

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES*Wednesday, June 12, 2013*

The House met at 1.30 p.m.

PRAYERS[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]**LEAVE OF ABSENCE**

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, I have received communication from the hon. Dr. Lincoln Douglas, Member of Parliament for Lopinot/Bon Air West, he is currently out of the country and has asked to be excused from sitting of the House during the period June 11—15, 2013; Mrs. Nela Khan, Member of Parliament for Princes Town, is also out of the country and has asked to be excused from sittings of the House during the period June 11—19, 2013; Mrs. Patricia Mc Intosh, Member of Parliament for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West, is also out of the country and has asked to be excused from sittings of the House during the period June 10—14, 2013.

Mr. Patrick Manning, Member of Parliament for San Fernando East, is seeking additional leave for a period of 42 days, with effect from May 29, 2013. This request was accompanied by a medical certificate from the specialist medical officer who has been assigned as the health-care provider for Mr. Manning during his return to Trinidad and Tobago on July 31, 2012. Hon. Stacy Roopnarine, Member of Parliament for Oropouche West, and the hon. Chandresh Sharma, Member of Parliament for Fyzabad, have asked to be excused from today's sitting of the House.

The leave which the Members seek is granted.

PAPERS LAID

1. Audited Financial Statements of the Trinidad and Tobago Mortgage Finance Company Limited (TTMF) for the financial year ended December 31, 2012. [*The Minister of Finance and the Economy (Sen. The Hon. Larry Howai)*]
Referred to the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee.
2. National Insurance (Contribution) (Amendment) Regulations, 2013 [*Sen. The Hon. L. Howai*]

3. National Insurance (Benefits) (Amendment) Regulations, 2013. [*Sen. The Hon. L. Howai*]
4. Value Added Tax (Amendment to Schedule 2) Order, 2013. [*Sen. The Hon. L. Howai*]
5. Annual Report of the Industrial Court of Trinidad and Tobago for the period October 01, 2011 to September 30, 2012. [*The Minister of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development (Hon. Errol McLeod)*]
6. Emergency Ambulance Services and Emergency Medical Personnel Regulations, 2013. [*The Minister of Health (Hon. Dr. Fuad Khan)*]
7. Ministerial Response to the Ninth Report of the Joint Select Committee established to enquire into and report to Parliament on Ministries, Statutory Authorities and State Enterprises (Group 2), on the Trinidad and Tobago Solid Waste Management Company (SWMCOL). [*The Minister of Local Government (Hon. Dr. Surujrattan Rambachan)*]

**Finance Committee Report
(Presentation)**

The Minister of Finance and the Economy (Sen. The Hon. Larry Howai): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following report: the second report (2012/2013) session of the Finance Committee of the House of Representatives of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on proposals for the Supplementation of the 2013 Appropriation.

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

The Minister of Housing and the Environment (Hon. Dr. Roodal Moonilal): Mr. Speaker, may I indicate that the Government would be in a position today to answer questions Nos. 35, 36, 42, 43, 44, 49 and 51, and would ask for questions Nos. 34 and 50 to be deferred for two weeks.

The following questions stood on the Order Paper:

**PTSC Bus Service to Cascade
(Resumption)**

34. Could the Minister of Transport indicate when would the PTSC bus service to Cascade be resumed? [*Mrs. Patricia Mc Intosh*]

**St. James Youth Centre
(Opening)**

- 50.** Could the Minister of Gender, Youth and Child Development state when will the St. James Youth Centre be opened for use by residents? [*Miss Marlene Mc Donald*]

Questions, by leave, deferred.

**Director of Student Support Services
(Details of)**

- 35.** **Miss Marlene Mc Donald** (*Port of Spain South*) on behalf of Mrs. Patricia Mc Intosh (*Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West*) asked the Minister of Education:

Could the Minister indicate:

- (a) whether there is a post of Director of Student Support Services?
- (b) if not, is there a plan to create such a post and if so, when?

Mr. Speaker: Are you asking the question? You are asking the question on behalf?

Miss Mc Donald: Yes, I am asking the question on her behalf.

Mr. Speaker: Okay. The Hon. Minister of Education.

The Minister of Education (Hon. Dr. Tim Gopeesingh): Mr. Speaker, in response to the question, there is a provision of Director of Support Services Division on the staff establishment of the Ministry of Education on behalf of the Public Service Commission/Teaching Service Commission. This position has been awaiting classification by the Chief Personnel Officer and, as such, Cabinet on April 11, 2013 agreed to the creation of the position of Manager, Student Support Services while awaiting the classification work to be done and the formulation of a Director of Student Support Services Division by the Chief Personnel Officer. That position of Manager, Student Support Services is one amongst hundreds that were passed by Cabinet in April 2013 in support of the work of the Student Support Services Division, and that is to facilitate the management and monitoring of the implementation of a comprehensive system of support services to students—namely, a quarter million students.

The position was advertised on the Ministry's website and in the print media during the period May 18, 2013 to June 03, 2013. For that position, 14 applications were received in response to the advertisement, and the Ministry of Education is now engaging their attention for the filling of that position. Meanwhile the Chief Personnel Officer, I am advised, is awaiting the determination of the approved employee association/union by the Registration, Recognition and Certification Board in order to establish a job evaluation committee to finalize the classification process for the post of Director of Student Support Services.

Mr. Speaker, the Director of Student Support Services, when it becomes filled—but while that is happening, we will fill the position of Manager of Student Support Services, and to manage that entire division we now can safely say to the country that we have in total—when they are filled after the advertisements—close to 782 Student Support Services Officers to look [*Desk thumping*] after the students in this country, and the positions are as follows—the Manager, which I spoke about:

Coordinator/Guidance and Counselling, one;

Coordinator/Diagnostic/Prescriptive Services, one;

Diagnostic Specialist, seven—one for each region;

Inclusive Education Specialist, one;

School Psychologist, 14;

Clinical Psychologist, 14;

Behavioural Specialist, 14;

Senior School Social Worker, seven;

School Social Worker, 148—so we will have one School Social Worker per secondary school.

Guidance Counsellor, 273;

Senior Special Education Officer, 45;

Special Education Instructor, 148;

Special Education Teacher Aide, 68—those are for students who are specially challenged and they need assistance.

Interpreter Assistant, 33—those are for—a lot of them are for the specially challenged hearing difficulties.

Braille Technician, four;

Braille Conversion Operators, three;

making a total of 782 officers for the Student Support Services Division.

And that, Mr. Speaker, occurred because Cabinet recently passed for the addition of 395 positions in addition to what was within the public service/teaching service from the past. The Government saw the necessity for the increase in the number of student support services personnel, and therefore moved with alacrity. In view of the situations that we are experiencing in our education system with some dysfunctional behaviour, we are moving expeditiously to have these Counsellors, at least two Guidance Officers/Guidance Counsellors per secondary school. So, 134 schools would have 268 officers and the remaining will be looking after the primary schools in clusters of possibly four or five primary schools that are close by. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Dr. Browne: Supplemental.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Supplemental, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I recognize the Member for Diego Martin Central.

Dr. Browne: Thank you. Hon. Minister, it has come to our understanding that there are currently four guidance professionals for 72 primary schools in Port of Spain and environs.

Hon. Member: Wow!

Dr. Browne: You just indicated that Cabinet has now approved a large cadre of additional positions in addition to the establishment, but if the Ministry clearly has been struggling so much to fill—

Mr. Speaker: Could you ask the question!

Dr. Browne: This is the question. If the Ministry has been struggling to fill the establishment positions, Minister, what is the process? Where would we find all of these hundreds of additional persons if we were struggling to fill the existing positions?

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: My colleague, I will be very happy to answer that question if you asked another question, because it is multipronged [*Laughter*] but I will seek to answer part of it.

The issue of filling positions of Guidance Counsellors and Guidance Officers, the Teaching Service Commission had experienced some problems in the past, but within the last two or three years there have been a number of professionals who are now qualified in those positions. In fact, one of the questions to follow, question 36, if you wait for that answer I might be able to provide that, but let me just give it to you now. We have received 328 applications to fill about 200 positions, and by analysis of them, most of them are very qualified, some with masters and PhD to help fill the positions. So, we knew that was a problem.

These positions were supposed to be filled by the Teaching Service Commission. Remember the Minister cannot appoint, promote, transfer, discipline anyone and Guidance Officers and Guidance Counsellors fall under Schedule 3, which is under the remit of the Teaching Service Commission, and therefore the Minister has no authority whatsoever in attempting to employ, whatsoever.

Because we knew the problem existed for a long time, for a while, this is why Cabinet in its wisdom, the Government, took the opportunity to move expeditiously to create contract positions to fill them while the Teaching Service Commission had not been doing so for a long while.

Dr. Browne: Further supplemental. Thank you, Minister, for that useful explanation. Clearly the Minister now has some power to fill some positions, when would these positions be filled?

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: I indicated that the advertisements went out to the print media and the Ministry's website and they closed on June 03, and I indicated that there are over 300-plus applicants. That will be looked at within the next two to three weeks by various committees—human resource management committees—to fill these positions and they will be filled before the school reopening next academic year.

1.45 p.m.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Supplemental, to the hon. Minister of Education. You have said that you have moved forward—Cabinet has decided to appoint one to two Guidance Officers per secondary school because you have seen the urgency to so, but to me the problem begins in primary school. When are you going to fill those vacancies? What do you plan to do in terms of numbers? I believe it should be one per primary school at least. Could you give some guidance on that?

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: All right. We have found that the major dysfunctions are now occurring in the secondary schools—[*Interruption*]

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: But it starts in the primary—

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:—so it is imperative to fill the positions in the secondary schools. So we will have 134 secondary schools filled by two officers, we will have 268. Out of the 320-plus, we will have about 63 more that will work now with the primary schools.

We have 484 primary schools throughout the country, so at least we will be able to have one Guidance Officer, whilst one Guidance Counsellor for a cluster of about five or six while we seek to move to increase the amount to fill the primary schools. But a number of primary schools are close by and in clusters and some primary schools have 50 students, some have 100, 150, so we will rationalize the allotment of the Guidance Officers/Guidance Counsellors to the schools, and we hopefully will be able to take care to have these people—in addition, each school now has—two days ago I signed off for 70 more health and safety officers in addition to the 90 who were there.

So, each school will have at least two health and safety officers—secondary schools—to work in conjunction with the Deans, Principals, Heads of Departments, Student Council and the Guidance Officers, Guidance Counsellors and the School Social Workers where we will have two as well for schools to manage the little difficulties that emanate from time to time.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: It is not little at all.

Mr. Speaker: Final supplemental.

Miss Hospedales: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Supplemental to the Minister of Education. Can you tell us exactly how many Social Workers and Guidance Officers have been sent home to date, because prior to May 2010, there were a specific number of Social Workers and Guidance Officers and, many of them, their contracts were either not renewed or came to an end. As a result, the Student Support Services Department has reduced numbers of Social Workers and Guidance Officers.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: I think that is a myth and fallacy that is being propagated—

Hon. Members: No!

Miss Hospedales: That is not a myth. I will get the information.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Mr. Speaker, the School Social Workers have been given this by the Ministry of Education, Permanent Secretary and personnel.

Miss Hospedales: I will get the figures for you.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: School Social Workers, number of contract positions renewed, 61 renewed; there are 75 contract positions, and 14 with life which are being renewed at the moment as we speak. So 61 have been renewed out of the 75 and 14 are being renewed as we speak. We created another 73 positions which will be filled in time for—so we will have 148 at least of the School Social Workers. [*Desk thumping*] No School Social Worker has been sent home as far as the questions asked by the Member for Arouca/Maloney.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West.

**Guidance Officer 1
(Vacant Posts)**

36. Miss Marlene Mc Donald (*Port of Spain South*) on behalf of Mrs. Patricia Mc Intosh (*Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West*) asked the Minister of Education:

Could the Minister indicate when would the sixty (60) vacant posts of Guidance Officer 1 be filled?

The Minister of Education (Hon. Dr. Tim Gopeesingh): Mr. Speaker, the response to question 36 almost parallels the response to question 35 and basically it is a redundancy to question 35, but permit me to answer directly on it. Currently there are 164 positions of Guidance Officer 1 on the staff establishment of the Ministry of Education. Seventy of these positions, by virtue of the Teaching Service Commission not appointing people, became vacant and are vacant. And as I indicated, the Teaching Service Commission is yet to appoint those persons to these positions despite numerous reminders from the Ministry of Education to the Teaching Service Commission over a period of time. As a result the Government and the Cabinet took the decision to create some contract positions which will bring the amount to close to 300-plus within the school system as I mentioned a while ago.

The Guidance Officer I, which is the Teaching Service Commission nomenclature, and the Guidance Counsellor is the contract position nomenclature to differentiate one from the other. The Guidance Officers are required to develop and implement programmes of activities geared to provide advice and counselling to students in the spheres of personal and social, career and educational developments.

Mr. Speaker, I think we are proud as a Government to indicate that in this academic year more than 42,000 students were privileged to be part of a process

of career guidance in the seven districts of Trinidad and in Tobago, over a two-day period in each district. We had students from Form 3, Form 5 and Form 6 attending these Career Guidance Seminars and Workshops where the Ministry of Tertiary Education and Skills Training and the Ministry of Education joined together to provide these workshops for close to 42,000 students. It is the first time in the history of the education system that such a large guidance counselling career seminar and programme was launched by the Ministry of Education. It was the first time ever, Mr. Speaker. [*Desk thumping*]. Forty-two thousand students benefited from it and there were more than 50 business organizations which participated as well.

The University of the West Indies, with five faculties, has at least about 50 different professions that students can go in—at least 10 professions per faculty. Then UTT, then COSTAATT, ROYTEC and the other tertiary institutions provided enough voluminous information for these students in their career paths development to understand and appreciate what lies ahead for them, for them to make a choice. Hundreds of professions are available for our students moving from the secondary schools into the tertiary education sector. So the Guidance Officers/Counsellors also assist in providing social, career and educational developments in accordance with established objectives.

Mr. Speaker, in an effort to fill these positions which remain vacant and outstanding, as I indicated, Cabinet approved to hire on contract a total of 179 more Guidance Counsellors in addition to aforementioned positions on the establishment thereby bringing a total of 343 when all positions are filled. So, as I indicated, the answer to this is basically within the original answer.

The Guidance Counsellors provide similar services to the Guidance Officers and are responsible for planning, managing and delivering a programme of school guidance and counselling. These positions were advised on the Ministry's website, Member for Diego Martin Central, and in the print media during the period May 18, 2013 to June 03, 2013; 328 applications were received in response to the advertisement. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Southern Main Road (Paving)

42. Mr. Fitzgerald Jeffrey (*La Brea*) asked the hon. Minister of Works and Infrastructure:

Could the Minister state why the Southern Main Road from Vessigny Village to Vance River Village has not been paved to date?

The Minister of Local Government and Minister of Works and Infrastructure (Hon. Dr. Surujrattan Rambachan): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr.: Speaker, the Southern Main Road is currently maintained by the Highways Division, the Siparia District Office, from the 61.5 kilometre mile mark, to the 124 kilometre mile mark. That is approximately 62.5 kilometres of roadway. The area from Vessigny Village to Vance River Village falls between the 75 kilometre and the 81 kilometre mile mark or approximately six kilometres. The Highway's Division, Siparia District Office, is currently carrying out routine maintenance from Vessigny Village to Vance River Village and has been undertaking deep patching of all potholes and depressions for the last three years.

The details of these works are recorded as follows: in terms of surface patching in 2010, 2,210 square metres at a cost of \$148,603; 2011, 1,181 square metres, \$115,724; 2012, 732 square metres, \$68,798; 2013 thus far, 139 square metres, \$19, 676 for a total of \$4,262 square metres over the last four years at a cost of \$352,801.00.

What is even more important is the deep patching that is taking place, and over the same period 1,704 square metres were subject to deep patching, of which 910 square metres was done in 2012 at a cost of \$45,914.

Hon. Member: You happy with that?

Mr. Jeffrey: Supplemental. Hon. Minister, are you aware that at a protest action at Point D'or junction, the hon. Minister had promised the residents that the entire strip was going to be paved and not patched?

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: Mr. Speaker, the Government is committed to paving and repairing roads across Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] There is no discrimination in that regard, and the evidence will show that roads have been paved in every single part of this country over the last three years that we have been in office. [*Desk thumping*] And definitely, Mr. Speaker, those roads in the La Brea area, in the Palo Seco, Erin and Siparia districts will also be put on the programme for paving. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Jeffrey: Supplemental.

Mr. Speaker: Yes.

Mr. Jeffrey: Mr. Minister, my question is this: Why was the road not paved? [*Laughter*] The whole question about patching: you are not patching in Penal, why are you patching the road from Vessigny to Vance River?

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: Mr. Speaker, there are different requirements in terms of the upkeep of roads. Some roads require not just paving but they require rebuilding, and some require 50 mm of paving, and there are others which require deep patching in which you cut out the area and you rebuild that area and then you patch it properly with hot mix.

Mr. Jeffrey: Further supplemental. Hon. Minister, are you aware of the lack of trust that is being generated for the people of Vessigny to Vance River [*Desk thumping*] as a result of promising to pave the road and instead you are patching, are you aware?

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: Mr. Speaker, the hon. Member would have heard me say that this Government is programming roads in all parts of Trinidad and that those roads will also be part of the programme.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member for La Brea.

**Ibis Circular Road
(Construction of Bridge)**

43. Mr. Fitzgerald Jeffrey (*La Brea*) asked the Minister of Works and Infrastructure:

Could the Minister state why the bridge at Ibis Circular Road, Aripero has not been constructed to date?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Minister of Works and Infrastructure.

The Minister of Local Government and the Minister of Works and Infrastructure (Hon. Dr. Surujrattan Rambachan): Mr. Speaker, this is: a very interesting situation with this bridge at Ibis Circular Road, Aripero. In fact, in 2010, I am advised that there were estimates that included this bridge under what you call unspent balances. But the project unit of the Ministry of Local Government did not approve this project because they claimed that Ibis Circular was part of a private development.

Now, Mr. Speaker, this is something that is not affecting only people who reside in places like Ibis Circular.

Hon. Member: All over.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: There has always been a debate about private development. Mr. Speaker, what you have is a situation where developers in this country have been rather unscrupulous in certain areas—

Hon. Member: Tell them.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan:—where they go, even when they have Town and Country approval, and they do minimum infrastructural work in order to make sure that the lands are approved by Town and Country Planning and then they sell those lands and people develop expensive houses on those lands, and they do not properly then—not the people—but the developer does not properly finish the infrastructure and he abandons the project. In my own constituency there is a project at Gasper Grande where people have built expensive houses, and again it is a private development and they have abandoned it and left the people there.

2.00 p.m.

Since receiving this particular question, I have asked my legal department at the Ministry of Local Government to give me an opinion as to how this might be accommodated because, Mr. Speaker, one has to balance certain things here. There are people who own those houses who are paying rates and taxes, and they are contributing by way of their income taxes also to the country. So if it is that the developer has abandoned the development—because in order for the corporation to take over development, the roads and the drains and whatever bridges, and so on, must be at a particular standard. So I am awaiting an opinion from my legal department in order to deal with this matter properly.

Mr. Jeffrey: Supplemental. How long will we have to wait for that bridge to be fixed?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Minister of Works and Infrastructure.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: Mr. Speaker, as soon as I get that opinion which is due in about 14 days—I am told by my people—I will certainly communicate with the hon. Member for La Brea.

Mr. Jeffrey: Supplemental. Hon. Minister, again, this whole question of trust. Since time immemorial—I am talking about three years ago—this kind of talk about, “Yuh ha to wait on legal opinion” was not—

Mr. Speaker: Could you ask your question, please.

Mr. Jeffrey: Right. Okay. The question I am asking here is this. Why is it that we have this toing and froing with respect to that Ibis Circular Road bridge?

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: Mr. Speaker, since the hon. Member has raised the issue of trust, I just want him to know that we had over 800 requests to pave roads in the country and those 800 roads that are being paved now, all those people on

those roads have gained more trust in the Government because we have fulfilled our promises, [*Desk thumping*] and the same thing has happened in this particular area.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for La Brea.

**Siparia-Erin Road
(Paving of)**

44. Mr. Fitzgerald Jeffrey (*La Brea*) asked the Minister of Works and Infrastructure:

Could the hon. Minister state why the Siparia-Erin Road from Santa Flora to Palo Seco has not been paved to date?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Minister of Works and Infrastructure.

The Minister of Works and Infrastructure (Hon. Dr. Surujrattan Rambachan: Mr. Speaker, the Highways Division, Siparia District Office currently maintains a distance of approximately 30.8 kilometre of roadway along the SS Erin Road from the 9.5 kilometre to 40.2 kilometre mile marks. And the area from Santa Flora to Palo Seco falls between the 27 kilometre mile mark and the 33 kilometre mile mark.

Over the last three years the Highways Division, Siparia District Office, has been carrying out maintenance on the SS Erin Road with heavy emphasis on deep patching of all potholes and depressions. It is to be noted that special emphasis has been placed on the area under review, that is, the portion of the roadway between the 27 kilometre and 33 kilometre mile marks.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, between 2010 and 2013 to date, 1,008 square metres of deep patching has been done and 2,364 square metres of surface patching have been done in that particular area.

Mr. Jeffrey: Supplemental, Mr. Speaker. Hon. Minister, are you aware at La Brea Trace Junction in Quarry, the hon. Minister had promised protesting taxi drivers that that piece of road was going to be fixed in two weeks' time?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Minister of Works and Infrastructure.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: Mr. Speaker, the Government does not give people false promises. [*Laughter*] When this Government gives a promise, it will adhere to the promise. [*Desk thumping*] And, therefore, what we intend to do is not to come in this Parliament and fabricate anything so that people—[*Interruption*] There is no fabrication. Mr. Speaker, what I want to say to the hon. Member for

La Brea, through you, is that we are going to be having programmes of work to deal with all of these roads and that would be communicated to the Member for La Brea.

**Early Childhood Care Centre
(John John East)**

49. Miss Marlene Mc Donald (*Port of Spain South*) asked the hon. Minister of Education:

Could the Minister state when will the Early Childhood Centre earmarked for John John, East Port of Spain, be constructed?

The Minister of Education (Hon. Dr. Tim Gopeesingh): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Division of the Ministry of Education is to be a high-performing, dynamic and vibrant organization responsive to the needs of stakeholders and which works collaboratively, efficiently and effectively to educate and develop an intelligent, versatile, productive and well-rounded child. It is the mission of the Ministry of Education to educate and develop children who are able to fulfil their full potential, healthy and growing normally, academically-balanced, well-adjusted socially, culturally and emotionally mature and happy.

The Ministry of Education in its strategic plan 2011—2015, identified as one of its priority areas, the attainment of universal early childhood education by 2015, and this, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, led by the hon. Prime Minister—her passion is to ensure that we achieve universal education or early childhood education, and this we will do by 2015.

As we move forward, Mr. Speaker, the critical aspect of a child's development which sets the foundation for life is within the first five or six years. And so, achieving universal early childhood education for children ages three and four, before they move into the primary school at age five, requires challenges to be addressed; that is, expanding the provision of quality services to accommodate the underserved population of approximately 34,000 children, ages three and four in our country. The annual birth rate is about 17,000/17,500, so we have to take care of approximately 34,000 children, ages three and four.

Ensuring that all ECCE centres operate above the required minimum quality standard level, as defined by our national policy on child care of the Ministry of Education, Trinidad and Tobago, Standards for Regulating Early Childhood Services—a paper was published on that and which the Ministry abides with—the

Ministry of Education, as part of its expansion of the ECCE sector, embarked on the Early Childhood Care and Education construction programme.

We inherited a quagmire from the previous Government, Mr. Speaker, where they started to construct early childhood education centres under the Haji system. The Haji contractors from Korea came into the country. They completed one out of—whether they said 30 or 40 or 50, they took \$60 million from Trinidad and Tobago—

Hon. Member: What? [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Sixty million dollars, and they left the country, Mr. Speaker, and every day we are receiving complaints from scores of contractors, bawling for money because Haji took the money and went, Mr. Speaker—under the last administration.

Hon. Member: And nothing to say about that.

Mr. Roberts: “Where Haji gone?”

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: So we have been trying to find where Haji is and we have not been able to find where Haji—what area they came from in Korea.

So, Mr. Speaker, we inherited a quagmire. Less than 5 per cent of the schools had started. Some did not start at all, but they received payment for it and they went. So we had to move expeditiously now, deal with the contractors who were constructing those schools—and Haji fled and we had to work with them to see how we can bring them on board to help complete these schools that were supposed to have been started.

Mr. Speaker, through the IADB, we began a programme in two phases. Phase one of the construction programme consists of 24 centres with proper tendering, transparency and accountability, where you have to satisfy the IADB criteria—

Hon. Member: That is not the question—

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:—which goes through international standards, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Roberts: Yes! Good answer! [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: And, therefore, Mr. Speaker, the 24 that are under construction of the IADB are going to be completed by September. We are now commencing another 26 under the second phase of the IADB programme, which will be completed by March of 2014.

Mr. Speaker, permit me to read into the record of this august House—

Mr. De Coteau: Read into the record.

Mr. Roberts: Read it loud!

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:—the 27 early childhood education centres which we have constructed already—

Mr. Roberts: Yes! Yes! [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:—all through the country: Aranguéz, Bon Air, Carlsen Field, Caura Royal Road, Clarke Rochard, Edinburgh South, Egypt Trace, Golconda, Harmony Hall, La Horquetta South, Lisas Gardens, Lower Cumuto, Malabar, Maraj Hill, Maloney, Maraval, Morvant, Oropune Gardens, Phoenix Park, Raghunanan Road—my constituency—Retrench, Roystonia, St. Augustine, St. Mary's Village, Union Hall, Valencia, Wellington Road.

Hon. Member: Everywhere.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Mr. Speaker, we constructed 27 of these early child education centres at a minimal cost of \$43 million, Mr. Speaker. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Indarsingh: Give us the average there.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Twenty-seven, an average of about \$1.5 million in those. Mr. Speaker, in addition to that, Cushe also was done and under IADB phase two ECCE programme, the 24 that are under construction now are going to be completed before the next academic year, and they are as follows: Arima New, Arouca Pine Haven SDAs—they are Seventh-Day Adventists—Bamboo Government—one in Bamboo Government Primary School—Barataria AC, Brothers, Buen Intento, Corinth Hill, Cunupia, Enterprise, Fyzabad, Jacob's Hill, La Ruffin, Madras, Malabar (Phase 4), Maloney Gardens 2, Mendez, Mount Hope, Palmiste GPS, Pleasantville GPS, Quarry Village, Rancho Quemado, Salazar Trace, Southern Gardens, St. Ann's Gardens.

So, Mr. Speaker, in addition to the 28 I spoke about, these 24 will be completed before the next academic year. So that is 52 this Ministry and the People's Partnership Government would have constructed in less than three years, whereas they constructed 22 in nine years, Mr. Speaker, having lost \$60 million through the Haji construction, Mr. Speaker.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: We lost?

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Yes, lost. Mr. Speaker, we are in the process of starting another 26 in the following areas: Adventure, Plymouth; Belle Garden—in Tobago as well, Mr. Speaker—Caroni, Cedros Government Quarters Site, Chaguanas; Courtland in Black Rock in Tobago again—Minister for Tobago Development—Cunjal, Egypt Village, Glenroy Development, Iere, La Horquetta, La Patta (Valencia), Marabella, Milford Court in Tobago again, Mt. Pleasant, Arima; Nariva/Manzanilla, North Manzanilla, Pine Settlement, Race Course Road, Carapo; Ravine Sable, Roxborough—five in Tobago—Spree Simon, Tulsie Manas—that SWAHA school, VOS, Suruj—VOS—Warrenville, Waterloo.

Mr. Speaker, 26 are going to start within another three to four weeks. [*Desk thumping*] So we have built 27; we are finishing 24 by this fiscal year.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: You completed 27.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: That is 52; 28 and 24: 52. And this 26, Mr. Speaker, that will be 78—close to 80 early childhood education centres we would have constructed [*Desk thumping*] by March 2014, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Member: No Haji money.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: No Haji money.

Hon. Member: No Haji money.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: And the total cost of this will be less than \$200 million for these 84, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of Finance and the Economy probably will be very pleased to know that we have not been asking him for much money for this, because we have been managing this very well.

Mr. Speaker, in addition to that, there are over 700 ECCE centres in Trinidad and Tobago, kindergartens and nurseries, that are under the auspices of the Ministry of Education, having registered. We are already in the process of working with these private owners of these early childhood education centres, and at this moment, 80 of them are willing to come on board with us, utilizing the programmes for the syllabus of the early childhood education with minimal requirements for us to support them, so in that way we will take care of another, possibly, 6,000 students.

Hon. Member: Excellent plan.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: So we have 8,000 students that we are catering for now with our 200 early childhood education centres—71 run by Servol. With

these 80-something, we will bring on another 6,000. That is eight and six: 14. We have another 8,000 we will get when we bring on the private sector. That is 22,000, and we would be moving within the next two years to ensure that the other 13,000 or 12,000 children, ages three and four—the 34,000 children, ages three and four in this country—will be brought under a formalized system of the Ministry of Education so that we will achieve the goal that the hon. Prime Minister set for this country to achieve universal early childhood education by 2015. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, the intellectual capacity and development of our children—70 per cent of our children’s intellectual capacity and development takes place within the first seven years of life, and that is the bedrock of intelligence and education, and once we move and satisfy the requirements for that, Mr. Speaker, this country will move by leaps and bounds in our education system, [*Desk thumping*] moving to primary and secondary and tertiary education.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Member: Yes! Yes! [*Desk thumping*]

Miss Mc Donald: Supplemental, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Member for Port of Spain South.

Miss Mc Donald: Yes, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I simply asked when will the early childhood care centre in John John be constructed. The Minister used language like, “We are in the process”. I am simply asking when will the early childhood care centre at Spree Simon in John John be constructed. Give me a time frame. Just answer that question, please.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: It will start—

2.15 p.m.

Mr. Speaker: Please, please, Members. Both of you all cannot—it is 2.15 p.m. In accordance with our Standing Order 19(7), is the Government prepared to allow question 51 to be answered, or would you want to have that carried forward in accordance with the Standing Order?

Dr. Moonilal: We will answer all the questions.

Mr. Speaker: You will answer all?

Dr. Moonilal: Yes.

Mr. Speaker: Okay. The hon. Minister of Education, could you continue and respond.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Mr. Speaker, that school, that early childhood education centre will commence in a month's time and finish by March 2014. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Point Fortin first, and then after the Member for Laventille East/Morvant.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Supplemental to the hon. Minister. Could you tell us, please:

1. How many childhood centres you met in the construction phase when you came into office on May 24, 2010?
2. What was the value of works completed at that time by Haji?
3. You did answer that \$60 million was the amount of funds released. I want you to confirm that as well.

So, it is the amount of funds released to Haji; the value of the works completed by then; and also, the number of schools which you met in progress when you came into office.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Mr. Speaker, only one out of the X number of schools that they were paid for, for \$60 million, was completed by Haji. Only one. [*Crosstalk*]

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: I never asked—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: The answers to the other questions obviously require some research to. Afford me the opportunity to provide accurate information to this House, Mr. Speaker. So I would advise the Member to be kind enough—if she wants the answer, to ask it in another question.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Supplementary. I did not ask how many schools were completed. I asked how many schools had work in progress.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Let her ask another question, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Laventille East/Morvant.

Miss Cox: Could the hon.—

Mr. Speaker: Please, Members, allow the Member to ask her question.

Miss Cox: Could the hon. Member tell us when will the Coconut Drive early childhood centre be opened?

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Member for Laventille East/Morvant, I would like to answer that question. I probably will have to do some work to find out where it is on the list and I will come back to the answer. Is it Coconut Drive?

Hon. Member: Take a note.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: I will take a note of it and I will come back to give you the answer.

Miss Cox: If it is complete? That is the answer I want.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: All right. To open any one of the ECCE centres, the community has to be notified. We have to ensure that the WASA approval and Town and Country Planning approval are completed. The community then registers their students and once they register the students, the school will be open for the next academic year.

Miss Cox: Supplemental. Is the Minister aware that this early childhood centre was completed since 2010?

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: We have completed so much, I cannot give you the exact answer. [*Desk thumping and laughter*]

Picton Dance Theatre (Completion of)

51. Miss Marlene Mc Donald (*Port of Spain South*) asked the hon. Minister of Community Development:

Could the Minister state when will the Picton Dance Theatre located at Picton Road be completed?

The Minister of Community Development (Hon. Winston Peters): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the answer to question No. 51: approval was granted on August 13, 2009 for the inclusion of the Picton Dance Theatre facility within the Ministry's community facilities programme. Work on this project had reached 10 per cent completion.

Mr. Speaker, in this business of building centres, it has to be prioritized, and so, we have 18 centres that are between 75 per cent to 95 per cent completion—
[*Interruption*]

Dr. Gopeesingh: Well done. [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. W. Peters:—and we are in fact working on these centres to ensure that they are completed and handed over to the communities. Work will continue in fiscal 2013/2014 towards the completion of the Picton Dance Theatre. [*Desk thumping*]

**FINANCE (SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION)
(FINANCIAL YEAR 2013) BILL, 2013**

Bill to provide the Supplementary Appropriation for the service of Trinidad and Tobago for the financial year ending 30th September, 2013 of the sum of the issue of which was authorized by the Appropriation (Financial Year 2013) Act, 2012 [*The Minister of Finance and the Economy*]; read the first time.

Motion made: That the next stage be taken later in the proceedings. [*Hon. L. Howai*]

Question put and agreed to.

**FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT
(ADOPTION)**

The Minister of Finance and the Economy (Sen. The Hon. Larry Howai):
Mr. Speaker, I beg to move the following Motion standing in my name:

Be it resolved that this House adopt the Second Report (2012/2013) Session of the Finance Committee of the House of Representatives of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on proposals for the Supplementation of the 2013 Appropriation.

Mr. Speaker, the Finance Committee of the House of Representatives met on Monday, June 10, 2013, and agreed on the following proposal with respect to the 2013 appropriation. The proposal was for the provision of supplementary funds in the sum of \$2,898,091,400 to fund urgent and critical recurrent and capital expenditure to September 30, 2013.

The increase in the Heads of Expenditure proposed is being sought by way of the Finance (Supplementary Appropriation) (Financial Year 2013) Bill, 2013. Because, Mr. Speaker, this involves salary adjustments of just under \$1.8 billion, every Ministry is involved. I, therefore, ask your indulgence as I go through the list. The increase is earmarked for the following Heads of Expenditure:

Auditor General—\$523,400

Judiciary—\$10,024,900

Industrial Court—\$667,900
Service Commissions—\$839,000
Tobago House of Assembly—\$222,818,100
Personnel Department—\$4,913,100
Ministry of Finance and the Economy—\$75,875,000
Ministry of National Security—\$203,751,000
Ministry of Legal Affairs—\$10 million
Ministry of Food Production—\$74,937,900
Ministry of Education—\$314,676,100
Ministry of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development—
\$7,568,000
Ministry of Public Administration—\$40,459,700
Ministry of Transport—\$136 million
Ministry of Tourism—\$8,577,800
Ministry of Public Utilities—\$6,300,000
Ministry of Local Government—\$257 million
Ministry of Trade, Industry and Investment—\$3,699,500
Ministry of the People and Social Development—\$210,438,000
Ministry of Justice—\$859,900
Ministry of Tobago Development—\$2,400,000
Ministry of Housing, Land and Marine Affairs—\$142 million
Ministry of the Arts and Multiculturalism—\$15,173,400
Trinidad and Tobago Police Service—\$661,290,200
Ministry of Planning and Sustainable Development—\$17,100,000
Ministry of Sport—\$69,689,000
Ministry of Works and Infrastructure—\$104 million
Ministry of the Environment and Water Resources—\$97 million

Ministry of Tertiary Education and Skills Training—\$190,187,500

Ministry of National Diversity and Social Integration—\$9,322,000

Giving a total of \$2,898,091,400.

Mr. Speaker, during the course of the debate, the proposals contained in the Bill will be addressed by various Members of the Government. Personnel expenditure, in particular, which comprises a significant portion of this request, will be addressed by the Member for Couva South, who is also the Minister of State in the Ministry of Finance and the Economy and, who is himself, a labour leader of long standing.

Mr. Roberts: Yes!

Sen. The Hon. L. Howai: The three largest Heads of Expenditure requiring supplementary resources for recurrent expenditure in areas other than personnel expenditure are: the Ministry of the People and Social Development, the Ministry of Housing, Land and Marine Affairs and the Ministry of National Security. I will deal with each in turn.

With respect to the Ministry of the People and Social Development, this Ministry requires an additional \$210 million to meet the payment of social grants to the end of fiscal 2013.

In case of the Ministry of Housing, Land and Marine Affairs, the additional resources are required to facilitate expenditure under the Community-based Environmental Protection and Enhancement Programme for:

1. the expansion of beautification and landscaping facilities;
2. the engagement of four additional contractors; and
3. the continued development of staff with an emphasis on training.

Mr. Speaker, with regard to the Ministry of National Security, the additional funding is required to supplement current transfers and subsidies in order to:

1. replenish the Strategic Services Agency's allocation which was utilized to meet the interim payments for the training and maintenance support programme arising from the acquisition of four AW139 medium twin-turbine helicopters;
2. to strengthen the disaster preparedness and mitigation capacities of the Office of Disaster Preparedness and Management (ODPM) in readiness for the upcoming hurricane season;

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3. payment of arrears to TSTT for the roll-out of CCTV cameras in Trinidad and Tobago; and
4. for the Hoop of Life Programme.

Other speakers, Mr. Speaker, will go into these requests in more detail—as well as other matters which came up during the course of the Finance Committee—later on in these proceedings.

All of the details of the proposal were circulated to all Members of the Finance Committee and discussed at its meeting on Monday, June 10, 2013. During the meeting, various issues were raised by Members. As Chairman, I responded to some of the issues raised and undertook to supply responses to others. I am pleased to report that responses have been circulated to Members, and also, that further explanations will be given by selected Members during this debate.

Mr. Speaker, the fiscal position of the Government remains solid. This has been acknowledged by the International Monetary Fund in its Article IV Consultation Report that was prepared earlier this year and which will be presented to its executive board of directors later this week. Also, on January 28, 2013, the rating agency, Standard and Poor's, in recognition of the excellent stewardship, reaffirmed its A foreign and A local currency sovereign credit rating on the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. At the same time, Standard and Poor's reaffirmed its A1 short-term rating and affirmed that the long-term outlook remains stable. They also reaffirmed the AA transfer and convertibility assessment which remained unchanged.

With respect to the deficit, Mr. Speaker, this was a question that was raised during the Finance Committee and perhaps I should seek to deal with it at this time.

2.30 p.m.

In presenting the annual budget 2013 in October of last year, the Minister of Finance and the Economy announced total expenditure of \$58 billion and revenue of \$50.7 billion, yielding an overall deficit of \$7.6 billion or 4.6 per cent of GDP. The adjustments included in the proposed supplementary appropriation Bill, as well as the use of \$477 million from the unexpended resources in the IDF at the end of fiscal 2012, will increase expenditure by approximately \$3.4 billion.

When this increased expenditure is matched against the projected increase in revenue of approximately \$1.6 billion and analyzed against the impact of savings

and adjustments within Heads of Expenditure, it results in an increase in the projected overall deficit on the fiscal operations from \$7.6 billion to \$9.2 billion or 5.52 per cent of GDP. Mr. Speaker, obviously an increase in the deficit is something that would cause some concern to Members, and therefore, perhaps, I should start by saying that last year at the same time when we did the mid-year appropriation, the projection was for a deficit of \$8.99 billion. The actual deficit turned out to be \$3.11 billion or just over \$6 billion below the announced deficit.

As at the middle of this year, the figures for the end of March, which I published in the newspapers, show that the recurrent expenditure—sorry, the recurrent surplus or deficit, in the case of the budget, was a deficit of \$2.9 billion which had been budgeted to the end of March. Actually, we showed a surplus on recurrent expenditure of \$731 million. So, in fact, Mr. Speaker, we were approximately \$3.6 billion better than had been indicated in the budget. [*Desk thumping*] Overall, the overall deficit which was projected at \$7 billion was actually \$1.7 billion.

So, Mr. Speaker, there has been considerable suppression of expenditure, and I would say that there has been the issue of capacity—capacity which we have to address and have been addressing as we move forward with a view to ensuring that the things that need to be done for the public of Trinidad and Tobago are, in fact done.

But, I want to, perhaps, dwell a bit on the fiscal outturn for the first half of this year which was considerably better, Mr. Speaker, than had been projected. Revenue exceeded budgetary estimations by 3.4 per cent. This arose mainly because of increased revenues from taxes on incomes and profits which came mainly from the energy sector, notwithstanding some of the challenges we have had in the energy sector to which I will speak a little later in my own presentation.

There was also, Mr. Speaker, an increase of 5.3 per cent in revenue on taxes and goods and services reflecting higher than expected revenue from goods and services, mainly emanating from the non-energy sector, [*Crosstalk*] and this reflects the growth in the economy in the non-energy sector of the economy to which I would refer to in a little while. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, the preliminary expenditure figures were also 14.5 per cent lower than budgeted, so that overall to the end of March, we had a combination of higher revenues and lower expenditure which resulted in a much better fiscal outturn for the first half of the year than we had originally projected. [*Desk thumping*] In total—and if I were to expand on the fiscal performance in a little

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bit more detail for the first half, our total revenue, as a per cent of GDP, was 15 per cent as against a budget of 14.2 per cent, and total expenditure was 16.1 per cent of GDP as compared to a budget of 18.4 per cent of GDP. So that, again, emphasizing in relation to the overall Gross Domestic Product of the country that we have been doing better on both fronts. Overall, the surplus or the deficit, when we take the entire expenditure, including capital, into account, the overall deficit was 1.1 per cent of GDP as compared to a budget of 4.2 per cent.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Excellent! [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. The Hon. L. Howai: But, nevertheless, Mr. Speaker, these are deficits and we must remain committed to ensuring a disciplined and focused approach to bringing the budget to a sustainable place. Clearly, we remain committed to the position enunciated in our budget speech last year where we committed ourselves to getting to a balanced budget by 2016.

These deficits, Mr. Speaker, are being projected in a global economy where most developed countries are also reflecting deficits. For illustration, the major economies in the world are reflecting deficits as follows: in the United States, last year, the deficit as a per cent of GDP was 8.7 per cent; in the UK, it was 6.5 per cent; in the eurozone, it was 2.5 per cent—very significant deficits are being reflected everywhere in the world. In Trinidad and Tobago last year, our deficit was about 2 per cent. It was among the lowest in the world. So while we are taking measures to grow the economy, we are also doing what is required to ensure that we get this budget to a sustainable place.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, if I might be allowed to quote from the OECD's Economic Outlook, last updated on May 29, 2013, in the outlook, the phenomenon of continuing deficit budgets is expected to continue in many parts of the world as many Governments seek to get their economies back onto a growth path. For example, in looking at the report, countries from as far away as Australia to the United States are expected to reflect deficits, again, in 2014. So, when we speak, Mr. Speaker, about getting our budget to a sustainable place but requiring some time to do so, it is being done, not in a profligate way, but being done in a way that will ensure that we get there without causing any serious dislocation to our economy, and using a modus that is in keeping with what is done in many other parts of the world.

For example, if I may be able to quote from the outlook—the OECD Economic Outlook—the United Kingdom will show a deficit next year, in 2014, of 6.5 per cent notwithstanding very severe austerity measures taking place in that country.

The United States will show a deficit of 5.3 per cent. The Euro area, 15 countries, would show a deficit of 2.5 per cent, and the OECD as a whole, will show a deficit of 3.8 per cent. This is not just in the developed countries, Mr. Speaker, but also in developing countries. Brazil will show a deficit next year of 2.2 per cent according to the OECD Economic Outlook; China, 1.5 per cent; India 6.6 per cent; Indonesia, 1.9 per cent; South Africa, 4.4 per cent.

But these deficits, Mr. Speaker, as I said, are being done in a context where the world as a whole has recognized the need to ensure that there is a certain level of spending which ensures that the economy will continue to grow as we seek to put the structural adjustments that are required in place to transform economies as diverse, as I said, from Australia right up to the United States. In fact, Mr. Speaker, if I may be able to quote from the *Wall Street Journal*, and I have here the *Wall Street Journal* of Wednesday, April 17 and they quoted the IMF and the IMF was warning Euro area policymakers against focusing too much on hitting tough deficit targets saying they risk further deepening their downturn. The IMF was recommending, and I quote from the IMF report which is quoted here in the *Wall Street Journal*:

“Fiscal adjustment need to proceed gradually, building on measures that limit damage to demand in the short term, the IMF said.”

So, Mr. Speaker, the issue of having a deficit budget, while again it remains an area of concern, we are certainly not comforted by the fact that we have a deficit. Nevertheless, we are comforted by the fact that the approach that we are taking is an approach that has an endorsement around the world.

Turning now to the performance of the economy, Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to say or to note that based on the initiatives which we have introduced, the economy has started to show a gradual turnaround. [*Desk thumping*] We have had three consecutive quarters of growth—

Hon. Member: “Doh like to hear dat, eh!”

Sen. The Hon. L. Howai:—three consecutive—after a fairly patchy period over the period 2009 to 2012. The initiatives which have been put in place by my predecessor Mr. Dookeran, [*Laughter*] as well as initiatives put in place by the Government, began to bear fruit. [*Desk thumping*] In the third quarter of 2012, the economy grew by 1.8 per cent; in the fourth quarter of 2012, the economy grew by 1 per cent; and in the first quarter of 2013, the economy grew by 1.7 per cent.

Mr. Roberts: Yes, man! [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. The Hon. L. Howai: So, Mr. Speaker, again, you know, when you are talking about recession, you have three quarters of decline reflects a recession. Well, Mr. Speaker, we have three quarters of growth reflecting a significant turnaround in the economy. [*Desk thumping*] And, Mr. Speaker, in comparing, you know, there are some concerns that, of course, we are talking 1 per cent and one and a half and 1.8, 1.7, we are not speaking about 5 per cent and 10 per cent growth [*Crosstalk*] but the thing is that in the current global environment, these are things that affect every economy in the world.

Let me, Mr. Speaker, perhaps, draw a comparison for you.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Minister of Finance and the Economy.

Sen. The Hon. L. Howai: Sorry.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Point Fortin!

Mr. Speaker: Member for Point Fortin, I am hearing you very loudly and very clearly, your turn will come to speak. Could you take notes and allow the Minister of Finance and the Economy to speak in silence, and could you kindly observe Standing Order 40 (b) and (c) respectively? Continue, hon. Minister of Finance and the Economy.

Sen. The Hon. L. Howai: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. If I were to compare, for example, the lowest level of growth in the last three quarters for Trinidad and Tobago, which was the 1 per cent that we showed in the quarter ended December: 2012, what I did is I compared that with what is happening around us in the rest of the world. For the same period, Jamaica showed a decline of 0.9 per cent; Barbados showed a decline of 0.2 per cent; the Euro area showed a decline of 0.6 per cent; the United Kingdom showed a decline of 0.3 per cent; the United States, the engine of the world economy, showed a growth of only 0.4 per cent; Canada—strong and resource-rich country—showed a growth of only 0.2 per cent; Brazil showed growth of 1.4 per cent. So, of all of these countries, Mr. Speaker, none of them, apart from Brazil, was able to match the growth which was showed in our economy in December 2012. [*Desk thumping*]

You know, Mr. Speaker, this is in a context where not only are these economies not growing and, in fact, shrinking, but even some of the stronger economies and the larger developing economies of the world, such as India and China, have begun to show a marked slowdown, and that still remains for us, Mr. Speaker—I only do this for explanatory purposes. The fact that we are in a world

where the economies are contracting, where growth is slowing, is an area of concern—remains an area of concern. While we speak about the growth that we have shown and we remain proud of that growth and proud that we have been able as Trinidad and Tobago to find our way in a world of turmoil and to continue to grow, nevertheless, we remain, we continue to monitor the situation closely as we move forward.

2.45 p.m.

Perhaps, I could address some of the specific sectors of the economy which showed some growth in 2013. Of course, I will have to deal with the energy sector separately. But, perhaps—because diversification is an issue that, again I will come to later, but again it is something that is high on the national agenda and I am not just saying the agenda of the Government of the Republic but on the national agenda it is a high priority. What was very pleasing is the continuing and actually more robust growth which the non-energy sector has shown.

In the third quarter of 2012, the non-energy sector showed growth of 2.7 per cent. In the quarter ended December, it showed growth of the non-energy sector, 1.7 per cent; and in the quarter ended March 2013, it showed growth of 2.6 per cent. Leading in there was the manufacturing sector, which has begun to show a turnaround, especially from last year and particularly the cement production has been up quite significantly and that also gave a boost to the manufacturing sector in the first quarter of this year.

