be driven by the energy sector.

The Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs came straight and told us as it is. All you all are doing is predicting gloom and doom left, right and centre. You forget that you have to live here; you forget the kids here and you represent people. We both took the same oath of office. Why are you misleading the community? Why do you think the role of the Opposition—you should learn from us, because we were there—is to present the worst picture in the country?

5.00 a.m.

You are not making sense. Why are we here today? We are here because you failed to do what you were supposed to do last year. "So yuh hide, you were unable to deliver your duty and when we come, yuh criticize the entire process." You are looking very foolish in the eyes of the people. If I do not tell you, who else will? I am your elder brother here. [*Laughter*] You are here because you did not do what you were supposed to do.

"How much money it is, Dr. Gopeesingh?" Mr. Deputy Speaker, $60 billion. You borrowed left, right and centre; you wasted the money, not a single project came in within budget. One of the worst run ministries in terms of the economy was the Ministry of Housing and Planning. Not a single housing project came within budget, and this has been demonstrated, not by me, but by the authorities that obtained at that point in time. We are building houses on state lands and there

are cost overruns; houses on state lands and there are cost overruns. "'We' meaning the people of Trinidad and Tobago; is my money yuh use;" of course, under the PNM administration.

When I look, minister after minister—my good friend, the Member for Port of Spain South, I hope she speaks after me—look at what you did in the Ministry of Community Development, Culture and Gender Affairs—[*Interruption*]

Miss Mc Donald: "What I did?"

Hon. C. Sharma: —"give away de scholarship money".

Miss Mc Donald: I will deal with you after.

Hon. C. Sharma: Thank you; I was hoping I was getting you to lift, to rise. [*Laughter*]**Miss Mc Donald:** I am not rising with you.

Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Hon. C. Sharma: Well, I will not get nara. [*Laughter*]

The point I am making is that ministry after ministry, not a single minister under the PNM government has delivered within budget; not a single Minister. We have seen wastage across the board. Apparently you do not know why you are here. You are here because you failed to do this particular exercise, as required in law, in 2010. The Member for Diego Martin Central is amazed, so unprepared to be in government, worse off in Opposition.

Look at moneys you borrowed for UDeCott in the run-up to the election, almost $5 billion and nothing to show for it. Are you not ashamed? You could pretend, but for how long are you going to pretend? Would the truth not be told sometime? Would the national community and your children not know? "Dad, what did you do in 2010 under the PNM?" [*Interruption*] You have no kids? Well, some people would say, "Uncle, what did you do?" You were unproductive across the board.

You ran a ministry, Member for Diego Martin Central, again, look at the run in your ministry. You yourself came here and said that you had given out "smart man card" in excess.

Dr. Browne: You are misleading the House.

Hon. C. Sharma: How much was it? [*Crosstalk*] The point is that you had cards for food that were given out to people who did not qualify; do not pretend. Across the board you saw favoritism in everything. Today "yuh cry" about staff

somewhere, but you did not tell the national community that all the staff you were complaining about today was hand-picked by yourself.

You came and tried to frighten the national community prior to the general election, "Oh CEPEP, you will be fired," but every single one was hand-picked. The only qualification was being a PNM member or supporter. Today, we have expanded that very same programme and we are producing so much more. You have used these people and abused them in the process.

Member for Arouca/Maloney, why do you have to pretend? Be real. You talk about cultivating criminals in the URP, assuming but not admitting that was so. Where did these people come from? We have retained all the people who worked in URP; all the people who work in the URP are still there. [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. Members: Not true!

Hon. C. Sharma: All the people who worked in URP continue to work. [*Crosstalk*] There were saints then. How were they employed? There were no public advertisements; all were through PNM offices. Imagine the Member for La Brea, the only work he did in La Brea was to put up URP employment notices, "who get 10 days and who get 15 days". That was his only work.

"My good friend, the Member for Laventille West, you have URP contract and CEPEP contract." How did you get it? I am coming back to the point; do not mislead the country about the economy. We demonstrated that investors continue to come, in spite of your foolishness, in spite of your disclosure about gloom and doom continuously.

I served in the Opposition and wherever I travelled I would encourage people to come and do business here, because it is for my country. Today, you are doing everything in your power—thank God you have absolutely no power, [*Laughter*] so you cannot discourage people. You get a headline in between; every time you aim for a headline, you are messengers of bad news; you have a horror story to tell; you have absolutely nothing to encourage the national community. Where does that carry us? What does that make us? Who are we serving in this country? Is that how you intend to return to government? That could never happen again.

The eyes of the nation are opened for another 100 years. What the PNM did to this country will live with us for another 100 years. The time will come when we would have to put up billboards and say your sins. Billions of dollars have gone through this country. Smaller countries with less moneys—the Philippines is a

good place; 19 million people, less income than us, but much more improved than us. We must be ashamed, whichever side we sit on, if we waste the resources of the State.

Look at the amount of money that this country was blessed with, the intelligence we have, the commitment we have for this country. When you drive, the roads are no good, the bridges are falling down, our hospitals are in chaos. And you come here trying to score points?

Billions of dollars, everything—in fact, I will give you a few of them. When you are in Opposition you forget that these books exist: the Auditor General's Report on the Public Accounts of Trinidad and Tobago. New Members of Parliament, you must become conversant with this book—this is published every year—because our children will know of it and you cannot hide, you cannot be economical with the truth, they will know. I want to tell you the amount of money you borrowed.

You subsidized everything you put your party hacks in, every place. The first thing on every one of them, you put your friends and family, no transparent process and you deny this, but you cannot fool anybody. The Water and Sewerage Authority (WASA)—how did it end up with more than 5,000 employees, Leader of the Opposition, were there advertisements, was there a process? The answer is no; you continued and you pretended. You continue to employ your party supporters, and look where we are, no water in the homes.

Dr. Rowley: "How Ganga Singh end up there?

Hon. C. Sharma: "How Ganga Singh?" You do not know?

Dr. Rowley: Yes.

Hon. C. Sharma: Good, at least you know one thing. [*Laughter*]

The Trinidad and Tobago Electricity Commission—and the list goes on, the Housing Development Company, you have abused that. You can say anything you want, the truth obtains here, the truth obtains elsewhere. If you can show me one housing development that came within budget, I will take you for dinner.

You created Taurus to protect yourselves and you have abused the process. My good friend, the Member for Arouca/Maloney, for the first time she must have gotten a chocolate for Valentine. Our chocolate beans are so popular, but, of course, look what you have done. You have destroyed the cocoa economy. Do

you know why? You destroyed it because you felt the people in agriculture do not support the PNM. That is why you "lick up" Caroni overnight; you destroyed it totally, and the list goes on.

Dr. Rowley: "When are you opening it back? When are you starting Caroni back?"

Hon. C. Sharma: You will support it?

Dr. Rowley: That was your campaign promise.

Hon. C. Sharma: Will you support it? Answer the question. You see the game you are playing? You destroyed Caroni simply because the majority of workers did not support your party. Get up and say, "I will support the reopening of Caroni," and let us work together. You cannot divide this country any more.

Both the Member for Diego Martin West and I came into the Parliament as elected Members and so did the Member for Diego Martin North/East. We both can be simple, sincere and honest. When we look at the achievements of this Government in less than one year in office, there is no government in this country, in the last 50 years, that has done as well as the People's Partnership in the last seven and a half months, and the evidence is there. [*Desk thumping*] I started off by saying that whatever we say in this Parliament must be the truth, the whole truth and nothing else. Member for La Brea, you are not familiar with the truth, my friend.

Mr. Jeffrey: What did you do?

Hon. C. Sharma: You are not familiar with the truth and you have never been.

In terms of achievements, for a new Government with young ministers, we have done so very well and I am so very proud. I can go on the roof of this building and read this out. Let me start with my own Ministry, perhaps one of the most successful ministries at this current time. In the Ministry of local Government, the levels of inequality of treatment—since we came into Government we had to reduce using the word "discrimination". Look at the levels of involvement; for the first time in the history of Trinidad and Tobago every elected local government practitioner has been treated fairly across the board. As a result, in every single electoral district, there have been projects on an ongoing basis and, by extension, in every constituency in Trinidad. That has never happened before.

When the floods came and the Prime Minister gave the call that every citizen in every single home affected by the floods must be attended to, for the first time

that was achieved within 72 hours using people from the Ministry and NGOs, CBOs and volunteers. When the floods came in New Orleans, that did not obtain; when they came in New York, it did not obtain.

More than that, we established five warehouses at not one single cent cost to the State. [*Desk thumping*] This has never happened. All the Members of Parliament opposite who served as ministers, in terms of achievement, you might be very close to a zero. This has never happened, five warehouses: Macoya, Fineline Foods, you still have foodstuff, beds, mattresses, emergency supplies; Rio Claro, Couva, San Fernando, Princes Town. Where has this obtained? Nowhere else, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Not only that, we sent goods to the islands. You criticized us for sending to the islands. We sent to the islands; we sent to Haiti. Have you ever done that? No. We sent to St. Lucia. Have you ever done that? No. We also sent to another island that does not come to mind right now.

Dr. Rowley: Timbuktu!

Hon. C. Sharma: That is where you sent stuff. I hope you did not send the money there too. [*Laughter*]

Roadworks under Local Government—across the board. When you look at the cost—and I want the Minister of Finance's permission to print the cost one day to show that roads under the PNM were 10 times more and the roads under the People's Partnership are 10 times less; same material used, same process.

The San Juan Market, political ploy on your side. "Elections come, yuh run to Marabella; yuh ent talk to nobody. You started a market for $45 million; thank God de people read your scheme, your smart man approach." Immediately after, the PNM mayor and the PNM council invited the People's Partnership Minister of Local Government to visit. They said, "We do not want dat $45 million market here; total waste of time." "We want a market that is useful, accessible and in keeping with the market culture, open and accessible to all." "We want our fish market and our meat area air-conditioned and we want parking." It was a fraction of the cost. The PNM council called us in and we consented.

The San Juan Market $47 million—for what? Nobody knows. So we went there, we met with the vendors, we met with the stakeholders and we met with the business community. They were shocked. They said, "This thing happening and we have never been said good morning to and you are consulting with us; meeting after meeting."