Construction, which had shown continuing declines over an extended period of time—for example last year, the first quarter of 2012, 4.1 per cent decline; second quarter, 3.5 per cent decline. But we began to see that turnaround taking place in the third quarter, 1.3 per cent, and that turnaround has gathered momentum; 2.3 per cent at the end of December: and 3 per cent at the end of March. [*Desk thumping*] So, we expect that will continue and very importantly, Mr. Speaker, agriculture, which has been showing continual declines, at the end of December, showed an increased growth in the agricultural sector of 2.6 per cent. [*Desk thumping*] I would like to congratulate my colleague, the Minister of Food Production, for his efforts in this regard.

But, with respect to the energy sector, despite several challenges—and we have had a number of challenges in the energy sector—there has been quite a considerable amount of maintenance work going on in the sector and we have also been hampered by industrial unrest. In the first quarter, we were hampered a bit by some industrial unrest and that impacted on the overall output of the sector.

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The energy sector grew by only 0.5 per cent and it is the strength of the non-energy sector that took us to growth of 1.7 per cent, notwithstanding t only 0.5 per cent in the energy sector.

Crude oil output fell by 2.3 per cent and, again, as you know, there was significant industrial unrest which affected output in that particular sector. But in other areas of the energy sector, we showed growth. For example, exploration and production grew by 1.6 per cent and natural gas production also increased by 2 per cent. LNG output also increased by 5.4 per cent. So, overall, we have been seeing very significant activity in a number of areas and once we get past the maintenance work that is required to be done in the energy sector, we expect to see much more robust growth for the economy moving forward.

One of the things that, perhaps, I should mention here is there will be considerable downtime in the energy sector during the third quarter. And, as a result of that, I expect that will have a significant impact on our numbers for that quarter. That is because of very significant maintenance work being done by one of our major upstream producers. This significant downtime, at one stage, was actually going to result in taking approximately one and a half Tcf of gas—so one and a half trillion cubic feet of gas, out of the system.

If I could put that in context, in the whole of India—I mean they do not use natural gas throughout—but the whole of India uses 1.7 tcf, 1.7 trillion cubic feet of gas. So, we actually were going to take down, during the third quarter of this year, the equivalent of what the whole of India uses on a daily basis.

Dr. Rowley: “What you talking about?”

Sen. The Hon. L. Howai: We have had, therefore, to make significant adjustments to that programme and we have worked a number of bypasses around that system to mitigate the effect and I have to thank the producers for working with us in trying to find a solution to reduce that output.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, Trinidad and Tobago produces 4.2 trillion cubic feet of gas, 4.2 tcf of gas, a day and that would have reduced our output by approximately 25 per cent, which would have had a very significant impact on the economy as a whole.

Mr. Imbert: “You know what you saying?”

Sen. The Hon. L. Howai: But on the first half of 2013—of course, hon. Member.

Mr. Imbert: Four point two trillion cubic feet per day?

Sen. The Hon. L. Howai: Yeah, yeah, of gas.

Mr. Imbert: Per day?

Sen. The Hon. L. Howai: Of which—sorry. My apologies. Sorry, my apologies and I thank the hon. Member for drawing it to my attention. I thank the hon. Member. It is 4.2 billion. My apologies and thank you very much for making that correction. It is 4.2 billion cubic feet of gas, as opposed to 4.2 trillion cubic feet of gas. My apologies.

Mr. Imbert: Per day.

Sen. The Hon. L. Howai: Per day, 4.2 billion. Thank you hon. Member for Diego Martin North/East. Thank you. So, based on the level of activity we are seeing, the Central Bank flash estimates for the first half suggest that the economy can show positive growth of up to 2 per cent for the first half of this year, which is very considerable. Two per cent growth, coming from a position where, during the course of last year, half of the year, we showed no growth, I think a 2 per cent growth is very significant. We expect that in this quarter, the energy sector will grow by 0.8 per cent and that the non-energy sector would expand by between 2½ to 2.8 per cent

Mr. Speaker, in the context of the growths that we are seeing, are being experienced in a context where, for example, inflation continues to remain well contained. The inflation rate at the end of April was 5.5 per cent and the private sector has begun to respond to the changes that they are seeing in the environment, with private sector lending increasing year on end to the period ended March 2013. Our foreign exchange reserves continue to remain healthy at \$9.2 billion up to the end of April and the import cover, therefore, continues to remain strong.

At the end of the quarter, the debt to GDP was estimated to be 48.7 per cent. Again, well controlled, and unemployment at just over 5 per cent. Mr. Speaker, the fact that unemployment is, perhaps, at a level that is the envy of many other places in the world, still does not mean that there is not room for us to do more. In fact, when we look at some of the figures for those around us, for example in the Bahamas, unemployment is 11 per cent. In Jamaica it is 13 per cent. In many of the other Caribbean islands it is in the teens. In the US it is 8.1 per cent; in the Euro area it is 12 per cent. So, an unemployment level of between 5 and 6 per cent is a manageable level in the context of what is happening globally, what is happening internationally.

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But, Mr. Speaker, the thing is, as I said, the search for continuing to create meaningful jobs, for continuing to create meaningful employment, continues to be a major challenge for the Government and it is something which a number of initiatives are being considered and some of which we will speak to as we go through this debate to deal with the whole issue of how we can create meaningful employment in all areas of the economy.

One of the things that we will be looking at, while we look at the whole issue of growth and what is happening in the economy as a whole from a macroeconomic point of view, a number of areas are also being addressed. For example, in the financial services support sector, as we have indicated before, a number of new units have been opening up. Royal Bank, for example, opened their operational and service delivery unit, which is a back office processing unit, which will eventually process the back office for some 22 countries in which RBC operates throughout the Caribbean. We expect that back office unit will continue to expand and will continue to create meaningful jobs in that particular area.

Scotia Bank has also established their regional back office centre here in Trinidad and Tobago and, again, that regional back office is expected to commence with approximately 200 persons and gradually continue to grow and increase as their operations expand. Pan American Life, another insurance company, has signed an MOU with a view to putting their back office processing centre here in Trinidad and Tobago.

As we have said, Mr. Speaker, in the next five years we expect to create something like about 3,000 new jobs in this particular sector. [*Desk thumping*] We are also putting the architecture in place to make this financial services sector a major area of growth for the economy.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, the revised FIU Act and the Securities Act were passed last year. Trinidad and Tobago was removed from the grey list of the FATF and we have laid in the Senate, the insurance legislation. Soon to come is the credit unions Bill as well as the occupational pensions Bill during the course of next year.

Mr. Speaker, what we are doing is we are building an infrastructure on which we will be able to expand and grow the financial services sector. Our vision is to see a dynamic capital market develop in Trinidad and Tobago, one which will see bond trading activity and the establishment of a regional stock exchange here in

Trinidad and Tobago. So, what we need to do before we can get to those points is that we need to build a legislative infrastructure and a regulatory infrastructure that would make this jurisdiction one that is attractive to potential investors.

Another area that we have been looking at is the public/private partnerships. I have to say that the progress which we had made in that particular area was not as, perhaps, as—it had not reached as far as I had projected or expected at the time when I read the budget last year. We have since put a number of initiatives in place to address the weaknesses and the deficiencies in that particular area and we have identified, out of a total of approximately 80 projects which had been proposed by various Ministries, we have narrowed that down and we have identified 10 projects which we will focus on with a top three being immediate priority for us in the areas of particularly health and transportation, the top three projects going forward into next year.

Mr. Speaker, these are all areas which would help to cement and help to drive the diversification efforts as we move forward. But, of course, while I deal with the macroeconomic issues and while I speak to all of the different initiatives that we have going in Trinidad and Tobago, there are a number of areas that we have to address in order to ensure that this growth is self-sustaining and to ensure that the economy is put on a strong developmental path. There are certainly structural reform measures that need to still be addressed. The diversification of the economy is in a very nascent stage and we have to start building on that. The creation of meaningful employment, as I said, is an area that continues to challenge us, an area in which we continue to focus, particularly in the area of innovation and entrepreneurship.

The brain drain that we experience is something that we need to deal with and turn around. The issue of demographics and immigration, a sustainable immigration policy and what is happening with the overall demographics of the country remain something that we have to deal with. The system of transfers and subsidies, again, also is an area that we continue to need to deal with and, of course, the efficiency of the public sector.

There are a number of areas and by all means as we stand here and we speak to some of the successes which we have achieved, we are conscious of the fact there continues to be areas on which we need to focus, in which we need to invest and on which we need to build if we are to ensure a sustainable future for all our children as we go forward.

3.00 p.m.

Another area, Mr. Speaker, which we dealt with in the last budget, and which perhaps I can give a bit of an update on, is the area of the Clico Investment Fund. The Clico Investment Fund as you know was launched on November 01 last year and, as of May 09, 2013 we had approximately 6,553 active CIF unitholders, holding approximately 67 per cent of the shares in the CIF. The market capitalization was \$4.3 billion and, of course, I need to say that had they held on to their bonds, they actually would have only been able—if they had to encash them right away—to perhaps receive as little as 40 cents on the dollar or 40 per cent of their return. While the price on the stock exchange has gone down to some extent, the fact is that many of those who redeemed their bonds for units in the CIF actually came out—they doubled the money they actually would have gotten—

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: What?

Sen. The Hon. L. Howai:—at least 80 cents [*Desk thumping*] on the dollar, as opposed to 40 cents on the dollar, if they had kept their bonds and changed them for cash. [*Crosstalk*]

So, Mr. Speaker, the initiative which was sparked by my predecessor, the former Minister of Finance, has contributed to significant growths in the stock exchange over the past year. [*Desk thumping*] In fact, the average daily trading of the CIF was 124,036 units on a daily basis. If I may quote from the *Business Express* of May 29, the CEO of the exchange was quoted as saying that:

“In the five months”—since the CIF had been launched—“transactions amounting to 12.6 million units”—were—“traded with a value of \$279 million.

And what the CEO said is and I quote him:

“that is real business for the stock exchanges so we are”—very “excited”.

What we have been able to do also is to begin to see some of the efforts for improving the activity on the stock exchange beginning to take shape. For example, and again, in respect of the CIF, the chairman of the Clico Policy Holders Group again quoted in the same article, May 29, 2013 of the *Business Express*, Mr. Peter Permell was saying that:

“The first dividend paid”—was—“56 cents per unit, and the second I have averaged should be 30 cents per unit. That is a total yield of 86 cents...per \$25 unit or 3.5 per cent on the overall investment. That is better than any fixed deposit return—”

And I am quoting him:

“anywhere now in these current economic conditions...”

So, Mr. Speaker, the fact is that the investment is a long-term investment and is an investment which yields a return of 3.5 per cent, considerably better than you would get, as Mr. Permell noted, in the banking sector, and certainly for those who converted their bonds for the CIF, representing good value for money.

In addition to some of these initiatives, of course, I should also mention that the Trinidad and Tobago Tourism Business Development Company has begun its work of revitalizing the business sector in Tobago. Approximately 26 applications were received as at May 10, 2013 and these are in the process of being approved. So we expect to see a number of businesses in Tobago taking advantage of this and starting the process of rebuilding their business over time.

In order to ease the VAT refunds, earlier this year we issued \$100 million again of additional funding to the Board of Inland Revenue to ease some of the burdens in that particular area. With respect to the ease of doing business again, Mr. Speaker, some of the structural reforms that we need to implement the VAT Act—we have reduced the time for registration to one day—sorry, we have made amendments to the Act—let me say that correctly—to make it mandatory for the BIR to effect registration for VAT in one day, and similarly for the NIB.

We have also removed a number of perhaps nuisance items such as, for example, the requirement to emboss articles and pay a \$25 stamp duty and so on, in order to get the process of registering a business much easier. For example, the issue of the name reservation, business registration or incorporation, are now available online through the single electronic window at the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Investment. I will like to congratulate my colleague, Minister Bharath for the efforts that he has done in that regard. [*Desk thumping*]

We have also taken a number of initiatives in the areas of construction permits and trading across borders and, of course, Mr. Speaker, you would be aware that we recently passed the Customs (Amdt.) Act which is intended to speed up the process of clearing goods, by allowing for the electronic provision of advance information, passenger and cargo information to customs and border control, so that we will be able to speed up that process. And we are looking for that to reduce the time potentially for clearing containers from the docks, from days to perhaps hours. There are a number of things that we need to do to make that effective, but we are aware of those issues and we are seeking to put those in place.

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So, Mr. Speaker, in short, what I want to say is that the economy of Trinidad and Tobago has begun to show growth. We have begun to put ourselves in a position where the momentum will continue into the foreseeable future. New investments are being made both by the international private sector as well as the local private sector.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Name them.

Sen. The Hon. L. Howai: We are seeing private credit continuing to increase. We are seeing a number of initiatives taking place, and we are seeing all of this happening in an overall macroeconomic environment that is conducive to new business. So, overall, the economy continues to do well. Some of the initiatives which we have put in the budget have begun to have an impact on the economy as a whole, and we expect to see a continuation of that effort in the months to come.

As I said—there have been a number of—in terms of the specific requests that are being made in this appropriation Bill, there have been a number of questions which were asked, and they were quite incisive questions, good questions by the other side, and we did send some of that information forward to Members on the other side yesterday, and we will address those issues which remain outstanding, as we progress through the deliberations of this House here this evening. Mr. Speaker, so I will not go into all of those details. I will leave them for my colleagues and then in the wrap-up, I will deal with any outstanding issues.

With the foregoing details, which I have given to this honourable House, what is clearly underlined is the Government's commitment to delivery. I think it was the hon. Prime Minister who indicated in one of her first statements that our mandate is to serve the people. That mandate has evolved to deliver to the people and has further evolved to implement for the people. So, the focus of the Government now is implementation of the projects which we have identified and a number of the initiatives to which we have committed ourselves in the budget.

The People's Partnership Government has in its three years in office, undertaken to carry out these mandates in the best way that resources will allow. But this Government has undertaken this work in what I regard as perhaps the most scrutinized political environment in our nation's history, and I think that is something that is to be commended because we must continue to carry on the business of Government in an environment that is open and transparent. Our every word, our every action, our every commitment receives immediate, widespread commentary from citizens of our country. With the pace and scope of

scrutiny having expanded enormously, it means that the expectations of the people have also expanded; development, progress and implementation will, therefore, not wait.

As a Government, we must adapt and, in large measure, have adapted to this evolving environment where needs are greater, more urgent and more complex. It is for this reason that the hon. Members on this side will be detailed in not only the programmes undertaken, but also the necessity of these programmes and the benefit and value they will deliver to Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Speaker, as the Minister of Finance and the Economy, I have taken the hon. Prime Minister's mandate very seriously indeed. The onerous task falls on me to ensure that—with the limited resources we have—the needs of our citizens, of our economic development agenda and of our determination to deliver, that all of these are met. These needs must be met in a manner that is responsible, that demonstrates a continuing progression of growth, with development and that that be self-sustaining.

Already the benefits of our restructuring of priorities are showing. We have reversed a declining situation and placed our economy on a growth trajectory. We have to continue to find a balance between the need to inspire economic activity through government spending, and the need to control inflation through disciplined fiscal management. We have to ensure that more and more expenditure is matched by measurable gain and value for the people of our country, and most of all we have to ensure that in the midst of launching, and delivering a redirected economic development programme, we do so with as little fallout as possible in the context of job creation and poverty eradication, and that we do so in a manner that is sustainable and deepens the confidence in the restored power and influence of the Trinidad and Tobago economy.

Mr. Speaker, I beg to move.

Hon. Member: Well done! [*Desk thumping*]

Question proposed.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition, Member for Diego Martin West. [*Desk thumping*]

Dr. Keith Rowley (*Diego Martin West*): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to make a few observations on the matter before us, and on the presentation by the Minister of Finance and the Economy. When we met in the Finance Committee recently, we were confronted with the Government putting to us a

request for approximately \$2.9 billion of additional expenditure, and we have to see that in the context of an expenditure pattern which had been severely criticized by the people who are in Government today. They were the ones who made a career from the Opposition Benches—

Miss Cox: Uh-hmm.

Dr. K. Rowley:—pointing out to the country that our expenditure patterns were too high.

Miss Cox: That is right.

Dr. K. Rowley: And those admonitions were coming against a background of a period of record revenues. At the time when they were criticizing expenditure in the \$40 billion, \$45 billion, \$43 billion level, and saying that level of expenditure was critically and dangerously too high, the revenues were record breaking.

Today, this Government is spending consistently well above the levels it criticized in the mid-2007, 2008, 2009 and 2010. We are approving annual expenditure in the order of approximately \$60 billion at the time of the budget presentation.

However, the Government's incompetence is demonstrated in a development programme, year after year, where they approve sums to drive the economy, a very inimical exercise—and the observing agencies point that out from time to time—and the Government is left to tell us comforting stories.

3.15 p.m.

It is now well part of our folklore that my good friend and colleague from Tunapuna spoke well before the arrival of this Minister, speaking about the turnaround of the economy. In fact, the very first budget presented by the Member for Tunapuna, who was the Minister of Finance, that budget was entitled, "Turning the Economy Around". That was in 2010.

Today, we are hearing from the Member—not the Member—from the Minister of Finance and the Economy, something quite different. After the turning of the economy around of 2010, we had the period of green shoots because the green shoots had arrived and the blue skies were above us. That was from a previous Minister of Finance.

Then we had a Cabinet reshuffle. We had a Minister of Finance who did not have to worry about his future because he became known as the \$10-million man

because things were so green and things were doing so well that we could have recruited from the public sector a Minister of Finance and the Economy at a cost of \$10 million to come and continue the process.

The first thing he did, Mr. Speaker, coming out of the private sector, albeit state owned, was to announce upfront before he arrived in the House that what was required was an austerity approach because the previous Minister of Finance was pursuing deficit financing at the levels of 2010, 2011 and so on. So he was coming with something quite different and he telegraphed it even before he arrived, causing the unions to respond to him saying: “Um um, you cyar take \$10 million up there and fix yourself and come and give us any austerity here.” And the unions began immediately to polish their walking shoes to deal with him.

So, today, I was very surprised to see the Minister of Finance and the Economy who entered the arena bringing to us solutions based on austerity budget that never came because he too presented another record-breaking budget.

Today, he is the poster child, giving us a speech written by somebody else, of course—

Hon. Member: Oh, gosh!

Dr. K. Rowley:—about deficit financing. [*Crosstalk*] I simply ask you, Mr. Speaker, to compare what was said by him today in his treatise on deficit financing and telling us it is happening all over the world. He took us to Brazil; he took us to Europe; he took us to the Caribbean—deficit financing and the wonderful things it will do. It is the same deficit financing we were engaged in under the previous Minister of Finance when he got the job and announced that we were going to go into austerity budgeting to correct our position. Mr. Speaker, we listen to them all the time and we listen to him and they can grumble and groan as much as they like, they can present no evidence to contradict anything I have just said. [*Desk thumping*] None!

Mr. Speaker, I want this country to understand that you are not to listen to any of the Government’s nancy stories because we have learnt by now not to believe anything this Government says. [*Crosstalk*]

We were told before, Mr. Speaker, by previous Ministers, that the economy was turned around, that growth had arrived; but today we are being told by the current Minister of Finance and the Economy that what was happening before in the period up to 2012, to use his own words, it was “patchy”.

I was here throughout the term of my colleague from Tunapuna. He never told us that patchiness was happening. He gave us a lot of good stories about how wonderful things were happening.

Miss Mc Donald: The skies were blue.

Dr. K. Rowley: But today his successor is telling us that what happened prior to his arrival was patchy. Their own words, Mr. Speaker, their own words; and, Mr. Speaker, the people of this country have to understand that the Government is now reduced to talking to itself because no serious person in this country believes anything the Government tells us.

In presenting his case to us today, Mr. Speaker, about how the non-oil sector had grown, you know what he told us? He told us that expansion in cement is his example of the growth, and the expansion in cement gave a boost to the manufacturing sector.

I want to ask the Minister of Finance and the Economy, what about cement and its use gives a boost to the manufacturing sector? What are they making, inverts and draw-pipes? Or cement shirts and cement shoes?

The growth—sales of cement in Guyana, largely—is not “gonna” contribute to the manufacturing sector in Trinidad and Tobago. That is nonsense! He even went as far as to tell us that you were using for four trillion cubic feet of gas per day. My colleague had to point out to him, in which case our gas would be finished in one week—in one week—and had he not been corrected, that would have been left on the record. And then we are being told: “Oh, we are consuming as much gas as India, when we reduce that amount that is what India is using.” What is the sense behind that? India’s economy is not driven on gas. It is driven on oil and it is driven on whatever else.

Miss Mc Donald: Coal.

Dr. K. Rowley: Coal and whatever, so what good is it to tell me today, after three years of the Government “turning around the economy”, and two Ministers of Finance telling me I must take comfort in the fact that we are going to reduce our consumption by the amount that India uses and, therefore, we should feel happy about that? No. The job you were hired to do is a job that is not being done because there is no policy position in this Government, it is pure ad hocism. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, bear in mind what he told you today. I want to spend my few minutes reminding the country that if what he said is true what we are observing cannot be the reality; but we know that the reality that we are observing is what exists in Trinidad and Tobago.

I want to take you, Mr. Speaker, to the question of the public debt, that this is something that has not been on the radar for a little while and, if we allow ourselves to listen to nancy stories from people like the Minister of Finance and the Economy, we will wake up here one morning and discover that this country is in a place that we “cyar” come back from.

Mr. Speaker, I know, I have seen, in the United States, very often you see a man might get three or four, five different life sentences; a man with one life might get a number of life sentences for a crime. Today, in this place, I am in the same jeopardy because when I present information here, I might find myself before the Privilege Committee again for offending my colleagues, but so be it.

Dr. Moonilal: Offending?

Dr. K. Rowley: But so be it. Right? I want to take you, Mr. Speaker, to our analysis of the situation of the public debt in this country and take what I am going to tell you against the background of the beautiful stories that the Government has been telling us. We got one this afternoon. Right? If things are so fine, things are going so well, why is it that in 2010, the public debt—the central government domestic debt—was \$39.1 billion, but the estimated public debt to 2013 was \$61 billion?

Mr. Speaker, they do not have to take my word for it. They must get up here and say it is not so. They must get up here and demonstrate that what I am saying is not so and if they know something else, they must tell this country because the country needs to know.

Mr. Speaker, external debt: one of the things we had done in recent times was to pay down the external debt, bringing it down to negligible amounts.

Dr. Gopeesingh: \$130 million.

Dr. K. Rowley: Changing our interest rates from expensive Japanese and other Euro-dollar loans, paying them off and, hopefully, getting into cheaper loans and so on; and, of course, increasing the local public debt, the public debt in the local market.

From our analysis, Mr. Speaker, external debt in Trinidad and Tobago dollars 2010 was \$8.7 billion. It is now \$17 billion and since they have guaranteed, according to this Minister of Finance and the Economy because he is one who has made it quite clear that deficit financing pretty much on the scale that we are on, would be a thing of the future—there is no end in sight to that—we can make

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projections as to where we could be in 2015. We have made that projection and it looks as though, by 2015, our estimates would be \$22 billion in external debt.

Mr. Speaker, this Government is a general free for all, as you know, and, therefore, the contingent debt, which was \$22 billion in 2010 is now about \$32 billion and, Mr. Speaker, when you look at that, you ask yourself how are we going to be treating with that against the background of very deafening silence about revenue streams in this country and against the background of misrepresentations about growth?

We cannot have people, Mr. Speaker, telling us things about growth in this economy, which can be challenged as not being true because the Minister of Finance and the Economy must be the only person in this country who can point out to us an economy in growth of 1.2 per cent or 2 per cent as the case might be. In fact, Mr. Speaker, recently I had to ask the Government to patent its skills because at the same time the Government was telling us by government spokespersons that the economy was growing. ECLAC, independent assessing agencies operating out of Trinidad and Tobago and throughout the region, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean—the last ECLAC report pointed out that there is an increase in unemployment in Trinidad and Tobago. The Government is not saying that.

One expects that if the economy begins to return to growth and growth is taking place, you will see a reduction in unemployment. Only the handful of people in Government who are doing wonderfully well and a few of their friends, they are seeing growth—some of them around their waistlines and elsewhere in their bank accounts—but the average person in Trinidad and Tobago is not seeing that.

I advise you, Mr. Speaker, to not take the Government's word for it. Listen to the people in the business sector who are the investors and the entrepreneurs. Let them tell you if what he is telling you is true [*Desk thumping*] because we know that this Government is capable of A-N-Y-T-H-I-N-G. This Government is capable of anything, including paying \$6.8 billion for a [*Inaudible*] old truck.

Hon. Member: Million, million!

Dr. K. Rowley: Million. I mean, in the last few days this country has been scandalized by a Cabinet that agreed, sitting in an air-conditioned room, receiving a presentation from a Member of the Cabinet and agreeing with their eyes wide open, on that day, to receive a presentation to pay \$10 million for a broken six-year-old water truck.

3.30 p.m.

I am not making this up, Mr. Speaker. This was the news in this country for the last week, and every mother, every father, every grandfather and every schoolchild who heard that was scandalized as to what kind of people are these who could sit on my behalf [*Desk thumping*] and expend my resources in that way. And all I am asking you, Mr. Speaker, is to let that be your yardstick, your guide to understand that that is only the thin end of the wedge—you only see that, but you could understand that. That represents the general arrangement of this Government. General!

And, Mr. Speaker, what you have to worry about is that when that kind of—I do not want to call it profligacy I want to call it madness—when that madness became known to the public, the Government’s explanation for it—the managers of our multibillions of dollars, under a Minister of Finance and the Economy and about 30-odd other Ministers—do you know what they are trying to get us to believe, Mr. Speaker? That we got a deal, and that the Cabinet came to that decision on a deal, a good deal, because we were told that a new truck, a new water truck, will cost \$40 million so, therefore, if we resurrect the old one for \$6.8 million and possibly repair it, we have a deal.

Well, this country got away lightly, that they picked up the old truck for \$6.8 million. Suppose they had bought a new one for \$40 million? Thank you all very much. I thank them very much, Mr. Speaker, for not buying a new one because their mindset was to treat with a possible \$40 million new truck. We could easily have had that bill, and that is the kind of thinking that makes them come to us here today and tell us that there is growth in the economy and that the economy has been patchy for the last three years, and it has now gone into growth and they want to sustain that growth, but makes no mention whatsoever of what is happening on the debt side where they are borrowing like mad, spending it like mad, because they know that they will not be in Government when it is time to repay those bills. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, if ever you want to understand why we are here asking for \$2.8 billion today, you go to the documents and in there they tell you, very early in the game, that these numbers we are asking for—we are asking for \$2.9 billion—well it is 2.898—\$2.9 billion to the nearest figure—and it says, we are required to get that because we want to service urgent and critical recurrent and capital expenditure—urgent and critical and I want to add my own comment to that “unforeseen”. Urgent has to be done otherwise disaster will befall us; critical has to be done otherwise it will trigger something bad and, of course, we did not

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know that these expenditures were required at this time during this fiscal year. So, when we came here last September we did not know about this, so we now have to come and bring it.

When you bear in mind, Mr. Speaker, that over a billion dollars of this has to do specifically with personnel expenditure with respect to wages and salary increases given to the public sector and its various departments, the Government said to us: “well we could not put any money in the budget because the union would have known and it would have tied our hands in the negotiation”. Let me repeat that.

You are budgeting for your expenditure for 2013, you expect to pay along the lines of agreements that you are concluding. You know once you conclude you will have to pay. You might not conclude all; you may not conclude all at the same level, but you know you will have a significant bill to pay, so you make no provision to pay it because you want to balance the budget on a mirage. [*Desk thumping*] You want to come and show a budget as not the full story, and on budget day they all come here and mash up the government furniture banging desks behind the Minister of Finance and the Economy, but the budget is, as my colleague says a half-pick duck.

Miss Mc Donald: That is right.

Dr. K. Rowley: They knew full well that that expenditure was going to be coming—

Miss Mc. Donald: Exactly!

Dr. K. Rowley:—made no provision for it, and when you ask them in Finance Committee, why did you not put a provision in the budget, you know we have to spend that in this fiscal year—tell us the inanity that had they put any figure in there, that is negotiation, the union would have known what we had in to pay them.

Miss Mc Donald: It is a negotiation tool.

Dr. K. Rowley: Mr. Speaker, that is just foolishness because if the Government had put a billion dollars in here, no union could have come and say, “Okay, give me that billion or give me \$800 million of it.” The Government has liabilities across the public sector. If they had put \$500 million to be topped up later on, but they put none—bring the budget, bring the budget, nice budget, balanced budget, minimize the deficit—and then they come now, six months later, and tell you they want a billion dollars to discharge liabilities known to us before. So it is.

If you go through here, Mr. Speaker, you will see many more of that. There are quite a few of them you will see in here, and I raised a couple of them myself for matters that were of interest to me and my constituency and my colleagues would have raised some more, and I am sure my other colleagues will have something today.

But, Mr. Speaker, among the urgent, critical and, dare I say, unforeseen—and I do not want to be sent to the Privileges Committee “unforeseen” is my word—[*Crosstalk*]*—especially since you are there. Mr. Speaker, on page 16 of the document under “Ministry of Legal Affairs”, I want the people of Trinidad and Tobago to listen to this. This is how “all yuh taxes being spent”—national consultation on constitutional reform, \$10 million. So this Government gets a “vaps” to get involved in something called—the Member for St. Augustine had nothing to do. Right? He has a Ministry that does precious nothing—*

Hon. Member: What?

Dr. K. Rowley:—so they find something for him to do—send him around the country to engage in discussions on reform of the Constitution. That is \$10 million right there; \$10 million. And you know, Mr. Speaker, that is for 17 consultations between November 2012 and March 2013—November, December, January, February, March; five months. That is \$2 million a month to go around the country in an exercise of self-promotion; absolutely no substance and nothing to show for it.

Mr. Imbert: And nothing would come out of it.

Dr. K. Rowley: And if you think that was bad enough, an additional sum of \$10 million is required to meet the cost. I want to ask my colleague, the Member for St. Augustine, what did you spend \$20 million on, talking? What did you spend \$20 million on in those five months? Because as far as I know this has produced nothing of any substance; nothing of any consequence [*Desk thumping*] because we are no nearer any public consensus on this matter. This is just another example of Government’s wasteful expenditure.

Miss Mc Donald: That is right.

Dr. K. Rowley:—wasteful expenditure but, of course, it is not their money—spend it as you see fit, carry on and pretend, talk to yourself, praise yourself—and, at the end of the day, the people have nothing to show. The same way you pulled up an old truck for \$6.8 million—it is down in Chaguanas Fire Station of no use to anybody—this \$20 million is \$20 million wasted by the Member for St. Augustine, totally wasted.

So, Mr. Speaker, we go to another classic in here, and this one really should call the attention of the public to take note. A few years ago, Mr. Speaker, this country went through an exercise of rationalizing the PTSC because the PTSC, over the years, had run up huge public debt and had become not sustainable, and we tried and we did a number of things and we started to put the PTSC back in a solid management framework—buy new buses, trained new staff, hired new staff and so on and the PTSC had certain improvements, far from perfect, but the PTSC had been turned around and put on a fairly firm footing providing main-routes supplies of transport and some arterial support in the country, while the Government supported the maxi-taxi growth to continue our public transportation.

This Government was asked, last Tuesday, at Finance Committee, whether, in fact, the money being asked for in this \$2.8 billion for PTSC—and, again, Mr. Speaker, it is under the heading of urgent, critical and unforeseen—as if they did not know when they were doing the budget that PTSC was in line to make a call on the Exchequer for some substantial amount of moneys to deal with its payment to the workers. They knew, they made no provision for it because they wanted to present a budget that was not entirely truthful.

So, at the committee stage, Mr. Speaker, they were asked in Finance Committee: Is the Treasury providing support to PTSC for its current account—meaning, is PTSC being funded by the Treasury on basically a day-to-day basis? And somebody mumbled no, and then the Minister of Finance and the Economy said he would find out and he would let us know. Do you know what the real story is? The PTSC, according to the Government, in the last nine months has been in receipt of \$200 million from the Government for its operations. Mr. Speaker, I wonder if this country knows that, and I wonder if anybody in the Government is prepared to tell the country that this is the state of affairs at PTSC because, if that is so, Mr. Speaker, what does the future hold?

For the last nine months almost \$200 million—\$199 million—from a Treasury that has some very weak legs on the revenue side, from a Treasury that has a budgetary arrangement supporting it of billions of dollars—I think this current budget is a \$7 billion deficit budget with deficits facing us into the future with no expectation or hope of changing that; and a Government that has foregone revenues—land and building taxes of approximately \$2 billion so far with no conversation in sight as to how that issue would be resolved; a Government that got up one weekend and discovered that it was under political pressure and decided that the way to treat with its political pressure created by its own misbehaviour, and if it offers this “vaps” of reduction of VAT on food—\$400 million loss to the Treasury—facilitating the importation of foreign foods.

Now that this has happened as they were warned that it would happen—they are now complaining that the food import bill is rising, and we are buying more foreign food, paying the same amount of dollars, but getting less food and complaining among themselves now.

That too is a surprise. They did not see that coming even though they were warned. They did not understand that they were going to lose \$400 million for unrequested VAT reductions and that it will not affect the pocket of the average person in Trinidad and Tobago, and the average household is right back where we were six months ago, and the Government is losing revenue to those who are smart enough to collect it. That is what the VAT deduction is about, bringing no significant relief to the householder. That is this Government at work.

3.45 p.m.

So this country should not get upset too much about the fire truck; that is only symbolic of the general arrangement. [*Desk thumping*] The reduction in VAT as a palliative that was temporary is of the same nature, and at the time when that was done, to justify it they told us it was temporary. Now that the Government's spokespersons are admitting that it has not brought any significant relief, and that it is a loss of revenue to the Treasury, are we hearing anybody in the Government saying when will temporary end?

I do not expect it because it was a pure political nonsense which they have done, which they will now be afraid to undo. And if they do not believe me they can contradict me, and if they do not like it they could move a Motion and send me to the Privileges Committee again. [*Desk thumping*]

Dr. Moonilal: We get a good idea—[*Inaudible*]

Dr. K. Rowley: They could do that because, Mr. Speaker, they seem to think that we are all in this House to praise them and to be afraid of them, or to agree with them—

Miss Cox: That is what they want.

Dr. K. Rowley:—or to encourage them to not speak the truth to the people of Trinidad and Tobago. But I would like you, Mr. Speaker, to understand that there are two stories in this country; there is the Government's story and there is the truth. [*Desk thumping*] And the people of this country have a free choice, it is still a free country: you can believe whichever one you wish. I defy any of them to get up here and contradict what I am saying here.

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Mr. Speaker, we had a disaster in Diego Martin last year August and a number of our districts were severely damaged, and the national community commiserated with us and there was a lot of activity aimed at bringing relief to the people of Trinidad and Tobago, but inside of there the Government could not resist the opportunity to rip-off the State of Trinidad and Tobago. They saw it as an opportunity to award contracts left, right and centre to Tom, Dick, Harry and their “dogs”, under the guise of bringing relief to the people of Trinidad and Tobago, of Diego Martin in particular. Even now as I speak there are people—
[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: [*Inaudible*]

Dr. K. Rowley: I do not want to have to answer you, you know.

Hon. Member: They ha’ no space under—[*Inaudible*]

Dr. K. Rowley: Yes, you “shoulda leave it just so,” right?

Mr. Speaker, we asked the Government to provide us with a list of all the expenditure to contractors. We have got that list and the list shows that there were three sets of moneys that were spent with respect to that disaster in Diego Martin. We had a—I mean, I do not know how this Cabinet functions but there was a requirement for three sets of a Cabinet approval, apparently, because the report—the response—to us were three sets. One is Cabinet agreed that the sum of \$49.4 million will go to the clean-up.

I am surprised to see we are being told that only \$41 million was required. There is a story going around, Mr. Speaker, that one Minister of Government has given so much of facilities and resources to his family that he is running out of members of family to give now.

Dr. Moonilal: “Yuh get dat on ah email”?

Dr. K. Rowley: The same thing is now being said here, that the Government approved \$49.4 million for the clean-up in Diego Martin but only \$41 million was required. So \$8 million of work was not required, and I have constituents who up to now—

Hon. Member: “Cyar see you.”

Dr. K. Rowley:—approaching me for assistance in dealing with some of the effects of that flood, but we are being told that they approved \$49 million award contracts to 30-odd contractors, most of whom are from outside of the area—most of the contractors from outside of the area. The contractors within the area given

virtually next to nothing in the clean-up exercise and the expenditure, and now we are being told that from the \$49 million approved we had \$8 million we did not have any use for, and every day we are asking, “Could you do this? Could you do that?”—Ministry of Works and Infrastructure, especially in the area of drainage and support for embankments and landslide preservation and so on.

It makes you wonder what is happening in the Government. How could you have \$8 million in a situation like that which you have found no reason to spend? You are reporting to the Parliament that the Cabinet approved \$49 million, you have done the work and you have \$8 million you have no use for but there are people in the community who are begging for support and cannot get it. And then another expenditure part, another expenditure group, over and above that was another \$26 million, and that too is for clean-up.

So it makes you wonder, if you had \$49 million and you did not spend \$8 million of it because there was no need—because they said that, it is said here. It is said here in their own words:

However, only \$41 million was required to meet payment to contractors.

Turn the page: approved \$26 million more for the same thing, clean-up operations in Diego Martin and other areas in the western peninsula. I would like the Government to explain that to us. And then you go to the next page, another set of contractors. Now these ones are owed, right, seventeen and a half million—*[Interruption]*

Miss Cox: All that is for the clean-up?

Dr. K. Rowley: Well, that too for emergency works. Now, this is confusing to me and I do not want to make any statement that could be offensive to any of my colleagues on the other side, because they take offence very easily.

Dr. Moonilal: You make all you want.

Dr. K. Rowley: I want them to explain that to the country. Explain that to us because these three Heads and Sub-Heads—and they all seem to be under the Ministry of Local Government—or ones under Local Government, ones under the Ministry of Works, because the Ministry of Works, the \$49 million—Mr. Speaker, the Ministry of Works had \$41 million, they could not spend eight, National Security doing the same thing, they spent \$26 million and Local Government doing the same thing, spent \$17 million.

I belabour this point so that you understand how confusing and confused the Government is. A simple matter like cleaning up after a flood in a small part of

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the country and this is the story you get, and the best thing that happened out of this, there are a number of contractors who did fantastically well and are now saying they could do with a flood every month.

Mr. Speaker, we hear the Minister of Local Government always talking about even-handedness in the distribution of the services of the Government at the Ministry level. Now, in this report we get a breakdown, because we asked for it, specifically, at the committee stage, and we asked the Minister responsible to tell us how the \$30 million under flood mitigation was spent and, Mr. Speaker, apparently, the only place where there was need for flood mitigation during the period under review was in constituencies where there is no PNM MP.

Miss Cox: Yes, every one.

Dr. K. Rowley: Every single one of the 24—

Miss Cox: Yes, all of us.

Dr. K. Rowley:—which absorbed the \$30 million for dredging, desilting and formation of embankment—I have looked at the geography of it and every single project to deal with this aspect of flood mitigation the Minister and his friends spent every cent in constituencies which are not in any way represented by the PNM.

Miss Cox: My God!

Dr. K. Rowley: That is discrimination, Mr. Speaker—[*Desk thumping*]*—*at the highest level.

Miss Cox: At the highest level because of some of the constituencies. Call some of the areas.

Dr. K. Rowley: And had we not asked on Tuesday for the specifics on how that \$30 million was spent—

Miss Mc Donald: We would never have known.

Dr. K. Rowley:—you, Mr. Speaker, would have gone away, listening and hearing them talking about how even-handed they are in expending the moneys, and they are doing it all over Trinidad and Tobago, but when they put it down on paper every single project is in a constituency where there is no PNM representative. We have 12 constituencies all over the country.

Dr. Moonilal: Twelve?

Dr. K. Rowley: Twelve, yes, the people of Trinidad and Tobago, yes, 12. Not a single project in one of those 12 constituencies, and it irks me to hear the

high screeches of the Minister of Local Government who is always in the forefront trying to give people the impression that this Government is even-handed.

Recently, Mr. Speaker, Local Government which he manages—micromanages right now—the Minister of Local Government is micromanaging the corporations right down to which roads you are going to pave.

Hon. Member: That is right.

Dr. K. Rowley: They have put a paving programme in the Diego Martin area for the Diego Martin Corporation. And would you believe that the area with the most roads, Diamond Vale—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the speaking time of the hon. Member for Diego Martin West and Leader of the Opposition 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.

Mr. Speaker: You may continue hon. Member. [*Desk thumping*]

Dr. K. Rowley: I thank you very much, Mr.: Speaker, and I thank my colleagues for the extension. Mr. Speaker, I was saying, demonstrated here today in the Government's own words, in documentary form, is the kind of discrimination that we on the PNM side representing citizens in constituencies won on election day by the PNM, we have been facing consistently from this Government, here in documentary form, clear as day. And I was about to tell you, in the Diego Martin area, in Diego Martin, the road-paving programme is now being micromanaged by the Minister of Local Government.

The roads to the paved, when you look at the list, they put all of the roads to be paved in the electoral districts which are represented by Members—who are not PNM Members—which are of their own party. So, in the whole of Diego Martin—[*Interruption*]

Miss Ramdial: Would the Member give way to clarify, Sir? Thank you very much. Mr. Speaker, the Member mentioned that of drainage and of course works not being done in the PNM-held areas, but when you look at the description of works for the \$30 million plan you spoke of, the rivers in the PNM-held areas, like Malick, Morvant, Diego Martin, these rivers require structural works or concrete works that are going to be done through NIDCO, so that is a separate plan, altogether.

Also, we have the limit within the permanent secretaries in the Ministry to do other works of embankment, and the Diego Martin Rivers does not require dredging, desilting; it requires structural works and concrete works—

Hon. Member: Oooooo!

Hon. Member: What!

Miss Ramdial: [*Desk thumping*]—so thank you very much. [*Crosstalk*]

Dr. K. Rowley: Mr. Speaker, if I am on my legs again and one of my colleagues from the other side asks me to give way and I do not give way, it is because I do not want them wasting my time. [*Desk thumping*]

4.00 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, the point I was making is that there was a provision for flood mitigation. [*Interruption*] Unless she is able to tell us here that there is no requirement for flood mitigation except in their own constituencies, the only place in the country that requires flood mitigation is in a constituency which is represented by a UNC Member or a COP Member. That is what she is saying; the \$30 million is for flood mitigation. If you choose to spend all of it in this way in your constituencies you cannot now come and tell me that I must wait on other programmes. I want my fair share from the flood mitigation programme. [*Desk thumping and interruption*]

Hon. Member: That is right.

Dr. K. Rowley: Mr. Speaker, let them explain it that way.

Hon Member: I have the East Dry River. [*Interruption*]

Dr. K. Rowley: I presume that as I complete my point before she interrupted me, I was talking about the paving of roads.

Hon. Member: Who is “she”?

Dr. K. Rowley: Diamond Vale has the most roads in Diego Martin. When you look at the Phase 1 paving that they have approved for which money is being expended, not a single road in Diamond Vale is being paved. It is not there in the programme [*Interruption*] because Diamond Vale is an electoral district where there is a PNM councillor.

Miss Mc Donald: Yes.

Dr. K. Rowley: And now I expect they will get up and tell me that Diamond Vale will get its paving from the rainfall budget.

Dr. Gopeesingh: The Diego Martin Highway extension, we are doing that.

Dr. K. Rowley: That is what she is saying, Mr. Speaker. That is what she is saying. So we have an allocation for a specific purpose, you use it all in your own constituencies and then you get up and try—*[Interruption]*

Hon. Member: Correct.

Dr. K. Rowley:—to give me statements about other projects. Flood mitigation, there are requirements for flood mitigation across this country; in the valleys, in the plains, in the hillsides, and there is requirement for paving across this country, and when you leave out Diamond Vale and not a single road in Diamond Vale is being paved, while you are paving in every other area in Diego Martin, I call that discrimination.

Miss Cox: Yes.

Dr. K. Rowley: And that is what they are doing. *[Interruption]* You see, they cannot get up and say, “it is not true”; they have to get up and say, “you will get it elsewhere”, so we are required to wait.

Dr. Moonilal: “Yuh getting a whole highway, you know”.

Dr. K. Rowley: Okay, so we are getting a highway to Diego Martin, so the roads in Diamond Vale do not need paving and will not be paved because the Government is building a highway improvement project in Four Roads. That is what they are saying, you know, Mr. Speaker. That is what they are saying. *[Interruption]* “Yuh hearing them”?

Mr. Speaker: “Yeah”. Members, I am being disturbed and cannot hear the Member.

Miss Cox: “Dey doh like to hear de truth”.

Mr. Speaker: Please! I did not need any help. *[Laughter]* So I will ask Members to assist the Hansard reporter and to ensure that what the Member is saying is accurately recorded. I ask Members to observe Standing Order 40 (b) and (c). You may continue hon. Member.

Dr. K. Rowley: I will not be distracted, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate your intervention. Thank you.

I get back to the basis for being here asking for this allocation because we did not know about these expenses and they have come upon us suddenly, and they have to be dealt with urgently and critically, and therefore the Parliament is convened so that we will improve these expenditures. *[Interruption]*

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Listen to the development programme, urgent and critical that they did not know about that could not form part of the budget—\$23 million for the COSTAATT campus in Chaguanas. I put it to you, Mr. Speaker, and I put it to the Members of that Government, that they knew all along that they were committed to this expenditure—[*Interruption*]

Miss Mc Donald: Mmm hmm

Dr. K. Rowley:—and therefore it should have formed part of the budget.

Miss Mc Donald: Look in the public sector investment.

Dr. K. Rowley: We have been introduced to the idea of the COSTAATT campus before the fiscal year, and therefore there can be no reasonable argument that it was an unknown expenditure, which we now have to attend to as an urgent item, an unforeseen item.

You go to the next page, you will see expenditure of \$2.5 billion, establishment of a skills centre in Debe; next you will see establishment of south campus for UWI, \$80 million. What is urgent and unforeseen about that? That came from the previous fiscal year. It is a known project being executed, and in fact in the very text here it says, you will require this money to meet ongoing cost of construction. So, who are you trying to fool? It was there when the budget was being prepared. The same thing with the open campus facility in Chaguanas; it was there but they chose not to make provisions for it, for the purpose I described earlier on.

And, Mr. Speaker, the one that takes the cake is the payment for the “Prime Minister pram”. [*Interruption*] Acquisition of four AW139 medium turbine helicopters. This Government came into office and one of the first things the Government did was to cancel the OPV project but keep the helicopters. [*Laughter*] They kept the helicopters, and the helicopters were to be paid for. What are we doing talking about making urgent provision to pay for helicopters in an unforeseen way? We knew all along that there was an arrangement to pay for them.

But you see, Mr. Speaker, what this country must understand is what the Government is doing. The Government is managing our public finances in a very slipshod, ad hoc and dangerous way—[*Desk thumping*]—the best example being the construction of the Point Fortin Highway, where the Government of its own free will, pushed by no one, decided to fund that major project, not from available loan funds but to fund it out of the current account. So we are engaged by this

Government's edict, building a seven and a half billion dollar road from the current account. I do not care what my colleague from Tunapuna tells me, but one of these days when he and I sit down for a drink somewhere in a bar he will admit to me that that was not the best way.

Hon. Member: You drink with people like that? [*Laughter*]

Dr. K. Rowley: No, do not worry, he would. [*Crosstalk*] One of these days he will discover I am the only friend he has got.

Miss Mc Donald: "Aaah"! [*Laughter and desk thumping*]

Dr. K. Rowley: But you see, Mr. Speaker, the Government is funding that project not from any sensible loan arrangement where the revenue is committed and firm and sustainable, leaving available for other national expenses, our Treasury deposits.

I am advised, and I believe it, that they have taken out so far two and a half billion dollars from Treasury deposits to pay for that, and that is money that should have gone to other aspects of development. And when you do that, Mr. Speaker, taking your Treasury deposits and using it in that way, you do not expand the funds available to you, because had you gone for a loan funding arrangement, you would have been paying that off sustainably over a long period of time with no stress on your shoulder, and the Treasury deposits would have been used to fund the things that are to be funded. But to feed that project so as to prevent the contractor from stopping work, priority number one in this country is the public debt payment—I hope it is being paid—and priority number two is that. And that is why a lot of government expenditure in other areas is not taking place, because the Government chooses to do that. They choose to manage your affairs in that way. But, of course, why are we surprised? Why are we surprised?

Mr. Roberts: Why?

Dr. K. Rowley: They say one thing when they are in Opposition and they do the exact opposite as they are in Government. [*Desk thumping*]

Last week we had a visit here of the Chinese President—two weekends ago—and I listened very carefully to hear government spokespersons or their apologists, in the context of that visit, talk about the cancellation of the aluminium smelter. I see a lot of statements about what wonderful relations we are building with China, how important it is for the world to understand that Chinese have come to visit us,

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and that they are offering us money to build a, b, c, d, but the Government was studiously silent on the outcome and the status and the future of its cancellation of the aluminium smelter project.

Dr. Moonilal: It was raised last week.

Dr. K. Rowley: It is raised now. It is raised now and I would like to ask the Government now, since you all are asking if it was raised last week, raise it now, tell the country, in the context of your—very full thing about your Chinese discoveries; you are now discovering Chinese workers, you are now discovering Chinese money, you are now discovering Chinese projects, you are now discovering Chinese President; tell us about the major Chinese investment in this country which you have cancelled. What is the status of the aluminium smelter? [*Desk thumping*]

What is the status of that cancellation? What is it costing us? Is anybody on the job? How is it being resolved? What is the cost to the people of Trinidad and Tobago? Tell us that because there are some very interesting loose threads out there which the Government is pretending are not there. Because the cancellation has consequences and those consequences are not being addressed by the Government, because they are pretending it is not so hoping that nobody notices. So, tell us about that when you come to talk in the budget debate—in this discussion.

Mr. Speaker, it is not only that, you know.

Dr. Moonilal: It is not only that?

Dr. K. Rowley: No, it is not only that, it is a whole system of issues which the Government needs to explain, and as it explains it you will find out that public expenditure in Trinidad and Tobago is expenditure by “vaps”.

For example, Mr. Speaker, I asked in committee and I did not hear the Member for—well, he probably did not have the time, but one of the things I would like to hear about today is this role of the Ministry of Tobago Development creating short-term employment in Tobago. I would like somebody in the Government to explain what that means in the context of the Tobago House of Assembly Act, because the Tobago House of Assembly Act gives the Tobago House of Assembly executive authority over certain specified matters.

I would like the Government to tell the population, where in Tobago and under what legal jurisdiction is the Ministry for Tobago Development expending millions of dollars to create short-term employment in Tobago outside of the

control and management of the Tobago House of Assembly, because it is important for us to know. We need to know how our administrations are functioning. If there is an avenue covered by the law where the Tobago House of Assembly can cede its authority or turn a blind eye to the Ministry for Tobago Development, taking responsibility in Tobago for certain policies and programmes which are under law belonging to the THA, we must know that. We must know that.

Mr. Speaker, we also see in the documents in front of us provision to pay staff in SAUTT, and I would like someone to tell me, as I asked in committee, whether in fact SAUTT exists. Because this Government had led the country to believe that SAUTT was closed down and that they had distributed SAUTT staff into the general security system and traditional systems.

I would like a clear and definitive statement from the Government today, Mr. Speaker, as to whether in fact SAUTT exists in any size, frame or if it has any responsibility as SAUTT. Because you apparently in 2012, after we were told about the disbanding of SAUTT since 2011, and seeing here provisions being made, and if I know this Government, after what they did with the fire truck, they might be paying people who are not SAUTT, and then they would come back and tell us that they were misled in the Cabinet. I have never seen a more hapless Cabinet where every time you expose them for their ridiculous behaviour, they start telling you about who they could trust and who they cannot trust in the Cabinet. Of course we always knew that the Cabinet of Trinidad and Tobago today is full of people who nobody should trust.

4.15 p.m.

But we are hearing now from Members of the Cabinet that they cannot trust their colleagues in the Cabinet because the Members of the Cabinet tell them one thing when it is something else. The very soul of Cabinet Government is being challenged by Members of this Government as they speak about their colleagues.

One of the requirements, Mr. Speaker, as you would know, one of the requirements for Westminster style Cabinet system, is that Members are required to be open and truthful to their colleagues. That is a requirement. Go read the book, it is there. As a Member of the Cabinet, it is a requirement to be open and truthful to your colleagues. And if in fact, that is not happening in this Government as they are saying that it is not happening, then this country must pay attention because, Mr. Speaker, what is going to happen is that they are now threatening the very backbone of the Constitution, talking about they now need to

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have a Cabinet without collective responsibility and they want to lift the veil of Cabinet secrecy so that they could tell the country what their personal views were when certain ridiculous decisions were taken.

No Cabinet functions like that, none. Cabinet secrecy is a requirement for Cabinet governance, and to be telling us that your ridiculous decisions at Cabinet can be explained so you can escape your responsibility by talking about the need to lift the veil so you could tell me what your view was—I do not want to know your view. The Cabinet stands as a united body once it takes a decision. And if they do not know that after three years, we do not want any conversation from them about that because clearly they have no idea what they are involved in.

As a result of that, they are just spending public moneys willy-nilly all over the place, wasting it. We are experiencing as a people the largest budgets in the history of this country, \$60 billion, \$60 billion, \$60 billion, one, two, three, four years in a row and we are worse off than when we have started. [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Member: Unprecedented.

Dr. K. Rowley: Worse off than when we started. We are not seeing the effect of this humongous expenditure because there are leaks in the system facilitated and encouraged by what the Government is doing.

Mr.: Speaker, if this Government continues doing this, we will continue to leak the revenues, to lose the resources, to allow the potential for a better life to evaporate, to facilitate corruption, to increase the volume of untruths being spoken in the country by officials of this country, and at the end of the day, the people of Trinidad and Tobago will ask: what happen here? And the answer would be, the UNC and their friends were here. That is what we are facing.

So we do not want the advice of the Minister of Finance and the Economy, who is telling us how wonderful the economy is. We want to live it. We want to hear those who are dependent on government expenditure telling us that opportunities have been created for them. What the Government has done, it has met a country doing well, reasonably well with some challenges. Instead of working and building on that and growing the number of opportunities, what it has set out to do is to take opportunities from who they met in place and give it to who they think should have it.

So, if you had a job when the Government came into office and they deem you to be a PNM because you got a job under the PNM, they take it away and give it to one of their friends or somebody who they favour. If you were a contractor under the PNM before and the previous Governments, they take away your

opportunity and they give it to others. If you had a gas station, Mr. Speaker, for 40 years selling gas, all of a sudden you cannot sell gas. The best gas seller in the country is a Minister's husband.

Hon. Member: Yes.

Hon. Member: Unthinkable.

Dr. K. Rowley: A family selling gas, a business that is selling gas, 40 years, your gas station being used to train people in the country and they call you to an exam, they set you up in a room one morning, you have to have an exam as to how to sell gas and they tell you two days later you fail the exam—

Miss Mc Donald: Yeah.

Dr. K. Rowley:—and your gas station is given to somebody else. This Government is provoking the people of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] If the Government wanted to give gas stations to their friends, I am sure there are places in the country where gas stations are needed.

Miss Mc Donald: A Minister's husband.

Dr. K. Rowley: Expand the economy, expand the need for gas stations. There is a growth in the number of motor cars in the country, where are the new gas station locations. You do not see that. What you see, is the Government taking away people's opportunity and giving it to their friends. Shameless and shameful. [*Desk thumping*] Mr. Speaker, I want to appeal to those who got into office on a campaign of bringing decency to bring decency to the UNC Government in Trinidad and Tobago. I appeal to you all.

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

Dr. K. Rowley: Mr. Speaker, you know how many contractors in this country now are complaining that they have lost their opportunity which they enjoyed for decades. And if they want any opportunity now, they have to kiss up to the Government, bribe Government officials at every level or associate themselves with the sycophants in the Government table to get crumbs off the Government table.

Miss Mc Donald: Pay for weddings.

Dr. K. Rowley: That is what is happening now. And they all know that it was not so under the PNM, they did well—

Miss Mc Donald: That is right.

Dr. K. Rowley:—they prospered and they had the opportunity. [*Desk thumping*] They know that, they know that. Say what you want about the PNM, opportunity for all was the hallmark under the PNM.

Miss Cox: That is right. [*Desk thumping*]

Dr. K. Rowley: In fact, Mr. Speaker, the people who were most resolute against the PNM were, in many instances, the ones who were most prosperous.

Miss Mc Donald: Yes, yes.

Dr. K. Rowley: Today, they are experiencing a different kind of governance. They are experiencing nepotism, cronyism, shakedown and naked corruption to get government work. [*Desk thumping*] So it is, Mr. Speaker. So when they come and tell us how things are good in the country and they anoint themselves as saviours all they have done is look after themselves.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Take from the poor.

Dr. K. Rowley: This is a Government that looks after itself. I mean, nothing is sacred. In the Ministry of Housing, Land and Marine Affairs I think it is six—

Dr. Moonilal: [*Inaudible*]

Dr. K. Rowley: Yes what! Probably six months now—is there a board in the HDC? Is there a board there?

Miss Mc Donald: “Nah, they waiting for Moonan.”

Dr. K. Rowley: What is worse, Mr. Speaker, what is worse, we are being threatened with a chairman of a board who just came off a period of disaster at CAL, whose entire tenure from the day he was appointed, there was uproar in this country over his unsuitability to chair CAL.

Miss Mc Donald: An issue of governance.

Dr. K. Rowley: This Government insisted to put this CEPEP contractor to chair the airline. Look at the records. In fact, he was there for 11 months, disastrous. He was summarily fired by the Minister of Finance and the Economy, and if we believe the report in the newspapers the Minister of Finance and the Economy fired him, fired them without reference to the Cabinet.

Mr. Imbert: That is what he said?

Dr. K. Rowley: That is what he said. It may or may not be so, but the point is, having just been summarily dismissed for bad governance—

Miss Cox: Yes.

Dr. K. Rowley: To use the Minister's own words, dismissed for bad governance; my words, mismanaging CAL. And we are now being threatened that he is now to move to the HDC because it is the Government's intention to put that individual to chair another billion-dollar enterprise. The HDC is a billion-dollar enterprise, but of course the key to the whole thing is that he would be useful to the Minister because the award of contracts is the attraction of all of this.

Today, I dare this Government to appoint Rabindra Moonan as Chairman of the HDC. I dare you to do that.

Dr. Moonilal: He is appointed already.

Dr. K. Rowley: He is appointed?

Dr. Moonilal: Yes.

Miss Cox: "He appointed already."

Hon. Member: Yeah.

Miss Cox: "He appointed already."

Dr. K. Rowley: "Doh" talk—

Dr. Moonilal: "Yuh doh ha to dare nothing."

Dr. Rowley: Mr. Speaker—

Hon. Member: Oooh!

Dr. Moonilal: Dare me again—[*Crosstalk*]

Dr. K. Rowley: Mr. Speaker, you understand the obscenity, and as far as he is concerned there is nothing wrong with that, nothing wrong with that. Take a failed chairman who ought never, who ought never to have been appointed. He got the opportunity at CAL, was found to be totally unsuitable but because he is the Minister's "drinking pardner" in San Fernando, he gives him HDC.

Hon. Member: What trouble is this.

Mr. Speaker: Please, please—

Dr. Moonilal: Who is your "drinking pardner"?

Mr. Speaker: Please, please, please—[*Crosstalk*] Member, Member, please, please, I think you should withdraw that, please. That think is—yeah, yeah. Withdraw that please you cannot—

Dr. K. Rowley: Well, indicate to me, Mr. Speaker, the offensive words and I will withdraw them.

Mr. Speaker: No, no, you are reflecting on the character of a Member, you are raising the conduct of a Member and you are saying things that the Member is denying. So all I am saying is that in those circumstances, withdraw those things.

Dr. K. Rowley: Mr.: Speaker—

Hon. Member: “Wajang” leader.

Dr. Moonilal: That is what Manning say you know.

Dr. K. Rowley: If you accuse me of having a “drinking pardner”, I will not take it as an offence.

Mr. Speaker: But he has taken it as an offence.

Dr. K. Rowley: “Da is he business.”

Mr. Speaker: Yeah, but I am saying that if a Member takes something as an offence—

Dr. K. Rowley: Okay, Mr. Speaker, I withdraw that, because I do not want to waste my last minute. I am simply pointing out how this Government does not care about rubbing the noses of the people of Trinidad and Tobago in the faeces that they create. To take that chairman and make him head of the HDC and stand up here in full view and say “take that, you could do nothing about it, that is how they have been running this country.

Dr. Moonilal: You ask a question I—[*Inaudible*]

Dr. K. Rowley: That is how they are running the country. Rather than hang his head in shame, he is standing in the Parliament to tell me that is confirmed.

Dr. Moonilal: Who was campaigning for you in 1974, “eh”?

Dr. K. Rowley: Mr.: Speaker, please—

Mr. Speaker: Please, please, hon. Member.

Dr. K. Rowley: Mr. Speaker, please, I have one minute left.

Mr. Speaker: You have one minute.

Dr. K. Rowley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am not arguing with my colleague from Oropouche East. I am only one citizen. I am only one point of view. I am not demanding that you do what I say you do, you know. I am simply saying to the

people of Trinidad and Tobago take note of what this Government is about and what this Government is doing. I thank you, Mr. Speaker. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for D'Abadie/O'Meara, Minister of Sport.

The Minister of Sport (Hon. Anil Roberts): Mr. Speaker, I came here this afternoon because on Monday we had a brilliant sitting chaired by the Minister of Finance and the Economy. He sat there and I heard brilliant questions from the Opposition. I brought an entire file to answer each and every one, whether it was the Member for Port of Spain South asking about the youth camps, the sport youth camps and the venues and so on. I have all hundred here.

Miss Mc Donald: My grounds, my grounds on St. Paul Street.

Hon. A. Roberts: Your grounds, your St. Paul Street, the Olympic caravan. The Member for Laventille East/Morvant asked about LifeSport, and the Member for Diego Martin North/East came here—the Members for Diego Martin Central and Point Fortin wanted to have information on different aspects of the national sporting bodies who got what sort of money, how they got it, when they got it.

Mr. Speaker, I came here and I was going to spend the entire time answering my PNM colleagues' questions. Now it was amazing the Member for Arouca/Maloney also asked some brilliant questions. Of course, the Member for Diego Martin West regurgitated a question when he woke up, but I came to answer all, but then I am greeted by what can only be described as a ridiculous contribution from someone who wants to get through the back door to go and become Prime Minister but there is no back door whatsoever.

Let me deal with the Member for Diego Martin West who, after such an eloquent, intelligent, degreed, university-led debate by the Minister of Finance and the Economy to sit down and listen to the Minister of emails. It was amazing that I am here to debate an appropriation, to debate money to be spent in the furtherance of the wishes and dreams of the people of Trinidad and Tobago and I have to listen to the Member for Diego Martin West who prefers to play golf than to meet the President of China.

Hon. Member: Shame, shame.

Hon. A. Roberts: I was coming—

Miss Mc Donald: Mr. Speaker, Standing Order 36(5), 36(5), Mr. Speaker.

Hon. A. Roberts: You could stand up whole day “ah” now start.

Miss Mc Donald: Mr. Speaker, 36(5)

Hon. A. Roberts: “Wha” is 36(5)?

Miss Mc Donald: To play golf than to meet the President, “yuh fast”. Take it back.

Mr. Speaker: No, no, please, I do not need your help. Member, I think that the Member is saying that you are—

Dr. K. Rowley: Lying.

Mr. Speaker: No, please, Member withdraw—just take your seat. Member for Diego Martin West, could you just withdraw that please.

Dr. K. Rowley: I am sorry you heard me, Sir. I withdraw.

Mr. Speaker: Apparently what you were saying there is not going down well, I ask you to refrain, withdraw and let us proceed please.

Hon. A. Roberts: Mr.: Speaker, I would give way if the Member for Diego Martin West would like to say that while the President of China was here, he was not playing golf in Mt. Irvine. I give way.

Dr. K. Rowley: Mr. Speaker, I have not been to Mt. Irvine Golf Course for the longest while. I do not like—

Hon. A. Roberts: Plantation.

Dr. K. Rowley: Mr. Speaker, I was not on a golf course when the President was here.

Mr. Speaker: He has withdrawn.

Hon. A. Roberts: I take him at his word and his honesty, I withdraw and humbly apologize, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: All right, cool. At this time I will want to—the temperature—

Hon. A. Roberts: And it going to get hotter.

Mr. Speaker:—is rising and it is a good time for us to take some tea. So this sitting is now suspended until 5.00 p.m.

4.30: p.m. *Sitting suspended.*

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

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for D’Abadie/O’Meara. [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. A. Roberts: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do not know if it was by design or by godly influence, but it seems to have gotten hot in this Chamber, so I request that the air condition be cranked up a little bit, or else we might have to—

Hon. Member: Overheat.

Hon. A. Roberts: Overheat. Now, Mr. Speaker, really and truly, it is becoming very difficult, as a parliamentarian duly elected, to come to this august House to debate. We came here—we had great questions. The Member for Arouca/Maloney already shaking her head. “She doh know what ah going to say.” She asked some good questions on the NGBs: how much money was given to each and where it went and elite funding and Olympic caravans, and the Member for Port of Spain South wanted to know about the youth sport camps for the 30,000 children over the last two years, and which venues, and so on, probably hoping to see that “they only in UNC areas down Caroni”, but I came here to show you the hundred areas of which the Member for Port of Spain South, there are many in Diego Martin—a lot. “But I doh have time for dat now.”

Miss Mc Donald: Stay there.

Hon. A. Roberts: “Yuh want meh to stay there?”

Miss Mc Donald: Yes.

Hon. A. Roberts: “I know yuh want meh to stay there, but I wanted to go there. Ah came here; ah even put on a light-coloured suit. Ah try to rebrand mehself, to say ah comin easy, ah comin light, ah comin nice”—

Mr. Cadiz: Innocent. Innocent.

Hon. A. Roberts: “Ah comin nice an innocent. And den ah ha tuh sit dong” and listen to an hour and 15 minutes of attack after attack, without intelligence, without maturity, from a parliamentarian who has been here and boast that he is here the longest. It just shows that when “yuh here long, it doh mean—quantity doh mean nutten. It is about quality becor I only now reach and better dan he by far.” [*Desk thumping*]

“Twenty years and dat is what he could respond to?” We are here to discuss \$2.8 billion—the Member, \$2.8 billion—of which a big chunk of that is for the people, the workers who built this country, because the PNM, of which you are Members, did not settle negotiations with labour unions since 2008 to 2010. I came to discuss that, to discuss how this Government settled 54 negotiations and we start 2011 and to go into 2014. I came to talk about “dat”, but now I have to respond to the Member for Diego Martin West.

The Member for Diego Martin West had the unmitigated gall to refer to a former Senator, Rabindra Moonan, former Chairman of Caribbean Airlines—and now, as you have heard, the Chairman of HDC—as a CEPEP contractor. Mr. Speaker, let me just clear the record. Mr. Rabindra Moonan is a qualified

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economist and the last time I checked academia, a qualified economist is well above the totem pole of a geologist. The only thing geologists could boast about is stones. But Rabindra Moonan is an economist and would have obviously given a better contribution here. So for a geologist, who I do not know if he ever worked as a geologist, who parks on the pavement by Newbury Hill all the time—

Miss Mc Donald: Mr. Speaker—

Hon. A. Roberts:—I would like to say—

Miss Mc Donald: Mr. Speaker, imputing improper motives. Please. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker: I would like Members, if I may—I know things are becoming a little bit personal, but I would like Members to focus on the issues before this honourable House and, en passant—but do not linger too long on these matters. Continue, hon. Member.

Hon. A. Roberts: Mr. Speaker, I heard the Member for Port of Spain South—I thank you, but the Member for Port of Spain South is saying that I am imputing improper motives and so on. Member for Port of Spain South, I would not want to show you the picture of the car parked on the pavement under “meh fadder house, yuh know. Ah tellin yuh.” It is not made up; it is actually there because you may not know that my father is actually a constituent of Diego Martin West. He cannot see him any time, “yuh know, becor meh fadder doh play golf,” but he is a constituent, and has been since 1980, being the first people of PNM to be able to buy a house up there.

You know, we would not go into that discussion here right now, but when a geologist can call an economist and refer to him in such a manner as a CEPEP contractor, when he is sitting down next to a CEPEP contractor there—but “I not going into dat right now”, you see? Because I came here—[*Interruption*] No, no, “me eh goin into dat. Just now. Ah waiting fer de air condition tuh come back on”.

Furthermore, he made—the Member for Diego Martin West, he “sitting dong next tuh one and calling a man one who is an economist. But anyway—

Hon. Member: Who is the contractor?

Miss Mc Donald: Who is the CEPEP contractor here?

Hon. Member: Who is the CEPEP contractor?

Hon. A. Roberts: Not you, Member for Port of Spain South. Not you. You are only a lovely lady who “dey did not tell tuh take dey money out CL Financial when it was going dong”. [*Desk thumping*]

Miss Mc Donald: Mr. Speaker—

Hon. A. Roberts: “Dah is all.”

Miss Mc Donald: Mr. Speaker, here we go again, getting personal. Mr. Speaker, we are getting personal here again. Have a seat. I am on my feet.
[*Laughter and crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker: Wait. Any point of order?

Miss Mc Donald: Yes, Sir, Standing Order 36(5)—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: No, no. Wait, wait, wait.

Miss Mc Donald:—and 36(1).

Mr. Speaker: Members, [*Interruption*] I would like Members to focus on the issues in the budget, this supplementary Bill, and try to avoid, as much as possible, getting personal. You see, when we get personal, the debate deteriorates. So I ask Members to—if you want to, make reference en passant, but “doh” linger, please. Continue.

Hon. A. Roberts: Mr. Speaker, in the contribution from the Member for Diego Martin West, he spoke about this Government increasing the debt to GDP ratio; that our national debt had increased so much, and that we were in jeopardy of totally throwing the macroeconomic principles out of whack and then we would not be able to move forward in years to come. And part and parcel of why our debt to GDP ratio has gone up exponentially was because the then PNM, and the then Minister of Finance who used to sit in this exact D’Abadie/O’Meara chair before she was summarily voted out in 2010, she sat down in a meeting with two Clico/CL Financial owners—shareholders: Duprey and Monteil—not disclosing to her colleagues, of which the Member for Port of Spain South was a Cabinet colleague—she never told the Member for Port of Spain South that she, too, was an owner of CL Financial and, in fact, owned 10,400 shares.

So, in fact, the three people who were sitting down to negotiate the future of Trinidad and Tobago’s economy to the tune of \$24 billion were de facto three owners and a poor Central Bank Governor who was not aware that he was being tag-teamed, hoodwinked, bullied and beaten into signing an MOU that has ensured that the taxpayers of this country have had to pay over the last three years under our stewardship, \$24 billion from the PNM’s incompetence. So that is where it is linked, Mr. Speaker. And one of those people who suffered was the Member for Port of Spain South. She suffered, like a citizen.

Miss Mc Donald: Mr. Speaker, again. Again, Mr. Speaker, 36(1), that is irrelevant and you are getting personal, Member for D’Abadie/O’Meara.

Hon. Member: That is not personal.

Miss Mc Donald: Yes, you are getting personal. Do not bring my private affairs in this House, please.

Mr. Speaker: Member, I always say that if a Member objects to references of a personal matter involving him or her, I ask Members to desist from going further. We do not want disorder in our House. So, continue.

Hon. A. Roberts: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move on, but I can assure all policyholders at CL Financial that through the astute leadership of the hon. Prime Minister, the Member for Siparia, the former Minister—the Member for Tunapuna, former Minister of Finance—the current Minister of Finance and the Cabinet of Trinidad and Tobago, any and all people who had deposits in CL Financial, “yuh money safe like Selassie I briefcase.” [*Desk thumping*] So if anybody had \$3 million in there, “it safe”; it will come back and you will get it back, regardless of whether you could have trusted your colleagues before.

Moving right along. [*Interruption and laughter*] The point—yes, the dress code was a duster and “a pink slippers”. But we would not go there—

Hon. Member: Curlers.

Hon A. Roberts: “—cause ah have tuh deal with the Member for Diego Martin West because Diego Martin West, in referring to Mr. Rabindra Moonan, former Chairman of CAL, as a CEPEP contractor and saying that he was fired, and saying dat he was dismissed and in disgrace and he was incompetent and that the Government would forge this fired human being on the population, would be a disgrace. Buh he was fired by bmobile. So how the PNM foisting him on the population? Wasn Diego Martin West fired by the former Member for San Fernando East? He was fired and he was fired and thrown out of the Cabinet. So how he come back? Because his principle is that when yuh fired, yuh gone through. Get rid of you! You are of no use.”

Well, I accept his position “den”, and as soon as he removes himself from this Parliament and from the leadership of the PNM, we will suggest to “Oropouche East drinking buddy”, that he do the same at HDC. But until such time, I think he who is in a glass house—and a thin glass house—should now throw big, Landate Tobago gravel at anybody. [*Laughter and desk thumping*]

Miss Mc Donald: Mr. Speaker, again, imputing improper motives, 36(5). [Interruption] No, no, no, no. You “cah get away with these kinda things, man”.

Mr. Speaker: I am following very carefully. Continue.

Hon. A. Roberts: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, please, if this is how it is going to be, could you keep a close eye on the clock? Being a swimming coach, I would like to know that I can get all of my time, please.

But, Mr. Speaker, I came here today to go through this, to answer the Member for Port of Spain South’s question; all of this nice information.

Miss Mc Donald: “Answer meh question.”

Hon. A. Roberts: I planned to come through the front door, but since the Member for Diego Martin West has a newfound affinity for “back door”, to enter in the back door, I will have to stop and stoop to his desired level. [Interruption and laughter] Now the Member for Diego Martin West—

Hon. Member: “Wat is dis!”

Dr. Gopeesingh: “He say somebody penetrating de back door.” [Laughter]

Hon. A. Roberts: Mr. Speaker, let me focus on you and not the crosstalk because I would get sidetracked.

Miss Mc Donald: “Yuh see dese kinda tings dey coming up wit.”

Hon. A. Roberts: Member for Port of Spain South, please. Can you listen, please? Now, Mr. Speaker—

Miss Mc Donald: “Stick tuh yuh notes yuh have there.”

Hon. A. Roberts: All right, I will stick to these notes here. Mr. Speaker, I could not believe, when I heard the Member for Diego Martin West say—and I quote—“You cannot believe a word that this Government says. The hon. Minister of Finance was reading from somebody else’s script this afternoon.”

When I heard the Member for Diego Martin West say “dat”, I could not believe it because, Mr. Speaker, we were in this House just a few months ago, around January, when the Member for Diego Martin West was making a contribution on a landmark Constitutional Amendment Bill about self-governance of Tobago, and I have his *Hansard* here, and at that time, while he was speaking, I was feeling a déjà vu. Right now on cable you see *Déjà Vu* with Denzel Washington.

I was getting a sense of déjà vu while he spoke, so I humbly asked the great parliamentary staff here to get a copy of his *Hansard*, and then I called my staff when he was wrapping up because when the Member for Diego Martin West—and this is his *Hansard* from January 16, 2013—when he was wrapping up, the Member for Diego Martin West said this, and let me quote from the *Hansard* now. This is a man who is saying that the Minister of Finance and the Economy was reading out something created and written by somebody else, the audacity of this Member for Diego Martin West. And he says in his contribution—in summing up he says—let me quote. One minute.

“Let’s make no”—sorry.

“But Dr. Winford James, an intellectual who speaks for and on behalf of a wide cross-section of people in Tobago has this to say, and with your indulgence, Mr. Speaker”—just let me quote. Let me quote from Winford James, said the Member for Diego Martin West:

“Let’s make no bones about it. The...Bill is a wicked piece of legislation—deceptively wicked”—and so on.

He quoted from Winford James.

As soon as he quoted, I got on my little BBM, “meh BlackBerry—I doh have no S4 Galaxy or 07 iPhone fancy ting, and meh screen is a bit broken but de phone works well—and ah said, But listen, could you pull up Winford James’ article for me from a few days before, in January?” And when I went through Winford James’ articles, he made six points about the legislation that this Government brought and the Member for Diego Martin West made six points. Winford James made his six points in a particular order and the Member for Diego Martin West made his six points in the same, exact order. Winford James used the examples, for example, a shifting boundary and so on, of 11 to 14 miles; the Member for Diego Martin West used the exact—he could not even change from 12 to 15, or 13 to 17.

Word for word, what Winford James said, the Member for Diego Martin West read out here and brought it as his own ideas from his mind and has the audacity today to call the Minister of Finance and the Economy—a great man, a great patriot, who has had success and has brought wealth to many citizens across this board, taken First Citizens from a workers’ bank that was bust under the PNM to a thriving business now, where people want to buy shares and so on, where the workers can get [*Desk thumping*] a portion of bonds and shares in their negotiation—and criticized the Minister of Finance and the Economy, saying that he plagiarized, that he took—somebody else wrote something and read it for him.

5.15 p.m.

Well one thing is certain, the Member for Diego Martin West knows well about that. “Ah didn come here for this, yuh know, but yuh must always have a plan B. Is a good ting ah put this in de file, yuh know, because ah really came to answer questions.” My Leader, [*Crosstalk*] Member for St. Augustine, he said, “Listen, dey ask some good questions, come and answer. So ah said”— [*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: “And continue to consummate food, yuh know.”

Hon. A. Roberts: Well, we know that too. We know that too. So, I want the Member for Diego Martin West, in such a critical debate, who came here and his entire contribution was the exact contribution taken from the *Express* from Dr. Winford James, to come here and criticize people, I say shame on the Member for Diego Martin West. Shame! He cannot lead anybody, anytime.

Dr. Rambachan: He is intellectually blunt. [*Laughter*] [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. A. Roberts: Then [*Crosstalk*] now—yes, we want, we talked about—we had an Integrity Commission Chairman who had to resign for plagiarism; but that is the Leader, that is the PNM, that is who they uphold as their bastion of integrity, a man who does not even have the character to write his “own ting”.

Mr. Cadiz: Or [*Inaudible*] integrity.

Hon. A. Roberts: Well, probably, because he is a geologist. It was a long time ago since he was in university, but an economist would have spent a little bit more time at university with better professors than a geologist. But then, it really got interesting, Mr. Speaker, and “dah is when ah knew ah had to get somebody else to read all this information for meh”. Maybe I will print it and circulate it. When the Member for Diego Martin West had the audacity to say that this Government is about nancy stories, we cannot be trusted, everything that comes out of our mouths—we are total strangers to the truth, nancy stories, Brer Anancy, “all kind ah ting.”

Mr. Speaker, from a man who, at the committee stage on Monday, tried to put to this committee that this Government said that not one cent of taxpayers’ money was to be spent in the Hoop of Life; that we said that no money, that everything, the funding came from somewhere else for the Hoop of Life competition that was so fantastic across the country; he sat there and he said so.

I was not going to talk on Monday, but I had to correct the record because what in fact this Government said was that the person who came to launch the Hoop of Life programme, the hon. Dr. Shaquille O’Neal, who spent more time in

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university after playing basketball than the Member for Diego Martin West, clearly—[*Crosstalk*—that was where no taxpayer money was spent—on Shaquille O’Neal’s visit. But it was stated categorically and early that the programme would cost approximately \$12 million across the board, with \$1 million being a prize—half and half, \$500,000 to the winning team and \$500,000 for a community project—as well as stipend for players, for coaches, for managers and so on. The Sports Company also did courts across the country and so on, and this was part and parcel of it. So again, trying to mislead the public and distort the facts.

This is the man, the Member for Diego Martin West, who stated that he was not invited to the banquet to sit and dine with the President of China. And then when the Office of the President said, “But you were invited. The invitation was sent.” He said, “No, it reach late.” This same man is telling us about nancy stories. So I cannot come here and answer my colleague’s good questions—very good questions that need to be answered, and will be answered and can be answered at any time because I have to deal with a man who wants to be Prime Minister through the back door. But back door is not a place to be, especially as a man.

When we see now that this man, this Member for Diego Martin West, stood up in this Parliament and accused the hon. Attorney General of being a racist and “going New York and the first thing as he land he want to know how much Indian and I is ah dougla so I could say Indian, African, however ah want because ah love all.”

Miss Mc Donald: Mr. Speaker, I rise on 36(1), please.

Hon. A. Roberts: You doing squats today?

Miss Mc Donald: Yes! Yes! [*Laughter*]

Mr. Speaker: Member, continue, but please—

Hon. A. Roberts: Mr. Speaker, I will connect it because we had an hon. Minister of Finance and the Economy who brought to the Parliament for discussion an appropriation, an increase in the budget showing different figures, showing where it was needed, where it was not needed, where this has to go and so on, and this is what we came to discuss. But the Leader of the Opposition called the hon. Minister of Finance and the Economy, a stranger to the truth; he called the entire Government strangers to the truth, he is quoted as saying that we are full of government nancy stories.

I am saying that this Government must respond to serious accusations from the Member, and that is what I am doing. [*Desk thumping*] I did not come here to do this. I came here to have a serious debate, but when I am faced with a leader who cannot even lead Tommy Joseph and Sprangalang in a joke-making contest, then I have to deal with this.

Miss Mc Donald: Mr. Speaker, I rise on 36(5), imputing improper motives now and insulting. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker: Yeah, Member, let us not get too personal. Again I am just asking Members to stick to the issues as much as possible and as far as possible, and as I said, if you want to make reference, en passant, but “doh” linger too much. Continue.

Hon. A. Roberts: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I shall not linger. I do not ever want to linger on the Member for Diego Martin West. It will give me a headache and nightmares. But the Member for Diego Martin West accused this Government of being strangers to the truth. It is a serious thing. This is not funny. I take that personally and I take that with great offence because I do not consider myself to be a stranger to the truth. So I have to deal with the nancy stories because if you are accusing someone of nancy stories, yet everything you read is from Brer Anancy, then we have to point it out.

So the Attorney General, according to the Member for Diego Martin West, went to New York and “as soon as he land, he want to count how much Indian it have and how much African”. We showed here that the hon. Attorney General never even “went New York, but yuh talking bout nancy stories.”

Then we come here and we sit down and—vote of no confidence in a Prime Minister who got 422,000 votes, 29 seats that the PNM could never dream of getting, and we sat and listened to this gentleman from Diego Martin West. The Member stated that this Government was bugging and tapping the DPP; nancy story. The DPP said he knows no such thing; another nancy story. Then they come now and he is saying—well we are not discussing the emails, but everybody knows we will find out “bout” that just now.

But then now, he says at a press conference that there are cameras spying on the DPP. The facilities manager says, “Dem cameras dey over 10 years.” So if they spying on the DPP now, we in Government three years, simple mathematics mean PNM was spying on the DPP seven years then? nancy stories and the Member for Diego Martin West comes here to be a serious leader of a serious party with a great tradition. He is destroying the legacy of the PNM daily.

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Then he comes and this is the best one now, he goes to the Integrity Commission and this is what the PNM is about—nancy stories. There was some plot of land in 50 acres in Couva and this Government—their friend bought it for \$5 million. Their friend bought the land for \$5 million and this Government went and pay \$175 million for it. It had to be “bobol”. Okay! Well, let us deal with nancy stories. Let us do a little simple maths. You all could follow on your calculators for those who are not so sharp. Okay? Fifty acres, \$5 million; an acre is approximately 43,400 square feet. When you divide 50 acres into \$5 million you get \$2.14. Where in Trinidad and Tobago can you buy a piece of land at TT \$2.14 per square foot? Where?

Mr. Cadiz: Especially in Couva.

Hon. A. Roberts: Where? Not even the La Basse” when it is burning trash can you buy at \$2.14 per square foot. So they throw out absolute rubbish, they throw out garbage, they throw out nancy stories and then create this conspiracy as if it has some truth in it, and that is what Mr. Nancy Story does. That is what the Member for Diego Martin West does and accuses this Government of being dishonest; \$5 million. Somebody bought land in Trinidad and Tobago, \$5 million for 50 acres. “Well, boy, that man real lucky. That is the best deal in life.” So, what he should be doing is investigating that—and it was back in 2009 so we will see if it was PNM. Anyway.

Then we move on, he now comes here and says that this Government has given up over a billion dollars in revenue from not collecting land and building taxes; he said so today. Number one, this Government came into Government because we did not want to torture and persecute people with 7,000 per cent increase in land and building taxes. So that is why we were voted in, because the PNM at that time were going into people’s houses, sending to analyze whether you had an air condition, two air conditions, tile on your floor, your garage, and increasing in Maraval and in Federation Park and in Woodbrook and in all these places, up in D’Abadie/O’Meara, Crescent Gardens, people who were paying \$100 would have to pay \$6,000 and so on. That is what PNM was going to do.

The People’s Partnership said, no. You have worked for your land; you have worked for your houses. That is the PNM policy. We think it is a blessing for the people. So that the savings that they make from not paying land and building taxes, he does not understand economics because Rabindra Moonan could have taught him a little bit, that when you have less spending, you increase your savings and people will have money to invest.

So if we do not collect in taxes, the multiplier effect would suggest that people will spend more, with a higher propensity to spend and, therefore, the domestic economy will churn. So he stands here and talks about a billion dollars foregone, but forgets the opportunity cost, the multiplier and the investment in the domestic economy from people having greater savings in their pockets because he did not spend much time in school to become a geologist. But he criticizes an economist who could have whispered in his ear before he came here to talk. “Boy, doh make dat point.”

Then—“Oh, I hear it boy—then we hear it. What de fire truck, fire truck, fire truck, everything is fire truck.” But there is a little nuance that the Member who has been here for 20 years, he was in the Cabinet even though he was summarily fired by bmobile, but he was in a Cabinet, he understands how Cabinet works. He sits there and he and his PRO from the PNM and other members try to tell the population that this fire truck, the Cabinet—they give the impression that a fire truck went down a hill, the Cabinet got together, “ah man give ah bill and say, Listen, it go cost this, that, that, that, that, and it could—\$10 million and the Cabinet discuss and say, hear what brother man, go ahead and pull out the fire truck.” That is what they like to give the impression and the perception that the Cabinet did that. No such thing happened. The fire truck went down “de” hill on November 17. He was probably playing golf again, but it went down on the 17th.

The acting Fire Chief, there, fellas, he tried to get it out; his squad could not take it out. He then got Asa Wright security, which he could do—the acting chief could get suppliers and services. So if he wanted to get a security company to guard the truck, he could do that because he legitimately is a public official who can legitimately get work undertaken whether by contract, invoice, instructions. So he put some security and then he said to a company, “Ey, go and check out that how much to take out.” So the person who authorized a legitimate expenditure was the Fire Chief at that time and the truck was taken out on the November 19 at 9.00 p.m. Job complete!

I am speaking to the ladies and gentlemen. If they read Andre Bago’s article, I think it is page 9 or page 7 of the *Newsday* today, you will see it and understand. On November 19, 9.00 p.m., job complete. “A man got told legitimately, take out that truck. He take out de truck, a bill has to be paid.”

Now, in order to pay the Bill, you then have to come to the Cabinet. So what is the choice of the Cabinet? Is it to do the work or not to do the work? No, no, no, no, no. The choice of the Cabinet is, you are presented with this bill given by a legitimate supplier, who did legitimate work. “You either pay the bill or you doh

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pay the bill and go in court. And once you go in court, you are then going to lose in court, yuh going to have to pay lawyers in court, yuh going to have to pay interest and so on for years down the line.” So the discussion is not about to do the work or not do the work. The work has been done.

“What it is about, is you either pay the bill or you doh pay the bill and go in court.” That was the decision and if the Member for Diego Martin West is here, today, “I will sit down and for anybody who wants to be the leader of the PNM I will sit down now.” And I ask the members of the PNM, you are presented with the dilemma, a bill has been undertaken, legitimately a supplier has done work. You are either to pay the bill or not pay the bill and go in court. What would you do? “Anybody stand up dey on that side and tell me what you would do.” I give way.

5.30 p.m.

Mr. Speaker: “Doh take too long!” [*Laughter*]

Hon. A. Roberts: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know they would not because, you see, they have not presented it to the population. “Everything is fire truck, fire truck, somebody tief! Corruption, fire truck.”

Hon. Member: “Wah ’bout Haji!”

Hon. A. Roberts: “Well, no, no I eh talking because, you see, dey like to play games, politics is not ah game.” You know the system, you know how it works! If a legitimate person in a pseudo-independent organization like the fire service undertakes to get services, and services are provided, it would be irresponsible of a Government to renege on their liability or their ability to pay their debts.

For example, when I became Minister of Sport, I had the unfortunate task in 2010 that the most money that was spent from the Ministry of Sport was to pay \$33 million as interest and payment on a loan taken on November: 17, 2009 to build—to finish off Tarouba stadium. Now, understand this, \$495 million borrowed by the PNM to finish a project that was budgeted originally at \$150 million, then \$275 million when they moved the—they changed the site. So budgeted at \$275 million, they then—the completion date was 2007.

In 2009, two years after the completion date which was March: 2007 for the Cricket World Cup that began in June 2007, they come now and take out a loan for \$495 million to continue building a stadium that was supposed to cost \$275 million—and these PNM Members here talking about corruption—and I, as

Minister of Sport, had to decide—not had to decide, the Permanent Secretary paid the money, but when I found out about it, I went to the Minister of Finance, Member for Tunapuna. I said, “Sir, this has to be ridiculous—\$33 million already to pay off a loan for something that is totally over budget, full of corruption; the Uff report called it the greatest disgrace in the history of Trinidad and Tobago, can we not do something? Can we not stop paying this? Talk to First Citizens, do something!

I was told in no uncertain terms by the Minister of Finance, when you are in charge of an economy, you cannot renege on legitimate debts, you must pay your debts regardless of whether you believe in it, whether you want to do it, whether you found it made sense by the PNM, you must pay your debts because the reputation of the country and the economy and the confidence in it and the rating agencies, very important, and that is the same principle that was used.

The Cabinet of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago was not asked to make a decision whether to move the truck or whether to leave the truck or whether to buy a new truck. Those questions were not before the Cabinet. The Cabinet was presented with a fait accompli, job done. It was either pay or renege. I ask any PNM Member, and I want the media to ask them one by one because “dey like tuh talk when dey come out ah here. Anytime yuh see ah camera, PNM outside! Dey doh like to talk sense in here but outside, camera, talk—yeah, let the media ask them!” What would you have done in that Cabinet? Would you have paid or would you have reneged? Would you have paid—

Dr. Moonilal: Go to court!

Hon. A. Roberts:—or would you have reneged and gone in court? Because, we can also talk about a former Minister of Works and Transport who forgot to file, or they file late or it went in late, and the Government—the taxpayers—had to pay some \$55 million because it did not go in on time.

Hon. Member: They forget!

Hon. A. Roberts: “That is ah serious thing; yuh all doh forget these things.”

Furthermore, there was a rapid rail that came out. They said—*[Interruption]*

Miss Mc Donald: Mr. Speaker, 36 (1) please. I am having problems understanding the Bill before us.

Mr. Speaker: Continue.

Hon. A. Roberts: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know it is difficult for the Member for Port of Spain South to have listened to the Member for Diego Martin

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West, but unfortunately, I tortured myself and listened to him, and took copious notes listening to what came “out ah Diego Martin West today, so I am responding to everything and anything that came out ah Diego Martin West”. I know it was hard for you to listen on “yuh left side dey, but next time, we will try to turn yuh on de right side.” But, next time!

So understand this, there was “ah rapid rail, ah brilliant rapid rail”; everybody was up in arms, sour grapes—the local contractors were vex and sour grapes, they were not getting through. A former Minister of Works and Transport said, “Yes, man, we get it, we got the feasibility study!” It was \$475 million; it later went up to a little bit.

Miss Mc Donald: “Tell meh ‘bout the Bill, nah!”

Hon. A. Roberts: Excuse me please! Mr. Speaker, when we came into government, the Government—the Ministry of Works and Transport, where only one elevator was working—[*Interruption*] Yeah, I would not go into the details of that. But, there was a plan, there was a contract that this group, TriniTrain Consortium which was made up of Bouygues and a Chinese company and Daynco, Dayne Harford who is very friendly with somebody on the other side and seems to be talking a lot these days. Dayne Harford of Daynco, they took this country for \$500-odd million for a stack of paper!

Dr. Rambachan: Five hundred and forty-six.

Hon. A. Roberts: Well, it went up to 546 for a stack of paper but, Mr. Speaker, you know what is worse?

Mr. Cadiz: Five hundred and forty-six what?

Hon. Member: Million.

Hon. A. Roberts: Million! “Sorry, not dollars, nah, \$546 million” and you know what happened, Mr. Speaker? Just recently, a Cabinet Note came for a further payment of \$23 million because that same group with Bouygues and TriniTrain, that Consortium, with Daynco, with Dayne Harford, who took \$475 million, they won something in court.

Hon. Member: Yes!

Hon. A. Roberts: They won in court! Well, they had plenty money to buy good lawyers, and this Government and the taxpayers for that piece of paper had to pay \$23 million.

Hon. Member: More.

Hon. A. Roberts: More, on top of it. Could we say, as the Cabinet, “Aye, dey ha no rapid rail, we should ah never go with rapid rail and Bouygues—Bombardier was the better one. This thing didn’ make sense. The JCC was up in arms. We doh believe the feasibility was good, so we not paying?” We cannot do that. It was a legitimate, as ridiculous as it sounds, that bill, an extra \$23 million for a stack of paper that they already paid \$475 million for, we had to pay that because you cannot renege because it was deemed a legitimate expense given by and authorized by a legitimate public official.

The same thing about the fire truck. The fire truck went down, a legitimate public official said, “Bring up the fire truck, a man present a bill.” The Government has to choose. “Yuh either pay the Bill or go to court. I ask all ah those who talking fire truck, fire truck, what would you have done? Because if you go to court, yuh goin’ to lose. Yuh goin’ to pay yuh legal cost for three, four years, that will come up to about \$10 million, \$15 million. When yuh lose, that is some cost, yuh done lost that, yuh will not get the renegotiate 6.8, yuh will pay the original bill of 10-point whatever, plus you will have to pay interest over the four years, plus yuh will to pay the \$10 million to the other side lawyers, so you would end up paying \$35 million.”

So, if the PNM is saying, “Go to court”, because, ‘yuh know”, the PNM love to go to court. They have been to the Privy Council eight times and lost all eight! “Dey better than Brazil in football!” They are extremely good! “A 100 per cent record! Every time dey go Privy Council, they lost. Talking about dat, let us move on now!” [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. Member: That is too much to stomach! It is too much!

Hon. A. Roberts: Then—

Dr. Rambachan: “Point Fortin say it is too much to take!”

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: It is rubbish!

Hon. A. Roberts: No, it is all right. I would love to hear the advice of squatters, I go and I speak to them all the time. [*Laughter*]

Now, public debt, the Member for Diego Martin West spoke about public debt. He got a document. Clearly, he got it from the Ministry of Finance and the Economy because his figures were spot on, and he is not accustomed being spot on, so those documents were actually correct, those were authentic documents. He is not accustomed coming here with authentic documents, so I was impressed today that he had an authentic Ministry of Finance and the Economy document

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which said that in 2010, the external debt and the local domestic debt was \$39.1 billion, and now in 2013, it is estimated to be \$61 billion, and therefore, this Government was just borrowing and spending wild and having parties and “all kind ah ting”.

You see, but once again, the want-to-be Prime Minister through the backdoor does not tell the country the whole story. He failed to tell the country that this Government, through the former Minister of Finance, through the present Minister of Finance and the Economy, through the leadership of the hon. Prime Minister, Member for Siparia, solved their “debacle” of the Clico—

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Debacle!

Hon. A. Roberts: Debacle, “pronounce it like I am from London, so we could go back to Trinidad”—debacle, we solved that to the tune of \$24 billion, and that has had to go on to the debt servicing to the debt ratio of Trinidad and Tobago, because it bond floated and so on, so that increased. But that is not us spending, that is us living up to the MOU that was signed by three owners of CL Financial and one poor Central Bank Governor. “So when yuh talking about nancy stories, when yuh talkin about trust, when yuh talking about hoodwinking” when you talking about \$24 billion that the taxpayers have to pay because of the incompetence of the PNM, do not talk to me about the debt ratio now because it increased because of your incompetence.

Dr. Gopeesingh: HCU, \$5 billion.

Hon. A. Roberts: He did not! The Member for Diego Martin West did not say! Probably, he did not know because I think—

Mr. Cadiz: He was in the Cabinet or not?

Hon. A. Roberts: No, he had been fired by then so he would not know. But even when he was inside, he did not know much except how to give Renaissance outline approval for Rahael and them! [*Laughter*]

But anyway, what else he did not say is that when this Government came into power, the PNM—“da is why they talk about the fire truck because dey doh pay bills”. “The PNM leh people do work three, four years, in every institution, from EFCL to e TecK to EMBD to UDeCoTT come down de line.” This Government had to pay \$5.62 billion of PNM old debt.

Mr. Speaker: All right, Member. Hon. Members, the speaking time of the hon. Member for D’Abadie/O’Meara and Minister of Sport has expired.

Motion made: That the hon. Member's speaking time be extended by 30 minutes. [*Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh*]

Question put and agreed to.

Hon. A. Roberts: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to my colleagues and the Member for Point Fortin. Mr. Speaker, I humbly apologize, once again, to my colleagues, the Member for Port of Spain South, Laventille East/Morvant, Diego Martin North/East, Diego Martin Central, Arouca/Maloney and Point Fortin who, on Monday, asked some very good questions, and I came to answer all including all the 13 facilities and who have security contracts and how much it is and so on. All here!

Miss Mc Donald: And the janitorial!

Hon. A. Roberts: Janitorial and—yeah, it is all here!