5.15 a.m.

Today we are constructing the market at an economical cost. I have always raised in this Parliament—and if is one thing Members opposite should learn and do not fear learning, whether from Government or whoever, there are industry

standards. A building comprising of A, B or C should be so much per square foot; next building comprising other type of material should be so much per square foot. I always say, nothing we have looked at—and I do not look at it; it is the international agencies that look at it; it is independent contractors; it is engineers; we have professional bodies and they are saying that you have demonstrated—you have not brought in a single building within the industry standard in terms of cost.

Recreation facilities: we are moving towards a healthy nation by encouraging people to live healthy lifestyles. Part of it is eating intelligently, exercising and doing other things that will add to their health. Recreation grounds across the country have been attended to, one after the other. Lights—because work is at 8.00 to 4.00; 8.00 to 5.00; they get home at 6.00; they see about their kids and they want to go for a walk. They must be lighted so they can walk safely. Even in La Brea it is happening.

Public utilities: Never before have so many homes been wired—poor families. And how did they obtain under the PNM? It was friend and family. No transparency! If you were not a supporter of the PNM you could not get it at all. Under the People's Partnership it is across the board: PNM, UNC-COP, NAR, Independent, Hindu, Baptist, you have to get it, because we owe it to the people. We do not grant favours to people. Under the PNM everything was a favour. You know how much money we spent? We spent $6.7 million for 500 homes. When I look at the same homes done under the PNM, it was much more than this.

Water projects: under the NSDP, we did 12 projects at a value of $3.24 million, and across the board—of course, there are 29 Members of Parliament from the People's Partnership, so certainly there will be more.

We did community electrification programmes as well, at a cost of $176,000 and we did 10 community recreation grounds. We did indoor plumbing facilities for families, never before under the PNM. We started work on the Navet main water line—29 kilometres of water main, and this is what attends to south/central Trinidad. Under the PNM you will not see that happening. You have water in Port of Spain for 400,000 people during the day; 40,000 people at night, and all the water remains in Port of Spain, because you manage inequality of treatment. You do not care.

Perhaps I would want to recommended to the Parliament at the appropriate time that Members come here, take an oath of office to serve and to deliver, and when you look at this Government's achievements, perhaps this should go on the Parliament website. When we elect Members of Parliament, it is hoped that they

will deliver goods and services; they will bring good legislation; they will do everything in the interest of people, and as a result, every opportunity for people to be able to see and to measure, to assist them in making decisions into the future, must obtain at all times.

My friend already spoke about the Ministry of Works and Transport so I will leave that out, but I just quickly want to talk about local government in terms of good governance. Soon after the general election, the hon. Prime Minister indicated that, to have the entire package of good governance practices, the local government elections should be held. Within the shortest period of time we went into the local government election and captured 11 of the 14 regional corporations which never obtained in the past, with a presence in the other three corporations. Today, the country is reaping that benefit, because you have local government practitioners available 24/7. I want to thank all the local government practitioners across the board—and you having postponed it three times because you knew you could not win it, so you were biding time.

Not only that, when we made training available, we made the training available for all local government practitioners, so they will sing from the same hymn book about service, service, service, and when they move to page two of the hymn book, it will be delivery, delivery, delivery.

I thank you for this opportunity to deliver for a few minutes. [*Desk thumping*]

Miss Joanne Thomas (*St. Ann's East*): Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me to speak at 5.21 a.m. It has been a very cold and tiring night, but I just want to put my input into this debate.

I listened to the Member for Fyzabad and Minister of Local Government and on Wednesday it was the first time I heard him speak and I realize that he is the comedian for that side. [*Desk thumping*]

Then, you know, I see this morning again, it is like he is the one to sum up everybody's contribution and put a little humour to it. I want to remind the Member of some promises made. He gave a listing of the things that were achieved and one of the first things I want to remind the Member of, local government reform was one of the first things that was stated in the manifesto of the People's Partnership Government, and just to remind him, I will quote:

"Strengthening Local Government shall be a cornerstone of our democracy."

This was noted in the local government manifesto. Then I remind him:

"The objective of the reform will be to reinforce the commitment of the People's Partnership to the decentralisation of authority in order to facilitate

more effective and responsive governance. This will also mean the qualitative broadening of Local Government as an institution to bring it closer to the people."

I remind the hon. Member, one of the areas mentioned was that he would give the councillors the necessary tools to operate more effectively and the councillors were told that they would be outfitted with offices and given phones to stay in touch with their constituents. The hon. Member even made the promise that repairs to vehicles owned by councillors would be made to ensure that constituents were met often and councillors without drivers' permits were encouraged to get their own quickly. We are still to achieve this. The councillors—at least in the area of the San Juan/Laventille Regional Corporation—are all still waiting for these offices; the assistance with vehicles and phones.

I want to ask the Minister—he spoke of the San Juan market as one of the achievements, and I admit that several meetings were held at the San Juan Regional Corporation; several town hall meetings were held with the residents and there were also walkabouts in the San Juan market and I was at most of those visits where we met and spoke with the vendors; we spoke with the residents, but I just want to ask the Member: has the market started?