Miss Mc Donald: And the playground and [*Inaudible*]

Hon. A. Roberts: And the playground and everything here. But I cannot do any of this—[*Crosstalk*] I cannot do any of this responsible work because the Prime Minister-in-waiting-through-the-backdoor came with all of this which makes no sense but we will deal with him. Because \$5.6 billion of PNM debt, whether it is e TecK, Tamana Park—how much?

Mr. Cadiz: One point two.

Hon. A. Roberts: One point two billion, whether it is hotel, Hilton—

Miss Mc Donald: Mr. Speaker, 36 (1), please, relevance.

Mr. Cadiz: Very relevant!

Mr. Speaker: Overruled, continue.

Hon. A. Roberts: Thank you, Sir. Relevance? We are talking about an appropriation; we are talking about the need to get more money to serve the people to get benefits for the people of Trinidad and Tobago. Your Diego Martin West said that this Government is just taking and borrowing money and spending wild and that the debt to GDP ratio is going out of whack, and I am showing the population that it is out of whack because the PNM did not handle their stories when they were in charge. They did not negotiate the wage bill; they did not negotiate with the labour union since 2008. These Ministers of Finance have negotiated over 54 settlements so people have to get backpay from 2008. [*Desk thumping*] That is why we need more money.

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So you can say what you want, but you will have a great debt to GDP ratio when “yuh doh pay people dey money”, but the People’s Partnership will not do that. If we owe you money, we will pay you. We will not leave you suffering and hungry and “yuh” children drinking sugar water to say, “Aye, our fiscal sheet, look at our balance sheet, it look so good, stick ah balisier on it and call it 20/20.” Absolutely not! [*Desk thumping*] We will pay people, because people “working hard and we will pay them dey money”. The PNM comes here and talks about labour; I have never understood the audacity—that is like me talking about shampoo, it should never happen! [*Desk thumping and laughter*] “De PNM talking about labour!”

You know, remember in 2005, gas which is now like \$4.25 per MMBTU and oil is \$95 a barrel. Back in 2004 or 2005, it was US \$13.61 per MMBTU and oil was \$147, and “de PNM tell workers who struggling hard, tightened your belt, and you all talking about labour”. The reason our debt to GDP ratio is up is because PNM did not pay their bills, and we are paying the bills for the people who did legitimate work—\$5.62 billion!

5.45 p.m.

Furthermore, if you remember—“people throw your minds back to 2009/2010—if you have any lil business that was VAT registered, remember yuh paying yuh VAT one time, yuh paying yuh VAT and when it come time tuh geh back”—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: “Nutten.”

Hon. A. Roberts: “Nutten. And after three months, dey tell yuh we doing ah audit and dey come and audit and take ah next six weeks and after dey take de first audit dey come back and say: ‘nah something was wrong’ and dey audit yuh again and six months past and eight months past and no VAT refund fuh you. Dat was de PNM because in their budget dey reduced VAT refunds by something like \$268 million.” So they could not pay it. So what they did was tell nancy stories and take the people along. When we came into Government there was a deficit on VAT refunds of \$2.17 billion. “You know what? We pay it off and now we paying refunds on time, which means people get their money back so they could plough it back into dey business and all yuh coming here to talk about debt ratio?” [*Interruption*]

“You know, ah put on ah nice light-coloured suit, ah thought ah was coming tuh talk quiet.”

Mr. Cadiz: “Yuh looking good.”

Hon. A. Roberts: “Ah looking good? Well i95 go say ah look bad again. No big thing. And talking ‘bout i95, that is very good.” I heard the same PNM, “they come here and accuse us” of going back on our word and they are so full of integrity and morality, and so on. “Ah see” Tony Lee, the bastion of PNM, gave back two tickets from CAL. He had got sponsored legitimately to go somewhere to do something. He said he was disgusted and he threw back the two tickets that he thought were given unfairly and without due process. “Well, Tony Lee, give back de radio station licence that you got when the Maha Sabha was waiting fuh dem own.” Give back the licence. [*Desk thumping*] “Yuh give back de two tickets. Yuh get a licence. You get a licence.” The Privy Council ruled that it was pure discrimination, it was not equal opportunities, you should have never gotten, there was a breach of every rule and procedure. “You eh give back de licence, yuh give back two Caribbean Airlines ticket? Tony Lee, rest me.” [*Laughter*]

Miss Mc Donald: Mr. Speaker, 36(1) and 36(5), imputing improper motives. Come on.

Mr. Speaker: Yeah, well 36(5) does not arise.

Miss Mc Donald: Thirty-six one.

Mr. Speaker: Yeah, well 36(1). I just want to rise on the matter of calling people’s names—

Miss Mc Donald: Certainly.

Mr. Speaker: No, I am speaking. [*Laughter*] Allow me to—I cannot stop Members of this honourable House from calling people’s names, but I ask Members, people who are not here to defend themselves, be very cautious and take into account that question. So, I cannot stop Members from calling names of members of the public who are not here, but I just ask Members to be cautious. That is all.

Hon. A. Roberts: I am guided accordingly Mr. Speaker and I must say I would look back at this on Channel 11 and see if the Member for Port of Spain South has broken a record with getting up and calling Standing Orders. I am very impressed with your fitness. I do not see why you are so nervous, you are so uneasy. The truth hurts. Back to the Bill.

Yes, Mr. Speaker, the Member for Diego Martin West had the audacity to say that the figures coming out of the Central Bank and coming out from independent

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institutions that give you a report on the growth rate—three consecutive quarters of growth, “we going good” but it looks like “they not too happy on that side with that”, but we are. The Central Bank report also said that we are at full employment of about 5.1 per cent. And you can steups from now until the cows run through the back door [*Laughter*] but it will not change the statistics that come from the Central Bank.

What did the Member for Diego Martin West say? “We only hearing from the Government. We only hearing from the Government.”

Miss Mc Donald: Ewart Williams again.

Hon. A. Roberts: What is that? “Go ahead yuh could stand up and say it. Is our boy dey. Yuh see Mr. Speaker? That is the PNM way.” She is calling the Central Bank Governor “our boy”. Well, what can I say?

Mr. Speaker, the Member for Diego Martin West had the audacity to say that it is only Government spokespersons who are saying the economy is growing. Nowhere else can he hear that. Well I do not know. You see, I am very worried. Unfortunately for me or fortunately, I am accustomed to waking up early from swimming and coaching and so on, so I get my newspapers between 4.00 a.m. and 4.12 and I read everything, including the *Guardian*. I read the *Guardian* still, but in the last 11 days RGM—RGM is a company that does a lot of construction work. Back in the days of the UNC, they built four football stadia: the Dwight Yorke, the Mannie Ramjohn, the Ato Boldon and the Larry Gomes Stadium. They built that for \$275 million, which is exceptional, especially when “yuh look fuh four stadia.”

Mr. Cadiz: Four for 200?

Hon. A. Roberts: Four for a total of \$275 million. Now, the PNM tried to build one with Calder Hart, “it still eh finish. It reach \$1.1 billion and it move six inches a’ready” and may collapse because there are 370 stop work orders during their time, when you read the Uff Report.

RGM said things are turning, they are back into business, they are building. I believe that was in the *Business Guardian*. There is Neal & Massy saying, not only their profits have gone up, they are seeing from Pres-T-Con and different groups “dey seeing the energy coming back in the construction sector and so on.” That is Neal & Massy. I did not know Neal & Massy is People’s Partnership, RGM is People’s Partnership. ANSA McAL, for the last two years, have increased in this quarter. They already increased their profits after tax of \$100 million, highest ever. They are saying things happening. I did not know that they are Partnership.

“Pizza Boys group start to open Rituals across de road. All down in, look, look. Down in Oropouche and Kucharan Trace. Yuh could get ah cafe latte grande now because now thing—[*Interruption*]

Dr. Moonilal: “From latte tuh latte.”

Hon. A. Roberts: “From latte tuh latte down in Oropouche. And the Member for Diego Martin West is saying nothing going on, is only ‘nancy stories.’ Pres-T-Con—and not only that.

Now, we move in. A lot of people—it becomes a little annoying at times but you have to deal with it. People always say—and the popular statement in the country is that, you know—“PNM, UNC, COP, same thing; politician, same thing; yuh exchange, you all have the same policies we have.” Let me state categorically right now, with a few examples—I do not have time to go into all but let me go into a few examples—that separate the People’s Partnership from the PNM. Here today, the Member for Diego Martin West said and I quote:

\$20 million spent on constitutional reform consultation is a waste of time.

That is the PNM’s position.

Our position is no, no, no. First of all, we did not spend no \$20 million, it is about \$3 million, but even if it was \$20 million, even if it is \$20 million, I am giving him that, “leh we say” \$30 million, spent on consultation for the reform of the Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, we on this side say money well spent. [*Desk thumping*] And on that side they say wasted money. “Yuh want tuh know why? Because dey former Prime Minister had 11 versions which none ah dem saw, none ah dem read and nobody wanted tuh own and it included all kinda thing that nobody talk about; nobody knew and they took it through the back door. So anything coming through the back door is what PNM is. De people doh want ah back door party. They want ah front door.” [*Laughter*]

Then let us go on. Let us see a difference because “dey say politicians all de same, balisier, rising sun, circle ah circles, whatever it is. Well MSJ ain have no party anyway. But anyway, we talking. Dey say politicians all the same. It used to be a’right.”

Let us talk about children’s lives. Under that side, that People’s National Movement, children diagnosed with all “kinda ailment; children looking tuh die fuh transplant”. Our girl from your constituency, “yuh know ah would not call name. Ah not into dat calling name thing”. But you know because it hurt you, because you also, Member for Port of Spain South, tried to talk to then Minister

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of Health, Jerry Narace who nobody voted for but he was Jerry Narace playing God on people's lives that children could only get \$60,000. "Now if anybody understand, a child's life, \$60,000 and nothing is de same thing. You talking about liver transplant. The cheapest place down in Argentina and so on, where Dr. Bartholomew sending them—yeah ah doh want tuh call he name but yuh talking about a million, \$1.3 million, \$1.2 million, \$900,000, \$800,000 and de PNM's position was"—

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: And still is.

Hon. A. Roberts: And still is, and still is \$60,000. "Good luck tuh you, say yuh prayers", \$60,000. You will—this PNM government, "if people put God out dey thought tuh vote them out, will get rid of the Children's Life Fund and go back"—

Dr. Moonilal: And children will die.

Hon. A. Roberts:—to \$60,000 and telling us that we are the same? I beg to differ. I am not of you, will never be of you and disagree with you and your policies 100 per cent. [*Desk thumping*] "And doh let meh say"—I am quoting here from the *Express*, I still read the *Express*, Ria Taitt, "she gone?"

Seeking to explain—

Now, we have already shown that all these Ministers from the People's Partnership, every month, depending on your portfolio, "whether yuh MP or whatever, yuh money comes out, goes to Children's Life Fund and dey even try tuh say we were not doing it, and so on and the accountants, Ministry of Finance, showed them that it is being done and continues to be done. And from us here, every month money going tuh save children, no problem." It is 5 per cent and the Prime Minister gives 10 per cent, "but de PNM say dey ain doing dat because dey doh believe in that policy."

Ria Taitt, political editor, Tuesday June 06: Al-Rawi, the next leader, "ah mean" the PRO of the PNM.

"It is possible to have improved on the availability of funding of these programmes if the current waste and outright theft of public monies are reduced so that there will be less need and urgency warranting reliance upon donations from people..."

"So children lives—politics. I love politics, yuh know but yuh see when a child needs surgery or dying, I could not care less 'bout balisier, 'bout rising sun,

'bout piece ah scale, about circle ah circles, is children's lives and the PNM are saying go back to Jerry Narace policy of \$60,000 to save a child's life, when this Government says up to a million. Child, even if yuh have a 8 per cent, 10 per cent chance, whatever it is, leh de doctor send yuh and we trying tuh save yuh life because one life saved is a tremendous thing. I doh even know. We cyah even put ah price on it. But yuh know what? And ah dare anyone on the other side to say something. Since time immemorial—and you must remember I was born of dat, grown in dat and left dat fuh life because ah cyah be of dat.”

But let me tell you, since I know the policy and the position, I want anyone of them to get up and deny that every month, every public figure who is voted in on a PNM ticket gives a portion of their salary and their money that they earned from their politics to Balisier House. “I sit down now tuh see if anyone of dem will get up and say: Minister, MP for D'Abadie/O'Meara, that is not so.”

Mr. Speaker: “Doh sit down too long, please.”

Hon. A. Roberts: “So, you will give 8 per cent ah yuh money tuh Balisier House but yuh will let children die.” I tell you that the—

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Shame!

Hon. A. Roberts:—People's Partnership—

Mr. Cadiz: Shame!

Hon. A. Roberts:—is different from the PNM.

Mr. Cadiz: Shame!

Dr. Moonilal: That is a shame.

Mr. Cadiz: That is a shame.

Hon. A. Roberts: You understand what I am saying Member for Pointe-a-Pierre?

Mr. Cadiz: Balisier more important?

Hon. A. Roberts: Balisier, every month. “Cyah cacadah”. Children's lives. No, we shall not do that. We shall call back Jerry Narace and tell “dem” take \$60,000.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: And die.

Hon. A. Roberts: Shame!

Dr. Rambachan: What about the computers, they would take back that too?

Hon. A. Roberts: “Well dey find we did duncy. Dey go take back dat too.” But people will not, people in Trinidad and Tobago will not believe the nancy stories.

“Ah man in ah office three years and doh know he have ah back door? [Laughter] And you want tuh run the Treasury? You in a office, three years you in a office and you eh know it have a back door? Yes, he might look fuh a backdoor into de Treasury. Imagine dat! Big press conference”—

Mr. Cadiz: For a back door?

Hon. A. Roberts: Yes—[Interruption]

Dr. Moonilal: Penetration.

Hon. A. Roberts:—people let me just put, let me just lay this to rest for the rest of our political lives and the lives of Trinidad and Tobago. The Member for Diego Martin West is the best asset the People’s Partnership have. “We want you to stay right dey. Nobody want tuh go in yuh front door, yuh back door, yuh side door. You going real good because the people of Trinidad and Tobago know that the Member for Diego Martin West, who cannot even debate on a serious matter, \$2.8 billion appropriation here, comes with nothing, researches nothing, plagiarize Winford James. Imagine dat!” When you have to come to Parliament and depend on Winford James, I am sorry. You have lost all intellectual capability and ability to lead anything.

6.00 p.m.

So do not get confused. “Ah feel we fraid Al-Rawi. If Al-Rawi was your leader, we fraid dat.”

Miss Mc Donald: Mr. Speaker, Standing Order 36(1), please. What is the relevance of this?

Mr. Speaker: Connect.

Hon. A. Roberts: Connect? The relevance of it, Mr. Speaker, the Member for Diego Martin West’s whole contribution was “dat over here, we tell nancy stories. We are Paul Keens-Douglas. We talking about de cricket match wit tantie and so on. Dat is what he said, and I am showing dat everything dat” comes out of the Member for Diego Martin West, one, cannot be trusted. He does not have an original thought. He comes to the Parliament and reads out somebody else’s words and presents it as his own.

Miss Mc Donald: Mr. Speaker, Standing Order 36(5). No, “yuh” imputing—
[*Crosstalk*]

Hon. A. Roberts: “Yuh want me to show you de proof again?”

Miss Mc Donald:—Standing Order 36(5).

Hon. Member: Plagiarism! [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker: Member, let us try to move on. I try to advise Members not to get personal in matters. [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. A. Roberts: Eh-heh.

Mr. Speaker: Please, Member? Member for D’Abadie/O’Meara—

Hon. A. Roberts: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Speaker:—connect and let us move on.

Hon. A. Roberts: Thank you. [*Laughter and crosstalk*] “Da is de first time I ever agree with you.” [*Laughter and crosstalk*] Now, moving right along. Mr. Speaker, the Member for Diego Martin West had the audacity to suggest that when two of the greatest leaders—the Vice-President of the USA and the President of China—came to our little Republic, he suggested that when the President of China came, that you know we were showing off and “gallerying” and “la-la-la-ing” and so on. Okay, that is his opinion and he is entitled to it. But something he said here today, he asked about the aluminium smelter and what is the position since we love China so much, why is our position on the aluminium smelter changed?

Mr. Speaker, I do not know what the Member for Diego Martin West or what his feelings of love or his understanding of love means. Love does not mean that you love every single thing somebody does. Love does not mean that every element of your body is enamoured with everything in somebody else. This Government stands firmly against smelter plants in such a small square area of land in Trinidad and Tobago because, with the newest technology, they pose great health risk to generations to come. Cancer of the throat, of the chest, of the lungs, of the testicles, some of us on that side may not have to worry about that—
[*Laughter*] but we have cancer straightforward.

So he asked—he said the project stopped. What was the cost of the project stopping? There may be a monetary cost of stopping the project, yes, but you know what happened when we stopped the project? We saved generations of children from La Brea [*Desk thumping*] from dying young from 400 per cent

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increase in cancer. We saved generations of citizens, and so “whatever de” money cost, this Government say take dat, sink dat” because people’s lives are more important to us than “a fist full of dollars on dat side”. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Cadiz: What was their response, not one smelter plant?

Hon. A. Roberts: “Not one dey say, when we said people would die and so on, dey say well not one, dey give yuh three, so three times more people would die.” The Member for Diego Martin West could never stand here and take “dis” Prime Minister. You know, with all due respect, you have courage and you could stand and take the pressure and lead.

Mr. Cadiz: “He gone through de back door.”

Hon. A. Roberts: “He gone through de back door and he run through de back door. He was so lucky that tea call, eh boy, but it is all right de people are seeing dat he is not here. The Member for Port of Spain South, ah could see she sit down dey and she taking. Dat is very good, but Diego Martin West cannot—talk, call people all kinda ting, attack, bring email, bring all kinda thing and run, run.”

You know what, “de Ministry of Sport, we are increasing our funding for elite athletes. We going to get a stop watch on Diego Martin West and see if he could make de 4 x 100 running team de way he run out ah here. [*Laughter and crosstalk*] Talk an run,” TR. [*Laughter*]

Now, huh-hmm—

Miss Mc Donald: “You should go and join Tommy Joseph and dem.” [*Laughter*]

Hon. A. Roberts: Tommy Joseph is very intelligent, a brilliant icon in Trinidad and Tobago, and will do much better than some of you all did in Government. [*Laughter and crosstalk*]

Now, when you say that we are speaking here today about—“how much time ah have dey?”

Hon. Member: Ten more.

Hon. A. Roberts: Ten minutes.

Miss Mc Donald: One more minute.

Hon. A. Roberts: All right. Well, since “yuh” want one more minute, I will

now answer the question asked by the Member for Port of Spain South in committee stage. Let me try to fill up some of those issues which were very pertinent, very correct and you were doing your duty as a parliamentarian, and I respect that and I did my research to come and answer this question because you and the Members for Laventille East/Morvant, Laventille West, Diego Martin North/East, Diego Martin Central, St. Ann's East, Arouca/Maloney and Point Fortin have written letters asking about their grounds, asking for situations, querying certain things and I respect that and we immediately, on getting your letters, put people on it to deal with the situation. Unfortunately, the Member for Diego Martin West has not written one letter on behalf of Diego Martin West and the constituents to the Minister of Sport in three years. So I am sorry that he wasted your time.

This question I believe you asked was about the T&T Youth Camps—where will they be and so on? Well, they will be in over 100 communities across Trinidad and Tobago. They will cater for 18,500 kids and you have some—I would not go through all 100, but let me say Diego Martin Regional Corporation: you will have at Marlin Swim Club there; you will have Diego Martin Community Pool; Carenage Boys' Primary; La Puerta Government; Diego Martin North Secondary School; Petit Valley Girls' RC; St. Dominique's Home; St. Francois Girls' College; Four Roads Recreation Ground and Diego Martin Central. All right?

When we talk about Point Fortin: you will have at Guanapo Recreation Ground; YMCA Point Fortin Pool; Coronation Park; South West Regional Indoor; Point Fortin Civic Centre; Clifton Hill and Techier Village.

Arima Borough Corporation: Arima Velodrome; Larry Gomes, Arima North; Tunapuna/Piarco Corporation: Carapo; Maloney; La Horquetta Recreation Ground; Garden Village D'Abadie Recreation Ground; Mickey Trotman Ground; George Boyce La Horquetta Swimming Pool; Constantine Park; Eddie Hart Grounds; Eastern Regional Facility; Frederick Settlement; Prime Minister Park; Las Lomas Recreation; UWI Spec; El Dorado East; El Dorado West and La Joya Swimming Pool.

So that is just to give you an idea—spread across the country, unlike the PNM, if they were to read out this list, it would only be where you all are. Do not judge me by how you all act. When we govern, we love elections, when we win, we govern for the whole country regardless [*Desk thumping*] of politics or party, regardless of anything. So you could ask Anil; anything you want to know, ask Anil because Anil will tell you.

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Another question I believe was asked by the Member for Arouca/Maloney—something about the Olympic Caravan Country Tours held last year in honour of our greatest Olympic team in “de history—all yuh could pong de table [*Desk thumping*]—of Trinidad and Tobago with one gold and three bronze. Why yuh not smiling? Dey din win it for People’s Partnership, dey win de medals for all of us. So let us try dat again.”

Miss Mc Donald: [*Inaudible*]

Hon. A. Roberts: “De greatest performance in Trinidad and Tobago’s [*Desk thumping*] history: one gold and three bronze medals, right. [*Crosstalk*] Do I need protection from my colleague?”

Mr. Speaker: Yes, Member for Port of Spain South, please.

Hon. A. Roberts: Port of Spain South.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member.

Hon. A. Roberts: Member. “So de caravan, ah tink dey ask about de cost and where it went. Well, it did went to Toco—de tour from Toco. They did hampers in Diego Martin, remember dat was de time of de flood victims. We gave out—the athletes gave the flood victims 300 hampers, dey had 40-foot trailer, dey did polo shirts and so on. It went across de country, all right, and all de budget is here. Dey did advertising to let people know where the athletes would be, where Keshorn would be, at what time and so on.”

Now, this brings me to my final point which shows that anybody wanting to be Prime Minister of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, the first thing you must do is like people. “You see, if you doh like people, yuh disqualify yuhself. When our Prime Minister was elected, the very first day she swore in, straight boots across de country because, unfortunately, there was flooding across de whole country.”

And today I stood and heard the Member for Diego Martin West, who in some nightmare dream feels that he may become a Prime Minister through “a back door, side back or de floor”, and stating that money spent to bring some sort of relief to constituents in Diego Martin was money wasted. When unfortunately, at that time I was one of—I was a temporary constituent—

Miss Mc Donald: No, he never said that. Standing Order 36(5). No, that was not said. No, Standing Order 36(5).

Mr. Speaker: No, that is a correction. [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. A. Roberts: Mr. Speaker, I am quoting. I know my hon. colleague finds it hard to listen to her leader, but I listened to every word. He went through and he said and I quote. The Member went through and he said:

Local Government, National Security and the third institution—Works and Transport—doing the same thing, everybody doing the same thing, and this Bill is just a total waste of money and contractors get rich and corruption.

“The Member for Diego Martin Central who was there from before the rain even start to fill up, who was on de ground, he saw de work—[Interruption]—dat is where I going, I could not find the Member for Diego Martin West. The Member for Diego Martin Central was out there early and he will attest—Diego Martin Central saw de damage, it was the worst damage in the history of the area, it was even described by the ODPM as a disaster zone.”

“And to come here and hear the Member for Diego Martin West describe giving people relief when dey fridge, dey belongings, dey books, dey children, dey house, dey wall gone down de river, gone down de drain, dey cars gone, road mash up; to get people assistance in that way was a waste. Yuh want to know why? I was his constituent at that time because ah was staying by meh father on 15 Newbury Hill, Diego Martin West, and he was not there on de Saturday, not there on de Sunday. While all these Ministers and the Members for Diego Martin Central, and North/East are out there with the people serving, he was not there. Where was he? Because if he had seen it, he would never come here today and call it a waste. In fact, I state here today that the entire contribution of the Member for Diego Martin West and his leadership, including the emails and de back door is a total waste.”

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

Mr. Speaker: Member for Diego Martin North/East. [*Desk thumping*]

Miss Mc Donald: Bring back some sobriety and some intelligence, please.

Mr. Colm Imbert (*Diego Martin North/East*): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. [*Crosstalk*] There is not that much to respond to with respect to the last speaker. When the Minister of Finance and the Economy was speaking, I think I took about 10 pages of notes, when the last speaker was speaking, about half page. But since the Member for D’Abadie/O’Meara has decided to be the official government spokesperson on that fiasco [*Desk thumping*] with respect to the \$6 million spent to recover a damaged fire truck, Mr. Speaker, this is the only Member of the Government that has spoken on this matter. It is an item of expenditure that has been incurred in fiscal 2013. We are looking at the

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supplementation of the estimates for 2013, including hundreds of millions of dollars for the Ministry of National Security. Since the Member is the only one who has had the audacity to speak on this matter, the Prime Minister said it was a fiasco, but the hon. Member has a different view.

I will repeat what the hon. gentleman said, Mr. Speaker, because I was quite astonished. He tried to justify the expenditure by scapegoating the former Chief Fire Officer and in so doing, in scapegoating the Chief Fire Officer, he uttered a number of inaccuracies, untruths, downright misleading and false statements, and I will explain the level to which this Government has sunk. Every single Member on that side who is a Minister is well aware of the fact that public servants have limits of expenditure.

Hon. Member: Correct.

Mr. C. Imbert: “Every one ah dem”, including the Member for D’Abadie/O’Meara. So when he told us that the expenditure of \$6 million by the Chief Fire Officer—who is not even a permanent secretary, is a mere head of department—was a legitimate expenditure, he knew that what he was saying was not true, Mr. Speaker. The spending limit for a permanent secretary at this point in time is \$1 million.

I will refer you to an article in the *Guardian* published on June 05, 2013—not too long ago—about the fire tender, this fiasco, as the Prime Minister has called it. The article is entitled “Jack gave fire truck deal before approval”, but the headline is not important. What is important is this statement in the article:

“Permanent Secretary in the National Security Ministry Jennifer Boucaud-Blake, who is in the United Kingdom at present, has distanced herself from any involvement, saying she is not authorized to approve spending over \$1 million.”

Now, the PS has said so and a head of department would have a delegated limit. I would expect that the Chief Fire Officer’s limit would be in the region of a couple hundred thousand dollars, no more than that, and the Minister of Sport will know that. So to come into this Parliament and to tell this untruth that this was a legitimate expenditure and as a result of it being legitimate, and that the fire officer had the authority to commit this expenditure and, therefore, what the Cabinet is supposed to do and, “ah big song and dance and carrying on and ranting and raving,” he is fooling no one, Mr. Speaker.

6.15 p.m.

He is fooling no one, and since he has put this matter into the public domain, if the PS says that she “doh” want to get involved in that matter because her limit is one million dollars, how could her subordinate, the Chief Fire Officer, be authorized to spend \$6 million? [*Desk thumping*] Absolute nonsense!

It tells me what kind of Cabinet we have in this country, Mr. Speaker. What kind of Cabinet we have in this country that a head of department, allegedly—because you are scapegoating that poor gentleman—a head of department allegedly commits expenditure of \$6 million and the Cabinet just says: “We have to honour this expenditure because it is legitimate.” It is not legitimate, Mr. Speaker! It is absolutely illegitimate!

Hon. Member: Go to court.

Mr. C. Imbert: Go to court for what? The person had no authority to commit the Government to \$6 million. That is open and shut. You “doh” even need a legal opinion on that, Mr. Speaker. But be that as it may, let us deal with the facts, Mr. Speaker. Let us deal with the facts.

We saw some nancy story in the papers, some Cabinet Minister leak—we “doh” know who it is—we have quite a few leaks on that side: “dey leaking Cabinet Notes; dey leaking Cabinet Minutes”. In fact, this thing about the chairman of the HDC, I believe the Cabinet Minute was read out on a radio station yesterday, so that is old news—the fact that there is a new chairman at the HDC.

Hon. Member: “Yuh forget to tell Diego Martin West.”

Mr. C. Imbert: The fact of the matter is, Mr. Speaker, I did some research, I did some research, Mr. Speaker, on what is the cost of fire equipment, and this is the information that I have: that a pump truck would cost about US \$200,000; a custom cab engine pumper about US \$350,000; a water tanker like the one that was retrieved, US \$350,000; and a high-lift, the most sophisticated fire tender that you have, about US \$1.2 million.

So the most expensive fire appliance in the world that could have a ladder that could go a hundred feet in the air, multiple hoses, could carry 10 men, all sorts of things, the cost of that, Mr. Speaker, would not exceed more than \$6 million or \$7 million. The cost of the item that was retrieved from the ravine was about \$300,000 brand new and that is indicated by the price that was paid for it in 2006, Mr. Speaker—about \$2 million. “The thing worth about \$200,000.”

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Now, what Cabinet in their right mind, what Cabinet in their right mind would authorize expenditure in excess of \$6 million—even if allegedly by somebody who has no authority to so do—to retrieve a piece of equipment that is worth \$200,000 or \$300,000? What Cabinet in their right mind? And it makes you wonder what is going on in Trinidad and Tobago. It makes you wonder.

The Member for Diego Martin West, he made a point. You had a particular individual who was chairman of a state enterprise. The particular individual was fired by the Minister of Finance and the Economy and I read from the *Express* of May 17, 2013:

“Finance Minister Larry Howai has fired the Caribbean Airlines...board.”

And he goes on to explain why—because there were problems of governance in that organization. The airline lost \$700 million in 2012, \$500 million in 2011, \$1.2 billion in losses and the Minister of Finance and the Economy jumped in and fired the chairman and the board. The Leader of the Opposition is quite right—after that performance—to query the appointment of the same person to the leadership of the HDC, a billion-dollar state enterprise. He is quite within his rights to query that, Mr. Speaker.

And you see, this Government, they take things for granted. I listened to the ranting and raving of the Member for D’Abadie/O’Meara, carrying on, getting on, knowing full well that the Chief Fire Officer cannot authorize more than \$200,000 or \$300,000 in expenditure, saying it was legitimate and, “wha we supposed to do”? Knowing full well that what he is saying is absolutely untrue, Mr. Speaker. Absolutely untrue!

Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, even if the thing had cost less than a million dollars, the Central Tenders Board Regulations require that you have to have a minimum of three quotes. This was not an emergency, Mr. Speaker, the firemen had already been retrieved and recovered from the vehicle. The exercise took place days later. This is not an emergency. What would justify this breach of tendering procedures, Mr. Speaker?

You know, this Government promised—this Minister was not here—but this Government promised to reform the procurement legislation in Trinidad and Tobago. They promised. It was a manifesto promise; came in 2010 with a lot of song and dance and “gambage”; come with a joint select committee; drag us through this joint select committee for almost two years; come in Parliament; get on, beat up. Three years later, Mr. Speaker, three years later, Mr. Speaker, has any reform been effected to the public procurement regime in Trinidad and Tobago?

No, Mr. Speaker. No. What we see instead, we keep reading about strange tendering practices, strange procedures in the newspapers.

Mr. Speaker, just the other day, we saw a report about an \$800 million contract which it is tipped will be given to a UNC financier—\$800 million for the National Gas Company. That is what the newspapers tell us; that this contractor SIS, Super Industrial Services, who I have some knowledge of when they used to be one of our small-sized road pavers back in the 2009/2010 era. They were one of the smaller road pavers doing work for the Ministry of Works.

Now, all of a sudden, this road-paving company can build a building for the National Gas Company for \$800 million, Mr. Speaker, and when you read the article, you see what is going on. The National Gas Company has instructed its agent NIPDEC to invite only a select group of contractors, of course SIS is on that list.

So, the National Gas Company tells NIPDEC just invite these three or four contractors here for this \$800 million project and then, surprise, surprise, NIPDEC, it is alleged, is going to award this contract, an \$800 million contract to Super Industrial Services, the same—[*Interruption*] Mr. Speaker? [*Interruption*] All right. No, no. It is \$800 million for the National Gas Company headquarters, Mr. Speaker, \$800 million. That is the Motor Vehicle Authority. Thank you for bringing this to my attention. My colleague from Laventille West has pointed out to me that this contractor got a \$232 million contract for the Motor Vehicle Authority.

Hon. Member: So what?

Mr. C. Imbert: You say, “So what?” Mr. Speaker, the Minister spoke about implementation. The Minister spoke about the fact that the deficit in 2012 is not as large as anticipated. Why? Because they spent less money. Why, Mr. Speaker? Because with all the old talk and the fanfare and the noise, nothing is happening in Trinidad and Tobago, Mr. Speaker. You do not have to be a rocket scientist.

Just the other day in a Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee, it was a public session so the information has already been published, so I am not breaking any rule here. In that public meeting, which was live on television, Mr. Speaker, some of the Government Members tried to score some points asking a particular question about a secondary school in Couva, making a big song and dance that the construction of this school began in 2007 and now in 2013 it is not finished and R-r-r-r-r-r and I listened carefully. I said to myself: Hold on, 2007—2010 was PNM; 2010—2013 is UNC. So half of the six years has to fall—[*Interruption*] Yes, UNC, you are UNC—half of the six years has to fall at the feet of the UNC.

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So I asked a question. I said: What percentage of the school was completed between 2007 and 2010, and they meekly and quietly said 80 per cent. And what percentage has been completed between—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: Somebody's phone is on—

Mr. C. Imbert: Yes, somebody has a phone on.

Mr. Speaker:—and it is feeding into the mike.

Hon. Member: Your phone is on.

Mr. C. Imbert: Not mine. My phone is off.

Mr. Speaker: It is feeding into the mike. Continue, hon. Member.

Mr. C. Imbert: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do not believe it was my phone, but that is quite all right.

Mr. Roberts: “Is Al-Rawi own.”

Mr. C. Imbert: Mr. Speaker, I asked the question: between 2007 and 2010, what was the percentage completion on the Couva South Secondary School? They quietly said: 80 per cent. And what was the percentage completion from 2010 to 2013? And even quieter, they said 18 per cent.

So, 80 per cent of the school was built in three years under the PNM and under the UNC, they “cyar” build 20 per cent of school. Mr. Speaker, so I said, Why? I said why and, even quieter, they had gone down to a whisper now, Mr. Speaker—[*Interruption*] Mr. Speaker, I know they “doh” like what I am saying, you know. It went down to a whisper now. They say, “Lack of funding; no money.”

And you see, when you listen to what the Minister is saying—“ah seeing all ah dem laughing because dat is exactly wha went on”. When you listen, they could not spend \$5 billion out of the last budget. Complete disaster! And the Minister mumbles: “Capacity problems, you know we have to look at strengthening the institutional capacity of Ministries.” That is our Minister, what he is trying to tell you is that they are incompetent, Mr. Speaker. They are incompetent. They cannot do anything.

Mr. Roberts: What about the Paramin School?

Mr. C. Imbert: Yes, three years to get a school going when the tender was invited in 2010. That is progress for you. That is progress for you, Mr. Speaker.

Now, Mr. Speaker, let me go to some of the points made by the Minister of Finance and the Economy, astonishing points. Mr. Speaker, in the committee meeting—[*Interruption*—yes, I pointed out that your Minister of Sport told an untruth when he said that the expenditure was legitimate. I think that is plenty.

Now, Mr. Speaker, let us go to what the Minister of Finance and the Economy told us. In the committee meeting, I asked a question of the Minister: what is the effect on the annual budget deficit of this increased allocation and where is the money coming from? And he said, I will tell you in the debate. Well, he did tell us what the effect would be on the deficit. The deficit is now inching up on \$10 billion, cross nine million, but he did not tell us where the money is coming from, Mr. Speaker.

And before we complete this debate, I will ask the Minister to come clean with this House and tell us where this \$3.4 billion is coming from. Three point four billion dollars is not chick feed. It is not peanuts. It is a considerable sum of money. Where in the economy? And if the deficit is going up to \$9.2 billion from \$7.6 billion, are you borrowing? And I am asking answers because I very well know you are borrowing. So, I would like the Minister to tell us what the borrowing will be for this fiscal year because you are increasing your borrowing clearly by at least \$3 billion.

You see, these are the things they do not want to tell the population. They “doh” want to tell the population that the deficit is now almost \$10 billion and that they are increasing their expenditure through borrowings, Mr. Speaker. They “doh” want to tell the population that.

Now, the other thing that shocked me is the Minister’s unfamiliarity with our energy sector and he got himself into a tangle talking about natural gas production mixing up billions and millions and trillions and so on. I would have excused him last year, but not anymore. This Minister has been in office long enough to know what is a cubic foot, what is a cubic metre, what is a million, what is a billion and what is a trillion, Mr. Speaker.

And, Mr. Speaker, the Minister tells us—I was astonished at what the Minister said—he had no clue of what he was saying; made a complete fool of himself.

Mr. Speaker: Please.

Mr. C. Imbert: No, but I—

Mr. Speaker: Please, please. Withdraw that for me, please!

Mr. C. Imbert: Oh, certainly, Mr. Speaker. I withdraw that. He confused himself completely. Now, Mr. Speaker, he tells us that there was going to be significant downtime in the energy sector in the third quarter of 2013 and this downtime would have impacted us to the tune of 1.5 trillion cubic feet. One point five trillion cubic feet. I have it here—1.5 Tcf.

6.30 p.m.

Sen. Howai: So mine is correct then?

Mr. C. Imbert: No, no, that is the other one. [*Crosstalk*] Yeah, you could say that. Mr. Speaker, he tells us that the downtime in the energy sector will impact the production of natural gas by 1.5 trillion cubic feet. That is the entire production of natural gas in Trinidad and Tobago for the entire year, Mr. Speaker, and 1.5 billion cubic feet of natural gas is nothing because a trillion is a thousand billion. So 1.5 billion is one-thousandth of a trillion. So 1.5 billion cubic feet would be one-thousandth of our annual natural gas production. It is nothing.

So, Mr. Speaker, he says now he meant billion. He has no clue of what he is talking about and he tried to compare our natural gas production and consumption to India. India is not a gas-based economy. He got his figures wrong by the way. India's natural gas consumption is about 2.1 billion—trillion cubic feet per year. [*Crosstalk*] That is all right, I have my figures right. I have my documents here, Mr. Speaker. [*Laughter*] India's natural gas production, Mr. Speaker, is 2.1 trillion cubic feet, consumption, per year.

There is no relevance between a downturn in our energy sector and India's natural gas consumption. It means nothing. I wish the Minister would clarify. What did you mean? It cannot be 1.5 trillion cubic feet, and it cannot be 1.5 billion cubic feet, it has to be somewhere in the middle there, but both figures are wrong. So please consult with your technocrats and please explain what you meant. Mr. Speaker, through you, the Minister is demonstrating profound ignorance of our energy sector, profound ignorance, and he has not told us what is happening. He said that he would get to that, but he did not tell us.

Mr. Speaker, when the Partnership Government got into office our oil production was 100,000 barrels a day.

Miss Mc Donald: Yeah.

Mr. C. Imbert: It has been stuck at 80,000 barrels a day for the last six to nine months, Mr. Speaker.

Miss Mc Donald: Yeah.

Mr. C. Imbert: There was a rapid decline as soon as this Government got into office. It dropped from 100,000 barrels per day to 80,000 barrels per day, and it has been stuck there for the last six to nine months. I keep asking the question and all of them duck the answer. Our oil production has dropped by 25 per cent under this Government—*[Interruption]*

Miss Mc Donald: That is right.

Mr. C. Imbert:—and what is this Government doing about that?

Miss Mc Donald: “Nutten!”

Mr. C. Imbert: The only reason you could pay any of those bills that you claimed you pay, although contractors line up outside every state enterprise and every Ministry for their money—*[Interruption]*

Mr. Roberts: That is not true.

Mr. C. Imbert:—but the only reason you could pay one bill to one of your supporters or financiers is because oil prices have remained fairly stable for the last couple of years and the gas price has increased.

Miss Mc Donald: That is right.

Mr. C. Imbert: Nothing to do with you, but we as a country where we had annual oil production—*[Interruption]*

Mr. Speaker: Member for Port of Spain South, you will get a chance to speak.

Mr. C. Imbert: We as a country, Mr. Speaker—let me use the daily figures—daily oil production in excess of 200,000 barrels a day at one point in time. Under the last PNM administration it went up to—it had gone down and it went back up to 150,000 barrels a day with the discovery of the east coast, the BHP platform.

Mr. Roberts: When was that discovered?

Mr. C. Imbert: It came into production in 2005/2006 and our oil production immediately shut up to about 150,000. The fact of the matter is, Mr. Speaker, this country depends on oil and gas, and under this Government oil production is down by 25 per cent and gas production is down. And all the old talk and the shouting and screaming is not going to change that fact, and I have not heard one government spokesman—no Minister of Finance, no Minister of Energy has come

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into this Parliament in the last three years and told us anything meaningful, credible, believable or realistic with what is going to be done about our declining oil and gas production. Just old talk, old talk.”

Today we heard more old talk. You heard the Minister say, “Well there was going to be a downturn because they had to do repairs and...” Give us the information, do not give us the old talk. Let us know what your Government is doing to carry our oil production back up to 100,000 barrels per day and carry our gas production back up to the levels that it was 10 years ago. That is what people want to hear, not this set of old talk.

Miss Mc Donald: And no new revenue streams.

Mr. C. Imbert: Mr. Speaker, I also had to listen to the Minister of Finance and the Economy praise himself and his Government for the fiasco that is the Clico Investment Fund; an absolute fiasco. I have been in this Parliament and listened to his predecessor, Minister Dookeran, make all sorts of promises which turned out to be empty promises about the Clico Investment Fund—one set of noise saying on one occasion, Mr. Speaker, that policyholders would be able to exchange their bonds in years 11 to 20 on a dollar-for-dollar basis for units in the Clico Investment Fund.

They launched a prospectus—and, you know, under the new stock exchange rules, somebody could be cited for fraud, Mr. Speaker—misleading prospectus—they encouraged policyholders to invest in the Clico Investment Fund. They tell them that they would get a dollar for collar—if they have \$100,000 they would get \$100,000 in units—they encouraged all of them to do it. In budget speeches—budget speech after budget speech—I remember the Member for Tunapuna carrying on in this Parliament, in this place—so it is not too long ago—about people would get as much as ninety cents on the dollar because you get eighty cents on the dollar from the first 10 years and then we are giving you dollar for dollar on the second 10 years; when you average it you get ninety cents on the dollar—he beat his chest and everybody banging “r-r-r-r-r-r”.

What are the facts, Mr. Speaker? What are the facts? The Clico Investment Fund was launched at a unit price of \$25 per unit. What is the price today? It is \$21.05. Let me repeat that. The Clico Investment Fund was launched in December of 2012 at a unit price of \$25 per unit. The price of the unit, as of today, is \$21.05—I know the Members opposite cannot do maths so I would do the maths for them—that is a decrease of 16 per cent.

So if I had \$100,000 in units in December I now have \$84,000 in units, but the Minister is boasting about a dividend of 3½ per cent. Mr. Speaker, 3½ per cent on

\$84,000 is \$3,000, Mr. Speaker. So my net value, between December and now, is \$84,000 plus \$3,000 in dividends, \$87,000, but I started out with \$100,000, so I have lost \$13,000—13 per cent of my investment is lost. How could that be great? How could that be the best thing since sliced bread? How could that be a goldmine? Who in their right mind would praise and boast about a 13 per cent reduction in their assets? Who in their right mind would do that?

And, you see, the Members of this Government feel they could just come and say anything, say anything and it is sounding good. He tells us that there is some gentleman involved with the Clico policyholders who said this Clico Investment Fund is the greatest thing, and we are supposed to swallow that. So people watched their investment drop from \$100,000 to \$87,000 in the last six months, they are supposed to say, “That did not happen, no I have a wonderful investment here. I have more than I had when I started off.”

You see, this is the problem with these types of debates. What does the Government intend to do about that? The Government controls the Clico Investment Fund. The people who have lost their money want to know what the Minister of Finance and the Economy intends to do about the 16 per cent reduction in value of units since you encouraged them to invest their hard-earned money in the fund? That is what they want to know. They want to know how they are getting back their money after you promised them and you told them that they would get a dollar-for-dollar par value if they buy units in the Clico Investment Fund. That is what they want to know. They do not want to hear you with some confusion about some person who said it is the greatest thing. The people lost their money and they want to know what you intend to do about it.

I am really disappointed in these debates. You have the Member for D’Abadie/O’Meara just carrying on, ranting and raving. Instead of looking at a serious breach of procurement procedures, instead of admitting that something went terribly wrong—that somebody duped and hoodwinked the Cabinet—instead of saying that, I might have believed that one; that somebody duped and hoodwinked the Cabinet into paying \$7 million for a worthless piece of junk worth about \$100,000. Instead of saying that, that they did not tell us, they fool us; they did not explain to us that it was a water tanker and not an aerial ladder; they did not explain to us that it would have been better to scrap the vehicle; they did not explain to us that the value of the vehicle was so much less than what we were being asked to pay for; they did not explain to us that this was done without authorization in breach of the Central Tenders Board; in breach of the spending limits of all public servants including the Permanent Secretary and the Chief Fire

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Officer; they did not tell us that so we are having an investigation now to find out what went wrong, and we give the country an assurance that this would not happen again. Instead of that, we have to hear this kind of—I do not know how to describe it, Mr. Speaker—trying to justify a complete breakdown of the tendering, procurement and expenditure system in Trinidad and Tobago; a complete breakdown of everything we are trying to do in this Parliament in terms of moving towards value for money, in terms of proper oversight of government expenditure.

Instead of supporting the move towards better oversight of public expenditure, you have a Minister coming to explain to say: “Well wha yuh want us to do, de man authorized the thing and wha yuh wha we to do.” Mr. Speaker, it was pathetic. And I would hope, I would hope, I would hope, Mr. Speaker, that some Minister in this debate would come and explain what went on with that glaring abuse of public funds. I would certainly hope so.

The other thing, Mr. Speaker, this Government has a very strange way of implementing projects, very strange. You heard the Leader of the Opposition refer to it, and it puts strain on the public finances. The Point Fortin Highway is a case in point. The Government is financing that project out of direct revenues. This must be a record for any country in the world.

Hon. Member: Seven billion; seven billion!

Mr. C. Imbert: Seven billion, over a US \$1 billion. It is only countries like Saudi Arabia and so on that have oil money coming through their ears and surpluses that they do not know what to do with can finance projects out of direct revenues, but when you have a deficit of \$9 billion, you are collecting \$9 billion less than you are spending, you have to borrow \$9 billion—\$9 billion ‘eh’ or \$9,000 million—and that is following a deficit of the previous year of several billions, and the year before that of several billions, and the year before that of several billions.

We have been running deficit budgets since 2009, and you have deficit after deficit after deficit accumulating, but instead of trying to stop the shock to the Treasury by taking a long-term loan with one of the international multilateral financing agencies, Mr. Speaker and spreading out your payments over 25 years—so that your payment for the highway would be \$200 million or \$300 million a year—they are financing it by direct revenues at a cost of \$1 billion or more than a \$1 billion a year.

Mr. Speaker, I want to put something on the record because this Government is reckless, and that approval of that expenditure for the fire truck demonstrates how reckless they are because if they did not bother to find out whether the Chief Fire Officer could have authorized that or not then you are irresponsible. You do not deserve to sit in a Cabinet in this country. [*Desk thumping*] Be that as it may, Mr. Speaker, I remember when the bids came in for the Point Fortin Highway, it was three weeks before the general election in 2010, and the bids came in at \$5.3 billion, \$5.4 billion. They were all in that vicinity, and I asked a specific question of the National Infrastructure Development Company who was the Government's agent with respect to this project—specific question. I saw the bids, \$5 billion, \$5.3 whatever.

Mr. Roberts: How you saw that?

Mr. C. Imbert: I was the line Minister, the information—

Mr. Roberts: What!

Mr. C. Imbert:—this question, this question is foolish, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Roberts: What!

Mr. Speaker: Please, please, please.

6.45 p.m.

Mr. C. Imbert: Mr. Speaker, through you, the National Infrastructure Development Company reported to me as line Minister on the outcome of the opening—[*Laughter*—]—of the tenders for the highway project. The Member could laugh you know, but, Mr. Speaker, they have no understanding of proper procurement procedures. The bids were opened, publicly, and one was \$5.3 billion, one was \$5.4 billion, one was \$5.2 billion, and after the bids were opened, NIDCO reported to me on what had occurred, and I saw one is 5.3, one is 5.2, one is 5.4, and I said to myself, “Something is not right here”. So I asked a specific question, I said, “What was the engineer's estimate?” Mr. Speaker, the response was \$3.8 billion.

So the instructions NIDCO got from me—put that on hold, because the bids had come in at \$1.5 billion over the engineer's estimate, and the estimate for land acquisition and project management was somewhere around six or seven hundred million dollars. So the estimated cost of this highway was going to be somewhere in the vicinity of \$4.5 billion. So when you see today the highway is costing seven and a half billion dollars—seven and a half billion when the cost is supposed to be four and a half billion, Mr. Speaker, you see the level of recklessness involved.

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I wonder if the Member for D'Abadie/O'Meara will tell us they had no choice with that too, it was a fait accompli. They signed the contract and they come and tell us—they signed the contract and they come and tell us. *[Interruption]* Mr. Speaker, you see it is a level of recklessness and the country needs to understand that that Point Fortin highway is costing \$3 billion more than it should, \$3,000 million. And that may explain the actions of certain people who are no longer with us, why they acted in such haste to break down the protesters' hut, why there is so much heat on that project at this point in time, because there is \$3 billion in extra money available on that contract, and you see this is why I put to the Members opposite, "You came into office and you promised to reform the public procurement regime. People voted for you because you said you would do that. You said there would be no more Chinese contractors in Trinidad and Tobago."

Campaigned against the use of Chinese labour, campaigned against the use of loans from the Chinese Government—what is happening today, Mr. Speaker? I asked the Minister a question in the committee stage. I asked the Minister what was the cost of the UWI south campus? What was the process used to select the contractor? What is the local content? Who is the contractor? And the Minister promised at the committee stage to tell this country, to tell us the answers to all these questions: Who is the contractor? What was the process? What is the cost?

The Minister gave us no information, Mr. Speaker. No information whatsoever, not in the written responses and not in the oral presentation from the Minister. But, Mr. Speaker, all you have to do is go on UWI website, log in south campus; what do you get? Cost: \$499 million. They are the ones who said they will never do a mega project again in Trinidad and Tobago you know—\$500 million for this UWI south campus, and that is the original cost, we do not know what the final cost will be. Who is the contractor? China Jiangsu. And it even says that the project is under way and it is expected to be completed sometime next year.

All the questions I asked the Minister are on the UWI website, but the Minister "decide he not answering me". You know why? Because he does not want to come and say that this Government has awarded a contract to China Jiangsu in the sum of \$500 million, where no local contractors were permitted to tender, where it is a Government to Government arrangement with the Government of China based on financing from China, exactly what the PNM was doing. That is how NAPA was built, and that is what they kicked brass about, Mr. Speaker—b-r-a-s-s by the way. It was not a slip of the tongue—and that is what they protested against, and they marched and they carry on.

You know, there was one of them over there he like to march. The Member for Chaguanas East, he loves to march, man—march up and down Port of Spain. Every time you had a murder, he marching. It had almost 160 murders in Trinidad for this year alone I “ent” see him marching. I have not seen the hon. Member for Chaguanas East marching, he must be tired.

Mr. Roberts: I will have to not vote for “yuh”.

Mr. C. Imbert: Yeah, that is all right, “yuh” never vote for me anyhow, it “doh” make no difference.

Mr. Roberts: Well I “eh” know. Huh!

Mr. C. Imbert: And, Mr. Speaker, you have China Jiangsu—that is the contractor on the e TecK building, that project was not a success. In fact, the Attorney General had contemplated taking action against China Jiangsu when the Government came into office. The e TecK project was not, and UTT headquarters was not a success. China Jiangsu was the contractor on that, and yet after all that “tra-la-la” and all that noise, you now have this contractor on the UWI south campus, you want to give a Chinese contractor the Couva hospital, you want to give a Chinese contractor the Arima hospital. When I add it up it is \$2 billion, Mr. Speaker. You know I was away recently—

Mr. Roberts: “Yuh shoulda stay.”

Mr. C. Imbert:—and when I came back, as I walked in the house, the phone ring. So I say, “Well, wait nah, people following meh”.

Mr. Roberts: “Yuh didn geh ah email?”

Mr. C. Imbert: Five minutes after I walk into the house, phone rings, you know what it is? An irate citizen of Trinidad and Tobago shouting about this, about the fact that the People’s Partnership went up and down Trinidad and Tobago screaming and carrying on about Government to Government arrangements with the Government of China, about projects financed by the Government of China, about Chinese contractors getting billion-dollar contracts in Trinidad and Tobago and local contractors getting crumbs and she say, “Look at them. Look at them. They doing exactly what the PNM did, but twice as much.” And you know, the Minister said in his naivety that they are the most scrutinized government. Nonsense! Nonsense!

The PNM was critiqued hour by hour, day by day. They had a “fella on ah talk show”, every day he carrying on, on the radio, Mr. Speaker, very loud noise, very loud noise—

Mr. Roberts: That is not your business.

Mr. C. Imbert:—but you see, Mr. Speaker, these are the things the Minister needs to tell us. Is it a policy of the Trinidad and Tobago Government to enter into billion-dollar contracts with the Chinese Government to do projects that Trinidad and Tobago contractors could do? I would like the Minister to tell us, is that your policy? Because you have the south campus of UWI, \$500 million, the Children’s Hospital, the Couva hospital, the Arima hospital, adding up, as I said, to about \$2 billion, minimal local content because the materials will come from China, the labour will come from China.

So, is it the policy of this Government to enter into arrangements with the Chinese Government to take bread out of the mouths of Trinidad and Tobago contractors? I would like you to tell us, is that your policy? [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Member: That is all.

Mr. C. Imbert: Because that is what we were accused of. Is that your policy?

Dr. Browne: Yes! Yes! True! [*Inaudible*—any difference between the PNM—[*Inaudible*]

Mr. C. Imbert: I tell you. Mr. Speaker, let me move on. During the committee stage, and I noticed that the minutes of the meeting, the report is inaccurate; inaccurate, incomplete, missing important information, and I think it is necessary to bring up an issue now. In the information given to us as Members of Parliament, there was a \$1 billion item that was missing in personnel expenditure. Eventually, we were given a piece of paper after the fact, telling us, “Okay, well these are the allocations to various Ministries and departments”, adding up to about a billion dollars, and in there we saw an allocation to the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service for \$540 million. That is not in the minutes. And I asked the Minister what is this for, and the Minister told us this is for settling industrial agreements with the police service. “It is impossible”, I said, Mr. Speaker.

I want the Minister to tell us what is going on. What is that \$540 million for? It is not \$5 million you know, it is \$540 million and, Mr. Speaker, in order to determine what the true facts were—

Mr. Roberts: False lies.

Mr. C. Imbert:—I found—yes, you are not literate enough to understand that true facts—

Hon. Member: Oooooo!

Mr. C. Imbert:—true facts is a well-known phrase.

Mr. Speaker: Member for Diego Martin North/East, you know you cannot refer to a Member in that kind of way. I ask you to withdraw those remarks please.

Mr. C. Imbert: Certainly I withdraw the remarks that he is illiterate, Mr. Speaker. I am sorry I said that. Now—

Hon. Member: [*Inaudible*]—people of Diego Martin—[*Inaudible*]

Mr. C. Imbert: Yeah, that is all right.

Mr. Speaker: Please, Member for Chaguanas East, the cross talking.

Mr. C. Imbert: Yes! Yes! It is some comprehension problems, Mr. Speaker, but let me go on.

Mr. Speaker: All right, the speaking time of the hon. Member for Diego Martin North/East 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.

Mr. Speaker: You may continue hon. Member. [*Desk thumping*]

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

Hon. Member: [*Inaudible*]—with comprehension.

Mr. C. Imbert: No, it is all right. Poor fella, I understand his problem, he would not be around next time. But, Mr. Speaker, I went and I found the Freedom of Information document published in the *Trinidad and Tobago Gazette*, with respect to the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service for the year 2012 and there is a statement in there and it is under the heading "Organizational Structure":

"The Commissioner of Police, who is head of the Police Service, together with 13 other Executive Officers, comprise the Executive of the organization. The Executive is responsible for policy formulation and general management of the organization, which comprises approximately six thousand officers..."

So there we have it, Mr. Speaker, an official document published by the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service in compliance with the Freedom of Information Act. As of 2012, there are 6,000 police officers in Trinidad and Tobago.

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Now, I went into the literature and I found an article on November 14, 2012, headlined as follows in the *Guardian*, “Cops to settle for 9% pay increase”, and this was a report on the outcome of negotiations for the period 2008 to 2010. It is my understanding that discussions may be under way for the period of 2010 to 2013. Mr. Speaker, the police agreed to 3 per cent, the Police Association agreed to 3 per cent for 2008, 3 per cent for 2009 and 3 per cent for 2010.

I further went and found some other information, again published in *Trinidad Guardian* on February 11, 2011, and it gives a breakdown of the salaries of police officers, and a constable gets \$5,123 a month, a corporal gets \$6,745 a month, sergeant \$8,200, inspector \$9,700 and it goes right up to assistant commissioner who gets \$17,000. The average is somewhere in the vicinity of about \$7,000 a month. So doing simple mathematics, which I know is difficult for some of the Members on the other side, taking an average salary of \$7,000 a month and applying a 3 per cent increase for each of the years, 2008, 2009, 2010, the average back pay for a police officer would be about \$18,000 for that three-year period, and I will be generous and make it \$20,000.

7.00 p.m.

Therefore, for 6,000 officers the back pay for the settlement of the collective agreement for 2008—2010 is \$120 million. So where is the other \$400 million, Mr. Minister? If the back pay is only \$120 million, what is the extra \$400 million for, Mr. Speaker? Is this overtime for the state of emergency? What is it? And you see the Minister said he would tell us. We pointed out to him that it was impossible with just about six or seven thousand police officers in Trinidad and Tobago, it is impossible for them to receive back pay of \$540 million for the period 2008—2010. You see, the Minister did not tell us. I am hoping he would have the decency to tell us at the end of this debate what that other \$400 million is for. What is it for? I suspect it is overtime.

Hon. Howai: Yeah.

Mr. C. Imbert: Well, you should have said so.

Hon. Howai: It is overtime and allowances.

Mr. C. Imbert: You should have said so, Mr. Speaker, and it brings me to my point. Why do you have to pay police officers overtime? You know why? Because you do not have enough of them, so therefore police officers have to work beyond the allotted 40 hours per week.

In fact, they get an extra duty allowance in recognition of that fact, that they all—police officers routinely work 15 hours a week in excess of their 40-hour work week. The approved establishment for the police force is at least 7,000. This Government when it came in, made a set of noise, how it will hire 2,000 police officers. What has occurred between 2010 and 2013? This is what the country wants to know. If we are short 1,000 police officers, what is your Government doing about that? Why are you paying police overtime, making them tired, making them sleep in the station, making them sleep on the job? Why are you doing them that? Why are you not hiring more police officers? And while I am at it, Mr. Speaker—[*Interruption*—yeah, really? Is that so? [*Interruption*] “Hm-mm”.

Mr. Roberts: That is what you all said.

Mr. C. Imbert: Yeah, okay. Mr. Speaker, I also referred to a report in the *Guardian*, February 11, 2011: “PNM govt proposed top \$\$ for cops”, and this is how it goes:

“Just before it was voted out of office last May, the People’s National Movement...submitted proposals to the Chief Personnel Officer (CPO) for wage increase ranging from 19...per cent to 30...per cent for police officers. The proposals were based on recommendations contained in a document, Police Compensation Review Working Report: Towards a Professional Police Service, dated April 19, 2010. A copy of the document, obtained exclusively by the...*Guardian*, shows recommendations for salaries ranging from \$10,000 in basic pay for a police constable to \$26,600—” for an Assistant Commissioner of Police.”

Mr. Roberts: Member, question?

Mr. C. Imbert: On that?

Mr. Roberts: Yes.

Mr. C. Imbert: Make sure it is a good question, “eh”.

Mr. Roberts: Could the Member state if that was a Cabinet-approved position or was that just a suggestion, because there is a great difference when it comes to allocating money?

Mr. C. Imbert: Okay, Mr. Speaker. The way the PNM Government operated, we had a public sector negotiation committee which was given broad parameters to settle collective agreements and, based on the work of that

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committee, that Cabinet subcommittee, the PNM Government had recommended increases for police officers ranging from \$10,000 for a constable to \$26,000 for an assistant commissioner of police.

Mr. Roberts: With a straight face, you know.

Mr. C. Imbert: Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Roberts: Wow, straight face. [*Laughter*]

Mr. C. Imbert: Mr. Speaker, the point being made here—instead of forcing police officers to work overtime and thereby decreasing their efficiency and decreasing their output, what is stopping this Government that says it has the answer to crime, from paying police officers what they are supposed to be paid and hiring the correct complement of police officers? What is the problem, Mr. Speaker? What is the problem? Because, what is the murder total as of today?

Miss Cox: One hundred and sixty-eight.

Mr. C. Imbert: One hundred and sixty-eight. So, on the—today is the 12th, the 11th, what is today's date?—12th of June, 168 murders between January 01 and June 12, 2013.

If you continue at that rate, there will be in excess of 380 murders for 2013, and there has been an upsurge in crime recently. An upsurge in crime: violent murders, four murders in a night; six murders in a weekend. The kind of horrible crimes we have been hearing about in the last three to six months—decapitation of people, people leaving “ah head on ah table”, all sorts of nastiness taking place in this country. People are not safe, and I would expect that any self-respecting Government, when it is coming for an increased appropriation of \$3 billion and crime is the number one problem in this country, and you have a spike in the murder rate, and you have gruesome murders all over Trinidad and Tobago—it is no longer the purview of Laventille, as a former Minister used to allege.

While murders are taking place all over south, east, central, west, the former Minister used to allege that all murders “taking place” in Laventille—not true—but now people can see murders taking place in Maloney, they are taking place in Diego Martin, they are taking place in Penal, they are taking place in Chaguanas; a spike in the murder rate, gruesome murders all over the place; police officers are being killed. A police officer was shot and killed behind the Woodbrook Police Station a short while ago, Mr. Speaker. You could believe that? Behind the Woodbrook Police Station, they shot and killed the driver of the current Acting Commissioner of Police.

What is the Government doing about that? An off-duty female police officer, they tried to rob her and steal her gun, at least she was able to fire back at them. This is what this country has come to. People are walking up to people in broad daylight, the middle of the road in downtown Port of Spain, and shooting people.

I would expect any self-respecting Government, coming to us and telling us that you want to give the Ministry of National Security almost an additional \$700 million, because when I look at the number, it is six-hundred-and-something million dollars is what you want to give the Ministry of National Security. What is the country going to get for that expenditure of \$700 million? Tell us Minister of Finance and the Economy. You came in here and you banged the table and you carried on and told us that we have economic growth, not pointing out that we have declined to such a low level that it will take a long time before we get back up to the level we were three years ago.

Because if you have three years of economic decline and your economy is going down and then you stop and you start to climb back up, it takes a long time to get back to where you were three years ago. Bang the table and carry on for nonsense, but tell us what your Government is doing with these vehicles that you want us to agree to, that you did not tell us who you are getting them from, you did not tell us what the process was to acquire the vehicles. Millions of dollars, Mr. Speaker. Millions of dollars for vehicles for police officers.

I asked the question, what is the process? Who are you getting them from? No answer. It is just like I asked the question about the open campus for UWI in Chaguanas, what is the process? What is the cost? What is the status of the project? No answer and some nancy story about how other Members will answer.

There are Ministers in the Government who are not Members of this House, you know. They are hardly likely to come here today and tell us what is going on. I mean, for example, are we going to have an intervention by the Minister of National Security, the new one, who is going to tell us what he is doing about these horrible murders that are taking place, this crime where "people" houses are being broken into in broad daylight, where people are not safe; where you cannot walk down the street anymore?

Is the Minister of National Security going to come in to this House and tell us what he is doing about that; what he is doing about the fact that we reach the point where the driver of the Commissioner of Police is murdered outside a police station and not a word from the authorities, nothing from the Minister of National Security, nothing from the Prime Minister, nothing from any Government Minister to reassure the citizenry?

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The Member for Chaguanas East, well he stopped marching a long time ago. He just wanted to march into a safe seat in Chaguanas and that was it, after that “he done march, he hang up he marching boots”.

But, Mr. Speaker, these are the things that people in Trinidad and Tobago are interested in. [*Interruption*] This is what people are interested in. The Leader of the Opposition spoke about gas stations.

Hon. Member: Who said that?

Mr. C. Imbert: The Leader of the Opposition, the Member of Parliament for Diego Martin West.

Mr. Roberts: For how long?

Mr. C. Imbert: Spoke about gas stations. For a little while, he did not talk for long.

Mr. Roberts: “Oooh.”

Mr. C. Imbert: But he made the point that it is a feature of this Government—by the way, Mr. Speaker, how much time do I have?

Mr. Roberts: An hour, you talk.

Mr. Speaker: Till 7.26 p.m.

Mr. C. Imbert: Fifteen minutes, okay.

Mr. Roberts: “You going good man, take ah hour.”

Mr. C. Imbert: The Leader of the Opposition made a point about gas stations. You see, there is something happening in Trinidad and Tobago, every single day; there is an example of cronyism or nepotism or apparent cronyism or apparent nepotism.

People have been running gas stations for 40 years. Generations of people have been managing gas stations and all of a sudden one day you come and tell them, “you are incompetent, we take away your contract from you”, and they give it to somebody who never managed a gas station in their life. That is what is happening in this country, Mr. Speaker. When people see that and when they see the close connections between the persons who have been given all of these new contracts and Members of the Government—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: And they do not care.

Mr. C. Imbert: And they do not care. You see, they are living in some little fantasy world. You think people are not taking note of that. You think Trinidadians and Tobagonians are not taking note of these things.

Mr. Speaker, one of the other things I saw is that the airports authority is going to get \$27 million, and before I take my seat I think I better report to this Parliament a matter that has been drawn to my attention. Now, the tenders committee of the airports authority is the committee that has the mandate to spend money allocated to the airports authority by subvention or through the fees that it collects from users of the airport in a proper, transparent and equitable manner.

And the Act establishing the airports authority defines the membership of the Board as follows:

“the members of the” —airports authority— “Board shall be appointed by the Minister from among persons who are suitably, qualified in the following disciplines:

- engineering;
- civil aviation;
- law;
- accounting and finance;
- economics and business management;
- and security.”

And a feature of the Airports Authority Act is that the deputy chairman is the chairman of the tenders committee. So the person who is appointed to be deputy chairman of the airports authority is given the responsibility to manage procurement on behalf of the airports authority, Mr. Speaker. And we are talking here about an allocation in excess of \$20 million for the airports authority.

So let us look at the Board of the airports authority. I am not sure if this is correct as I speak. I am not sure what is happening with the chairman. I am hearing some talk about the chairman but I understand the rest of the Board is intact. So, if you go on the airports authority's website you will see Mr. Gerald Hadeed is the chairman, Mr. Kurt Adjodha is the deputy chairman, Mr. Carlisle Marks is a member, Judith Baliram is a member, Maria Gonsalves, Rishi Mahadeo, Premchan Sahadeo and Ruthven Goddard, and two others, or Susan Charles-Sylvester board member. But the person named as deputy chairman is one Kurt Adjodha. This is the person that by law is chairman of the tenders committee or by regulation.

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I have the curriculum vitae submitted by or on behalf of this gentleman, Kurt Adjodha, when he was appointed to the Board of the airports authority on the recommendation of a Cabinet Minister. And he has below his name Civil Eng. BArch., PMP. Areas of specialization: project construction management, civil engineering, construction engineering, contract administration, onshore structural engineering, pipeline construction—

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: What?

Mr. C. Imbert:—architectural design. The man is a genius.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Wow.

Mr. C. Imbert: I assume he is fulfilling the requirement on the Board for the discipline of engineering. His work history: in 2000 he worked for Petrotrin as an engineer; 2003, he worked for NIPDEC as a civil engineer; 2004/2005, he worked for Hafeez Karamath as a project engineer, and after that he worked for Millennium Holdings, Atlantic Project Consultants, et cetera, as a consultant.

7.15 p.m.

It goes on to say, I am a civil engineer and architect with 10 years' experience. I have worked on numerous projects in the oil and gas infrastructure industry, so, so, so. I have done structural analysis on over 80 structures, performed duties as an engineer on site and it goes on and on and on. And he lists as his education, Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Cadiz: I wonder if he could build a stadium?

Mr. C. Imbert:—BSc Civil engineering, University of the West Indies, Bachelor of Architecture, NY, New York Institute of Technology, School of Architecture and Design and he has a project management professional qualification from the Project Management Institute. Well, Mr. Speaker—

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: He must be 60 years old.

Mr. C. Imbert: This gentleman, for the benefit of Members, was born in 1979, and when he submitted this CV, Mr. Speaker, when he submitted this CV he would have been in his 30s.

Hon. Member: Oh Lord.

Mr. C. Imbert: Mr. Speaker, I am told that the University of the West Indies has no record of this fellow ever acquiring a bachelor's degree in engineering. This is the deputy chairman of the airports authority, the chairman of the tenders

committee. I am told that the New York Institute of Technology has—School of Architecture has no record of this gentleman attending or acquiring a Bachelor of Architecture. Similarly, with the project management professional, and being a registered engineer in Trinidad and Tobago, I went myself and I checked the list of engineers registered with the Board of Engineering of Trinidad and Tobago—

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: “Doh tell meh.”

Mr. C. Imbert: There is not a single Adjodha on this list.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Oh Lord.

Mr. C. Imbert: You have Adams and then you have Agard. “Da’is it for the D’s—Ad’s—Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Roberts: They have Imbert?

Mr. C. Imbert: Yeah I am there, there are two of us. And I then went to the Board of Architecture of Trinidad and Tobago and there are no Adjodhas listed as registered architects with the Board of Architecture in Trinidad and Tobago.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Oh my goodness.

Mr. C. Imbert: Mr. Speaker, it takes three years to get a Bachelor of Engineering degree. It takes five years to get a bachelor of architecture from the New York Institute of Technology, that is eight years and that is full time.

This fellow, born in 1979, who says that he worked at Petrotrin, NIPDEC, Hafeez Karamath, Millennium Holdings, IBI Group of Companies, Atlantic Project Consultants, somehow managed to get a Bachelor of Science in Civil Engineering and a Bachelor of Architecture at New York Institute of Technology studying full time in New: York and in Trinidad while also working at Petrotrin, NIPDEC and Hafeez Karamath.

Mr.: Speaker, I am reasonably satisfied, the man is a fraud. This is another Resmi Ramnarine. And you see, I have to ask myself what is going on in that Government? Somebody could just come and put something in front of you—

Miss Cox: That is somebody’s friend.

Mr. C. Imbert: And because it is somebody’s friend or somebody’s family and some Minister say he is a good fella, it is like the Minister who tell you that a fire truck will cost \$50 million new, so \$6 million is a good price. So somebody come and tell you that Kurt Abdel Adjodha is an architect, he is an engineer and

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he is a project manager, and you appoint him to the airports authority, you make him deputy chairman and you do not bother to check to see whether the man even went to secondary school.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: He maybe has three O Levels.

Mr. C. Imbert: If you go on the Internet and you look for that fella, the man is running a company called Pet City Limited. Pet City Limited, a pet shop. And, Mr. Speaker, I just brought this to demonstrate to this Government how careless they are. I heard the Prime Minister say she will have to double-check what she is told. Well, go and check the CVs of all board members in all state enterprises because it could have plenty more frauds like this, plenty more, and I know the Minister of Sport has some experience with that. No, no, it is all right, you spoke already, you are not eating into my time. I know the Minister of Sport has some experience with people submitting CVs and leaving out pertinent details.

Mr. Roberts: No problem.

Mr. C. Imbert: But I want this Government to tell me, why did you appoint this gentleman to be deputy chairman of the airports authority and make him chairman of the tenders committee dealing with procurement of hundreds of millions of dollars in a sensitive installation such as the airport of Trinidad and Tobago, when the fella never went to UWI, does not have a Bachelor of Architecture from New York Institute of Technology and is not listed as a registered engineer or a registered architect?

Mr. Roberts: He has to be an architect to be a deputy chairman?

Mr. C. Imbert: The law states that you must have persons who have qualifications in law, accountancy, engineering—

Mr. Roberts: There is no other engineer on that board?

Mr. C. Imbert: No. So, Mr. Speaker, that is a side issue, the fact that the Board may be functus, is a side issue, but you see this is what is going on with this country. You see I would ask Members opposite to be very careful about what you say or what you do, because this is the tip of the iceberg, Mr. Speaker. This is the tip of the iceberg. You have a situation in NIPDEC—how many more minutes I have, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Speaker: You have five minutes.

Mr. C. Imbert: Oh, that is plenty, man. I spoke about the NIPDEC experience, where you have the NGC spokesperson saying in order to explain away why there

is a report in the papers that SIS, the contractor that allegedly worked on Mr. Jack's residence in Tobago and worked on other residences in Trinidad, Mr. Speaker, there is a report that this contractor is going to get an \$800 million building contract.

Mr. Roberts: Did they get Cabinet approval for that?

Mr. C. Imbert: Well, it seems that a fire chief could award a \$6 million contract. So why can NGC not award an \$800 million contract? I mean, according to the Minister, Mr. Speaker, anybody could do anything and then when they bring it for you, you have to ratify it. So a Minister could sign a contract for \$5 billion for a highway that is supposed to cost \$3 billion and when they bring it for you, you just say well that done already. You just have to approve it after the fact.

Mr. Roberts: Nice try.

Mr. C. Imbert: That is a fact, that is what I said. So anyway, Mr. Speaker, but what is happening in NIPDEC? The general manager of NIPDEC departed from that organization some months ago. There is a new General manager.

Mr. Roberts: Who?

Mr. C. Imbert: Who is the general manager? I am told it is the niece of the chairman.

Hon. Member: Oh God.

Mr. C. Imbert: I am told it is somebody who used to work in a pharmacy. Yes. So you have NIPDEC—

Mr. Roberts: How long they told you that, you check it out?

Mr. C. Imbert: I checked it out. So I have NIPDEC, a company handling billions of dollars in project funds for the Minister of Finance and the Economy. NIPDEC reports to the Minister of Finance and the Economy, so I am putting this one to the Minister of Finance and the Economy. What is going on in NIPDEC? Check and see whether the chairman of NIPDEC has hired a close family member to be the general manager, whether that person is qualified for the position and whether that person was hired in accordance with proper industrial relations procedures, Mr. Speaker. Check it out, because that organization is handling billions of dollars, billions of dollars in taxpayers' funds. Go and check it out. Find out who is the general manager of NIPDEC and find out how they got there and find out who they are related to.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Conflict of interest.

Mr. Roberts: Come out the House “nah”. Not you. [*Laughter*]

Mr. C. Imbert: Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Roberts: You going good, you going good.

Mr. C. Imbert: Yeah, but it is all right, I just want the Minister to tell me, explain that \$500 million to the police and have the common decency to tell us what you are doing to improve the efficiency of the police.

I have to give pips to the police by the way. I had a break-in at my house and they caught the thieves. [*Desk thumping*] All praise to the Trinidad and Tobago police.

Mr. Roberts: You are going against your leader.

Mr. C. Imbert: It is all right. This is personal. Okay? That does not deal with our murder rate. This is a personal matter and I give praise to them.

Mr. Roberts: Yes.

Mr. C. Imbert: But I want the Minister of Finance and the Economy to tell us what is that \$500 million for and what is this Government doing to improve the efficiency and the deplorable detection rate in the police service, Mr. Speaker? The detection of murders is about 10 per cent. The general detection of crime is about 20 per cent. I was one of the lucky ones. Tell us what the Minister of Finance and the Economy is doing about irregularities in state enterprises, about breaches of tender procedures, about unsuitable people like this person that I have just named for you who would like us to believe that he is some kind of super genius so he managed to shuttle between Trinidad and New York acquiring a Bachelor of Architecture, a Bachelor of Civil Engineering, a project management certificate. Tell us about these people. What process does your Government do?

Hon. Member: I will check it.

Mr. C. Imbert: Yeah. What process? It is the same thing with the fire truck. Apologize and admit that you goofed, apologize that you messed up. Take action, investigate that. The Chief Fire Officer does not have the authority, the Chief Fire Officer does not have the authority to authorize expenditure of \$6 million, and I demand that there be an investigation into that matter. I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Minister of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development (Hon. Errol McLeod): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I want to offer a response immediately—

Mr. Imbert: About what?

Hon. E. Mc Leod:—to the case of the super qualified, super talented Mr. whatever is his name, with the CV. I would like to know, certainly we ought, all of us, would want to know when was this fraud, if I might say so, discovered, and whether we are interested in helping the process, all of us. I would have brought that information to the relevant authority except if you got it today.

Mr. Imbert: I did actually, at two o'clock.

Hon. E. Mc Leod: Okay, there certainly is a great measure of incompleteness, Mr. Speaker and hon. Members in our processes, and I am sure that as we go along, we are going to come to scrutinizing these situations more closely and bringing as quickly as possible to Trinidad and Tobago the kinds of systems that are going to be more seamless than the particular situation raised by the Member for Diego Martin North/East.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: That sounding like an apology.

Hon. E. Mc Leod: You see, Mr. Speaker, and I am not too big to apologize, but that is not what I am doing either. You see, Mr. Speaker, we have attempted and we will continue to attempt to bring as many people as possible—but of course they ought to be qualified for the particular function—into the stream of things that we are attempting to do.

Unlike the other side when they occupied this side of the House, they had one Calder Hart as chairman of seven boards. There was the indispensable Professor Ken Julien emeritus—

Mr. Cadiz : A next seven boards.

Hon. E. Mc Leod:—on about nine boards, yes, and whoever else. And it turned out that we were not getting value for money from these people, not that they were not qualified, but they were too occupied and they did not have time to do a god job, perhaps, in any of the particular functions in which they were placed. And I am not casting aspersions on them either. And if it is we have somebody who is supposed to be an engineer but who is not an engineer, then we ought to move to deal with that.

Mr. C. Imbert: That “fella eh easy” you know.

Hon. E. Mc Leod: Well, Mr. Speaker, it seems that it is a virus, it is a virus that—is the word mutated?— that has mutated almost across the board.

7.30 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, I have information that there is a particular public relations officer of a political party in Trinidad and Tobago who applied for a job with a reputable, well-known chamber of lawyers, and the particular person claimed to possess the master's degree and was interviewed and told, "Okay, we are going to be in touch with you". But that law firm decided that it must do due diligence and so on, only to find out that this person does not have any such qualification. "Yuh know who ah talking about or wha?" [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. George: No, "he going for some coffee; not in dat chambers, though."

Hon. E. Mc Leod: "Yuh know?" And this person, Mr. Speaker, is getting up almost every Monday morning on the television stations, on the radio stations, in the newspapers, and pronouncing modes of behaviour that he should like us to follow in Trinidad and Tobago. Mr. Speaker, stay tuned and you will get more information on this particular situation.

Hon. Member: Do not change "de" channel.

Hon. E. Mc Leod: You must not throw stones if you are living in, what, thin glass houses?

Hon. Member: Thin glass houses, yes.

Hon. E. Mc Leod: Mr. Speaker—[*Interruption*]

Hon. George: "Or if yuh name Al-Rawi." [*Laughter*]

Hon. E. Mc Leod: This place is not easy, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I wanted to respond to a couple other things that the Member for Diego Martin North/East—you walking out on me too, sweetheart? [*Interruption*] Okay. [*Laughter*]

The Member for Diego Martin North/East, he told us that our oil production in 2010, when the People's Partnership came to office, was 100,000 barrels a day. That is not true, Mr. Speaker. Our oil production then was as a result of natural decline, and that the last administration did not engage in drilling and other production activities. [*Desk thumping*] That is the nature of the oil industry, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Cadiz: That is the truth. Tell them "de truth, man".

Hon. E. Mc Leod: You have to be discovering new fields, new reservoirs, new production levels and so on, to maintain where you were yesterday.

Hon. Member: Yes.

Hon. E. McLeod: And as a result of their not investing in drilling and other production works, we were realizing 90,000 to 92,000 barrels a day in May 2010, and that production continued to fall—it was a natural decline—and we would have fallen to somewhere between 80,000 and 83,000 barrels of oil per day.

But the Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs had spoken with us sometime, a couple months ago, and we were informed that we are now engaged in some drilling activities. As a matter of fact, our last count was that there were some six, or perhaps even nine separate drilling activities going on in a drilling programme that has been developed, and our production is moving up, although slowly, day by day. But we would have had some operational challenges because of particular activities in the industry, and it seems that we are now with those activities behind us and it is anticipated that our oil production is going to, very likely, get back up to 100,000/120,000 barrels per day in the next, however many months, Mr. Speaker. But serious investment will yield results in fields where there is oil to be produced. Serious investment will yield results in—it could be 18 months to five, six, seven years, depending on the field and the particular terrain in which you are doing this activity.

There was also the suggestion that this Government is continuing in the way that the PNM had gone with regard to the employment of Chinese capital and labour, and whatever, in our own investment and building programme. Mr. Speaker, ours is going to see more local inputs in what happens here with Chinese capital and so on—investment—than we had realized. And I, too, was in the demonstrations and I, too, was on the campaign trail, and we were criticizing, as we ought to have criticized, how the PNM went about the employment of full-scale foreign labour while citizens remained idle here.

Hon. Member: Material, financing, everything.

Hon. E. McLeod: Yes, everything. No, we are going to have a greater local input in what happens. The Chinese certainly have their own programme, you know. They are seeing after Chinese interests—after China's interests—and we must see after our interests, and it is not reasonable to suggest at all that we are going to follow the way the PNM had gone.

Mr. Speaker, the PNM is well known for their hypocrisy.

Hon. Member: So true.

Hon. E. McLeod: Mr. Speaker, I will answer, to the extent that I am able to answer, any question raised by anybody other than frontline PNM people, on

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matters of transparency, accountability; matters of corruption and so on. But it sickens me in my stomach when PNM representatives get up and charge others with corruption, after what they had done to this country for the years that they had been in authority. [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Member: Shame!

Hon. E. Mc Leod: They must not use that word at all—at all. That is not to say that if we have done anything wrong, that it should be swept under any carpet, Mr. Speaker. The PNM must not come here and pontificate on procurement and that kind of thing, not after what they had done for the years that they had been in office.

Mr. Speaker, the Member for Diego Martin West and Leader of the Opposition concluded his contribution by emphasizing his point that this Government is provoking the citizenry of Trinidad and Tobago. Mr. Speaker, it is not so much what he said, you know, but it is the tone; it is the subliminal—help me. [*Interruption*] I will accept it—the subliminal message that bears so much divisiveness.

Listen very carefully, Mr. Speaker, and those of us who would have participated in the occupation in which I spent most of my adult life, you know, you would come to such a keen sense of hearing and understanding, and so on, that you discover more decibels in what is not said than what is said. It is an art that one can develop, and there is an attempt, Mr. Speaker, to divide this society along lines that all of us are going to live to regret, if it happens, and I charge the Leader of the Opposition with provoking such a situation in this country, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Member: Shame!

Hon. E. Mc Leod: And it is not the mere provocation that they had carried on against workers, you know; it is more than that. But I want to deal now, specifically, with the last Government's provocation of workers, and you would hear them today suggesting that workers and unions are mad and vexed, and that we are moving against them.

That is not true, Mr. Speaker. That is not true at all. I mentioned to this House on a couple of occasions in the recent past that there were injunctive measures against three trade unions when we came to office, and that was in the face of these unions and others, being denied the process of collective bargaining to settle major outstanding collective agreements—major negotiations. Mr. Speaker, there were 75 negotiations for collective agreements outstanding in May 2010—75 of them.

Hon. Member: How many?

Hon. E. Mc Leod: Seventy-five.

Hon. Member: What is that? Remind her.

Hon. E. Mc Leod: Seventy-five negotiations for collective agreements—

Dr. Ramadharsingh: They were anti-labour.

Hon. E. Mc Leod:—outstanding in May 2010.

Hon. Member: “Who say dat? Who say dat?”

Hon. E. Mc Leod: Yes, you were anti-labour.

Hon. Member: “Who say we anti-labour?”

Hon. E. Mc Leod: You were. At least that is what you demonstrated.

Hon. Member: “Yuh boss at de time.”

Hon. E. Mc Leod: There were 75.

Hon. Member: I said 54, so I was wrong. “Is 75.”

7.45 p.m.

Hon. E. Mc Leod: Seventy-five that were outstanding and, Mr. Speaker, as we got engaged, we found another 14—

Hon. Member: Oh Lord. That was a hundred.

Hon. E. Mc Leod:—that broke down during the period May 2010 to May 2013. “Da’is what we found, eh.”

Mr. Roberts: “Da’is more than Chris Gayle make.”

Hon. E. Mc Leod: And you would recall, Mr. Speaker, on the last occasion that I spoke here, I indicated that we contributed in some cases in a more major way than in others, but we contributed to the settlement of 49 of those outstanding negotiations. I am pleased to date to report, Mr. Speaker, the number has moved to 66 we have settled. [*Desk thumping*] Sixty-six collective agreements.

Mr. Cadiz: That is performance.

Mr. Roberts: Sixty-six settled?

Hon. E. Mc Leod: Sixty-six settled.

Hon. Member: “Performance beat old talk”.

Hon. E. Mc Leod: And there are, as we speak, three of them which if things go as the vibes suggested, maybe in another week or so they too would be already settled.

Hon. Member: You will reach 69.

Hon. E. Mc Leod: Mr. Speaker, I do not intend to occupy too much of the time, but I would like to, for the consumption of Members of this honourable House and, by extension, the national community, especially because next Wednesday is Labour Day and I will be absent, not because of pronouncements that have been made by certain people, but because I have a commitment with Trinidad and Tobago having assumed office at the level of the governing body of the International Labour Organization. I have a responsibility to attend the ILO governing body meeting and the International Labour Conference. I leave on Saturday and I will be gone for all of next week. So I am, by this means here today, also asking for your permission to be absent next week, Mr. Speaker.

Appropriate steps have been taken to have a message from the Minister of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development broadcast on television. Either Tuesday or Wednesday this is likely to happen. But I thought it necessary to mention the names of the 66 agreements that we have settled. We have the:

1. Fire Service Association First Division—that is the union—the employer being the CPO and the Trinidad and Tobago Fire Service, for 2008—2010, monthly paid. Sector is public service.
2. Fire Service Association Second Division, CPO employer, 2008—2010, monthly paid, public service.

Hon. Member: PNM “doh like fireman boy”.

Hon. E. Mc Leod:

3. Prison Service Association First Division, employer CPO, 2008—2010, monthly paid, public service.
4. Prison Service Association Second Division, employer CPO, 2008—2010 the period, monthly paid, public service.

Hon. Member: PNM “doh” like prison officer too.

Hon. E. Mc Leod:

5. Trinidad and Tobago Police Service Social and Welfare Association First Division, employer CPO, 2008—2010, monthly paid, police, state.

6. Trinidad and Tobago Police Service Social and Welfare Association Second Division, employer CPO, period 2008—2010, monthly paid, settled.
7. Trinidad and Tobago Unified Teachers' Association, CPO employer, 1st October, 2008 to 30th September, 2011, bargaining unit, teachers, settled.
8. Public Services Association, CPO employer, 2008—2011, civil service and statutory authorities, monthly paid employees, settled.
9. Transport and Industrial Workers Union, the National Maintenance Training and Security Company, employer, 2008—2010, daily rated staff, settled.
10. Transport and Industrial Workers Union, National Maintenance Training and Security Company, 2008—2011, bargaining units 1 and 2, settled.
11. Transport and Industrial Workers Union, MTS, 2008—2010, monthly paid, settled.
12. Union of Commercial and Industrial Workers, National Quarries Limited, 2009—2011, settled.
13. OWTU, NATPET Investment Company Limited, 2010—2013, supervisory staff, settled.
14. OWTU, NATPET Investment Company Limited, 2010—2013, hourly rated employees, settled.
15. OWTU, NATPET Investment Company Limited, 2010—2013, monthly rated employees, settled.
16. PSA, Airports Authority of Trinidad and Tobago, 2008—2010, hourly, daily and weekly paid, settled.
17. PSA, Betting Levy Board, 2008—2010, monthly rated, settled.
18. Estate Police Association—Chaguaramas Development Authority, 2008—2010, precepted staff, settled.
19. PSA, Chaguaramas Development Authority, 2010—2013, monthly paid, settled.
20. PSA, Civil Aviation Authority of Trinidad and Tobago, 2008—2010, monthly paid, settled.

And this is one that was under injunctive measures.

Mr. Speaker, you know, the one representation that was made by anybody on that side there, was for payment to a lawyer whom they had employed to go and get the injunctive measures issued against these three unions. I will not mention the lawyer's name because the lawyer was doing a job which he was hired to do.

21. National Union of Government and Federation Workers, CPO employer, 2008—2010, daily rated employees, settled.
22. NUGFW—that is, National Union of Government and Federation Workers—Family Planning Association of Trinidad and Tobago, 2009—2011, monthly rated, settled.

Mr. Roberts: “Dey doh even like embryo?”

Hon. E. McLeod:

23. Contractors and General Workers Trade Union, Lake Asphalt of Trinidad and Tobago Limited, 2008—2010, monthly rated, settled.
24. PSA, National Agricultural Marketing Development Company, 2008—2010, monthly paid, settled.
25. OWTU, National Helicopter Limited, 2010—2013, settled, monthly paid.

Mr. Roberts: Roget, pound the table.

Hon. E. McLeod: Thirty-one—25 to 31, wrong page.

Mr. Cadiz: You settling too many in one time.

Mr. Roberts: You settling too many, boy.

Hon. E. McLeod: I continue:

26. PSA, NIPDEC (National Insurance Property Development Company), 2008—2010, settled.
26. OWTU, Petroleum Company of Trinidad and Tobago Limited, 2008—2011, monthly rated junior staff, settled.
28. OWTU, Petroleum Company of Trinidad and Tobago Limited, 2009—2012, monthly paid, settled.
29. OWTU, Petroleum, 2008—2011, hourly rated/weekly paid, settled.
30. OWTU, Petrotrin Company, TRINMAR Limited Operations, 2009—2012, monthly paid, settled.

31. EPA, Petrotrin, 2008—2011, Estate Police Officers, settled.
32. EPA, Petrotrin, TRINMAR, 2008—2011, Estate Police Officers, settled.
33. Seamen and Waterfront Workers Union, PLIPDECO, 2009—2012, monthly rated, settled.
34. Seamen and Waterfront, PLIPDECO, 2008—2011, monthly paid, settled.
35. Seamen and Waterfront Workers, PLIPDECO, 2008—2011, supervisory staff, settled.
36. OWTU Power Generation Company Limited, weekly paid, 2011—2014, settled.
37. Transport and Industrial Workers, PTSC, 2009—2011, settled.

And for this one, Mr. Speaker, I think we spent a whole afternoon and an entire night, and we settled at some time eleven o'clock the next morning. Yeah, and I particularly enjoyed that one. I enjoyed it from the standpoint that you had two entities, the union and the management, and they were both arguing for the greater efficiency and sustainability of the public transport system in Trinidad and Tobago. That was real union and employer coming together for the common good.

38. PSA, Public Transport Service Corporation, monthly paid, 2008—2010, settled.
39. EPA—Estate Police that is—Trinidad and Tobago National Petroleum Marketing Company, 2011—2013, precepted security staff, settled.
40. EPA, T&TEC, precepted staff, 2009—2011, settled.
41. OWTU, T&TEC, 2010—2013, monthly rated, settled.
42. OWTU, T&TEC, 2008—2010, hourly, daily, weekly and monthly paid bargaining unit, settled.
43. PSA, Tobago Regional Health Authority, 2008—2010, monthly paid, settled.
44. PSA, Trinidad and Tobago Racing Association, 2008—2010, money paid, settled.
45. EPA, TSTT, 2009—2012, precepted staff, settled.
46. West Indies Group of University Teachers, UWI employer, academic senior administration professionals, 2008—2010, settled.

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47. EPA, WASA, 2008—2010, precepted staff, settled.
48. PSA, WASA, 2008—2010, monthly paid, settled.
49. NUGFW, WASA, 2008—2010, hourly, daily and weekly rated, settled.
50. BIGWU, Trinidad and Tobago Mortgage Finance, 2009—2012, monthly paid, settled.
51. Communication Workers Union, TSTT, 2008—2010, senior staff bargaining unit, settled.
52. CWU, TSTT, 2008—2010, junior staff bargaining unit, settled.
53. NUGFW, the Naparima Bowl, 2002—2004, daily rated, settled.

8.00 p.m.

Mr. Roberts: 2002?

Hon. E. Mc Leod: Yep!

54. Transport and Industrial Workers Union, Fatima College, 2008—2011, weekly rated, settled.
55. EPA, the University of the West Indies, 2008—2011, Estate Police officers, settled.
56. OWTU, University of the West Indies, 2009—2011, non-academic staff, settled. This would have gone to the Industrial Court and I think they settled in conciliation at the court.
57. NUGFW, North West Regional Health Authority, 2008—2010, daily rated, settled. [*Crosstalk*]
58. NUGFW, South West Regional Health Authority, 2008—2010, daily rated, settled.
59. NUGFW, North Central Regional Health Authority, 2008—2010, daily rated, settled.
60. NUGFW, CRHA—which one is that? 2008—2010, daily rated settled.
61. NUGFW, TRHA, Tobago Regional Health Authority, 2008—2010, daily rated, settled. [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. Member: Settle the parliamentarians now!

Hon. E. Mc Leod: Mr. Speaker, and I am being asked to settle—

Hon. Member: Settle the MPs! The Members of Parliament!

Hon. E. Mc Leod:—the Members of Parliament—and I understand the Speaker to be also a Member of Parliament. [*Crosstalk and laughter*] Yeah! Mr. Speaker, once I check the membership list and I see your names appearing, I will make representation. [*Desk thumping and crosstalk*]

But, it is more than that, Mr. Speaker. It is more than that. Mr. Speaker, in 2010, there were outstanding 4,109 rights disputes. Members of this House will become familiar with it one of these days. The negotiations are categorized as interest disputes, and the disputes affecting your employment, disciplinary actions, suspension, promotion and so on. Those are considered rights disputes. There were 4,109 rights disputes and we were able to settle 3,344 of them and there are some 630 that somewhere in the pipeline between the Ministry of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development, conciliation processes, and perhaps, referral to the Industrial Court.

I want to put on record that we have really good and able officials in the conciliation department of the Ministry of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprises Development, and that once the employer and the employees' representative were to see the interest of Trinidad and Tobago, then we are certain that we can walk that road, at the end of which, there would be a confluence between the efforts of both parties. The conciliators are ever ready and prepared to assist parties in coming to a resolution of the issues affecting them.

Mr. Speaker, we are at the point now where we are calling on employers and unions to be more timely in their approaches to settling wage and other collective bargaining agreements. Mr. Speaker, it does not benefit the worker and it also debilitates the efficiency and growth and development of the business in which the worker is employed, if in 2015, we will be trying to settle terms and conditions of employment that apply to 2010 to 2013—if you get my drift, Mr. Speaker—it does not help. A number of workers have become accustomed to looking towards backpay just as one would have looked towards the receipt of his hand in “a sou sou”. [*Crosstalk*]

When you get backpay for a period that is long gone, what you get is less money. [*Crosstalk*] Yes, it is devalued money.

Dr. Browne: Especially under the UNC!

Hon. E. Mc Leod: Hmmm? Steups!

Mr. Roberts: “You see, yuh was going good and all of ah sudden, yuh see?”

Mr. Cadiz: “Yuh going good all de time!”

Hon. E. Mc Leod: “Is all right! Is all right!” I allow him that. I allow him that, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Roberts: “Yuh allow him one!”

Hon. E. Mc Leod: Yeah, I allow him that! Yeah, it does not help. So, we have—I have certainly called on colleagues, ministerial colleagues—indeed, I wrote them—those who have entities in their portfolios that employ people and we have also been in touch with the trade unions in those particular premises to send their proposals. A number of employers seem to not know that they too can submit proposals. The employer can send proposals to the union. The employer can report a breakdown in negotiations to the Minister.

If we were to do this early enough, then we will settle these disputes within the period that they must be applying to. There will be greater peace, particularly with our going forward with the social dialogue process which has been established, and about which we are going to be talking quite extensively, Mr. Speaker, I anticipate, at the ILC next week. So that we must prevail on the workers and their employers to come to the table and address the real interest of Trinidad and Tobago, and we will find ourselves addressing the interest of our particular sectors and our little membership and so on.

But, all of that, Mr. Speaker, is going to be further developed in the context of new arrangements that we want to bring about in terms of the law, the framework—the industrial relations framework in which we want to spend the next however many years, as we move to diversify the economy—oil and gas being wasting assets—and bring about sustainable growth and development of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Speaker, last year—I think it was last year January or somewhere around there—we appointed the Industrial Relations Advisory Committee consistent with the provision at section 80 of the IRA, and this committee has worked—well, first of all, the committee comprised representatives from the employers’ organizations, the workers’ organizations—and this is to use ILO language—the employers’ organizations, the workers’ organizations, the director of labour administration or his representative, industrial relations professionals and representatives from academia.

I think we had put a very good team, a team of good practitioners and people who are in possession of so much knowledge and theory of the whole processes,

you know, labour, administration and the collective bargaining process and the legal framework within which we do our business. I have a first draft—a preliminary draft of their report 2013, and what we plan to do now, Mr. Speaker, is to engage the social partners in the consultative process. As you are aware, any changes—

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the speaking time of the hon. Minister of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development and the Member for Pointe-a-Pierre has expired.