Mr. Sharma: Yes, girl.

Miss J. Thomas: Because, as far as we are concerned, we are seeing no signs of the market, so to come here and say that the market is one of the achievements when the only thing that has been done in the market was that the area has been cleared—I want him to let me know when the market is going to be started and when to expect completion of the market.

Mr. Sharma: The Deputy Speaker has given us permission to attend after.

Hon. Member: Is it open?

Mr. Sharma: Yes.

Miss J. Thomas: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would just like the Member to explain to me—I will give way again—to let me know when the market was opened and when is it going to be completed. When is the market that was agreed to at the last press conference we had—when is completion of the market expected?

Mr. Sharma: I want to thank you very much, and I hope the vendors did not hear what you just asked because work is on an ongoing process and the market was never closed.

Miss J. Thomas: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do not want to belabour the point, I am just asking you if you can just tell me when is the expected date of completion for the market. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Sharma: You and I and the Member for Laventille West and other Members were there. The contractor and the consultants indicated one year to complete.

Miss J. Thomas: And that one year began when?

Mr. Sharma: When we met the last time. Do you remember when we met a month ago?

Dr. Browne: This is serious business, you know.

Mr. Sharma: Seriously, when we met we had a meeting at which you spoke and my good friend spoke, and the consultants were there, and the contractors spoke; and they spoke in English, and we had lunch and they said one year from when they started.

Miss J. Thomas: Okay, so we can expect that—I just want to get a date from you. As the Minister in charge of the market, are you trying to tell me then that you do not have an exact date of completion for the San Juan market; as the Minister in charge of this project?

Mr. Sharma: As indicated and as you would have heard in this debate today, under the PNM, not a single project came within budget in terms of time and money. We promised, you and I, and the other Members who attended, promised it is going to be within budget and within time. Up to now it is on schedule.

Miss J. Thomas: Thank you, Mr. Minister, but I still have not gotten a date from you, as you can see, but I would not labour on that point.

One of the other areas I would just like to highlight, the Minister did mention about the relief that was given to a lot of the burgesses that suffered because of the flood and I confirm that relief was given to residents, but what is amazing is that there is always relief but nothing is put in place to avoid an occurrence of these things happening. In my area everyone would be aware of the pensioner who was buried alive in La Canoa Road and his family was given some measure of relief, but nothing was done to alleviate that problem. The Minister was made aware of the need to put some walls and nothing was done in La Canoa. As a matter of fact, nothing was done in my area to assist and alleviate further occurrence of the problems that cause the flooding in my area. I just wanted to remind the Minister that these things are still outstanding to be done.

5.30 a.m.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the burgesses of my area and the surrounding areas took the promises of this Government seriously and expect them to fulfill their promises. They will not be fooled by words. They need the assistance, and this is why I am reminding the Minister to keep his promise he made to the people and let us attend to the people's needs.

In going through the numbers, I looked and I saw no additional increase in the Ministry of Local Government. There was a transfer of $94 million. Of the $94 million, $18 million was allocated to the Solid Waste Management Company and $94 million was transferred to the Ministry of Housing and the Environment for the CEPEP allocation. Then, $18 million was added for the Solid Waste Management Company which gives a net of a minus $72 million.

There are no increases for any of the areas that we have identified to the Minister with regard to the allocation. So I am a little concerned if the promises made would in fact be realized, because when you look at the numbers they are the same for all the regional corporations.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I refer to a transfer that was made in 2009 and I wish to ask the Minister about an allocation of about $2.3 million given to the Community Improvement Services Limited—I just wanted to get an idea—what projects were these funds allocated to? Also, there was an amount of $1 million that was allocated for the engagement of a solid waste resource management advisor for the Ministry, I would like to ask the Minister: what initiatives are in place or would be put in place for the advice that was sought through the payment of this $1 million to that particular advisor?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would not take any more time, but I want to let the Minister know that I am disappointed from the point of view, that promises were made, and not just what were made but the manifesto comprised of a lot of promises [*Desk thumping*] that have not been delivered to the burgesses and we want to let you know that we are aware and we are waiting with bated breath for these promises to be fulfilled.

All the nice face you are putting up, I need to let you know that I am very serious about this and we need to get answers on this. Again, I am a little concerned with regard to the market that you said has started. As I have mentioned, there are additional allocations in the budget for the local government, so I am really anxious to see where the moneys for the market are coming from.

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

Miss Marlene Mc Donald (*Port of Spain South*): Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. At 5.35 a.m., as difficult as it has been a difficult night, I am going to be very brief.

Dr. Rambachan: No, take your whole 75 minutes.

Miss M. Mc Donald: No, I will not do that. I will not do that. But I want to take the opportunity to respond to a couple of the Members on the other side who spoke earlier this morning. I want to look at the Leader of Government Business, the Member for Oropouche East. He made certain statements. One, the Member for Oropouche described this side as the laziest Opposition he has known. But I want to say to the Member for Oropouche East and to this honourable House, that in the five years or the 10 years he would have sat in Opposition, I am sure that what we have done over the last seven months in the support of this UNC-led Government, that we have done much more in seven months than he has done in his 10 years. Let me tell you, because I sat there for two and half years so I know what I am talking about. I have had that experience and I know that when they were on this side they never supported us. They never voted in support of any budget or any of the Bills. Never did! It was one—[*Interruption*] Allow me to speak, please. You have had your opportunity, Sir. But since we have been here, we have made history.