Motion made: That the hon. Member's speaking time be extended by 30 minutes. [*Hon. P. Ramadhar*]

Question put and agreed to.

Hon. E. McLeod: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I will wind up in maybe five, 10 minutes at most. Mr. Speaker, so we are moving forward to amending the Industrial Relations Act. As it is now, the recognition board, for instance, does not address the issue of recognition of a trade union representing workers and so on in quite the efficient way as it had been intended, and over the years and so on, things just remain almost in a static kind of condition. So, we are going to deal with the recognition process, we are going to reform the process, make it more modern and so on as we subscribe to ILO standards and more progressive applications in other parts of the world.

I was looking at something, the Labour Relations Act they call it, in South Africa, and I have already begun to see some positions there that we might want to discuss as we bring about the kind of reformation that we would like to have in our situation here. But, of course, whatever we do has to come out after we have sat down with the tripartite partners: labour, employer, Government, and we go through the series of recommendations that have been made by that Industrial Relations Advisory Committee after we have studied it ourselves.

We are going to review the definition of worker. As it is now, there are some people—there are some officers in organizations, management level people, who are denied representation by a trade union because somebody determines that that person is not a worker within the meaning of the Act. But, that person works! That person goes to work for seven o'clock in the morning or eight o'clock in the morning as everybody else, and that person carries all kinds of responsibilities and on the occasion of that person being disciplined, that person then realizes that he really has no power, and that person is denied—[*Crosstalk*] Yeah, well, we are going to deal with that too, the domestic employees.

Miss Mc Donald: They are not workers?

Hon. E. Mc Leod: They are not defined as workers at all—the domestic employees, the chauffeur, the gardener.

8.15: p.m.

Mr. Roberts: “And dem does real wuk.”

Hon. E. Mc Leod: They are not considered workers within the meaning of the Act and we have to deal with that. Now, that one is a very sensitive issue, Mr. Speaker. It is a very sensitive issue and I am looking at the South-African model in that regard. They have made quite a lot of progress in these regards. I am looking at that and we are going to bring the whole gamut of these provisions, and so on, and put them out for discussion, for consultation, and so on. So this was just to give you a “lil” preview of the work that we are doing in this regard.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I thought that I might bring to the attention of hon. Members, the extent of the work that we have done in the settlement of these many negotiations, and there are still some to be settled and there is another round that we are supposed to be entering now as we speak. I thought that I might bring that to our attention because it is my understanding that a large measure of the \$2.9 billion that we are asking for in supplement funds, a large measure of that, is to pay the settlement of these wages and salaries, and so on, of so many people.

Mr. Speaker, I hope that this situation, which we inherited when we came to office in 2010, never again happens in Trinidad and Tobago, especially as we seek to move forward and bring about more of a level playing field, employer and employee. But that has to be done on the expectation that we are going to be very mature with a subscription to the better interest of Trinidad and Tobago, rather than the positioning that we sometimes take: once my situation is settled, to hell with everything else. We cannot go forward in that regard at all, at all, at all.

We have to establish what is our objective here. The common objective is to ensure that we lift our levels of productivity, to ensure that our workplaces are safe and healthy and secure. We procure our environment because we want a Trinidad and Tobago that generations coming down the road can live very comfortably in. Thank you very much. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker: Members, I understand that dinner has arrived and having regard to the fact that we may be here for a long time this evening, I would like to suggest that we suspend at this time and we take 45 minutes for dinner. Okay? So this sitting is suspended until 9.00 p.m.

8.18 p.m.: *Sitting suspended.*

9.00 p.m.: *Sitting resumed.*

Mr. Fitzgerald Jeffrey (*Member for La Brea*): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I listened attentively to the Member for Pointe-a-Pierre's contribution and, try as I may, I could not see the linkage between his contribution and the Bill that is before us. But, Mr. Speaker, I would like to take issue with his shooting in the dark when he cast aspersion on the authenticity of the qualifications of a lawyer who happens to be the PRO of a political party and who appears quite regularly on television.

Dr. Rambachan: "How you know is he, he talking about?"

Mr. Indarsingh: Who is the PRO?

Mr. F. Jeffrey: "Why you doh shut up and listen?"

Miss Mc Donald: "Alyuh allow him to—"

Mr. F. Jeffrey: "Mr. Speaker—"

Dr. Rambachan: He is a "badjohn" from La Brea.

Mr. F. Jeffrey:—what is extremely pertinent here—[*Interruption*]

Dr. Rambachan: "Wajang behaviour here."

Mr. Indarsingh: What kind of behaviour is that?

Miss Mc Donald: Mr. Speaker, please 40(b) and (c).

Mr. Speaker: I want to sustain that point and I ask Members to allow the hon. Member for La Brea to speak in silence. Continue hon. Member.

Mr. F. Jeffrey: Thank you very much Mr. Speaker. Let me make it abundantly clear that the PRO of the People's National Movement is a highly successful attorney-at-law, who happens to be on television quite regularly giving free expert advice and information.

Mr. Speaker, he has a Master of Laws degree from the highly reputable and internationally-renowned King's College of London, University of London. He is the recipient of a copy of the alumni magazine from King's College, London.

I would also like to add that when you put the PRO of the UNC, the PRO of the COP, the PRO of the TOP, the PRO of NJAC, you put them all together, they cannot

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match the qualifications of the PRO for the People's National Movement. [*Desk thumping*]

Dr. Khan: Mr. Speaker, 36(5).

Mr. F. Jeffrey: I would have thought that the Member for Pointe-a-Pierre—
[*Interruption*]

Dr. Khan: Standing Order 36 (5) Mr. Speaker, he is imputing improper motives to the member of the PNM, the PRO. [*Desk thumping and laughter*].

Mr. Speaker: Overruled.

Mr. F. Jeffrey: Mr. Speaker, one would have thought that the Member for Pointe-a-Pierre would have brought the credentials of the Vice-Chairman of the Airports Authority of Trinidad and Tobago—[*Interruption*]

Miss Mc Donald: Or Resmi Ramnarine.

Mr. F. Jeffrey:—to disprove the allegations made by the Member for Diego Martin North/East about the veracity of his qualifications, but quite intelligently he neglected to do so.

Mr. Speaker, coming to this Bill, last Saturday I visited the “Office” in Point Fortin. The “Office” in Point Fortin is a “liming” spot by some erudite gentlemen who discuss politics among other issues. I was asked by one of the gentlemen from the “Office”, what Bill Parliament was going to debate this week? And I told them it was the Finance Bill. Mr. Speaker, if you saw the consternation on the faces of these gentlemen.

One retired senior public servant exclaimed, and I want to quote: Over \$160 billion of financial mismanagement over three years and now want more money? I know that there is no word like “worstest” but I want to use “worstest” to mean worse than the very worse. [*Laughter*] The “worstest” Government in Trinidad and Tobago since 1962 is this Government.

Miss Hospedales: True, true. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. F. Jeffrey: Mr. Speaker, the rest of the “Office” concurred. They agreed.

Dr. Rambachan: “Dah real rum shop talk boy.”

Miss Mc Donald: “Why you so?”

Mr. F. Jeffrey: I am certain that similar sentiments are expressed by the majority of the population of Trinidad and Tobago. If those opposite have any doubt—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Indarsingh: “What you consumed that Saturday?”

Mr. F. Jeffrey:—I challenge them, instead of calling the by-election in Chaguanas West or the local government election, call a general election to get validation, “if yuh brave”. But I guess “so many singing fuh dey supper” that they would not take that chance.

The Minister of Finance must have had many sleepless nights trying to summon the courage to come before this House to present this Bill. Mr. Speaker, the hon. Minister would surely agree with me that it was indeed a travesty. How could the Minister of Finance come to this House and ask for approval for us to give them \$2,898,091,400? How can he expect this House to approve that? Coming on the heels of “mmail” gate”—

Dr. Moonilal: “Mmail gate” too?

Mr. F. Jeffrey: Emailgate. The \$6.8 million payment for a six-year-old fire tender that was beyond repair, coming on the heels of \$7 million paid to repair a four-foot hole on the Beetham Highway, coming on the heels of millions overpaid that was exposed by the Auditor General and they have the gall to come and ask for more money. Mr. Speaker, coming on the heels that in 2010, there were 111 suspicious activities in the financial sector to 303 in 2011 and I am advised that in 2012, the figure is approaching 500. Coming on the heels that the former Chairman of Caribbean Airlines, a high party financier, removed from that corporation because of financial irregularity but was promoted to head the Housing Development Corporation. I guess it is more lucrative there.

9.10 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, they have seen high-ranking government officials illegally giving the go ahead to spend \$608 million as a cost to the State. If it was the Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla, Moruga or Tobago East, they would have been fired a long time ago, but when you are the “Minister of Everything”, you only go when you feel like resigning. They have seen how Super Industrial Services Limited, a strong financier of the UNC, became a major beneficiary of lucrative contracts by this Government. I am advised that the former director of the Point Lisas Park Limited, Mr. Azad Niamat of 70 Main Road, Chaguanas, who offered to sell Eden Gardens for \$200 million and eventually settled for \$175 million, was rewarded with the chairmanship of Caribbean Airlines.

Mr. Speaker, these are things that the Minister of Finance and the Economy should indeed get worried about. [*Crosstalk*] I find it passing strange that no increase was made to the Ministry of Health—

Mr. Indarsingh: Mr. Speaker, would the Member give way? [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. F. Jeffrey: No, no, I am not giving any way. [*Crosstalk*]

Dr. Khan: Jeffrey, give way.

Mr. F. Jeffrey: I am not giving way. [*Crosstalk*] I find it passing strange—

Dr. Moonilal: “He doh want yuh correct him.”

Hon. Member: “He correcting you, you know.”

Mr. F. Jeffrey:—that no increase was made to the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Community Development, and for a moment I wondered if those both Ministers were punished or victimized for signing the nomination form for the former Member for Chaguanas West. [*Desk thumping*] I wonder! I wonder, Mr. Speaker.

Overpayment, lack of procedure, have led to this mass spending frenzy which has resulted in kickbacks.

Hon. Member: Prove it.

Mr. F. Jeffrey: One has to understand the seriousness of what is taking place in this country. As far as the Ministry of Community Development is concerned, I recognize that no increased allocation was made to the Ministry of Community Development. And this is a worrying development, at a time when this country is faced with rising crime—

Miss Mc Donald: And delinquency.

Mr. F. Jeffrey:—and delinquency. At a time when there is a breakdown in family life. There are communities without community centres, they have no place to congregate and you could imagine the importance of community centres in those areas.

Mr. Speaker, I want to refer you to the PSIP programme for 2013. On page 135, the sum of \$70: million will be provided in 2013 to facilitate the completion of the construction of 23 community centres, \$70 million—Palo Seco Settlement, Palo Seco; Los Charios and Vessigny. At the same time the construction of 10 new community centres was supposed to take place in the fiscal year 2013, and these 10 include: Bunsee Trace; Ben Lomond; Frederick Settlement; Surrey Village; Kernahan; North Oropouche and Gran Couva, Mr. Speaker, to name a few.

This is something that hurts, it hurts because you know something, up to the time when this Government—the PNM was in Government, those three community centres were over 90 per cent completed, and we had elections and the Government changed.

Hon. Member: “All yuh lose.”

Mr. F. Jeffrey: And strange, Mr. Speaker, at this point in time, those community centres are almost the same way they were three years ago. My Member for Port of Spain South was supposed to open those three community centres in early 2011, we are in 2013 and those community centres are far from completion. As a matter of fact, the Palo Seco Settlement and Palo Seco Los Charios Community Centres are at a standstill at this very moment, while some of these very new community centres like in Bunsee Trace and so on, they are under construction. Mr. Speaker, I am wondering why? Why? Why? Why?

Hon. Member: Discrimination.

Mr. F. Jeffrey: I am saying here now, those three community centres should have been completed a long time ago. One has to understand as well that it is also very reprehensible that large communities like Aripero and Rancho Quemado are without community centres. No place for the people to come together to discuss issues, and God alone knows how nothing bad has not happened in those areas. It is high time that this Government pay close attention to those communities: Aripero and Rancho Quemado among others.

This House is indeed a sacred place.

Hon. Member: Very sacred.

Mr. F. Jeffrey: And, Mr. Speaker, I raised a question in this House on March 01, 2013 and the question was:

Could the Minister state—that is the Ministry of Community Development when the following community centres will be opened:

- (a) Palo Seco Settlement;
- (b) Los Charios; and
- (c) Vessigny.

The Minister of Community Development said:

Thank you Mr. Speaker, the Palo Seco Settlement, Los Charios and Vessigny Community Centres are approximately 90 per cent completed;

Same thing as in 2010. All right.

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The Ministry of Community Development proposes to open these centres during the third quarter of fiscal 2013.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I knew quite well that was an impossibility because speaking to the contractors, they told you that “de work stop yuh know, we cyar start back de work because de Government has no money, no money to compete those community centres.” Yet the Minister of Community Development came before this House and indicated that during the third quarter of fiscal 2013, those three community centres will be completed. This is an honourable place, this is a sacred place and we ought not to mislead this House.

9.20 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, when we look at the whole question of national security, when the PNM was in Government, this now Government had all the answers to crime. As a matter of fact, when the PNM demitted office, the crime rate had begun to fall. In comes this Government and decides to do all kinds of things—cancel contracts for the OPV, dismantle SAUTT, et cetera, et cetera; do not continue with the building of community centres, et cetera. Mr. Speaker, what we are seeing happening in our country now is crime getting out of hand—

Dr. Rambachan: Only now?

Mr. F. Jeffrey: And, Mr. Speaker, it is indeed a serious development when your hard-working policemen are being shot—as a matter of fact, killed. The “bloods”, to take a quote from the Prime Minister because when the PNM was in office in 2008 or 2009, she had said that the “bloods” of those who died will be on the hands of the PNM.

Dr. Rambachan: It still there.

Mr. F. Jeffrey: And I am saying here now, I wonder whose hands the “bloods” of those policemen who were murdered and those who died now, are on? Whose hands?

Dr. Rambachan: Under whom were the young people not treated properly? Who was the administration then? Who caused the situation to deteriorate?

Miss Hospedales: What?

Mr. F. Jeffrey: Mr. Speaker, when you ask the population whether upper class, middle class, lower class, are you safer now than you were in April 2010, they will tell you a resounding no. People are terrified at this point in time, more terrified than they were in April: 2010.

Miss Ramdial: That is not true. That is not true.

Miss Hospedales: That is true.

Mr. F. Jeffrey: Mr. Speaker, I can understand the situation for the Member for Couva North. I can understand well and I sympathize with you, but the facts are the facts.

Mr. Speaker, we all know quite well what is happening in this country. The Member for Diego Martin North/East mentioned that a policeman was murdered behind a police station. Mr. Speaker, that used to happen before? Mr. Speaker, people right now, no respect, no respect for the police and this is because of the incompetence of this Government.

Dr. Rambachan: This is why they did not allow—[*Desk thumping*]

Mr. F. Jeffrey: This is because of the incompetence of this Government [*Interruption*]

Miss Mc Donald: Allow him to speak.

Mr. F. Jeffrey: Mr. Speaker—

Hon. Member: You will get your turn. Quiet! Keep quiet!

Mr. F. Jeffrey: I can deal with the Member for Tabaquite. I can deal with the Member for Tabaquite, do not worry. “You cyar fool nobody.” No, I can tell you.

Miss Hospedales: Hah, say that again!

Mr. F. Jeffrey: No, I can tell because you know something, when you look at the allocation for local government, it has nothing else to do but fighting the local government election to see if you could bribe people, but that would not work. Ask Tobago. Ask Tobago what happened in Tobago. No matter how much money you spent in Tobago, 12-0. Look at what happened in Siparia, this year. We waiting for “allyuh”.

Dr. Rambachan: Yeah, keep waiting.

Mr. F. Jeffrey: Mr. Speaker, the Ministry of Food Production, they got an increase of \$74,937,900 and, I remember too well, they had all the answers for the rising food prices and so on. Mr. Speaker, but we know quite well that—let me just go back—Mr. Speaker, when the PNM was in office, the food import bill went from \$4.2 billion in 2008. That was replicated in 2009 and the then Opposition, they “wine” on the PNM; but strangely, in 2010, the food import bill, when the PNM demitted office was \$3.8 billion. Interestingly, Mr. Speaker, in

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comes this incompetent Government, in 2011, the food bill went up to \$4.7 billion and I am advised that in 2012 the figure is over \$5 billion.

The Minister of Trade and Investment, Sen. Vasant Bharath, tried to justify the reason for the increase in the food import bill and he said that the increase was due to the fact that while we were producing more food, we are paying more for less. He said that it had to do with import prices, and so on, of the food. But, Mr. Speaker, when the PNM was in Government, we had the same rising food prices. We had the vagaries of the weather. Mr. Speaker, we also had adverse domestic policies from foreign governments, but that did not matter. How come it matters now?

Mr. Speaker, I can tell you that this UNC-led coalition is a big joke. It is a big joke because, Mr. Speaker, part of the problem with the food situation in Trinidad and Tobago—we can go back and see what were the comments made by local food producers. They were talking about the reason for the fall in locally-produced goods was the removal of subsidy on premium gasoline.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, premium gasoline is what they use for the whackers; what they use for small machinery; what they use for pumps, and they removed the subsidy on gasoline. So what is going to happen, Mr. Speaker? They zero-rated VAT on imported manufactured goods, food items. That increase in land lease—and you remember quite well how they went and bulldozed the lands in Egypt Trace and Pineapple Smith. Mr. Speaker, we all know that and there is a price for that.

So what happens? There is also a shortage of food on the local market, notwithstanding what is happening abroad and, Mr. Speaker, as I have shown the Parliament on numerous occasions, when you look at the policies that were enunciated by both Ministers of Finance and the Economy, they seem to cut and paste from the PNM's Minister of Finance's presentation in 2009. Mr. Speaker, but cutting and pasting "doh" cut it; "doh" cut it. You need to know about what is involved when you are talking about agriculture. But, Mr. Speaker, we all know what happened with Caroni (1975) Limited.

Dr. Rambachan: Who closed it down?

Mr. F. Jeffrey: Yes.

Dr. Rambachan: And what was the reason?

Mr. F. Jeffrey: Mr. Speaker, Caroni (1975) Limited was closed for economic reasons but, Mr. Speaker, you know something? Seeing that Caroni (1975)

Limited was so lucrative—the sugar industry was so lucrative—this Government came in and one would have expected that they would have gone back and planted more cane, but you did not do that. You did not do that at all. What, in fact, you did—you used the land for housing. You built government offices. You built the university campus. You are building COSTAATT campus. You are building children’s hospital and you are also engaging in the cultivation of short-term crops. You forget sugar “one time”.

But, Mr. Speaker, the population knows quite well that the sugar industry was facing stiff competition from beet sugar, artificial sweeteners, et cetera, from places like the United States of America and Europe and, therefore, it was no longer economical to subsidize or purchase sugar and so on. Therefore, most of the countries in the Caribbean have abandoned the sugar-cane industry. You cannot fool the population. You cannot fool the population, Mr. Speaker.

Dr. Ramadharsingh: You do it to beat Opposition people. That is why you do it because they did not support your Government, you wanted to destroy them—

Miss Hospedales: “Yeah, right.”

Dr. Ramadharsingh: That is why you do it.

Mr. F. Jeffrey: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development is another case in point. He just got a paltry \$7,568,000 allocation, but that Ministry lacks any kind of research if they were supposed to do any effective work. As a matter of fact, I remember raising the question about the situation in La Brea, about the unemployment situation in La Brea and the hon. Minister of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development could not dispute the figures. As a matter of fact, he had none.

But, Mr. Speaker, I have engaged a team of volunteers and we are going in every one of those 33 villages that comprise the La Brea constituency to do a registration exercise of all the unemployed. We will take their age, of course their ID, education, skill, three passport pictures, et cetera, just to ensure that we have the necessary data.

Because, Mr. Speaker, when this exercise is completed, I am coming back to this House to show, empirically, how serious the unemployment situation is in La Brea. And when I am talking about La Brea, I am speaking not only of the township of La Brea, but I am talking about from Aripéro to Salazar Trace and from Quarry to Erin. Mr. Speaker, unemployment is serious business and the

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Minister of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development does not have the wherewithal to do it.

Therefore, I thought that this little \$7 million that they got would have been much more to engage in a serious exercise. I am certain that the Minister of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development cannot produce figures for Laventille. They cannot produce figures for Port of Spain South. They cannot produce figures for Point Fortin, for St. Ann's East, for Arouca and so on. That is why research is extremely important and I thought that the Minister of Finance and the Economy would have increased the allocation the Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

Mr. Speaker, I come to the Ministry of Housing, Land and Marine Affairs, CEPEP, \$142 million.

Hon. Member: Well run!

Mr. F. Jeffrey: And they are talking here now, Mr. Speaker, about to facilitate the expansion and beautification of landscaping activities and I am saying, if you are thinking in terms of beautification and landscaping activities, the La Brea Pitch Lake would never have been omitted.

Mr. Speaker, we all know that the La Brea Pitch Lake is the Eighth Wonder of the World but, Mr. Speaker, it is overgrown with grasses. Mosses have begun to take over the little pools of water—

Mr. Indarsingh: Mosses? Mosses?

Mr. F. Jeffrey:—and the trees require pruning. But, Mr. Speaker, one would have expected that with the high unemployment—*[Interruption]* I said moss, right. With the high unemployment—

Mrs. Thomas: Continue! You continue, boy.

Mr. F. Jeffrey: With the high unemployment, one would have expected that at least two CEPEP teams would have been allocated to La Brea Pitch Lake.

Hon. Members: To deal with the mosses.

Mr. F. Jeffrey: Well, Mr. Speaker, I am certain that the \$142 million will be used for payback for their financiers. I would like to advise the Minister of Housing, Land and Marine Affairs that there is an urgent need to prune those trees, to remove the moss and, at the same time, to remove the grass as well that is making the pitch lake an unsightly affair.

Mr. Speaker, given the unemployment situation in La Brea, I thought that at least two CEPEP teams would have been awarded to the people of La Brea. As far as the Ministry of the Environment and Water Resources, I am surprised that only \$30 million was being contracted for the mitigation work and stabilization of river banks; but I want to draw to your attention that we have serious flooding problems in the Erin River from Santa Flora to Erin. The Sundarsingh/Boodoosingh Lane watercourse, the Coffee Street watercourse in La Brea, the Lawrence Hope River, the Los Charros River, the Alexander Road watercourse in Vance River; all these watercourses need urgent attention.

Miss Ramdial: And you are getting it.

Mr. F. Jeffrey: Thank you very much. Could you tell us when?

Miss Ramdial: They called you.

Mr. F. Jeffrey: Okay, thank you.

Miss Ramdial: Days ago.

Mr. Speaker: Member for Couva North, I know you like to advise the Member for La Brea, but do not disturb him whilst he is speaking. Hon. Member, you may continue, please.

Mr. F. Jeffrey: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Under Tertiary Education and Skills Training: I have no problem with the COSTAATT campus in Chaguanas; no problem with that at all. I have no problem with the skills and technology centre in Debe. I have no problem with the south campus in Debe either, nor the open campus facility in Chaguanas; but I ask the question, what is causing the delay in the construction of the UTT campus for Point Fortin? What is causing that delay? What is good for Debe, Penal and Chaguanas is also good for Point Fortin and La Brea. We are also a legitimate part of Trinidad and Tobago. We are not begging; we are demanding. This is our right.

9.40 p.m.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, with the Ministry of Tourism, I see \$3,899,600 for promotion, publicity and printing. Mr. Speaker, I may have to draw the Minister of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development into this one: newly trained and recruited lifeguards at Vessigny Beach are not being paid their wages. There were some, Mr. Speaker, who were employed and sent home for no apparent reason and still not paid. It is the lives of young men that are being messed up.

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Mr. Speaker, this budget or this Finance Bill that is before us, we need to understand that there are far too many gaps, far too many loopholes for us to approve without questioning this \$2 billion. We need to put measures in place to stop the overspending—the overpayment for contracts. We need to put measures in place to stop the corrupt practices. We need to put measures in place to ensure that before any money is expended under any contract that signature is applied. Mr. Speaker, we must not give credence to the allegation that we do not know how to spend money.

And so, I ask, Mr. Speaker, as I take “meh” seat that we understand what is at stake. The people of La Brea must not be left out. I find—when I look at what is presented before us—there is very little for the people of La Brea. I would not sit idly by and allow this thing to continue for much longer. I thank you, Mr. Speaker. [*Desk thumping*]

The Minister of State in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Rudranath Indarsingh): Thank you very much—

Dr. Moonilal: Let him have it!

Dr. Khan: Teach him; teach him.

Hon. R. Indarsingh—Mr. Speaker, for allowing me to join this debate at this juncture. After listening to the Member for La Brea, I really was not going to respond to him, but it is important that—

Dr. Khan: The truth be told.

Hon. R. Indarsingh:—the truth be told, because he engaged in a proliferation of what I would call half-truths and innuendoes in his delivery and, again, it is a very clear indication of what all the speakers from those on the other side—from when the Leader of the Opposition started his response to the last speaker—they have been attempting to misinform and spread propaganda that will cause one to come to the conclusion that there is some kind of discrimination on the part of this Government, as it relates to how it has been disbursing the resources of Trinidad and Tobago over the last three years.

Mr. Speaker, it is very clear to me that when the speakers would have focused on issues, such as, there has been \$160 billion in financial mismanagement—and, in fact, the Leader of the Opposition focused on the issue of this Government going in the direction of pursuing austerity measures and so on, and it had no policy position and engaging in nancy stories and so on—I am forced to conclude that they learned nothing when they were in the Government of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, the Member for La Brea, again, I do not know where he got his information from.

Dr. Moonilal: From the Pitch Lake, from the “mosses”.

Hon. R. Indarsingh: He indicated to this House that the now Chairman of Caribbean Airlines is some gentleman connected with some transaction—alleged to be connected with some transaction in Eden Gardens. I want to say and set the record straight—and, probably, he would not have been following the news and so on—but the Chairman of Caribbean Airlines is Mr. Phillip Marshall. So I really do not know where he got that information, and when I attempted to set the record straight, the arrogance of the Member for La Brea—

Dr. Khan: He refused to give way.

Hon. R. Indarsingh:—he refused to give way, and that is symptomatic of the PNM—

Dr. Moonilal: Oh, yes, yes. [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. R. Indarsingh:—in the way that they would have conducted themselves in office and now in Opposition as it relates to the business of the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Speaker, in fact, the cut and thrust, the focus of this administration has been one of people-centred delivery, people-centred development and focusing on improving the quality of life and standard of living of all the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago.

During his contribution, the Member for Diego Martin West alluded to the Ministry of Legal Affairs being a non-Ministry, a Ministry that has nothing to do and, in fact, simply going around the country and doing nothing for the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

Dr. Khan: No birth certificate for him.

Hon. R. Indarsingh: If one could just reflect about what prevailed prior to May 2010—in fact, I could recollect going with my entire family to the Ministry of Legal Affairs and the lines to get birth certificates went beyond South Quay—

Dr. Rambachan: What about passport?

Hon. R. Indarsingh:—and there were a number of tents and people were frustrated and there was a general sense of hysteria and confusion at the Ministry of Legal Affairs prior to May of 2010. And since the coming of this

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administration and the leadership of the Minister of Legal Affairs, the Member for St. Augustine—the business of the Ministry of Legal Affairs has been transformed to the point now where you could simply walk into the head office and the sub-offices and acquire your birth certificate in less than five minutes. [*Desk thumping*]

The transformation has focused also on the registration of deaths and so on. This particular administration has gone beyond the call of duty, again, with that focus of people-centred development and so on—taking into consideration that on weekends when persons would have gone to the great beyond, their relatives and so on would want to deal with giving them their send-off in a very speedy manner and so on—to have sub-offices and registration of deaths and so on taking place throughout the length and breadth of the country. And also taking into consideration the religious responsibilities and so on, especially of the Muslim community who seek to bury their loved ones within 24 hours.

The Ministry of Legal Affairs has been very accommodating in taking on board the concerns of all religious denominations and so on in its transformation and making it more what we would call people-centred and customer friendly.

So when the Leader of the Opposition says that the Ministry of Legal Affairs has nothing to do, and the Minister has been doing nothing and so on, what it tells me, it continues to show that lack of care for the people coming from the Leader of the Opposition—[*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Member: Shame!

Hon. R. Indarsingh:—that sense of consistency, Mr. Speaker.

The Member for La Brea has been very consistent in his call for a general election [*Desk thumping*] and now he is saying that—

Mr. Jeffrey: I have been calling for that for the last two years.

Hon. R. Indarsingh:—the Member for Tabaquite and the Minister of Works and Infrastructure and Local Government is using the allocation to buy votes. Well, Member for La Brea, we do not have to buy votes. The track record of the Minister of Works and Infrastructure and Local Government speaks for itself, because I am sure that there are roads that are being paved in your constituency. There are bridges that are being built and so on. There is a proliferation of URP projects and so on, and it shows that this Government is spreading the resources across the length and breadth of Trinidad and Tobago [*Desk thumping*] and your style has been simply one of attempting to fan the flames of discrimination.

I think that it is unfortunate on the part of those on the other side when they cannot offer anything tangible, in responding to what has been put forward by this administration, they are seeking to fan the flames of discrimination—something that is really in the DNA of the PNM, since what they have practised since 1956 in dealing with the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago.

I want to tell you, Member for La Brea, that the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, the hon. Kamla Persad-Bissessar, the Member for Siparia, knows the Constitution of Trinidad and Tobago fully well and an election in this country—whether it is “by”, whether it is local government or whether it is of a general election—will be called in keeping with the Constitution of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Member: Correct!

Hon. R. Indarsingh: We will not do what you all did as it relates to local government election in this country. [*Desk thumping*] You all postponed it six times, on six occasions. [*Crosstalk*] And you have the audacity to talk about calling general election and so on! We are committed. This government is fully committed to upholding the rich traditions of democracy, and we will ensure that the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago have the right to make that decision at the appropriate moment.

You will not again—you all have this way about you all, you know, Member for La Brea. You feel that if you talk loud and you “bad john” and you bully and so on then we will respond, but we will respond in time.

You indicated that the crime statistics were on the upsurge, but I cannot recollect that at any point in time when progressive pieces of legislation to tackle crime on a head-on basis were brought to the Parliament, where was the PNM—where were you all in giving support to legislation that focused on tackling the crime issue in Trinidad and Tobago?

When the Government came to this House and attempted to involve and to grant the powers of arrest to the soldiers of Trinidad and Tobago, what was your position? You termed the soldiers of Trinidad and Tobago “killing machines”.

Miss Mc Donald: You did not understand that boy!

9.55 p.m.

Hon. R. Indarsingh: I understood fully, Member for Port of Spain South. I have a responsibility to talk; you will talk when you are given the opportunity. I benefited from an education in Trinidad and Tobago and I will talk, you cannot tell me—

Hon. Member: From the PNM.

Hon. R. Indarsingh:—I do not understand.

Hon. Member: From the PNM.

Hon. Member: Yeah! [*Desk thumping & laughter*]

Hon. R. Indarsingh: PNM! The PNM never did anything for me.

Miss Hospedales: That is not the truth. Rudy, I expect different from you.

Mr. Speaker: Can I ask hon. Members to allow the Member for Couva South to speak in silence. And, Member, could you address the Chair?

Hon. R. Indarsingh: Certainly, Mr. Speaker, I have been addressing you but the Members, those on the other side—

Mr. Speaker: No, those Members—

Hon. R. Indarsingh:—seem to be concerned about what I am saying, but they must understand, like any other citizen of Trinidad and Tobago, my parents paid taxes and I am entitled to any opportunity and an equal opportunity in terms of the goods and services offered—[*Desk thumping*—]by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago. This has nothing to do with a PNM education; the taxes of my parents in terms of their working life contributed to the economy of Trinidad and Tobago, like all citizens of this country.

So this thing about being a “PNM education” and “PNM schools” and so on, the schools of—the education system of this country has been built by the blood, sweat and tears of all citizens of this country—[*Desk thumping*—]and you took the opportunity. Your track record in giving support to legislation that will tackle the crime issue on a head-on basis has been an abysmal failure, Member for La Brea. So do not think that you—[*Interruption*]

Miss Mc Donald: Mr. Speaker, I have to disagree with that, 36(5). If you look at the Bills that we supported you, we supported your crime initiatives in this House—as the Chief Whip—and I could list all of them for you. Do not do that, “doh” go that way.

Mr. Speaker: That is not a point of order and that is not relevant. Continue.

Hon. R. Indarsingh: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was simply making the point that in terms of when the citizens of the country mattered, in terms of the citizens

and the well-being of all in this country, and they talk about nation-building and patriotism and so on, when the time was critical in terms of giving that support to ensure that there is nation-building and the well-being of all our citizens and so on, where was that type of support when it was needed? History will record, certainly, the position of the PNM as it relates to giving support to these pieces of critical legislation.

Mr. Speaker, the Member for La Brea sought to venture into what I would call my backyard territory. He went on to speak about Caroni (1975) Limited and the sugar industry, and he spoke about the agricultural sector in Trinidad and Tobago. I cannot recollect ever the agricultural sector recording any period of positive growth under a People's National Movement Government. I cannot recollect that, and under this particular administration, in less than three years the agricultural sector has recorded a 2.7 per cent growth.

Dr. Khan: And we have more beef.

Hon. R. Indarsingh: And, yes, the Minister of Food Production has brought in, I think—

Dr. Khan: Eighty.

Hon. Member: Fifty cows.

Dr. Khan: Eighty cows.

Hon. R. Indarsingh:—fifty cows to aid in the development of the dairy industry and so on—

Miss Mc Donald: Fifty cows?

Hon. R. Indarsingh:—and to say, Member for Port of Spain South—

Miss Mc Donald: “Allyuh” brought goats in too?

Hon. Member: Sheep too.

Dr. Khan: Kangaroo.

Hon. R. Indarsingh:—that Caroni was closed for economic reasons and so on, I will have to revisit and educate you again, because as I said and I will continue to say, “I experienced the process, I lived the process”, and if it is one person who has the authority to speak on the closure of Caroni (1975) Limited, “is me”. [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Member: Tell them.

Hon. R. Indarsingh: And it was political vindictiveness, it reeked of political vindictiveness.

Miss Hospedales: Nonsense! Nonsense! Nonsense!

Hon. R. Indarsingh: It is important again that I use this opportunity to set the record straight.

Dr. Khan: Set it straight.

Hon. R. Indarsingh: Set the record straight. I said to you all, the then leader of the interministerial committee that was dealing with Caroni (1975) Limited and all the unions, there were five unions in Caroni (1975)—five different bargaining units. When we were offered one meeting to meet that interministerial committee, as the Member for Diego Martin North/East was present in that meeting and making all different types of gesticulations and so on—in that meeting I indicated, the head of that interministerial committee at that point in time said to me that the time had come to break the All Trinidad Sugar and General Workers Trade Union because the people of south and central Trinidad rally, or Rienzi Complex is used as a rallying point, a focal point for the people of south and central Trinidad and it was a breeding ground for politicians in south and central Trinidad.

That is what was said to me, and I will go to my grave repeating what was said as it relates to the reason for the closure of Caroni (1975) Limited. Just to show the vindictiveness of the administration at that point in time, in 2008 when the All Trinidad Sugar and General Workers Trade Union took the Government to court to address the infrastructural development works on the lands of Caroni (1975) Limited, and Justice Lennox Deyalsingh ruled that all the infrastructural work should be completed by July of 2008, the then Prime Minister, the Member for San Fernando East, instructed the Attorney General to appeal the ruling of Justice Deyalsingh in the Appeal Court of Trinidad and Tobago, and the vindictiveness went beyond the appeal court where the Government took the case to the Privy Council.

It was only—Member for La Brea, listen let me educate you. You need a little bit of education this evening. You need that. It was the leadership of the Member for Siparia who instructed the Attorney General after May of 2010 to withdraw the appeal against the ruling of Justice Deyalsingh, and that withdrawal of that matter at the level of the Privy Council started the wheels rolling again as it relates to continuing the infrastructural work on the agricultural and residential lands. In less than three years we have distributed over 1,000 leases, and during

2003 to 2009 you all distributed less than 200 leases, and I challenge any one of you to tell me I am speaking nothing but the truth. That is the vindictiveness of the PNM.

Hon. Member: They wicked.

Hon. R. Indarsingh: That is the wickedness, that is the discrimination of the PNM, and for you to stand up here and speak about the agricultural sector and the development of the agricultural sector under the PNM and what Caroni (1975) Limited meant to you all and so on, reeks of hypocrisy.

Mr. Speaker, we must—because those on the other side are behaving—as it relates to what is happening here—as if it is something that they are hearing for the first time, or they are experiencing this particular piece of legislation for the first time as it relates to seeking to get approximately \$2,898,091,400 to get that sense of authorization as it relates to meeting expenditure that is needed for the service of Trinidad and Tobago to continue the work of not only the Government, but ensuring that the country continues to grow and develop as a nation.

Because, when the Leader of the Opposition was speaking, he was attempting to indicate to the House and the national community as if something that the Minister of Finance and the Economy—when he piloted this piece of legislation—as if it is something that I may conclude that, the Minister was doing something illegal and clandestine and so on. Mr. Speaker, we have come to the rightful place. The Parliament is the place that you get the appropriate authorization for urgent and critical expenditure. Mr. Speaker, during the course of any financial year there are always demands made for expenditure that is not allocated within the budget, and there are rules that allow that to take place in accordance with our system.

So what is happening here is nothing strange, it is not for the first time that it is occurring in the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago, and the PNM really has nothing to offer in responding to what has been put forward by the Minister of Finance and the Economy. They are behaving as if when they all were in the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, they did not come to the Parliament for increases in allocation for expenditure. In fact—and I want you all to tell me if it did not occur, under your watch.

So, in 2006 the PNM sought an increase in the budget from \$30.64 billion to \$38.046 billion, an increase of \$7.46 billion. In 2007, the PNM came to this House for the budget to be moved from \$31.493 billion to \$32.618 billion, an

increase of \$1.125 billion. Mr. Speaker, in 2008 the PNM came for two such measures in 2008, totalling \$8.6 billion.

Dr. Moonilal: Oh! And they get on like that.

Hon. R. Indarsingh: The budget moved from \$36.4 billion to \$44.5 billion. That was the track record of the PNM during their tenure.

Hon. Member: How you get that money?

Hon. R. Indarsingh: So the hypocrisy of if something clandestine, something illegal, is being done and it is something new, is an indication that again, you all have learned nothing during your period when you were the Government of Trinidad and Tobago. This is par for the course as it relates to fulfilling our responsibility as the Government of Trinidad and Tobago.

Hon. Member: Well said.

Hon. R. Indarsingh: That is what is simply being done here by the Minister of Finance and the Economy, Mr. Speaker.

Dr. Browne: Member?

Hon. Member: Eight and eight, 16 and one—\$17 billion!

Hon. R. Indarsingh: And the Member for—

Dr. Browne: Member for Couva South?

Dr. Khan: Amery calling.

Dr. Browne: You willing to give way?

Hon. R. Indarsingh: Yes, Sir.

Dr. Khan: He not like—[*Inaudible*]

Dr. Browne: Thank you, hon. Member, for giving way. Thank you for giving way. I hope you are not creating a straw figure here and attacking it. I do not know if Members are saying that there is something wrong with a supplementary appropriation Bill. I think the major concern is not that at all, because you are now saying that the PNM brought these Bills—fair enough. The major concern is that the revenue sources are not being identified consistently, and also the level of detail being provided is really not sufficient and certainly not comparable with what was done previously under the last administration. So it is not that bringing a supplementary appropriation Bill is wrong. I do not think that is what was being said at all.

10.10 p.m.

So, I am just a little concerned about the direction in which you are heading in your contribution in creating an impression now that the Members on this side are saying that there is something inherently wrong with a supplementary appropriation, because that point is not being made.

Hon. Member: Good, thanks for the information.

Hon. R. Indarsingh: Thank you Member for Diego Martin Central, but if you listened a couple moments ago, your colleague said that the allocation to the Ministry of Local Government is being used to buy votes. That is what was said, so I am simply responding and putting it in the proper context of what we are doing here tonight. Also, consistently, there seems to be the theme coming out from you all that the additional money is being used in a discriminatory manner. *[Interruption]* That is why I am seeking to set the record straight as it relates to what was your spending track record when you were the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, and what you all did with the increase in spending. Did you spread it across the board? Across the 41 constituencies?

When I became the Member of Parliament for Couva South, the Calcutta Road, I will use that as an example of your discrimination and your vindictiveness. The Calcutta Road from the Freeport Police Station to Corban Junction, the worst road in the constituency of Couva South was never paved for 40 years. So, what you all did with this increase in spending during 2003—2010? That is all I am simply attempting to do here tonight, Member for Diego Martin Central.

Dr. Rambachan: Eighteen million.

Hon. R. Indarsingh: I am coming to that. Thank you Minister of Works and Infrastructure and Minister of Local Government. I am coming to that because the Member for La Brea indicated that we have spent, and so on, \$160 billion over the last three years. I will also take the opportunity here tonight to provide the level of detailed expenditure or the details as they relate to the personnel expenditure that was requested.

Mr. Speaker, it is important, I do not want to take too much time here tonight, but, to again set the record straight because the Member for La Brea focused on the issue of suspicious financial transactions and the increase in suspicious financial transactions and so on in Trinidad and Tobago. And it was they who painted, during the debate on the FIU, a picture of doom and gloom and if Trinidad

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and Tobago did not subscribe and ensure that we met the criteria and so on, the financial system—if I should use that phrase—would have been shut down and so on.

Hon. Member: FATF.

Hon. R. Indarsingh: They said Trinidad and Tobago would be blacklisted, and before you all jump to the conclusion about what the French would have said, the Minister of Finance and the Economy Sen. The Hon. Larry Howai has made that very clear and made his position clear and the Government of Trinidad and Tobago in terms of the statement he issued with the reported blacklisting of Trinidad and Tobago by the Government of France, and I just want to quote from that particular statement that was issued by him and he indicated, and I quote:

“In this regard, I am advised that the Minister of Foreign Affairs is seeking clarification from the French Embassy regarding the basis for the statement. Further...His Excellency...has agreed to meet officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to address this matter tomorrow”...and—

“I wish to emphasise that I have not been made aware of any blacklisting of Trinidad and Tobago by the Government of France”—however, I am certainly aware that—

“The Financial Action Task Force (FATF) has removed Trinidad and Tobago from its list of countries with strategic Anti Money Laundering and Counter Terrorist Financing deficiencies having established a fully functional Financial Intelligence Unit and put the systems in place to ensure a robust regulatory framework.”

That is another achievement of this Government as it relates to doing its work and doing its work in a very positive manner.

Mr. Speaker, we must never forget that the economic environment when we came into office in May of 2010—what was the domestic economic environment and what was the international economic environment? The reality is that the PP Government steadied the economic ship of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] It was on a downward slide—[*Interruption*]

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: “Nah, nah, nah”.

Hon. R. Indarsingh:—and it is after three years of stewardship we are seeing the signs of positive economic growth in Trinidad and Tobago [*Desk thumping*] and it is the overall policy planning and the programmes of this administration for the last three years.

Again, Mr. Speaker, the books of the Government reflected one thing and when you factored in all of the indirect borrowing and liabilities it was never a rosy one. It was an era of mismanagement, corruption, wastage and inefficiency. I want to remind the Member for La Brea, because he took the liberty to indicate here tonight that in three years there has been, what he said, \$160 billion of wastage. But Member for La Brea you seem to possess a 10-day memory.

Hon. Member: Yes.

Hon. R. Indarsingh: And it is important that you do some internal introspection and ask yourself: “where you was”? I take—you “was” part of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago between 2003 and May of 2010.

Dr. Gopeesingh: 2002.

Hon. R. Indarsingh: “You was part of the Government”.

Mr. Jeffrey: I was here in 2002? 2002, I was here?

Hon. R. Indarsingh: But you supported the PNM. Are you distancing yourself from the PNM? Are you distancing yourself from the PNM, Member for La Brea?

Dr. Moonilal: Yes, he is.

Hon. R. Indarsingh: You must answer the question. Who allowed UDeCOTT to borrow \$1 billion for the waterfront project?

Dr. Browne: You are in the waterfront right now. [*Laughter*]

Hon. R. Indarsingh: Who allowed Petrotrin to go into the international markets and borrow—[*Interruption*]

Miss Cox: Right now you are in the waterfront.

Hon. R. Indarsingh:—US \$750 million for the gas optimization project? Who allowed Petrotrin to go in that direction?

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: [*Inaudible*]—the international market.

Hon. R. Indarsingh: I am making my point, Member for Point Fortin, you will have the opportunity to respond.

Dr. Moonilal: Pray not.

Hon. R. Indarsingh: When it was supposed to cost approximately \$4.94 billion, instead it has doubled to approximately \$8.21 billion.

Mr. Hypolite: Couva South. [*Raises hand*].

Hon. Member: What?

Hon. Member: He is winding up just now. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Hypolite: Just one simple question.

Dr. Khan: You will talk after, you will talk after.

Hon. R. Indarsingh: The construction of the Petrotrin headquarters—who presided over the fiasco that took place at the proposed construction of the new headquarters for Petrotrin?

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Talk about the fire truck.

Hon. R. Indarsingh: Over \$170 million was spent.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: “Nah, nah, nah”.

Hon. R. Indarsingh: No, but “you was de one” who was just speaking about wastage and inefficiency and mismanagement and so on. [*Interruption*] So, it is important that you and the PNM be reminded of your misdeeds and the atrocities, the financial atrocities you perpetrated on the population of Trinidad and Tobago.

Dr. Browne: Standing Order 36(5), he is talking about the Member’s misdeeds. I do not know if that is supposed—

Mr. Speaker: I am following him very closely. Continue.

Hon. R. Indarsingh: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You see, they become easily offended—[*Interruption*]

Mr. De Coteau: The truth offends.

Hon. R. Indarsingh:—and they become very aggressive and raucous and so on in their behaviour, hoping that will derail me from the point that I have to make about the financial misdeeds of the PNM. [*Interruption*] That is all. I am simply setting the record straight, Member for La Brea.

Mr. Hypolite: Would you give way?

Hon. R. Indarsingh: I have given way enough, so I will continue tonight.

Dr. Khan: The Member for La Brea is asking to give way.

Hon. R. Indarsingh: I have been very gracious.

Mr. De Coteau: He did not give way.

Hon. R. Indarsingh: I have been very gracious in my contribution here tonight. *[Interruption]* And the Member for Laventille East/Morvant, I will take my time in reminding you about the misdeeds of the PNM. That is something the history—the country—must be reminded of, the citizens must be reminded and we must never forget that if, God forbid, you all return to political power what the country will be subjected to again.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: No way.

Hon. R. Indarsingh: That is the important point here tonight.

Hon. Member: “Yuh tink” so? *[Interruption]*

Hon. R. Indarsingh: That is the important point here tonight, and just to remind you all again, the new headquarters for state oil company Petrotrin, planned under a previous board, the board was headed by an oil czar by the name of Malcolm Jones, in fact. A name that you all are very familiar with—

Hon. Member: “Da is Manning pardner.”

Hon. R. Indarsingh:—with in terms of the previous board and under the previous administration was, to quote my colleague the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries, he indicated that it was being planned with a degree of opulence and grandeur in terms of the sums that were allocated. *[Interruption]*

I think \$170 million was wasted—unfinished and I think an additional \$440 million is needed to complete this Petrotrin headquarters and you have the audacity, Member for La Brea, to accuse this administration of wastage and inefficiency and so on. If I go on to speak about EMBD and WASA and so on—*[Interruption]*

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Talk about EFCL.

Hon. R. Indarsingh: Yes, and I can speak about EFCL too and UTT and so on. That is your track record, that is your legacy.

Hon. Member: Shame! *[Crosstalk]*

Hon. R. Indarsingh: And your legacy was one of—in keeping with that theme of not caring and not having a concern for people’s issues and people-centred development, you would have heard from the Minister of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development, the Member for Pointe-a-Pierre, when he indicated that since May 2010, 66 out of 75 collective agreements have been resolved. What was your position then as it relates to between 2008—2010 in settling the negotiations?

Dr. Browne: You said that already.

Hon. R. Indarsingh: No, I am coming to the point Member for Diego Martin Central, because you want the breakdown as it relates to—the details as they relate to the financial or the personnel expenditure.

Dr. Browne: It is all right.

Hon. R. Indarsingh: But, you all are now “perpetrating” yourselves as the new-found friends of the labour movement in Trinidad and Tobago. But if you go back since 1962 you have oppressed, you have brutalized, you have trampled upon the rights of the workers of Trinidad and Tobago and the labour movement.

Dr. Rambachan: They put Butler in Nelson Island. [*Laughter and crosstalk*] They put Weekes in Nelson Island.

Hon. R. Indarsingh: I am coming there. I am warming up in terms of my delivery. [*Laughter*]

Hon. Member: Not warming up—[*Inaudible*]

Mr. De Coteau: Tell us. Tell us.

Miss Mc Donald: Warm up.

Hon. R. Indarsingh: Member for Port of Spain South, allow me—you all yearned for the information so I have to put it in the proper context. [*Laughter*] At the finance committee meeting you all were yearning and craving and making all kinds of uproar and so on. Yearning and saying “we want the information”.

10.25: p.m.

“You all are hiding this, you all hiding that”, and so on. You accused the Minister of Finance and the Economy of, if I should use the phrase “manoeuvring the figures”, so allow me to get there and set the records straight. [*Desk thumping*] So whether it was the Industrial Stabilization Act; whether it was the cane farmers as it relates to their issue during the 1960s; whether it was the bus strike of 1969; whether it was Bloody Tuesday—you all must remember 1975/76 Bloody Tuesday and so on, you brutalized oil and sugar workers and you put George Weekes and Butler in Nelson Island.

Hon. Member: And “yuh” laughing at it too.

Hon. R. Indarsingh: And today, my distinguished friend and colleague from Moruga/Tableland understands the value and importance of that island to the

history of Trinidad and Tobago in terms of its preservation. We must commend them for having that sense of vision to embark on such a ground breaking piece of work out there. So when we have all gone to the great beyond, the people will understand what the PNM utilized Nelson Island to do in terms of jailing and isolating their opponents from the mainstream of society.

Hon. Member: “They go invite you, yuh know.”

Hon. R. Indarsingh: That is your programme and your track record Member for Diego Martin Central. And even—you belong to the PNM, do not distance yourself from the PNM. Do not distance yourself from the PNM.

Dr. Browne: Are you willing to give way?

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

Motion made: That the hon. Member’s speaking time be extended by 30 minutes. [*Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan*]

Question put and agreed to.

Hon. R. Indarsingh: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you colleagues as it relates to my continuation. [*Crosstalk*] I have a sense of history, Member for Laventille East/Morvant, so I could understand the context I am placing my delivery here tonight. So it was Bloody Tuesday coming up during the ’80s and the ’90s. You must all remember when you mobilized the army and the coast guard against the Atlantic LNG workers in Point Fortin, the police. You brutalized the Atlantic LNG workers—

Miss Mc Donald: Mr. Speaker, 36(1) relevance please, please.

Mr. Speaker: Could you connect?

Hon. R. Indarsingh: And it was perpetrated against the workers of Caroni and the sugar industry and so on, and the way you dealt with the collective bargaining process, Mr. Speaker; the way the collective bargaining process was dealt with between 2008—2010 is a continuation of that lack of concern for the workers of Trinidad and Tobago. What was your position? You all did not make an offer, you did not display the political will to settle any of the negotiations, any of the negotiations, and that is why we have to find the moneys to settle the debt that has been accumulated as a result of these collective agreements.

Mr. Speaker, I just simply want to say that the settlement as it relates to the civil service and statutory authorities, the total outstanding debt was \$305.9

million as it relates to the police service, the first and second divisions. You know, the Member for Diego Martin North/East raised a number of concerns as they relate to—he wanted the details as they relate to the—

Dr. Khan: They asked them to shorten their contribution so you have to shorten yours too.

Hon. R. Indarsingh: I simply want, Mr.: Speaker, he wanted—I wanted to set the record straight as it relates to the police service of Trinidad and Tobago and just to provide that detailed explanation that was requested in terms of the settlement. The salaries and COLA, \$290,587,000. Overtime for the monthly paid officers was \$132,819,000. Allowances for the monthly paid officers was \$113,097,000, and Government's contribution to the National Insurance Scheme stood at \$5,581,900 as it relates to the personnel expenditure for—under Head 64 of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service.

So, Mr. Speaker, for purposes of time and so on, the details of increases in personnel expenditure could be circulated for the interest of benefit of any of the Members on the other side. But it is important for us to understand that what we are doing here today is an exercise in fiscal responsibility to the people of Trinidad and Tobago. We will continue to ensure that there is fiscal prudence and discipline; we will continue to ensure that there is oversight and transparency and proper accountability in the operations of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago as we fulfil our responsibility in improving the quality of life and standard of living and care for all as we continue that focus on people-centred development.

I thank you.

Miss Marlene Mc Donald (*Port of Spain South*): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Before I start, as Member for Parliament for Port of Spain South, I would like to send condolences out to the parents of the twins Khertima and Khadijah Taylor, as well as Kafiya Gill who passed away tragically last Sunday morning. I hope that God gives both sets of parents the strength to endure the pain, the loss that they are suffering at this point in time and I know time heals, and I wish them well and may they rest in peace all three young ladies. I also want to wish a speedy recovery to the three others who are all hospitalized at this point.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Well done. We will share your views.

Miss Mc Donald: Mr. Speaker, I need to respond to certain issues raised by the Minister of Finance and the Economy. The first one I think that I want to deal with is an issue concerning a figure coming out of the Ministry of Legal Affairs.

Mr. Speaker, on Monday we were presented with this document. The document was very clear. The document said the Ministry of Legal Affairs is requesting a sum of \$10 million to host constitutional reform consultations throughout Trinidad and Tobago. And that an additional sum of \$10 million is required to meet costs associated with this activity.

Mr. Speaker, we received the responses from the Minister, and at page 5 there is a breakdown. I had asked the question, Mr. Speaker—I should say—as to the cost: what is the total cost and the breakdown of the cost to date? And there is a breakdown here totalling \$7.1 million. But there is also a note which says, the total estimated cost of the consultations is \$20,848,823.

When the Leader of the Opposition spoke he cited this particular figure of \$20.8 million as the cost of hosting the consultations. Subsequent to that, the Minister of Legal Affairs and Member for St. Augustine went on air, on television, and stated that it was a wrong figure and that he had only spent about \$3—\$4 million.

Mr. Speaker, I want to place it on *Hansard* that what we got here is what came from the Ministry of Finance and the Economy under the hands of the Minister of Finance and the Economy and I could only say—and I said it before—that when Ministers bring documents to this Parliament we can only hope that the figures and whatever information is placed, they are true and reflect whatever happens in the Ministry. I will now ask the Minister to please clarify so we can put in the public domain. Just as the Minister, just as the Minister of Legal Affairs—

Dr. Moonilal: [*Inaudible*]

Miss M. Mc Donald: Allow me please. Just as the Minister of Legal Affairs put it outside there that the Member of Parliament for Diego Martin West stated or gave an erroneous figure, I would like the Minister to please clear this.

Hon. L. Howai: Thank you Member for Port of Spain South. Yes the figure as stated here is \$20,848,823 and in fact that represents the budget which the Ministry of Legal Affairs had prepared and presented to the Ministry of Finance and the Economy for the conduct of consultations.

The figures which are listed here, on page 5 of the explanations that had been circulated, total \$7,117,320. What these numbers represent is the actual cost that has been incurred to date by the Ministry of Legal Affairs. The amount that has actually been settled by way of payment is the figure of \$4 million that the Minister of Legal Affairs referred to. But the figure that was stated by the Leader

of the Opposition is actually the figure that is stated here which is the \$20,848,823 and we stated this as the total estimated cost of the consultations. But this figure here is really the budget.

So, we were really dealing with three figures: one is the budgeted figure which is the estimated cost of the consultations, which is the number that in a sense I could understand when reading this, one would have taken it for granted that the number, the figure to be expended was \$20,848,000 which is the original budget, but the amount that has actually been incurred is \$7,117,000 and the amount actually paid is \$4 million. The Minister of Legal Affairs has assured me that he is unlikely to spend the entire \$20.8 million which was the original budget. He is probably more likely to spend the amount of \$10 million. I hope this clarifies the position.

Miss M. Mc Donald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and thank you Minister of Finance and the Economy. Mr. Speaker, again was it not just eight months ago this Government came to this honourable House seeking an approval of a national budget for expenditure of \$58.4 billion? I listened to the Minister and the Minister said, and I think, I looked at how he outlined his presentation and he spoke about the deficit. And Minister I want to tell you that you said the deficit would be going up by—would have reached \$9.2 billion, that many countries around the world they use deficit spending as a means of recovery, and therefore Trinidad and Tobago we should not be scared of the deficit spending.

10.40 p.m.

But, you know, I would tell you something. You have not given this honourable House any reason to be comforted with how you are going to get out of that deficit spending. What is your exit strategy? Nothing like that was told to this House.

Again, I have to agree with the Member for Diego Martin North/East: What is the revenue—what is the projected revenue in order to cover some of this expenditure that we are going to incur, given the fact that we have been experiencing higher levels of oil prices and also of natural gas?

The Minister also went through the performance of the economy and that is where my debate will be this evening—tonight—Mr. Speaker. And he looked at the performance of the economy and he painted a rosy picture of the performance of the economy. I do not know if we live in the same country, Minister, because wherever you go, people are complaining. This economy is stagnant. So perhaps, Minister, you did not show exactly what is happening with this economy.

So, Mr. Speaker, I will analyze this economy and show why this economy is stagnant. I will also analyze and show you figures why I cannot support this supplementation—this appropriation of \$2.8 billion and the position it will take us in, Mr. Speaker.

As for the Minister of Sport, all I can say about him is that thank God Dr. Rowley spoke this afternoon because he made the Diego Martin West MP his focal point. That was his speech. So he dumped everything he came with and he focused strictly on the Member of Parliament for Diego Martin West. So I really do not have much to say with respect to him, so I am going to be focusing on the Member—well, the Senator, Minister of Finance and the Economy.

Mr. Speaker, when I look at this appropriation of \$2.8 billion, that is \$2,898,091,400, Mr. Speaker, I cannot help but feel that this is a Government—it demonstrates to me a Government with an insatiable appetite to devour the country's resources. As I examine it more, Mr. Speaker, it reveals to me the Government's lack of ability to plan the country's resources. It reveals a Government, Mr. Speaker, that cannot make up its mind about what they are going to do. It reveals to me that this Government cannot get their budget arithmetic correct, Mr. Speaker. Just eight months ago—and we are coming back here asking for a capital expenditure of some \$389 million and a recurrent expenditure budget of some \$2.5 billion, Mr. Speaker. Something is not right, Mr. Speaker. Something is not right.

Furthermore, I am of the opinion that this Government is on a path of fiscal irresponsibility. It threatens—and this attitude, Mr. Speaker, threatens to destabilize our economy. They seem to be totally oblivious of the external shocks and the internal shocks. They seem to be oblivious of the fact that we are not living in a void by ourselves, that there are international issues we have to look at. They should look at the eurozone and see what is happening: in Greece, in Portugal, in Spain, in France, almost at the brink of financial collapse, and we are pursuing the very, very policies of these governments in the eurozone.

Deficit financing is not bad. I have said it time and time again in this House, Mr. Speaker, but there must be a plan of how you are going to exit. You cannot come—and he told us today; he told us today that—as a matter of fact, he praised these countries. He praised them. He said from Australia to the United States, they are engaged in deficit spending, so because they do it, we can do it too.

Mr. Speaker, I want to ask the Minister a few questions. What is the country's projected gross revenue, given the increased prices in oil and gas? What is it?

We are seeing—I follow the gas prices and the oil prices and we are experiencing higher than normal prices in both oil and gas. How will your projected increased revenue, Sir—and this new level of proposed expenditure—affect the already huge deficit for 2013? And you have answered it partly because you have said that your deficit is now moving from \$7.6 billion up to \$9.2 billion. But the Minister is not telling us how we are going to finance that; how we are going to get out of that.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: He would not be in office.

Miss M. Mc Donald: And as I said, what is the Government's exit strategy, Mr. Speaker? And, Mr. Speaker, you know, as I said, I always count the time—What has happened over the past three years? The Minister in the Ministry of Planning, Member for Couva South, talked about the management of this economy over the last three years. Mr. Speaker, in three years since they have been in office, they have mismanaged this economy and they have destroyed the entrepreneurial spirit in this country, and I will show it and I will demonstrate that when I deal with the banking sector, Mr. Speaker, and show what is happening in the banking sector.

Mr. Speaker, transparency, accountability and good governance have all been thrown aside. This country, Mr. Speaker, is in a total mess, and you all could continue to bury your heads in the sand. [*Desk thumping*]: You could continue to bury your heads in the sand. That is exactly the position we have found ourselves.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: That is right.

Miss M. Mc Donald: Mr. Speaker, on Friday, May 24, there was a celebration of sorts in Chaguanas, their third anniversary. Mr. Speaker—and they were in a celebratory mood. Mr. Speaker, I sat and I waited with bated breath, waiting to hear what are the achievements of this Government; what were they going to say.

Hon. Member: “Nutting, nutting.”

Miss M. Mc Donald: I waited for the Prime Minister, actually, and, Mr. Speaker, she spoke for over one hour—the Prime Minister—and, Mr. Speaker, thank God that Dr. Rowley had come to this Parliament on Monday, May 20 with those emails because, again, the entire speech was all about Dr. Rowley and the emails. Nothing focused on what they had achieved in the past—

Dr. Khan: Point of order, 36(1).

Mr. Speaker: Apart from 36(1), this whole matter, as you know, Member for Port of Spain South, is engaging the attention of a committee, so I do not want us to make reference to emails and so on. Those matters are before another committee, please.

Miss M. Mc Donald: Mr. Speaker, that was *obiter dicta*. I am moving on.

Mr. Speaker, I want to tell this Government that their former Minister said that this country has become a dungeon of despair. And, Mr. Speaker, I can give you the evidence. Three years they have blown \$163 billion. [*Desk thumping*] That is what you have done. Your supplementations totalled \$8.8 billion, \$3.2 billion in 2011, \$2.7 billion in 2012 and now \$2.8 billion in 2013. You have blown \$163 billion.

In three years this Government has racked up a combined deficit of \$17.9 billion. [*Desk thumping*] In three years, Mr. Speaker, squandermania, wanton wastage and overspending, lack of transparency and accountability have become the order of the day. That is what you have done in three years.

In three years, Mr. Speaker, we are witnessing the breakdown and the noncompliance of established rules and regulations in this country. [*Desk thumping*] Mr. Speaker, we have no more principles. We have no more principles, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, the evidence of this wanton wastage and squandermania can be found in the Auditor General's Report of 2012.

Mr. Speaker, and you know what is sad? Nineteen permanent secretaries could not respond to the Auditor General's questions. Mr. Speaker, for 2011 and 2012, overpayments totalled—for the combined years, overpayments totalled \$25,354,000. There was a lack of inventory controls at various Ministries, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, theft in 2012—there were 45 cases of theft and losses of state property totalling \$682,966. Mr. Speaker, under signed contracts, under the Minister of National Security, eight contracts amounting to \$49 million could not have been seen. Under the Ministry of Works and Infrastructure, four contracts amounting to \$6.8 million could not have been seen. The Trinidad and Tobago Police Service, five contracts amounting to \$2.3 million could not have been seen. Under the lease agreement, Mr. Speaker, you have several properties, you could not find not one signed lease agreement for properties, so the rental of three properties totalling on a monthly basis, \$28.6 million! \$28.6 million!

Mr. Speaker, in seven Ministries there were increases in expenditure by more than 50 per cent, from between 2011 and 2012. The Ministry of Sport went from

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\$28.7 million in 2011 to \$395,884,000. Mr. Speaker, a whopping increase of 1,275 per cent. [*Interruption*]

Under the Ministry of Works and Infrastructure, Mr. Speaker, the expenditure went from \$514 million to \$2.4 billion—wanton wastage and squandermania—an increase of 378 per cent.

The Ministry of Transport, a 386 percentage increase. The Ministry of Planning went from \$62.8 million to \$208 million, an increase of—and I am only picking out the big ones, Mr. Speaker—232 percent.

The Ministry of Justice went from \$126 million to \$408: million, a 222 per cent increase. The Ministry of Gender and Youth Affairs went from \$46 million to \$137 million, a 194 per cent increase. The Ministry of Housing, from \$1: billion to \$1.9 billion. It happened to be the least, you know, 90 per cent increase.

So, Mr. Speaker, I ask the Minister a question: Is this country better off—

Hon. Member: No.

Hon. Member: Yes.

Miss M. Mc Donald:—after all these increases? Are the citizens better off, Mr. Speaker? Mr. Speaker, you could walk anywhere and they will tell you, people are suffering. They are suffering. Mr. Speaker, when they come to the constituency office, if it is not job, it is not food—I am sorry the Minister of the People and Social Development was not there because last week when I was in office, I had to call him. People came to my office begging. You know, they had nothing. They cannot get a job; they cannot get a—

Hon. Member: That is how they want them.

Miss M. Mc Donald: And, Mr. Speaker, I have to—I will tell you the truth. I had to call the Minister and ask the Minister to refer these people who were in my office; send them straight down to the Ministry of the People and Social Development to get some assistance. Mr. Speaker, it seems as if, with the increased oil prices and natural gas prices, it is not trickling down. There is a problem! There is a problem, Mr. Speaker!

Mr. Speaker—and I want to highlight something for you. In the office of the Prime Minister—in the OPM—in the appropriation account there was an allowance for 195 persons on contract, totalling \$9.6 million in expenditure and on inspection by the Auditor General, it was indicated that only 55 people were

engaged on contract, with expenditures of \$689,000. So where are the next 140 persons and the \$9 million? Is there a ghost going on in the Prime Minister's office, in that OPM, Mr. Speaker? What happened to that next \$9 million? Where are the 140 persons, all who were paid?

10.55 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, there is one in the Ministry of Transport, a number of inconsistencies there. According to the appropriation, there was a contract employment which cost \$2.4 million, but in response to a question by the Auditor General, the sum paid for contracted employees was \$19.3 million. So, Mr. Speaker, in three years I can tell you that this inept, incompetent and, I want to say, wicked Government has brought hardship to many of the citizens in this country and that is their track record.

For the past three years they joyride all over the globe, their friends, their family and, Mr. Speaker, first-class tickets on CAL. They upgraded their friends and their family. Mr. Speaker, free tickets on CAL airlines to attend a Mother's Day function in North America. All of that and that is the dungeon of despair that this country is facing today. What a better way to describe it. The former Member for Chaguanas West described it properly.

Mr. Speaker, amidst this wanton squandermania, this Government has the audacity to return to this honourable House, just after eight months of presenting a budget of \$58.4 billion for expenditure, to request a further \$2.8 billion. This is nothing else but scandalous and it shows a lack of fiscal discipline.

Mr. Speaker, I want to look at the state of Trinidad and Tobago's economy, and I am doing so through the eyes of the Monetary Policy Report released by the Central Bank as of April 30, 2013. The last time when I did an analysis of the economy, the then Minister of Finance doubted my figures and he berated me in this Parliament. "So yuh doh have CSO figures, so what figures do you use?" However, I do not think that they can scoff now at the Central Bank's figure. They could have done that then because there was a different person sitting as the Governor. There is a new person sitting now as the Governor. So I cannot see them not accepting these figures.

Mr. Speaker, let us look at the GDP, which measures the economic growth of a country. You see, the GDP is the gauge you use to judge your standard of living, and I am going to talk about when the former Government was in office. In the fourth quarter of 2009, GDP grew by 0.08 per cent. It was small, but the economy

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started to turn around. In the first quarter of 2010, GDP grew by 1.9 per cent. That is how we left it. That is how we left it—1.9 per cent. By 2011, GDP decreased by 2.6. You had negative growth of 2.6 per cent, and by the fourth quarter of 2012, Trinidad and Tobago experienced slower economic activity due to the flat output—and we will talk about that, the flat output in the energy sector—and overall for 2012, you had a minuscule growth of 0.2 per cent for 2012.

Mr. Speaker, this Government has been able to muster a 1 per cent growth rate over their three years in office. They have not been able to do that.

Hon. Member: I wonder why?

Miss M. Mc Donald: They projected 2 per cent for 2011; we ended up with negative growth of 2.6 per cent. They projected 1.7 per cent for 2012; we ended up with 0.2 per cent. Now they want us to believe that they can achieve a growth rate of 2.5 per cent in 2013. How are they going to achieve this, Mr. Speaker? And how are they going to achieve it? Let us examine their revenue streams. When you are examining this country's revenue streams, you have to look at—let us look at the energy sector. The energy sector will make up of your natural gas, your oil and your petrochemicals.

Mr. Speaker, real growth is only achieved when the country experiences an increase in actual output or in productivity. We are a gas-based economy, so the expansion of the energy sector is critical to the revenue streams of Trinidad and Tobago. Mr. Speaker, the research will show you that there has been a slowdown in economic activity in Trinidad and Tobago in the fourth quarter of 2012 in the energy sector, and I want to remind the Minister that I am using the Monetary Policy Report as put out by the Central Bank as at April 30, 2013.

Mr. Speaker, let us look at oil production. There was a significant decrease in oil production in the second half of 2012 due to maintenance activities. For the first two months we continued with that slide. So in the first two months of 2013, crude oil production declined by 1.8 per cent when compared to the same period in 2012. So overall, Mr. Speaker, your oil is not doing well. Your production of oil is not doing well. We are down to just about 80,000 barrels and I think the Member for Diego Martin North/East highlighted that fact already.

With respect to our natural gas production, Mr. Speaker, for the first two months of 2012, there was a minuscule increase in natural gas production by 2.8 per cent. However, I want this House to note that there is a programme of maintenance by the two big companies—that is, BG and BPTT—to take place in

September of this year—and this is maintenance work. I will tell you what, Mr. Speaker.

I want to call out some figures here to show you that these major energy companies producing natural gas, they have been reducing, I should say, producing less and less each year. In 2010, BPTT natural gas production was 2,565 MMcf; BG was 1,016. In 2011, 2,565 went to 2,271 MMcf and, in 2012, 2,118; and for BG, they went from 1,016 to 994 to 977. Mr. Speaker, natural gas production is falling.

What has happened in our situation is that the price for gas has gone up and, therefore, that is why the Government revenues could have looked a little better earlier in this, I should say in the first quarter of this year, because the price of gas and the price of oil were over the budgeted figure of the \$75 per barrel in the 2013 budget, and the \$2.75 for the natural gas.

Mr. Speaker, LNG: LNG production increased by 7.9 per cent over the last six months of 2012. However, with respect to NGL, which is your natural gas liquid, that industry continues to decline. With respect to your petrochemicals, the output of the petrochemicals declined by 9.7 per cent during the second half of 2012, and for the period January to February 2013, the decline has continued. Ammonia production has decreased by 4.4 per cent—negative! Urea production decreased by 11.2 per cent. Methanol was the only one that showed some growth of 12.8 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, even the market for iron and steel weakened in 2012. The iron and steel markets have remained uneventful in the first quarter of 2013. Overall, there has been a 5.9 per cent decline in the energy sector despite the small increase in the natural gas production of 2.8 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, we have been hearing about these maintenance activities for the past three years. You know, every time you pick up your book, especially *The Review of the Economy*, when you see natural gas and oil, the prices—not the prices, sorry—production has fallen, what has happened? What did they explain to us? That there is maintenance activities going on. So what is happening? Is there something else more in the mix? Is there something that the Minister has to explain about these maintenance activities in both the oil and natural gas industries? I think we need an explanation because they are just going on and on, and no one has explained this to us.

Mr. Speaker, let us look at the non-energy sector. For 2012, there was a minuscule increase in the non-energy sector by 1.7 per cent in the fourth quarter of 2012. The growth in the non-energy sector has been slow but steady over the

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last six quarters, but this has not been able to compensate for the severe contraction in the energy sector. So, Mr. Speaker, overall, what do we have? We have in the energy sector falling production; we have in the non-energy sector just a minuscule increase. That is what we are facing right now, you know, and that is why our economy is stagnant. The Minister should have come here and explained it, so not only you, Mr. Speaker, and this honourable House, but the national community could understand the predicament that we have ourselves in.

Do you know what is also sad? The Minister has not even explained to us the implication of shale gas. You have not said that, that the United States—and you know, your Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs spoke about that I think, either last week or the week before. I heard him explaining that the United States had just made a discovery of shale gas that could last them for about 200 years or thereabout. So what are we to do?

It means that if they are not purchasing from us—because they are the biggest importer of our natural gas and also the oil—what is going to happen in the light of the fact that America could become self-sufficient? The Minister has not explained that to us. That is a challenge. You have not explained that, and that is coming from your Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs, Sir, not from me.

Mr. Speaker, I want to look at another area, foreign direct investment—which the former Minister of Finance, Mr. Dookeran, spoke of and I quote—the level of investment driving economic growth. So the question is: what has happened with foreign direct investment in Trinidad and Tobago?

Minister Howai, in the 2012/2013 budget, told us that foreign direct investment of US \$879 million—they made that—from 2010 to 2012. That is what he said—it averaged that amount. But, Mr. Speaker, there are two things that are interesting about this Government's net foreign direct investment. The average net foreign direct investment—and I have to compare it by the previous PNM administration for the period 2007 to 2009—was approximately US \$1.25 billion.

Mr. Speaker, what is important—[*Interruption*] Allow me to finish, please. You will have your day, Sir. More importantly, what I want to state, Mr. Speaker, is that our foreign direct investment was produced in the height of an economic crisis. It is a world economic crisis happening and we are still able to muster \$1.25 billion. What is even more interesting again, Mr. Speaker, is the nature of the current Government's net foreign direct investment for 2012, and according to the Monetary Policy Report of April 2013, the net foreign direct investment in 2012 reflects greater re-investments by foreign-owned energy companies.

11.10 p.m.

During the year, net foreign direct investments were directed mainly to the energy sector and source primarily from North America. So what the Central Bank is really telling us, Mr. Speaker, is that for 2012, foreign direct investments were reinvestments in the energy sector, and they did not emanate from new investors. They did not come from new investors.

Mr. Speaker, throw your mind back. Did the Prime Minister not take a contingent of some 100 persons to India in January 2012 to secure foreign direct investment? They spent over \$10 million on the trip. When the Prime Minister returned to Trinidad and Tobago, the hon. Prime Minister boasted of having held something like about 200 meetings and signed over 15 memoranda of understanding. Then, we heard via the media that 10 Indian companies were interested in doing business in Trinidad and Tobago. Mr. Speaker, well, after all that fanfare—

Hon. Member: Not one!

Miss M. Mc Donald: Foreign direct investment in 2012 was primarily sourced from North America. Nothing we got from that trip, Mr. Speaker, spending over \$15 million. Nothing, Mr. Speaker! [*Crosstalk*] All that came here to this Parliament, this came here to this House, from all the different Ministries, it came here. We asked questions, it came here.

Dr. Browne: Begged for the answers.

Miss M. Mc Donald: Mr. Speaker, what about the trip to Brazil seeking foreign direct investment? Nothing has materialized to date, and this is what I am showing you about the wanton squandermania and wastage. How many millions of dollars have been spent on overseas travel, on hotel fees, on clothes, on hairdressing services? And, absolutely nothing to show for it. Nothing!

Mr. Speaker, has this Government ever explained to the national community, the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago, the bungled negotiations with the US \$5 billion SABIC/Sinopec methanol complex deal? Have they ever explained? The answer is no. What about the US \$600 million Russian Severstal iron and steel project resulting in the loss of the project? Have they ever explained that? Have they ever explained that to this House or even to the national community? No, Mr. Speaker. So why does this Government continue to jeopardize our opportunities of having some sort of economic growth? The answer is clear: it is sheer incompetence. [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Member: Yes!

Miss M. Mc Donald: This Government is inept, incapable—

Dr. Browne: Corrupt!

Miss M. Mc Donald:—of generating true economic growth. As I said, true economic growth comes from more production of goods and services, higher productivity. That is how you measure the GDP in any country.

Mr. Speaker, but, can we really blame the Russians and the Indians and whatnot who want to invest in this country when they really take a good look at what is happening in Trinidad and Tobago? The Member for Couva South said that we did not support “when dey come with dey soldier/police Bill”, but which foreign investors would want to see a country they coming to invest here, we are supposed to be a democracy, and we are here militarizing our daily routine. They do not want to see that, Mr. Speaker.

You recall, look at what is happening, people are here looking, embassies here, high commissioners and whatnot looking on, and seeing—in September 2012, I had to take note of it. During the Government’s “Democracy is Alive” programme, there was the former Minister of National Security where he made some comments about reporter Asha Javeed, claiming biased reporting and attempted to smear her name by implying that she—he knew her history.

Mr. Speaker, which foreign direct investors will want to come here when you are there getting phone records of certain journalists? This type of international exposure is harmful to our country. It sends a wrong signal that this Government is strong-arming its citizens for support, and therefore, we ourselves—the Government themselves, they are staving off foreign investors from coming into this country. The Minister must be honest enough to tell us what is happening.

Mr. Speaker, I turn my guns now on the stability in the financial sector. I am concerned about the prospects of our economy, and I am looking at some of the instabilities in our financial system. We look at the significant excess liquidity in the banks. You know, it is characteristic of an economy that has stalled. It shows a lack of confidence in the economy and the Government by the citizens of this country.

Mr. Speaker, again, through the Monetary Policy Report, there is a relatively low credit demand, high net fiscal injections, but what has happened is because of the accumulation of this excess liquidity in the system, the commercial banks’

excess reserves reached \$6 billion in March of 2013 up from \$2.7 billion in October 2012. As a result of that, the Central Bank had to come in with its armory of weapons utilizing its monetary policy and mop up the excess liquidity in the system.

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

Motion made: That the hon. Member's speaking time be extended by 30 minutes. [*Mr. N. Hypolite*]

Question put and agreed to.

Miss M. Mc Donald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Member for Laventille West and thank you Members on the Bench. Mr. Speaker, as I said, the repo rate has fallen to the lowest it has ever been. It is unprecedented. It is at 2.75 per cent, and that is what you call the overnight rate at the Central Bank. That repo rate is also an indicator as to how the interest rate in the market would flow.

So, whenever the repo rate dips, you would see interest rates going down also. When the repo rate goes up, you would see interest rates going up and it being at 2.75—it has been since July 2012, the repo rate is at 2.75 per cent, and this translates into an environment where citizens are earning virtually nothing in the deposits at commercial banks. “Yuh geh 1 per cent, yuh geh 2 per cent.” Look at the repo rate, it will tell you what is happening. That is because of the excess liquidity.

Mr. Speaker, and you look at business loans. The business loans by the commercial banks declined by 0.7 per cent in February 2013 after increasing by 8.2 per cent in the first half of 2012. Why? Because, you see, I am interested in that component of loans because it is via when small business people take loans, they open a business, they employ people, people come in, people buy goods and services, and so it gets the whole chain of events—the economic chain going. So when they decrease and they do not borrow, it sends the wrong signal in the economy.

Mr. Speaker, I turn my attention to unemployment and which is a very—it is a moving target and it is very confusing since this Government is here. “Yuh cyah pin it down at all what is the correct unemployment rate.” So, the figure I have here from the report, in the second quarter of 2012, the rate of employment was 4.9 per cent.

Hon. Member: Ooooh! So much?

Miss M. Mc Donald: Four point nine per cent, Mr. Speaker. I am wondering whether this figure takes into the account all the people who have given up on looking for a job outside there. Does it take into consideration too all those people who are working URP, CEPEP, Colour Me Orange and whatnot? Does it involve those people? I doubt it very much.

What about all the residents? I have to make a plug again for my constituency. What about the residents of East Port: of: Spain? We are still waiting on the restoration of Fort Picton. It was placed in the budget in 2011, it was placed there in 2012, the Minister made mention of it in 2013. “Yuh know what yuh said?” That when this is done, it will create jobs and that tourists will go there in droves, and that there will be a theatre—some sort of theatre, you will support some theatre groups in the area and you will do historical reenactments.

Mr. Speaker, we are still waiting. We are still waiting. That is why I asked about the Picton folk theatre, because I know that will never ever materialize, and so I asked for the Picton folk theatre, because that is what I had started and hoped that you would finish it, and be able to actually get the young people involved in that area—the Picton folk performers, et cetera—to utilize that facility.

Mr. Speaker, I would think that in a budget—and this is for the Government—that when you come here with a budget—

Dr. Moonilal: “This not ah budget!”

Miss M. Mc Donald:—you will come here—[*Crosstalk*] when you come with a budget—I know this is not a budget—[*Crosstalk*] listen good to what I am saying! When you come here with a budget, you will come here with your revenue streams, you will come with your expenditure. Your expenditure could either be capital expenditure or recurrent expenditure. I would expect that you would include as much as possible when you come with a budget. Mr. Speaker, eight months thereafter, to come now with a supplementation, Mr. Speaker, as I said, it is not in keeping with proper practice and good governance.

Let me take a look at the capital expenditure. Capital expenditure is \$380,719,700. These are the things that the Minister brought forward: purchase of vehicles for the police, \$77,500,000—he did not know that in October; President’s roof, \$17 million—he did not know that in October; COSTAATT campus in Chaguanas—they did not know that—\$23.3 million; south campus, UWI, \$80 million—they did not know that either—open campus to Chaguanas, \$9 million; acquisition of four helicopters, \$126 million—they did not know that.

Mr. Speaker, but if you look at the *Public Sector Investment Programme*—that book they will give us at budget time—they are all listed inside of there. They are all listed there. Spending by the central government on their capital programme totalled \$2.4 billion during the first half of fiscal 2013. However, this was below what was actually spent in 2012, so they are spending less. The shortfall in capital expenditure was due to three things: administrative delays, outstanding submission of invoices and delays in the implementation of several projects. Always bear in mind, Mr. Speaker, that the Government is the main driver of employment in this country. The main driver!

Mr. Speaker, of the budgeted capital expenditure of \$7.5 billion for 2013, this Government, after six months into the final year, has spent only 33 per cent in real terms—\$2.4 billion and let me explain this, Mr. Speaker, and I need to quote. Mr. Speaker, the Central Bank has produced a table here.

11.25 p.m.

The Government has \$7.5 billion to spend, capital expenditure, for the year 2013. Up to March, they should have spent at least 50 per cent of it. This is what has happened, they have spent \$2.4 billion. On their housing programme, they were supposed to have spent \$718 million, they spent \$596 million. To build roads and bridges, they were supposed to spend \$695 million, they spent \$142 million. For their early childhood care centres and primary and secondary school modernization programme, they were supposed to spend \$581 million, they have only spent \$64 million.

On the construction of a multi-fuel pipeline and development of new port facilities, they were supposed to spend \$403 million, they spent \$91 million. On the construction of police stations and facilities, they were supposed to spend \$256 million, they spent \$55 million. On the development of lands at Caroni and Orange Grove, \$250 million, \$130 million only spent; construction of hospitals and health centres, they were supposed to spend \$175 million, only \$16 million spent. Construction and upgrading of sporting facilities, they were supposed to spend \$148 million, only \$24 million spent. Establishment of the main campus of UTT Tamana, they were supposed to spend \$75 million, only \$12 million spent. These are your figures from the monetary policy, April 2013.

My concern is here, they are here today seeking the support and approval for \$380 million for capital expenditure. How could you come and ask for more money when “yuh cyah even spend what you have? You cannot even spend.” It is not logical! Mr. Speaker, it does not make any sense. This Government is

contributing to the slowdown in this economy. They are the ones. They are the main protagonists. You have all this money to spend. You were granted this money in the budget in October 2012. You have only spent 33 per cent. You only have three more months in the year to go and you have come back now asking for \$389 million. “Yuh cyah spend what you have, but yuh want more.” What sense does this make? Mr. Speaker, this is incompetence, total incompetence. That is why we cannot support this. We could never sit down here as an Opposition Bench and support this. [*Desk thumping*] We cannot do it.

Mr. Speaker, I look now at my recurrent expenditure and the recurrent expenditure takes in things like your personnel expenditure, which is the big chunk of this; purchase of goods and services; your current transfers and subsidies and your debt financing. Mr. Speaker, when I look at some of the recurrent expenditure, there is a figure there for office accommodation, under personnel department:

Chief personnel officer to meet rent payment for September 30, \$2.9 million; then for the Ministry of National Security, Hoop of Life office, \$1.2 million.

Mr. Speaker, I recall the last Government put up the waterfront project, the Government campus. Do you know what is the purpose of all that? The last Government’s vision was to turn the Government into landlords and not just us being tenants. All this went up because we felt that we reached a time when we should not be paying these types of ludicrous rentals about the place.

Mr. Speaker, I would have thought that this Government, three years in office, could have utilized—this place is underutilized. The buildings here are underutilized. “Dey cyah even finish de Government campus” and we are looking at this type of rentals and the Minister is not here. The Minister of Finance and the Economy should tell us, why is it that these buildings are underutilized and why he is not finishing the Government campus, which will assist in the rentals. That is what it is supposed to do; turn the Government into landlords and move us away from being tenants.

Mr. Speaker, I look at—there is one other I want to talk about here, oh yes—that \$50 million for consultancy services in respect of a restructuring solution for Clico, BAT and HCU. Mr. Speaker, in the public domain, we hear of Clico assets being sold. We hear about private treaties being entered into. So we want to find out what are really the true assets of Clico, the value of Clico, of BAT, of HCU. What has happened to date? If the assets are being sold or commitments made. What is the rationale in the absence of a plan for restructuring?

All in all, because I think that my other colleagues will deal with other areas that I would have left out, I want to state that we do not support this Bill. The Minister of Finance and the Economy has not provided this House with any revenue streams. He has not done so. He has not explained to this House how we are going to deal with the deficit and, worse yet, he has painted a picture that is very rosy and has not dealt with the critical issues in light of a reduced production in natural gas, reduced production in oil, minuscule growth in the non-energy sector, a flat iron and steel industry. Mr. Speaker, we are going nowhere and going very fast and that is why we are stagnant. I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: The Hon. Member for Couva North.

The Minister of State in the Ministry of the Environment and Water Resources (Hon. Ramona Ramdial): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Before I go on to my Ministry and, of course, to justify the appropriation Bill, with respect to the Ministry of the Environment and Water Resources, I just want to respond to some of the Members on the other side. I want to start off by responding to the hon. Member who just spoke. What she failed to mention though, Mr. Speaker, she spoke about the diminishing revenues from our oil and gas sector and what we were going to do to increase revenues and what we were looking at as a Government, in order to increase revenues.

I want to just mention to her that in today's *Express*, of course the *Business Express*, because I know she referred to some of the information from here, there is an article called: Changing trends in the LNG world. Of course, it goes on to mention with the US shale gas and, of course, the competition that we as a small island would be getting and is getting with respect to our sale of our gas as compared to their shale gas. But what she also failed to mention is that there are other markets on the global scene that, of course, would encourage us to trade and, of course, benefit from an increased revenue stream. Of course, that is the Asian markets where we would see an increase in the demand for LNG and, of course, our natural gas.

So, as of right now, our economy here shows that our trading partners, with respect to oil and gas, especially that of natural gas, lie within the US, lie within South America and as a government we are, of course, trying to further encourage trading with our south partners. So we are looking at the South-South cooperation and we are also looking to increase trading with our Asian partners. We would have seen recently with the visit of the Chinese President coming to Trinidad and Tobago—

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Chineese?

Hon. R. Ramdial: The President of the China—Member for Point Fortin. Yes, thank you for that—coming to Trinidad and Tobago, of course, to increase our trading patterns with that of China and our natural gas.

So we have Mr. Norman Christie and Mr. Nigel Darlow, of course, commenting in this article. Mr. Christie is quoted as saying, with that of the trading partners with respect to the Asian markets that this:

“...is good news for Atlantic’s future”—I quote, Mr. Speaker—“in LNG, and as one of the biggest contributors to...GDP while employing a staff 98 per cent local, that’s also good news for the economy.

So what does T&T have to work on to keep riding our LNG high?

The biggest challenge, at least according to the bpTT President Norman Christie is the country’s ability to remain competitive.”

He went on to say:

“T&T is one of the most highly taxed regimes. The government has recognised this and that is why you have seen some of the changes in the new bid rounds, recognising competition.”

He went on to endorse the Government and, of course, the changes that, under the Ministry of Energy and Energy Affairs, we have been embarking upon to remain competitive within the energy markets. That is just one of her statements that I wanted to respond to. So as much as she is preaching doom and gloom for the economy of Trinidad and Tobago—[*Interruption*]

Miss M. Mc Donald: Who is she? She is the cat’s mother.

Hon. R. Ramdial: The Member for—

Mr. Speaker: Port of Spain South.

Hon. R. Ramdial: Port of Spain South.

Miss M. Mc Donald: Thank you.

Hon. R. Ramdial: Yes, Mr. Speaker. So as much as the Member for Port of Spain South is preaching doom and gloom for the country’s revenue stream and all of this, the state of the economy, she has failed to identify that we are also stream with recognizing the changes taking place and, therefore, we are trying to match that and be a little more competitive when it comes to our trading partners. And, of course, to expand our markets, to change our markets eventually, in light of what is taking place.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to respond to the Leader of the Opposition. I know he mentioned earlier—well he analyzed, of course—this new flood mitigation plan for which the Ministry of Environment and Water Resources has asked for a further \$30 million. He mentioned that when he looked at the constituencies being affected and, of course, the work that is going to be done, all of the constituencies highlighted were that of UNC or COP constituencies and none of the PNM-held constituencies.

But I want to correct that and I want it to go on the record to say that these works, when you look at the description of works, you are seeing dredging, desilting and formation of embankments. So, these works that have been identified for these constituencies refer only to these types of works mentioned here. And, therefore, the rivers and, of course, the natural watercourses that flow within the PNM-held constituencies, we have identified, through the Drainage Division that the description of works mentioned for the \$30 million budget does not pertain to these rivers and natural watercourses which are located in the PNM-held constituencies.

I want to go on further to say that structural works and concrete works are what are identified for these rivers, especially in Diego Martin and that of Malick and Morvant and other areas. And, therefore, to get these works done at these particular rivers and natural watercourses, these works will have to go through the company of Nidco and, therefore that is another plan under the Drainage Division where we are going, of course, to go out for contractors in order to get these works done. So the description of works is really what is in question here and I want to correct that.

Also, of course, I mentioned earlier that, through the maintenance of rivers and natural watercourses, under the Ministry of the Environment and Water Resources, we also have a limit. There is a limit under which the Permanent Secretaries of any Ministry can spend and we have been utilizing that method also for maintenance work, with respect to our rivers and natural watercourses. That was just one aspect under the Appropriation Bill that I wanted to correct.

We have sat here all evening into the night and we have listened to the Opposition Members speak about discrimination and speak about inequality of distribution of resources to their constituencies. But I want to remind them and I never get tired of saying it, that for nine years they were in government and they practised something very, very similar, or if not, because our Government, however, we have shown evidence that—[*Interruption and crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker, can I beg your protection, please? Because I am trying to make a point here and they are being very disrespectful.

11.40 p.m.

Mr. Speaker: All right. You have my full protection, continue.

Hon. R. Ramdial: Yes. I was alluding to their assumptions that we were behaving in a way which showed that there was an inequality with respect to the distribution of resources to their constituencies. I was also saying that when they were in government, they practised that. So I do not know what they are trying to do, if they are trying to superimpose their practices on this new Government. And, therefore, I want to say that we have shown via evidence, where we have distributed our resources equally or equitably as best as we can throughout the country of Trinidad and Tobago.

I have mentioned many times here, when I make my contribution, that in the PNM-held areas, we have done a lot of work under WASA. We have done a lot of work under the Ministry of Works and Infrastructure. We have done roads and bridges under local government. We have opened some community centres that they spoke of under this People's Partnership Government. We introduced a lot of programmes and policies with respect to the crime-fighting initiatives in these high-risk areas, and not only in the PNM-held areas, also in the Partnership-held areas, where there are high-risk crime areas. We have gone in and introduced programmes and policies that would assist with crime fighting.

So, Mr. Speaker, I really do not want to dwell too much on what we have done as a Government, because the evidence is there, it is out there. [*Laughter and crosstalk*] The information is there and as much as they may sit and laugh about it, they know for themselves that they have gotten resources.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Not at all!

Hon. R. Ramdial: I want to make reference to my good friend from La Brea, the Member of Parliament for La Brea. Well, this evening he mentioned that he needed a particular river and he needed some natural watercourses cleaned and there was flooding experienced. But what he failed to mention in this House is that about three days ago he got a call from the Drainage Division because he forwarded the information to me, and he did receive a call asking about his area, and asking him to go on a field trip to look at it. [*Crosstalk*]

No, but you see, Mr. Speaker, this is what the Opposition fails to realize: there is a process that has to be followed. [*Crosstalk*] You are an MP, we give you the respect as an MP. You tell us you have a problem in your constituency with

flooding. Of course, I as Minister of State in the Ministry of the Environment and Water Resources—of course, we are very much into trying to alleviate flooding, and what is happening here is that you have the technical people from the Drainage Division calling the goodly MP and, of course, he has the audacity to stand in this Parliament, in this House and say, you know, flooding is not being attended to in La Brea, and nothing is happening and all of that. But, the process has started.

I want to assure the Member that we will do all that we can—within our power—at the Drainage Division to ensure that we try to assist with the problem and to solve the flooding problem in La Brea. We are doing the same in Point Fortin, we have gone down there. We have looked at the river. You may not know and you may know or you may not want to admit it, but at the end of the day we are trying to assist our colleagues both—even in the Opposition—

Hon. Member: “Yuh pass by East Dry River?”

Hon. R. Ramdial:—that we will come to that. I know today the goodly Member for Laventille East/Morvant forwarded to me some information with respect to her areas, and we will be addressing that. So it is very unfair for the Opposition Members to come here and stand and say we are doing nothing, and we are getting nothing and all of that.

Dr. Browne: You are not doing enough.

Hon. R. Ramdial: We are not doing enough? Okay. It is a new thing now, Mr. Speaker, we are not doing enough. At the end of the day we have limited resources, there is a lot to spread around, in light of the nine years that the PNM governed this country, and the resources were not utilized in the form or fashion that they are now asking for it, because they have known that we have been suffering from a flooding problem for many, many years in Trinidad and Tobago and all parts of our country; they have known this.

The previous—well, the Member of Parliament for Diego Martin North/East sat as Minister of Works for nine—for what, three years, four years? [*Crosstalk*—and he knew of the flooding. Drainage Division was there, he was Minister, what happened? What happened? [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. Member: Jack said he would stop flooding.

Hon. R. Ramdial: You know, and I want to ask that—and I will give way for the Member to respond and to ask him what happened under his tenure as Minister? [*Crosstalk*] Will you—sure.

Mr. Imbert: I was replaced by a fella called Jack Warner. [*Laughter, crosstalk and desk thumping*]

Hon. R. Ramdial: Oh, come on. All right, Mr. Speaker, I will not give way again because that was a very foolish answer; foolish answer. [*Crosstalk*] But this is the point I am trying to make, so when you put the light on them and you ask them what they did under their term in Government for flooding, and for roads and for bridges, they cannot respond. At the same time I want to say we are not of that ilk.

Hon. Member: Ask Jack Warner.

Hon. R. Ramdial: We are not of that cloth, and what is happening here is that we have come into power, the People's Partnership took power in 2010 and we have tried, and we have even succeeded in distributing the resources to alleviate problems throughout Trinidad and Tobago in many forms and fashions.

So what is happening here is that this is just Opposition politics as far as I see it. It is all about branding the People's Partnership Government as bad, as not doing what they are supposed to do, a stagnant economy, you name it, the Opposition politics is at play here. In my last contribution when I got up I spoke about creating a media bias in their favour, a political bias, and a media bias.

Dr. Browne: What?

Hon. R. Ramdial: So they come and they stand here and "dey drop a bomb" as they like to call it. Or "dey buss ah mark" as they call it, and then you know, it is all about swaying support from the public for them. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker, I want to go on to highlight some of their mistakes during their term in Government because they like—I know the Member for Port of Spain South got up and highlighted a list of things that she thought that this Government is responsible for. I just want to mention a couple of theirs. The Leader of the Opposition, of course, in 2009 when he was a backbencher and I want to quote him. He said that:

The Calder Hart/UDeCOTT feeding frenzy is 10 times worse than that of Piarco.

And, of course he also mentioned that:

The PNM presided over two oil and gas booms and where did all that money and resources go?

And that is something we have to ask ourselves as a nation.

We also would have endured during their term in office the Tarouba fiasco. What happened to that? What happened to the money spent in Tarouba and, of course, we have a hanging stadium; the e TecK and Bamboo Networks over US \$5 million wasted; the GTL project which cost over TT \$2.7 billion; cost overruns of \$50 million, \$128 million, \$64 million, \$156 million on the Orchard Gardens, Corinth Hills, East Grove and Green Vale Housing projects. What became of them?

Mr. Speaker, the national street-lighting project where \$6 million was spent to purchase some parts that were never accounted for; the Broadgate scandal of \$1 billion; \$35 million spent to repair a \$120 million vessel, the *HSV Su*; the Clico scandal where \$20 million was given to the PNM for the 2007 election campaign. What about that? The \$45 million scholarship programme which was termed to be a PNM slush fund, what about that? The six fast-patrol vessels which the PNM bought from Australia from the ship builder Austal for \$400 million and which have failed to function properly since handed over to the coastguard in 2010. What became of that? The \$21 million to international firm Parsons Brinckerhoff for a transport study and no study was done; the rapid rail for over 500 million for a feasibility study that is still packed up in a box, I am told. What about the \$110-million share controversy with Home Mortgage Bank and Stone Street Capital? And, of course, it included the PNM former general secretary.