We have supported this Government on the budget, on the Anti-Gang Bill, on the Bail Bill, on the Interception of Communications Bill, and now we are here today, and we are going to support you on this. We are basically saying that—I do not think sometimes when we are speaking, as the Member for Fyzabad said, we have to be very careful in how we describe each other. At the end of the day we are still colleagues and we still have to work with each other, and I believe that we should respect each other despite where we sit in this House. Whether we sit on this side or whether we sit on that side because I will tell you, the pendulum can swing at any time. So be very careful. These are my words of advice.

Mr. De Couteau: I agree with that.

Miss M. Mc Donald: I also want to make the point that the Member for Diego Martin North/East who chairs the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee (PA(E)C) has attempted five times to call a meeting and could not get the committee going. Why? Because the Government Ministers could not make it. So who are the lazy ones? So we must be very careful. We must gather our facts before we open our mouth to speak.

I want to make another point and this was made—it is a common thread. The Member for Oropouche East said it, the Member for D'Abadie/O'Meara said it and the Member for Fyzabad said it, and these were the words that the Member for Oropouche East said:

> "We are giving away scholarships and nobody knew they were giving away any scholarships."

I guess the Member for D'Abadie/O'Meara made the same sort of remarks. So I want to take some time to explain this whole thing and I would tell you what—[*Interruption*] No, I am not going to take 40 minutes. You see, Members for Oropouche East and Fyzabad—I would forgive the Member for D'Abadie/O'Meara—it is rather disingenuous of both of you, because you sat in this House—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Sharma: How do you spell that word?

Miss M. Mc Donald: Listen, your comedy hour is over. Okay! It is over. [*Desk thumping*] I assumed office on November 19, 2007. When I came into office as Minister of Community Development, Culture and Gender Affairs I noticed that there was a scholarship programme, and when I examined the programme I realized that it was not really a scholarship. A scholarship will denote a different type of meaning. In other words, there will be some sort of contractual relationship in a scholarship between the State and the student. Nothing like that existed. So I realized that we are dealing with a different approach here, and I recognized that it was financial assistance being given to students.

In order for me to restructure and reorganize that particular programme, I temporarily closed the programme from November until January when I prepared the terms of reference for the particular committee. I also solicited five people. There were five professionals who were in charge of a financial assistance committee in order to deal with the applications. We developed a website. The application is on the website. We sent application forms to all offices of the Ministry—all "down south", north, central and at the head office. We advertised and the programme got started. It is one of the success stories at the Ministry. I can only report on what happened during my tenure. I can tell you that over that two and half years that programme was run successfully. The Minister is there. I received quarterly reports from the committee from 2008, right up until April 2010.

Hon. Member: Where did you advertise?

Miss M. Mc Donald: Oh, it was in the newspapers, it was on the Internet. Yes, all in the Ministry's offices. A lot of people were applying because it opened up. So there was no problem, but I think they bandied about a figure of $45 million. Let me tell you where that $45 million came from.

In the period prior to 2007—which is between 2002 to 2007—the programme was run as if it was a scholarship programme—but it is really financial assistance—and during that period $45 million was granted to particular students. I do not recall the number of students who benefited from it, but all that information is at the Ministry. I can tell you and assure you that I restructured a very transparent and very open programme and I assume that it is still in existence at the Ministry. The Minister could answer that question. So I think that should—the Member for Oropouche East is aware of that, also the Member for Fyzabad. They are well aware of that.

Let us look at another statement made by the Member for Oropouche East. He made reference to, "We may not have the money to pay pan men because of the wastage by this Government". I want to tell you something. In 2009/2010, that financial year, the Ministry of Community Development, Culture and Gender Affairs received $347 million for that particular year. Before I think it was about $350 million. This year with the realignment of the Ministries, I note that the Ministry of Arts and Multiculturalism got about $340 million. I think the Ministry of Community Development got $170 million.

5.45 a.m.

So I looked at the fact that the Ministry of Arts and Multiculturalism, which is equivalent to the Ministry of Culture alone, got what the three other Ministries got. I looked at that; I made sure. I think that the Ministry of Community Development only got $170 million. I do not know about the gender affairs part of it, because gender affairs went to another big Ministry—Planning, Economic and Social Restructuring and Gender Affairs.

When I looked at it, I could have understood when the Prime Minister on her campaign trail said they were going to make payments of $2 million to pan, to calypso, to chutney and to soca. I do not know how NCBA was left out. I was surprised to hear now that this is just a one-off payment in 2011. This tells me: "Listen! Vote for me—this is a promise—and you will get this." Now all of them expected that this would be on an annual basis, but now they are being told that this is only for one year. We have to be very careful because it is the same thing we did and I do not want to be repetitive. The same thing happened with that Senior Citizens' Grant.

I was the former Minister of Culture, so most people would call me—the mas', the pan, the calypso—and complain. I think, Minister of Arts and Multiculturalism, that you should take time out and read yesterday's *Express* editorial with a critical eye.

I want to state that I thought that the $300 million-plus was going to include that $1,000 being paid to the pannists. When I came into the Ministry, it was just $400. What I used to do is to have the monthly meetings with my stakeholders, pan, mas', calypso, et cetera. In talking, at the time, Mr. Patrick Arnold, the President of Pan Trinbago, mentioned this $400 and I foolishly thought it was a monthly payment. They laughed and they said no, it was for the entire season.

So, if they begin playing from around November—Panorama is around January to February—at the end of the whole season each player is given $400. I thought: this is the national instrument. I see pan, if you go to a community, as a magnet drawing the young people into the panyard. It is just a flurry of activity in the carnival season. It is about the discipline. They say we are an undisciplined people, but you should see the discipline among these young people in the panyard.

I am from Laventille and I go to Despers panyard up in the hills, my favourite band, and look at the passion, the vigour and the interest of these young people. It was not done by me. We took a decision to go to $1,000. We felt these pannists deserved $1,000. It is not a salary; it is a stipend. Where again would the pan men make any type of money? That is all they get at carnival time. If their band should win a first or second prize, they would probably share it; but this is what they get as an individual. This is what we looked at and we felt that we could have afforded.

Even on a budget for the whole three-prong ministries, $347 million, we could have made that payment. It went from $4.3 million, when I met it, to $7.3 million. When I looked at the budget in September and saw that the Ministry of Arts alone got $340 million, I felt good because I thought that the $1,000 was safe. Perhaps this is something we can look at again. It is not so bad that it is cast in concrete.

I heard the Minister say they can use the extra $1 million to pay the $200 shortfall. Let us assume they foolhardily did that in 2011, in 2012, that $1 million prize would go. In other words, they will revert to the status quo which obtained in 2010. This is something you can look at.

Let me get straight into the Schedule, and I am looking basically at the gender affairs. I do not think anybody here has articulated what is going on with the

national gender policy and this is what I would want to ask the Minister of Finance. I do not know if there is any Minister here except the Member for Couva North.

Member for Couva North, I am interested because in August 2009 last I laid in this Parliament the Draft National Policy on Gender and Development. This was in the form of a Green Paper. We put it out for comment from stakeholders and NGOs. The deadline date was February 2010. Before I left the Ministry, we had received numerous responses from the public and that department was collating that information and crafting a new document in the form of a White Paper, which, as it approached government's policy, it was placed in a White Paper and submitted to Cabinet. I have not heard anything about it.

Miss Ramdial: Will the Member give way so that I can explain? Hon. Member, so far we have all the information from the collated document we got from the previous stakeholders. However, our Government's policy is a little different so we are looking to add on new things to the gender policy and amend certain things we have reviewed. We are in the process of doing that and we will resubmit to Parliament very soon.

Miss M. Mc Donald: Thank you very much, Member for Couva North, for that information. I would also like to find out a little more about all the different programmes. What has happened with our national hotline? What has happened with the walk-in centres and our central registry? There are a number of things attached to the gender affairs division. I am not hearing anything at all. There is a programme called Defining Masculine Excellence—the gender is not only about women, it is also about men and I feel close to that particular programme because it explores the relationship with men.

Miss Ramdial: The hotline programme is, as far as we know, working very efficiently and the masculinity programme has been reinstated for the new year. However, all these can be answered if you pose a question, which I will answer fully for you.

Miss M. Mc Donald: Thank you very much. I think that I am satisfied with some of the answers. I can pose the questions yes, but I think that I am basically satisfied with what the Member has said.

I want to take a look at community development and there will be some questions to the Member for Naparima. Before we left the Ministry, there was a community construction programme and, of course, over the last month or two,

you would have heard all the Members here, especially those from the Laventille constituency: Laventille East/Morvant, Laventille West, Port of Spain South, asking about community centres.

During my tenure at the Ministry, we launched this programme somewhere in mid-1979. We had eight start-ups each month. The community centres you are now opening are those centres I had started like in 2008 and early 2009. Before leaving office, I opened over 20 community centres in all parts of this country.

There are some community centres outstanding because my constituents ask me all the time. The Picton Folk Performing Centre, in Picton, the Basilon Street Recreational Facility; all their plans and everything were drawn.

I want to thank you, Minister, because when we do good we must say thanks. The one at Mango Rose; I notice that work on that particular community centre has been resumed. There is a list and there is a host of other community centres in all the various constituencies. This is something that was approved by Cabinet. It was supposed to be over a five-year period. It was not just one year. We looked at how many we could do in a particular year; eight start-ups per month and we were moving on with the programme. Perhaps I can pose a question for written answer and we could—[*Interruption*]—I could pose and you can give me a written answer.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will be brief; I will not belabour anything else this morning. I want to say to the Minister that, overall, my area of concern was spending. I know that the Government had borrowed or was in the process of borrowing about $8 million to kick-start the economy. It was more or less being seen as a stimulus package. My only concern is that we need to get back the confidence of the consumers. There is a lot of liquidity at the banks. I know of one bank that is not accepting deposits. They are highly liquid and they do not want to accept any more cash.

We need to build back and we also need the private sector. If you look at the United States, England, some of the European countries—I was reading the Keynesian theory of economics and—Keynes had this notion that aggregate demand will act as a stimulus to grow the economy. He proffered that governments could spend what they do not have. In other words, they can borrow; but he also proffered that it can be a mixed economy. There could be the private sector working along with the public. To me, he preferred the public sector spending because it is the biggest employer and the net spender in the economy. I

prefer the mixed where I can see the private sector working along. I always maintain that the government cannot do it by itself. You need a mixture of the private sector as well as the government working in tandem.

Those are the few points I would like to make. With those few words, I thank you.

The Minister of Finance (Hon. Winston Dookeran): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am so pleased to end the debate by the Member for Port of Spain South on such a positive note. We have had a long and very exhaustive discussion and I will not delay this House very long.

This Motion has to go to the Senate and there will be opportunities to answer many of the specific questions raised at that time. I thought I would use the opportunity just to outline the situation before us and what is the challenge ahead and perhaps the next step.

6.00 a.m.

There was a lot of discussion, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as to what the People's Partnership Government inherited, when it took office on May 24, 2010, and some misconceptions had developed as to the state of the finances of the country at that time. Some Members were of the view that it was in such a good shape that we should, in fact, be very happy about it. I do not want to reopen that debate, but I just want to put on the record one statistic which outlines very clearly what the state of the finances were as we assumed office. To do that, I want to refer to the total government balances in September 2008, September 2009 and September 2010. In other words, this is the money that we had in the bank as a nation.

In September 2008, available to the Government was the sum of $17.7 billion. In September 2009 that figure had dropped to $9.7 billion, and September 2010 that figure had further dropped to $5.5 billion; a dramatic decrease in the government balances. September 2008 and September 2009 were the years in which the PNM government was in office, and September 2010 is when I had the opportunity to present the budget. That, to me, is a summary figure to tell you that we had an uphill task to put the finances in order and that is what we have been doing since we came into office.

The second question I want to ask is: what really is the outlook, as we look ahead into 2011? It was pointed out by the Member for D'Abadie/O'Meara, and he wrote me the statistics that were given just, I guess it was yesterday now, by the Central Bank, on the outlook for 2011. I will just indicate one or two figures here, which will provide a sense of comfort. The budget was indeed presented on

September 08, 2010. The Finance Bill that gave legislative authority for that budget was presented sometime in November, and now we are in January, just four months later. But, the groundwork has been laid for what I am about to say. These figures, Mr. Deputy Speaker, are the figures of the Central Bank. I just thought, for the purposes of establishing what the outlook looks like, let me outline what they are.

With respect to unemployment, the estimate for 2010 was 7 per cent and the forecast for 2011 is 7.5 per cent. With respect to headline inflation, the estimate for 2010 was 10 per cent inflation and the outlook for 2011 is 7 per cent. With respect to the non-energy growth, the estimate for 2010 was minus 1.9 per cent, and the outlook for 2011 was 1.9 per cent. That is a major turnaround in the outlook and, for the first time in the last three years, we shall see the resumption of growth in the non-energy sector. The outlook for the energy sector in 2010 was 3 per cent, rather the estimate was 3 per cent, and the outlook for 2011 is 3.2 per cent.

Finally, the real GDP or the growth rate as we call it, for 2011 was .1 per cent, and it forecasted at 2011. The growth rate would be 2.3 per cent. These are the figures of the Central Bank. They are sobering figures. They are positive figures, and they suggest that we are beginning to see some of the blue sky, now that we have removed or are about to remove a lot of the clouds that were in the financial landscape. [*Desk Thumping*] There is much work to be done. We are aware of that, and a lot that has been articulated in the policy statement of the budget will have to be put in place.

But, let me just make one announcement—but before I do so, I cannot help but correct one piece of misinformation that was given by the Member for Diego Martin North/East when he spoke about Trinidad and Tobago being blacklisted. He made special reference to my statement earlier in this debate when I said that it was in 2005 that the problems of the strategic deficiencies were outlined. He questioned that as he tried to create doubt.

As we are all aware, the Member for Diego Martin North/East has a very unique skill of marshaling misinformation to generate false arguments. He has done it here again. He has done it often and I give him credit. As a teacher, I give him credit for marshaling misinformation to generate false conclusions. I want to put this on the record, because I do not think it should go unchallenged. He said that Trinidad and Tobago—there was no rating, or whatever he calls it, in 2005. I have here a full report that was submitted, as late as December 20, 2010. This was submitted to the Caribbean Financial Action Task Force on the state of

preparedness of this country to meet the restructured deficiencies that were identified. One paragraph of this report says—I would just quote it:

> A mutual evaluation was carried out in Trinidad and Tobago in 2005, by the Caribbean Financial Action Task Force. On the basis of this mutual evaluation, the examiner, inter alia, identified the following deficiency within our anti-money laundering legislative framework.

I would not go into the details, but I want to establish the fact that this problem had its genesis from 2005 and was articulated subsequently in January of 2010, in a more formal way, and since then the Government has been taking many steps, since it came into office, to rectify these structural deficiencies which he said has put us in the category of being blacklisted. Previously he had argued that he was in fact wrongly interpreting the situation.

The Government, indeed, took many steps and on October 19, 2010, we made an application to join the Egmont Group, which is the body of Financial Intelligence Units in the world, and we have agreed to apply for membership in June of 2011. On November 25, the structure for the organization and staffing of the International Financial Unit was agreed to by Cabinet. On November 18, 2010, Cabinet approved a policy for FIU regulations, and on December 09 and 17 we began the search for a permanent executive director. That search is well in progress at this point in time.

I raise these just simply to put the record straight that this Government has been more than active in dealing with the structural deficiencies that were identified way back in 2005, and articulated formally to the Government in February of 2010, and for him to suggest that no steps were taken is to create more misinformation. This Government has done, in a short space of time, what his government had so many years to do and did not address at all. We will speak more on that during the course of the debate elsewhere.

Finally, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I just want to identify one next step, and it comes from what the Member for Port of Spain South said in her closing remarks. We have been very conscious of the need to set the environment right for the private sector to have its say in changing its focus and mandate, and I mentioned in my contribution earlier on that there is need to do so. We have been talking with the private sector, not only to have increased activity, but to be able to change its mandate at this stage of the economic development of Trinidad and Tobago.

To that end, the Cabinet, as of Thursday, approved a proposal for us to engage the International Financial Centre in Washington, which is the private sector arm of the World Bank, and has done enormous work throughout the world on trying to ensure that the private sector do have a more effective role to play in economic development and to deal with the issues regarding the liquidity situation and excess credit.

In so doing, there are three basic objectives that we intend to achieve in this engagement. We are moving ahead. We shall strengthen the investment climate, with the support of the International Financial Centre and the role the IFC can play in improving the ease of doing business in Trinidad and Tobago, through improving the existing investment climate and the use of special economic zones in the future, some of which I had outlined in the budget debate.

Secondly, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago can engage the IFC in its public investment and offering programme to identify assets which can add value, economically and socially, and lead to the ownership of assets by the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago, as we embark on a plan for transformation of the economy.

Thirdly, the IFC shall offer its services, not only in terms of the investment climate, or in terms of the doing business index, in which we have in fact fallen substantially from a grading of 60th in 2007 to 80th in 2010, it shall also be engaged in the creation of a low carbon and green zone within the investment framework of Trinidad and Tobago, and the establishment of a public sector implementation framework, so that we can proceed with greater pace in ensuring that our investment programme continues, and to do so the IFC will be discussing with us the establishment, which they will partly fund, of the creation of a development and diversification fund for the private sector in Trinidad and Tobago.

These are things on the agenda. It is only four months since we have put the budget in place. It is only two months since we have given it legislative authority. Now, as we start the year 2011, we start it against the background of what the Central Bank estimates say, and we look forward to this year being one of delivery, delivery, delivery.

I beg to move. [*Desk thumping*]

Question put and agreed to.

Report Adopted.

FINANCE (SUPPLEMENTARY AND VARIATION OF APPROPRIATION) (FINANCIAL YEAR 2010) BILL

Order of second reading read.

The Minister of Finance (Hon. Winston Dookeran): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I beg to move,

That a Bill to supplement and vary the appropriation of the sum the issue of which was authorized by the Appropriation (Financial year 2010) Act 2011, 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 a third time.

Bill accordingly read the third time and passed.

ADJOURNMENT

The Minister of Housing and the Environment (Hon. Dr. Roodal Moonilal): Mr. Deputy Speaker, after this 17-hour marathon session, I want to thank all Members for their participation, patience and commitment to the business of the Parliament. I want to say a special thank you, on behalf of all Members, to the Clerk of the House and the staff of the Parliament, the Hansard Reporters, [*Desk thumping*] the police officers, those members of the staff of the canteen, the tea room, support staff and all who supported us at this very, very long session that began 1.30 p.m. yesterday.

A special word of gratitude, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to yourself [*Desk thumping*] who have endured not one but indeed two marathon sessions in the very short time that you have been asked to deputize for the Speaker of the House, so we thank you very much for your very strong commitment and patience and dedication.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I beg to move that this House do now adjourn to Wednesday, January 19, 2011 at 1.30 p.m. and to put Members on notice that we will be debating, on that day, Bill No. 1 on the Order Paper, an Act to amend the Summary Courts Act, Chap. 4:20 and the Indictable Offences (Preliminary Inquiry) Act, Chap. 12:01.

We also intend, on that day, to deal with a Resolution in accordance with provisions of section 56 of the Customs Act, Chap. 78:01, Resolutions for the

continuation of duty exceptions to industry and to the offshore petroleum exploration and production operation sector for the period commencing January 01, 2011 to December 31, 2015. We intend to deal with both matters on Wednesday, January 19, 2011.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Before I put the adjournment to the House, there was a matter that was supposed to have been raised on the Motion for the Adjournment by the Member for Diego Martin North/East.

Hon. Member: We are prepared to answer.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is it going to be—is it deferred? [*Crosstalk*] Deferred. By consensus of both sides, it is deferred.

Question put and agreed to.

House adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 6.20 a.m.