So all of these things, Mr. Speaker, during their term in office and then they come here and they try to broad-brush us with the same type of things. So at the end of the day what I want to really say here is that the Opposition, PNM will do all it can in its power—because they are in Opposition—to even malign the good work that we are doing as a Government.

As a Member of Parliament and all my other Member of Parliament colleagues here and even the Opposition Members of Parliament, I am sure that we all work hard, they all work hard to represent effectively, and at the end of the day what really matters? What really matters? What matters is, of course, how well you are able to represent to, of course, uplift the standard of living of your constituents, and that comes in various forms. It may be paving of a road, it may be box drains to alleviate flooding, it may be social programmes to assist young people, it may be gender programmes to assist our women and our men, but at the end of the day, Mr. Speaker, this is where the country's resources have to go, and this is what is happening under this Government.

I think that the Opposition is somewhat blind if they do not see what is happening. At the end of the day, of course, they are all operating within their

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purview as an Opposition, this is what they have to do; this is their job. They, of course, have to do everything they can to make the Government look bad. But I want to say, Mr. Speaker, that the evidence is out there of the good work that is happening.

I want to make reference to this morning at the TIC opening at the Hyatt, right next door. I want to commend Minister Bharath for doing a really, really good job with respect to the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Investment. I remember him saying this morning that where it was before, it took at least three months and, of course, a lot of bureaucracy for businesses and for our partners from other countries to come and invest in Trinidad and Tobago. Now, they have come up with a system called invesTT, where a maximum of three days is all that it takes now for someone to come and set up shop in Trinidad and Tobago. I want to say that this is something very, very, positive for the economic growth of our country.

At the end of the day you need to provide the enabling environment; you need as a Government to provide the structures and the systems in place that will lend to the development of your country. I think that through the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Investment—because you know the Opposition MPs, they always get up and talk about, you know, you talk about growing the economy. How are you growing the economy? Where are the investments and all of that, but it has to start somewhere. So, we are investing now to set up structures and systems where in the long term and in the long run you will see the benefit of this.

And I am sure that we are going to have a lot of businesses now from the Caribbean region, from South America—of course, South and Latin America. You are going to have the Asian countries coming in to invest in Trinidad and Tobago, because we all know of the frustrations of trying to set up shop in Trinidad and Tobago. I think today really and truly when the Minister spoke about it, I am proud to say that the People's Partnership Government has found a remedy to that, and this is something that we need to be proud of, Mr. Speaker.

In addition to that, we all know that in all other Ministries there is expenditure. In some Ministries, those delivery Ministries, like the Ministry of Works and Infrastructure, the Ministry of Local Government, Ministry of the Environment and Water Resources, Ministry of Health, there is high expenditure because this is something where the goods and services have to trickle down to the individual citizen and, therefore, the demand for the financial wherewithal is, of course, where it lies.

The Ministry of Finance and the Economy, Mr. Speaker, in an economic climate—and you would have heard the Minister of Finance and the Economy

speak about it earlier—of course, where it is you have had little or no growth in the European continent and, of course, you look at America and all of that, we are really, really fortunate to be a resource-rich country where it is that at least we can boast and say, we have a sustainable stream of revenue coming in.

At the end of the day we do not want to jeopardize this. We do not want to jeopardize this at all, Mr. Speaker. And as much as the Opposition has shown its surprise with respect to the amounts of money that we have come to ask for in this Appropriation Bill, one has to realize when one looks at our projected plan for the country and our projects, it is, of course, justified.

Therefore, you know I want to say that—especially under the Ministry of the Environment and Water Resources—when you look at WASA and the operations of WASA, you would see that from 2010 till now, we have been expanding the water grid in Trinidad and Tobago. So we have looked at rural areas, we have looked at areas where there was no pipe-borne supply of water, and we have decided to expand the water grid in these areas and provide a pipe-borne supply of water to these rural areas.

We have also been privy to an IDB loan and I know that all of my colleagues would know about this, and where it is that we have been able to acquire a loan in order to set up the waste water treatment plants in Trinidad and Tobago. Everybody knows that the water sector is very, very important. You know we depend on water, it is a vital resource, it is a basic amenity and it is an amenity where all of our population depend upon, you know, and we are looking at WASA to see how we can strengthen its operations. We have started doing so; our customer services have been upgraded. When you look at the scope of works and, of course, the planned division for WASA in the future, it is all about at least achieving by 2015, a 90 per cent, or 95 per cent water supply—pipe-borne supply of water to every household.

Mr. Speaker, as an MP, and all of our MPs will attest to this, even the Opposition MPs, they have sent requests to WASA asking for water projects in many various areas. We have gone into the Diego Martin area and spent at least \$21 million to date on water projects. I remember the Leader of the Opposition getting up and speaking of an area in his constituency and, of course, under his Government it was never delivered, but under the People's Partnership Government we were able to deliver that water project in that area.

Dr. Browne: What area is that?

Hon. R. Ramdial: I cannot remember right now, but I mentioned it earlier. It is on the *Hansard*. You can refer to the *Hansard*. But at the end of the day these

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are the things that this Government has come to Parliament to ask for, these moneys, and this is where it is going to go. It is going to go into roads and drainage, water, lights, health, education and it is all about really uplifting the lives of the citizenry of Trinidad and Tobago. At the end of the day when politics comes into the mix, and the Opposition politics is in the mix, nothing that we can ever do or say is ever good.

Mr. Speaker, I want to—through Parliament and through you and I know that, you know, this is broadcast nationally and internationally—that let us not take on the Opposition, you know. Let us not take on the Opposition.

Hon. Members: Ohhhh! [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. R. Ramdial: Let us not listen to their diatribe. Let us not be fooled—

Dr. Browne: “Nah, nah, nah.”

Miss Mc Donald: Mr. Speaker, Standing Order 36(5), we are not talking diatribe here, come on.

Mr. Speaker: I want to say Standing Order 36(5) is relevant here, but you could use more elegant language to describe it.

Hon. R. Ramdial: Okay. I take that back, Mr. Speaker, but the other word that I would use to describe it is their “discourse”, over and over that we hear in this Parliament when we come, about all the bad things that they think that we are doing, the alleged corruption and all of that. At the end of the day I want to say that the requests for these moneys are all for viable projects that would assist in uplifting the lives of our constituents, even the Opposition and their constituencies it will be channelled into also. I do not want the population to be misled into thinking there is an unequal distribution of resources. [*Interruption*] No, that is not true. That is not true. [*Crosstalk and laughter*] At the end of the day, as I said, the Opposition politics come into play.

As the Member of Parliament for Couva North and I have said it many times here, going into—as a Member of Parliament, there was a lot of neglect, and it is not even a rural constituency.

Hon. Member: Basdeo Panday!

Hon. R. Ramdial: It can be identified as a suburban area, and at end of the day, they were in Opposition, you were in Government. I am sure that they came to Parliament and they asked for the same resources—

Dr. Khan: All the time.

Hon. R. Ramdial:—that you are now asking for. So what made them different? You see, Mr. Speaker, at the end of the day they would justify their actions. They would always try to justify their actions but it is, of course, not an action that the People's Partnership Government subscribes to. And, therefore, in the constituency of Couva North we have been able to get water, we have been able to get lights in recreational areas, we have been able to open community centres that the PNM-led Government in their term of office ignored. I speak of the Roystonia Community Centre, for 12 years it laid as a white elephant in Roystonia, in Couva, unopened, falling apart, vandalized, and I heard one of the Members earlier on this side came and spoke of schools and community centres that have not been opened.

So, you know, at the end of the day, Mr. Speaker, we opened that community centre in Roystonia, and now the residents of Roystonia are very happy, they come to the community centre and they utilize it as much as they can.

12 midnight

And we have seen that happening. We have refurbished community centres all across Trinidad and Tobago. We have paved roads, built bridges, distributed water, given lights to recreational areas, upgraded sporting grounds under the Ministry of Sport—

Mr. Imbert: Only in Couva.

Hon. R. Ramdial: No, no, I am speaking across the country, Mr. Speaker. I want to say something, though, Mr. Speaker. You need to have proactive representatives. At the end of the day, you will have an MP—

Dr. Browne: Panday was not proactive.

Hon. R. Ramdial: Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Yes, you have my protection.

Hon. R. Ramdial: Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Diego Martin Central, allow the Member to speak! Continue!

Hon. R. Ramdial: At the end of the day, you have MPs, they go to their constituencies on a daily—not a daily, but on a weekly basis. You have some who go daily and they are able to listen to the complaints on the ground. Listening to the Member for Port of Spain South, she was saying, you know, that people all over the country are saying that things are bad, things are going downhill, what is happening; but when you look at the real meat of this whole thing, when you go

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down on the ground, people are asking for more because they are getting and they are asking for more. They are saying, “Well, you know, MP this road was fixed and this river was fixed and what is going to happen to the other one? When are you all coming to do that?”

In the Opposition areas, it is the same because I get calls from some of the Opposition-led areas and, Mr. Speaker, I am being very honest here when I speak. I speak about WASA and I speak from experience in drainage and in WASA. They call me and they say, “Well, you know, the water project was completed in this area, what is going to happen to this area? And we are able to give answers because we, of course, know where we are heading.

Dr. Browne: You are misleading.

Hon. R. Ramdial: At the end of the day, Mr. Speaker, national development comes in many various forms and I want to say that this People’s Partnership Government is doing a wonderful job—

Mr. Imbert: Ha!

Hon. R. Ramdial: Yes, a very, very good job. People on the ground—I mean, there are always going to be challenges. There is always going to be a part of the population who are never satisfied and, of course, who will want.

Hon. Member: That is the PNM people.

Hon. R. Ramdial: And at the end of the day, Mr. Speaker, I think that this Appropriation Bill is justified in terms of the request for moneys for the various Ministries. At the end of day, it is all about further development and I want to, of course, endorse the Minister of Finance and the Economy in his Appropriation Bill and his request to get support to move ahead with this. Mr. Speaker, I thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for—Before you speak, I want to serve notice that, in 15 minutes’ time, we shall suspend for 25 minutes and then return.

The hon. Member for Laventille East/Morvant.

Miss Donna Cox (Laventille East/Morvant): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am delighted to join this debate on the supplementation of the appropriation for fiscal 2013. Mr. Speaker, but before I move on, the Member of Parliament for Couva North—I think that the Member of Parliament, before she started, she really should have said “Once upon a time...” [*Desk thumping and laughter*] Mr. Speaker, that is all I would say pertaining to what was said today.

Mr. Speaker, this measure seeks to provide for the supplementary funding amounting to \$2,898,091,400. Put differently, Mr. Speaker, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago is seeking to augment its expenditure by a further \$2.9 billion. And why? According to the documentation provided, it says that this money is required to fund urgent and critical recurrent and capital expenditure to September 30, 2013 in areas where insufficient or no allocation was provided.

Mr. Speaker, if ever there was an admission of incompetence by a Government, this is it. You see, just a few months ago, we had in this honourable House the presentation by the Minister of Finance and the Economy, a national budget.

You will no doubt recall, Mr. Speaker, that throughout his presentation he used terms like, I quote:

It will be taken in consultation with the affected stakeholders.

End of quote. I quote again:

After consultation with relevant and affected stakeholders, I intend to obtain additional financing.

So the common theme throughout his presentation was consultation with relevant stakeholders. So, today, the Minister comes to the House and it is abundantly clear that proper consultation did not take place. How then can one explain that the mid-year review of the *Public Sector Investment Programme*, which was conducted by the Ministry of Finance and the Economy in collaboration with other Ministries and Departments, was in fact the catalyst which forced the Minister to come to Parliament to authorize this increase in spending?

So, Mr. Speaker, let me put this matter before us today in some perspective. I wish to refer to my contribution to the budget debate. I recall telling the Minister of Finance and the Economy—and I was not alone on this side of the House—that this Government, in three years, would have spent what PNM took six years to spend and that, in its fourth year, they would have spent what PNM took eight years to spend.

Mr. Speaker, I may have to revise my forecast and reduce the time frame to three and a half years. You see, Mr. Speaker, this is the third time in less than a year that this Minister has come to this Parliament seeking to increase his expenses. Not too long ago, in the month of January 2010, there was the Finance (Supplementation and Variation of Appropriation (Financial Year 2012) which provided for an increase totalling \$3.4 billion, although this was partially offset by some reductions of \$1.8 billion.

Mr. Speaker, bearing in mind that the 2012/2013 budget, which had totalled a whopping \$61.4 billion—the largest expenditure budget in the history of Trinidad and Tobago—and there were fears about the absorptive capacity of this country to accommodate expenditure of this order of magnitude, any move to encourage or impose greater levels of expenditure on the population of this country could only mean that we have recklessly begun our trip on that slippery slope.

When one examines the breakdown of the increases being sought, I am convinced—and I understand my colleague from La Brea spoke about the money allocated to the Ministry of Local Government—that the timing of this proposal is driven by a strong, political undercurrent. I would like to see a breakdown of the intended expenditure for the Ministry of Local Government, which received \$257 million, representing almost 10 per cent of the overall allocation. How come? Is it because we are on the eve of local government elections? Mr. Speaker, no matter how they dice it, or how they disguise it, that political objective is vividly exposed for all to see.

Mr. Speaker, this UNC-led coalition government campaigned and made many promises to the people of Trinidad and Tobago. As we can now see there is a deafening silence concerning their implementation of most of their promises. They promised to solve crime. Crime was supposed to be a thing of the past. What is the situation now?

Crime continues to escalate and the murder toll for the year is now 168. Two weeks ago, there were seven murders in four days. Last week, there were four murders and this Government continues to tell the citizenry of Trinidad and Tobago that crime is on the decline. All of a sudden, since they came into office, they are categorizing crime.

Mr. Speaker, the number of homicides in a country is what people look at when they judge the increase or decrease in criminal activities in a country. People are being murdered on a daily basis. There are many other criminal acts, which are not reported in the media, yet the Prime Minister recently stated that serious crime is down by 36 per cent and we would like to get the proof of that.

Statistics are subjected to manipulation and the Government must say how they arrived at a 36 per cent reduction in crime, in serious crime. A reduction in serious crime always occurs in tandem with reductions in homicides and, Mr. Speaker, they must face the fact that they have failed to arrest the crime situation in Trinidad and Tobago.

I will move to some statistics. Mr. Speaker, from January 01 to May 12, 2013, the crime statistics are as follows: Murders were 138. Note, two months later, the murder toll is 168. May 12, the murder toll was 138. We are on July 12, it is now 168.

Hon. Member: June 12.

12.10 a.m.

Miss D. Cox: June 12, it is now 168.

Hon. Member: One month.

Miss D. Cox: It is one month, yes, one month from May to June. Woundings and shootings was 165; rape, incest and other sexual offences, 162; burglaries and break-ins, 957. So, do these statistics sound like something to boast about Mr. Speaker?—because for the period January to April 2013, the murder rate was 119 for the same period last year, and this year it is 124. So, there is just a difference of five murders.

The Commissioner of Police recently stated that the country is facing a massive crime challenge. On the other hand, the Deputy Commissioner of Police is saying that Trinidad and Tobago does not have a massive crime problem. The Government, along with the police, is saying that there is a 36 per cent reduction in serious crime. So, Mr. Speaker, could someone tell me what is the real story here. If crime is on the decrease, as they say, then why is there a need for 2,500 SRPs and 317 new vehicles, which I see is in the allocation?

The sanctioned strength of the police service is 7,715, and I would like to know where these officers are. Imagine a small country like Trinidad and Tobago has 188 hot spots, and what is the Government doing about this, except to make “soldier/police” to arrest the crime situation in hot spot areas?

So, Mr. Speaker, the Government has failed in the area of national security—
[*Desk thumping*]

Dr. Browne: Correct!

Miss D. Cox:—and the detection rate of the police service is less than 10 per cent. [*Desk thumping*] And this has been going downwards instead of upwards. This low detection rate suggests that many criminals are escaping justice, and the Government must take full responsibility for this.

Mr. Speaker, the higher the detection rate in a country the lower the crime,

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and this is one area the Government should be placing emphasis on, instead of jumping on the bandwagon to boast that there is a reduction in crime with no empirical evidence to show.

I must talk about the dismantling of SAUTT and the grounding of the blimp and the cancellation of the OPVs which, of course, would have assisted in our crime situation. With a crime detection rate below 10 per cent, of course, the confidence of the population is at an all-time low and it is, of course, low and there is no confidence in this UNC-led coalition Government with regard to their handling of the crime situation.

Mr. Speaker, they continue to make up as they go along with regard to crime. Every day they come up with a new crime-fighting strategy. I see an allocation for new vehicles in the police service. Since there is supposed to be a shortage, I would just like to refer to this area with this allocation. Mr. Speaker, I would just like to ask a few questions. Does the Government understand that the police service cannot continue to purchase vehicles meant for civilian use and use them as police vehicles? Does the Government intend to use the established approach of the joint VMCOTT Ministry of Works and Infrastructure and the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service to directly procure vehicles at a greatly reduced price?

Mr. Speaker, as the road carnage continues to increase can the Government tell the country what has happened to the 50 purpose-built vehicles that were to be used by the traffic branch? Can the Government verify, through its acting Commissioner of Police, if some of the vehicles which were meant to be patrolling the nation's highways are, in fact, being used to deliver mail?

Hon. Member: What!

Miss D. Cox: You see, because Mr. Speaker, police service vehicles must be specifically designed and built for police operations. They have more robust suspensions, stronger front ends, more powerful engines and sturdier materials used. Mr. Speaker, civilian vehicles are not designed for the rigours, and they do not hold up as purpose-built vehicles, and this is what should be done. [*Desk thumping*] I am not seeing where this is happening. I mean, you just cannot go to Neal & Massy or go and just buy a fleet of vehicles; you are actually supposed to buy purpose-built vehicles for the police service.

I have another suggestion, Mr. Speaker. In the meantime, as there is a shortage of vehicles, I would like to suggest that the hon. Prime Minister release all the government vehicles which her [*Desk thumping*] Ministers—

Hon. Member: Yes.

Miss D. Cox:—have at their disposal for them and their families to ride and drive up and down Trinidad and Tobago. These vehicles were bought for the summit and were to be released to the protective services. Actually some were released to the protective services and Ministries—but not to be used by—Ministry officials and public servants—Government Ministers, who are in receipt of tax-free loans and travelling allowances and should, therefore, be using their personal vehicles.

Mr. Speaker, these vehicles are being used, of course, maintenance and fuel free by Government Ministers, and taxpayers now have to fork out \$77,500,000 for the purchase of vehicles and equipment for the police service. As I speak about equipment, I would like the Minister of Finance and the Economy to tell us—under this allocation, what equipment? You just have equipment. I would like to know what equipment is to be bought for the police service.

Mr. Speaker: Hon Members, at this time, I would like to suspend and we shall resume 12.40 a.m.

Miss D. Cox: Twelve what?

Mr. Speaker: At 12.40; twenty minutes to one.

Miss D. Cox: Okay.

12.17 a.m.: *Sitting suspended.*

12.40 a.m.: *Sitting resumed.*

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Laventille East/Morvant.

Miss D. Cox: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As I continue, Mr. Speaker, I would like the Government to investigate the recent scandalous exercise pertaining to the promotion of sergeants to inspectors in the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service. I hope there is money allocated for all the sergeants who are now supposed to be inspectors.

Mr. Speaker, there appears to have been some irregularities in the recent promotion exercise involving the promotion of sergeants to inspectors. Many sergeants claimed that they were bypassed for promotion and they were concerned about the procedure used to select officers who were promoted. Mr. Speaker, the officers complained that there was a change in the marking system used and they were not informed about this. I was informed that when they took their complaint to the acting Commissioner of Police they were told, they could take him to court if they want. Mr. Speaker, these words sound very familiar.

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The Government of Trinidad and Tobago, Mr. Speaker, needs to get a grip on what is happening in the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service with regard to promotion. These promotional issues will serve to further demoralize the police officers because imagine junior sergeants were promoted above senior ones, and they are now strutting around in khaki while the other sergeants who should have been promoted have to accept that.

Dr. Rambachan: Was it merit?

Miss D. Cox: It is both merit and—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: They had an examination.

Miss D. Cox: Both, yes. There was a problem with the marking system. They changed the system and they were not informed about it. So, Mr. Speaker, this is, indeed, unfair to them, and I ask the Government to address this situation as soon as possible.

I want to quote from the *Trinidad Express* dated December 22, 2012 and the headline is: “Promotions like a ‘thief in the night’”. This is in reference to what I am speaking about. It reads and I quote:

“It is unacceptable for acting Police Commissioner Stephen Williams to promote police officers like a ‘thief in the night’, president of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service Social Welfare Association...Sgt Anand Ramesar...said.

Ramesar made the statement yesterday in reference to a ceremony on Wednesday when 51 sergeants were promoted to the rank of inspector.

Ramesar said the promotion ceremony was done without an order of merit list being provided.”

12.45 a.m.

So, Mr. Speaker, this is something that I feel that the Government should be looking at, seeing that there has been money allocated for the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service. As a matter of fact, I think it is six hundred and sixty-something million dollars, and I feel that the Minister of Finance and the Economy may have to be looking for money soon for these sergeants who were supposed to be inspectors.

What is the status of the 21st Century Policing Initiative? I have not heard anything about it since Gibbs was ran out of town.

Dr. Rambachan: “He gone to Canada.”

Miss D. Cox: The Minister of Finance and the Economy spoke about this initiative in the 2012 budget statement, so I am just asking. I would like to get an update on the 21st Century Policing Initiative. What is the status?

I move to something concerning prisons, Mr. Speaker. With regards to the prison service, the prison officers are concerned that officials of the Service Commission and the Director of Personnel Administration department are being—well, I cannot use the word “bully”, but “rattled” by a senior Government Minister to promote three persons to the rank of Assistant Superintendent of Prisons. Mr. Speaker, examinations for this position, the position of Assistant Superintendent of Prisons, took place late last year and the results are not out as yet. The prison officers are asking why is this senior Government Minister pushing for promotion in this position to take place now.

The merit list for the post of Assistant Superintendent of Prisons has expired; new assessments and examinations results are due. So, Mr. Speaker, the prison official said that the three officers—one of those three officers, Pragg, was represented by the hon. Attorney General in the past, and these officers are Ramoutar, Pragg and Lutchman. Many prison officials are claiming that the prison service is doomed to suffer because there are some Government officials making statements about the prison service. Mr. Speaker, if this information is correct, then I think that the Government needs to look at this. Okay, Minister?

Hon. Member: Yeah, we will look at it.

Miss D. Cox: I expect that the prison service would be given the necessary resources to carry out their duties, and I would like to get an update on the new scanners. I do not know if this was already budgeted for or if it is here, but I heard a talk about scanners for the prisons, and I would like to know if this is within these allocations.

Under Trinidad and Tobago, service Head 64:0200122, “Short-term Employment”, I see where SAUTT is featured under this heading, and why are SAUTT officers on short-term employment? I would like the Minister of Finance and the Economy to tell me: why are SAUTT officers on short-term employment? Because, Mr. Speaker, many of these officers are ex-policemen and members of the defence force who resigned their jobs and joined SAUTT, and some of them were made special reserve policemen.

Many of the officers are owed money by this Government, and they left their jobs and went straight into SAUTT without taking their leave and they were

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promised payment for all their leave. This has not materialized to date. So, Mr. Speaker, many of them are waiting on their ex gratia payments, and these officers were promised the same salary that they were receiving in SAUTT as they are now working alongside police officers and some of them in high-risk areas.

My understanding is those who are attached to the gang unit, air operations and the SSA or SIA have been receiving their same salary, but those who are on the beat with the police are receiving half their salary. Their salaries were cut in half. On top of this they are not entitled to overtime as they are special reserve policemen. So, Mr. Speaker, why is the Government taking advantage of SAUTT personnel? Many of them cannot afford to make ends meet because of the cut in their salaries and no overtime. What is the Government beef with SAUTT?

I would like the Minister to explain the Government's position on this because many of these SAUTT officers have families to take care of and this behaviour is indeed heartless. So, "Mister Minister of Finance" I would just like to know that the money allocated for SAUTT, I would like to know what this money is for. Well my colleagues spoke about the fire service, and spoke about the \$6.8 million wreck, and, Mr. Speaker, I just want to state concerning the fire service, I just would like to know—no, I will deal with something else first.

It is sad that in the year 2013 the Fire Service Association has to pen a letter of complaint with regards to discrimination against women in the Trinidad and Tobago Fire Service. It is indeed sad. I was informed that the present acting Chief Fire Officer gave a mandate to a committee to conduct an evaluation exercise, analyzing the status of women in the fire service.

Mr. Speaker, there is a belief in the fire service that there is an attempt to restrict the future intake of women in the service. Why did the fire service officers not receive their salaries at the end of April? I do not know if it was a problem, if the Minister of Finance and the Economy could tell me why the fire officers did not receive their salaries at the time, the end of April. The Government of Trinidad and Tobago must ensure that our public officials are treated better than that, because I understand there was no explanation or notice given beforehand that their salaries would have been late.

Hon. Member: "Dey run out of gas in their car to go—[Inaudible]"

Miss D. Cox: The officers of the fire service are still struggling to receive their acting allowances on time, so the Government needs to look into the concerns of the firefighters.

My colleague from Diego Martin North/East spoke about the vehicle that was wrecked on November 12 last year, so I would not go into detail about it, but I

just would like to say that the Government is today seeking to approve additional money in various Ministries, and I can understand why because, clearly, the public purse is being mismanaged and certain people are riding the backs of hard-working taxpayers.

Mr. Speaker, we need an explanation concerning the expenditure related to that fire tanker. How could the Prime Minister be now putting measures in place where this type of expenditure is concerned? This should have been done from day one. They are now attempting to close the stable after the horse has bolted. Why would a water tender, which after seven years and depreciated at the extent that the present value is around \$600,000, be hastily wrecked? Yes, hastily wrecked, Mr. Speaker, because that water tender was purchased in 2006, and I understand that there was a haste and hush-hush behaviour surrounding the removal of the water tender which was hastily removed two days later.

As the Minister of Finance and the Economy coming from the banking sector, I am sure that you are aware that the banks do not let go of its money just so. If you want a loan you have to satisfy certain requirements. Well, what happen now? Taxpayers' money is not a free for all, and I just want to urge this Government to be careful how they spend taxpayers' money. Mr. Speaker, we understand that the Chief Fire Officer is preparing a report now. A report went to the Ministry of National Security before, I do not know what is going to be new in this report, but, of course, as usual, this Government is taking us for fools.

The Member for D'Abadie/O'Meara mentioned, "is either you pay the bill or not", when he spoke about the fire tender because, of course, he was not paying attention to the process involved. The people of Trinidad and Tobago need a full explanation and breakdown of cost, the process involved from beginning to end. And why is it hidden in the Chaguanas fire station? Why was the offer to wreck the vehicle for free, rejected? Mr. Speaker, everyone like Shaggy, now singing the tune, "It Wasn't Me."

The Chief Fire Officer said he is on retirement leave. The acting Chief Fire Officer said he was on vacation. The Permanent Secretary said she is not authorized to approve spending over \$1 million. The then Minister of National Security said, "Do not blame me, it was a Cabinet decision". The present Minister of National Security, well I do not know what he said.

Hon. Member: "Nutten!"

Miss D. Cox: The Prime Minister said that is a fiasco and she is awaiting a report, as usual.

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So, Mr. Speaker, we anxiously await an explanation with regards to this irresponsible and scandalous behaviour of this Cabinet with regards to this expenditure which fire officials are saying could even be more than the \$6.8 million quoted. I understand that documents have been shredded since this news broke in the fire service. So, Mr. Speaker, what is indeed sad is that the Trinidad and Tobago Fire Service is in dire need of vehicles and much needed resources for the fire officers to carry out their duties.

The fire service needs proper equipment and tools in order to effectively service vehicles. And you know that money—there is so much that could have been done in the fire service with that money because there are so many problems in the fire service. Mr. Speaker, there is an urgent need for the refurbishment of the main workshop. The engineering department needs more space to operate. There has been an increase in the number of requests for inspections and the Fire Prevention Department does not have enough vehicles to carry out these inspections.

Since 1991, there are some fire officers who have not received their qualifying incomes. There is a shortage of uniforms. There is a shortage of ambulances; those in commission have outstanding defects. Insufficient emergency rescue tenders; there is one in Tobago at Crown Point Fire Station, and it is over 15 years old and riddled with defects. There is a shortage of personal protective equipment, shortage of breathing apparatus. There is no personal breathing apparatus with a face mask, which is required for hygienic purposes.

There is a shortage of fire kits. There is a shortage of firefighting and rescue equipment, lack of proper storage facilities, lack of accommodation for female fire officers, overcrowded fire stations, defective fire appliances, braking and steering systems, no fire boats for marine firefighting—they are dependent on the coast guard to transport fire officers in the event of any incident at sea, at a time when there is an influx of varying sea-going vessels to our sea territory and ports. No construction of fire stations to reduce response time and so allow for an effective response from the fire service. There is a lack of appliances to handle hazardous-material incidents. There are only two in service and none in Tobago.

There is supposed to be an expansion and refurbishing of the fire service headquarters. I do not know what is happening with that. That is long overdue. Six—shortage and insufficient fire hydrants, especially in the rural areas. Mr. Speaker, something was brought to our attention, six serviceable fire hydrants which cost about \$180,000 in value—because they cost about \$33,000 each—were removed from a fire station in Roxborough, Tobago by two civilians in a

private vehicle, approximately two years ago, and it was stated that this was on instruction from a senior officer, and these were sold to a scrapyard dealer.

A report was made to the police and nothing came out of it. As a matter of fact, the said senior officer who it is alleged gave the word to remove those hydrants, got accelerated promotion. So as a matter of fact he skipped a rank. Mr. Speaker, I would like the Minister of Finance and the Economy and the Minister of National Security to investigate—public funds were used to purchase gym equipment, and it was at the residence of the now acting Chief Fire Officer, who was then the Deputy Chief Fire Officer. This gym had to be retrieved from his home. Why was this covered up? I understand that the Ministry of National Security had to send and take back the gym equipment from the now acting Chief Fire Officer's home. So, Mr. Speaker, the Minister needs to look into this, because if this is so then the Government must look at how funds are being used in the service.

1.00 a.m.

It is said that one company is doing everything in the fire service: uniforms, construction, maintenance of vehicles and so on. I guess a one-stop shop. We need to find out why this is so. I wish to remind this House about the importance of the Trinidad and Tobago Fire Service and why we have to be so careful how we expend money, because the fire service department is the first-response organization that is summoned whenever and wherever a fire or any other emergency occurs.

Mr. Speaker, we have not forgotten the formation of the new Flying Squad which everybody except the Government seems to know about. From captain to cook claim not to know about this Flying Squad which came into existence around June 2012, and initially met at a national security building on Henry Street called Matco Building. How did members of the new Flying Squad get the use of this building, Matco? How did members of the new Flying Squad get the use of this building? Because every time an individual goes to that building there is a register to sign in. Where is that register?

I see under recurrent expenditure you have where office accommodation, storage, rent; where—it is not under recurrent. The Auditor General's Report deals with signed lease agreements which were not produced for several properties for which rental payments were made, and this was under the Ministry of National Security. This is something that the Minister of Finance and the Economy needs to look at, because there are three such locations which were

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listed under national security and the Auditor General is saying that signed lease agreements were not produced for several properties for which rental payments were made, which means that the checks and balances are not there.

Mr. Speaker, of course the Government had an illegal security unit operating and the people of Trinidad and Tobago need to know the truth about this new Flying Squad. They must come clean because I have a list of some of the members of this new Flying Squad where they signed their names and addresses and telephone numbers on this register. As a matter of fact, there were three serving members of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service who worked with this unit on their off days. So, if this unit was not operating why were two members of the police force transferred and their firearms taken after the story came out? Why are the officers now being victimized? Is it that they are afraid that they will admit that the unit existed?

So, Mr. Speaker, this new Flying Squad was given the use of vehicles and a building in the east rented from one Mr. Richard Koorn. They were also sent to do medicals by Dr. Mathura on Ramsaran Street in Chaguanas, where he was to be paid \$2,000 per person for a complete medical. The Deputy Commissioner of Police, Richardson, was the one who had the list of names of the members and took it to the commissioner to grant firearm users' licences to these members of the new Flying Squad, and there were meetings between the new Flying Squad, some of whom met with Mr. Partap. He is not there? The Member for, what is the area?

Dr. Browne: Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Miss D. Cox: Mr. Heerah stepped in after Mr. Partap was fired and there were meetings with one, Mr. Gervais of the Ministry of National Security, and Mr. Gervais attended the meetings at Donrich Security at the compound in Piarco where he represented the Ministry.

Mr. Speaker, the Government knows nothing about this new Flying Squad, but members were on a national security helicopter doing surveillance and gathering intelligence information on October 09, 2012. Mr. Speaker, Major Brown of the Ministry of National Security organized a ride on the choppers for the new Flying Squad, and anyone who knows the protocols attached to the use of national security helicopters and planes—because you know it is not cheap—will know that no ordinary citizen can use the helicopter without proper clearance unless “yuh name” Ashworth Jack or Machel Montano. [*Laughter*]

I see more helicopters are being bought, Mr. Speaker, and these helicopters must be used for national security purposes, not for the high-flying Government

officials we have here. Because, Mr. Speaker, they like to fly. I recently saw a front-page article—where is the Minister of Community Development?—with the Minister of Community Development up in the air in Chaguaramas. [*Laughter*] Zip line or something like that, up in the air. Mr. Speaker, you know, I think it is an obsession with flying and I wonder if it has anything to do with the slogan “we will rise”. You know, they are taking it literally. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker, that new Flying Squad was on the helicopter called Viper 2, on surveillance with national security officials on October 09, 2012—

Hon. Member: “How you does know all of that”?

Miss D. Cox:—where they found marijuana fields Mr. Speaker, I have the names of the pilots of that helicopter: Buddy and James. They found marijuana fields in the following areas: Matelot, Grande Riviere, Sans Souci, longitude 10 x 9 x 61 north and latitude 61 x 2 x 4 west.

Hon. Member: Good Minister of National Security.

Miss D. Cox: Cumana, one field; Balandra; Toco, four fields, longitude 10 x 49 x 65 north and latitude 60 x 58 x 45 west. Monte Video, three fields. This was on October 09 they were on the helicopter.

Check the—what do you call it? Is it a manifold, what do you call it?

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Manifest.

Miss D. Cox: Manifest. The new Flying Squad and members of the Ministry of National Security, Buddy and James were the pilots, October 09. The name of the helicopter is Viper 2.

Mr. Hypolite: That is a Minister of National Security. You all need a national security minister like her.

Miss D. Cox: So, Mr. Speaker, I was informed that this information was submitted to the Ministry of National Security and the Commissioner of Police who also claims to know nothing about this new Flying Squad. It is only when the Flying Squad threatened to go to the media, because the police did not act on the information produced, they went and carried out the exercise, the marijuana exercise. This exercise was reported in the media and one can check the *Newsday* newspaper dated October 26, 2012 headlined, “Cops destroy \$140 million in ganja in the east...”. And there is another article on October 27, 2012 in the *Newsday* where the headline is: \$140 million of illegal narcotics goes up in smoke, Cops battle ganja farmers. I will not read the details of the newspaper reports but these are the headings.

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Mr. Speaker, after this exercise Mr. Heerah, the man who is expected to take the fall for all of this, called some members of the new Flying Squad and thanked them personally for a job well done in reporting these marijuana fields. So, it is clear that this was a joint operation with the new Flying Squad and officials of the Ministry of National Security.

Mr. Imbert: You know about that?

Miss D. Cox: I ask the Government again to come clean with this new Flying Squad issue because precious police time is being wasted by conducting investigations when they know the truth. As a matter of fact, some police officers know the truth, so “himself is investigating himself”. And they have interfered with the workings of the Ministry of National Security and the relevant bodies attached to it. Serving police officers are being victimized based on all that they have seen provided for the unit. They assumed that all promises made would have been honoured because we had three serving police officers working along with the new Flying Squad.

Mr. Speaker, I spoke to many of the persons listed on the new Flying Squad register who are asking that they be paid for all the work that they did. As far as they are concerned they were a part of the Government’s new crime-fighting unit. So, the Minister here is seeking additional money for the Ministry of National Security. Where is the money to pay the new Flying Squad coming from? I know that Government is ashamed to admit that this squad existed because of all the stories they told about SAUTT and so on, but the existence of the new Flying Squad under the control of the Minister of National Security was indeed illegal.

Mr. Speaker, the person who wrote and submitted all the reports to the Minister of National Security was also a part of the new Flying Squad and was once the accountant for Mr. Aboud of Downtown Owners and Merchants Association. He is now working at SWAT Estate Police doing accounts. *[Interruption]* I understand when the story came out he was fired from SWAT and then rehired in order for him to keep his mouth shut and not leak any information that was written for submission to the Minister of National Security, who is on record stating that he never received any report from the new Flying Squad. Where are the reports on the activities of the new Flying Squad? This reminds me of the fire truck expenditure: work first without approval and then pay, hence the reason why the members of the new Flying Squad are now expecting to be paid, because they were given promises.

Dr. Browne: “And they ent pay them”.

Miss D. Cox: They have not been paid.

Dr. Browne: But they pay for the fire truck.

Miss D. Cox: No one has been paid, and we are waiting to find out if the fire truck payments were made. *[Interruption]* Mr. Speaker, I just want to quote from the UNC's Manifesto under law enforcement where it stated that:

“We will establish a National Security Operational Centre (NSOC), involving use of technology to set up a real-time centralized system for tracking crime.”

Mr. Speaker, this office, the National Security Operational Centre was indeed set up—

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the speaking time of the hon. Member for Laventille East/Morvant has expired.

Motion made: That the hon. Member's speaking time be extended by 30 minutes. *[Mr. N. Hypolite]*

Question put and agreed to.

Miss D. Cox: Mr. Speaker, I was speaking about the National Security Operational Centre, which, quoted in the UNC's Manifesto was set up—*[Interruption]* was supposed to be set up to use technology in a real-time centralized system for tracking crime, and the office was indeed set up, headed by Mr. Heerah. But what I saw in the Manifesto, of course is not what the unit is being used for now.

Hon. Member: The police is investigating it.

Miss D. Cox: This unit was being used to facilitate the new Flying Squad, and the Government continues to try to fool the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Heerah acknowledged his role, yet the then Minister of National Security and the Prime Minister know nothing about it. Where in the budget was the money for the new Flying Squad? *[Interruption]*

Mr. Speaker, can you protect me, please, because I cannot—*[Laughter]* I am tired and everything else.

Mr. Speaker: No, you have my full protection. Continue, hon. Member. Please! *[Laughter]*

Miss D. Cox: Protect me from my own.

Mr. Imbert: “NiLeung, it is your fault”.

Miss D. Cox: Where in the budget was the money for the new Flying Squad? Is there money in this supplementation of the appropriation for fiscal year 2013 to pay them? We need answers to these questions, Mr. Minister.

Mr. Speaker, in conclusion, the Government has failed with regard to crime and I just want to point out [*Desk thumping*] that there are over 14 miles of unprotected sea coast between Point Radix and Point Galeota. [*Desk thumping*] Many other areas are unprotected, so guns and drugs can come in freely. Of course, I must go back to the OPVs; they would have protected our borders. The three offshore patrol vessels would have assisted greatly in stemming the flow of guns and drugs into our country and in the region, and the airship would have provided continuous surveillance; aerial surveillance. The Government destroyed our drug detection capabilities, our ability to intercept drug shipments on the high seas. The Government’s crime plan, Mr. Speaker, was a state of emergency and “soldier/police”. What will they come up with next? The Government has discriminated against certain sectors of the society; many of the Ministers have concentrated on UNC-led coalition constituencies and have neglected PNM constituencies and the East-West Corridor.

For example—I am sorry the Member for D’Abadie/O’Meara is not here—the Morvant recreation ground and Coconut Drive recreation ground, those have been neglected.

1.15 a.m.

Mr. Speaker, how many grounds have been refurbished in D’Abadie/O’Meara? I understand it is about seven.

Mr. Hypolite: And none in Laventille?

Miss D. Cox: None in Laventille. All right, and we are supposed to be serious about crime. But in D’Abadie/O’Meara alone, seven recreation grounds were refurbished. Okay, none in Laventille, but we are serious about crime.

Mr. Hypolite: That is equity.

Mr. Imbert: One in Maraval.

Dr. Browne: “We serious about crime.”

Miss D. Cox: Mr. Speaker, from 2010 to now, I am only getting promises from the Minister of Sport, so I would like to name him “the most promising Minister”.

Mr. Jeffrey: Yeah, correct, correct. [*Desk thumping*]

Miss D. Cox: Mr. Speaker, Malabar FC is getting regular assistance which is based in his constituency, and many of our other sporting groups like Morvant Jets and so on, are suffering. The Morvant Community Centre, the first in the Caribbean, and up to now, cannot be built; I am still waiting on a date from the Minister of Community Development.

The Member for Couva North spoke about the rivers and so on. We got a listing of all the rivers, and I wrote numerous times concerning the Mon Repos, Malick and Morvant Rivers and we are still awaiting assistance. Well today, I walked with copies of my letter and I gave them to her. The early childhood centre in Coconut Drive, Morvant which was completed in 2010 is yet to be open. Why are Morvant residents being punished?

Mr. Speaker, many persons were wantonly and recklessly thrown on the breadline by this Government on the spurious grounds of restructuring and reorganizing—always ominous words when used by them—violating the constitutional rights of citizens of this country to join political parties of their choice. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, this Government cannot run this country. Their response to all the wrongdoing is to blame the PNM—for example, the Member of Parliament, our last speaker, for Couva North—or to insult, attack, send pre-action protocol letters and buy-out talk show hosts. That is their reactions. How long can we endure this? How long would this continue?

Mr. Speaker, I want to quote from the UNC manifesto again under the heading: “Attacking Crime, Nurturing Humanity.” And it states, I quote:

“The current government neither has the will nor the competence to deal with the lawlessness and. indiscipline pervading our society and which feeds the environment within which crime flourishes. The current situation speaks to a moral decay that now pervades the society propelled by a corrupt and ineffective leadership...”

Does this not sound like what is happening in Trinidad and Tobago now?

Was this a prophetic statement or that person had a crystal ball? Who wrote this? This is exactly what is taking place today under the leadership of the Member for Parliament for Siparia, the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago. Mr. Speaker, anyone reading or hearing this statement will have no hesitation in

being totally convinced that these remarks are targeted at what is left to survive as the People's Partnership Government. And this is painfully representative of what we have been enduring since May 24, 2010.

So, Mr. Speaker, today this UNC-led coalition Government stands in the docks accused and charged with the heinous crime of failing to deliver in any meaningful way on the promise which they had so studiously and connivingly concocted. This Government came into office against a background which sought to convince the population that the remedy for arresting the spate of crime and lawlessness was in their proverbial back pocket.

Today, three years later, there was one state of emergency; thousands of young men deprived of their freedom for reasons yet to be explained; a select number of Muslims arrested for an alleged and unfounded ploy to assassinate the Prime Minister and freed just as expeditiously as they were hounded; two failed Ministers of National Security, and a current one groping in the dark and grasping at straws; two fired Ministers in the Ministry of National Security; an enhanced National Security Council; a police service gasping for breath; an attempt to proclaim legislation under a cloud of betrayal; a Bill to make soldiers police; attacks on the media; a new Flying Squad that they do not know about; calamity CAL; Resmi; a fire tanker scandal, with everybody passing the buck.

So, Mr. Speaker, after three years and after all these atrocities, sad to say, the alarming spate of crime and lawlessness in our beloved country still beckons unchecked, unabated and uncalled for. So, we are not seeing or getting value for our money in the hands of this Government [*Desk thumping*] yet we are here seeking another \$3 billion for them to squander. I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Anybody here. The hon. Member for Point Fortin.

Mrs. Paula Gopee-Scoon (*Point Fortin*): I am sorry, Mr. Speaker, I did not realize that I was going now, but nevertheless it is 1.20 a.m. I think we have been here for—"ooh", 12 hours, therefore—

Hon. Member: And we are tired.

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon: Let me tell you, yes we are tired, but we are happy to be here to represent the PNM and to speak to the people of Trinidad and Tobago on the failings of this Government. [*Desk thumping*] Mr. Speaker, let me say from the onset that I do not support this Bill, absolutely do not support this Supplementary Appropriation Bill which we have here before us. I will speak to it, but there are just two items which I want to speak to, which came up during the address of the Member for Couva North, and it is that she had said—she was

quoting the June 12 *Business Express*, quoting Mr. Norman Christie who is the CEO of bpTT and she was speaking to, quite rightly, the effects of the entry of shale gas and that Trinidad and Tobago has found new markets with better pricing and so on. We know about that because Trinidad and Tobago had markets outside of the contracted markets even from the last administration. We were selling gas as far as Japan and so on.

But what I found, the Member also went on to say that Mr. Christie also said that Trinidad and Tobago is one of the most highly taxed regimes, and I feel there is where she should have spent more time because the comment coming out of these energy companies is, in fact, the very high tax regime which they continue to face and the fact that the Government has not been giving incentives in particular to the “upstreamers”. And I believe that this is the message that she should have taken out of this discourse based on Mr. Norman Christie’s findings.

Only in the *Business Guardian*, week one, June 2013, it was pointed out by this CEO that bpTT remains a low-margin but high-volume business, and therefore they would need to be encouraged—and this is the upstream producers he is speaking on behalf of—as they continue to undertake large expenses for exploring for energy reserves. They need to be encouraged by the Government in terms of incentivizing them to continue to deliver the gas and to continue to explore.

So this is the kind of discussion—truthfully, this is what she should have spoken to, to ensure that these companies can in fact get the returns commensurate with the risk which they are engaging in. I am hoping that when this debate goes to the other place that the Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs can speak to Government’s plans for incentivizing the “upstreamers”, Mr. Speaker.

The other point which the Member raised, and I have a concern about, she spoke about a lot, a lot of work that her Ministry was doing. This is the Ministry of the Environment and Water Resources, and they were assisting even Opposition territories, but I want to say that is not so, because that is not so at all. I have written, I have spoken to the Member herself, in particular, about the Guapo River and the desilting of the Guapo River and its possible redirection, and of course, that conversation is to pay caution to the fact that we can expect flooding as we enter the rainy season. We are in the rainy season.

This has not happened. As a matter of fact, I have written that Ministry about the commissioning of the La Fortune Water Treatment Plant, the Point Fortin

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Desalination Plant, the aged sewer network in Techier Village, again the desilting of the Guapo River, and also about the reconstruction of the main Icacos watercourse. I am saying that I have not gotten a good response from the Ministry of the Environment and Water Resources. With regard to the main Icacos watercourse, I know that the Ministry of Works and Infrastructure—well, the Member for Tabaquite has two super Ministries. One of his Ministries, I think might be Local Government, is doing some work on that watercourse but just looking at the figure that they intend to spend which is \$1.8 million, it cannot do the work that we have asked to be done on that watercourse. So I am very, very disappointed in this lot, lot work that they are doing and that really is having no effect particularly in the Opposition territories.

So Mr. Speaker, I am very, very, pleased to contribute to this Bill. As I said from the onset, I am not going to support it and I do not think my colleagues are going to support it as well. My feeling is this Bill really should have been called “the wrecker Bill”. Just two weeks ago people were calling us the “fabricators” what we have had here today to me is a “wrecker Bill”, because these people on the other side, the Government, sorry, intends to wreck this economy and to continue to wreck this economy. And I am not talking only about this \$6.5 million fiasco—I am quoting the Prime Minister—that the Cabinet had approved to move this fire truck water tank vehicle 15 metres off the Blanchisseuse Road. But I am talking about the \$164 billion wrecker to wreck and demolish this economy.

My colleagues quoted the figure of \$163 billion, that is the Member for Port of Spain South, the Member for La Brea as well, being the amount allocated by this Parliament to this Government for the service of Trinidad and Tobago under this administration and I need not quote the figures for 2011, 2012 and 2013, but it comes to about \$164 billion. But however, if you add the figure which they obtained when they took office in 2010 in May, you know, you would say that this Government had something like \$200 billion to spend, Mr. Speaker and you would not believe that \$200 billion is in excess of what we spent in an entire five-year period; in excess. [*Desk thumping*] Two hundred billion over three years when in fact that figure is over what we spent in five years.

Mr. Speaker, quite frankly I have not seen any evidence of this spending. At least at the end of the term, we could have said this is what we did. There were tangible, tangible fruits for the citizens of this country to benefit from and I mean I can go as far back as the GATE (Government Approved Tuition Expenses), I could speak about our enhanced infrastructure as well, the very buildings in which we sit now, the very buildings which most of their Ministries occupy.

I could speak about the very unfinished ones as well which they refuse to finish. I am talking about the Government campus, or work has been going on, very, very slowly, Mr. Speaker. But really I think—and what we did as well is we secured a lot of assets to deal comprehensively with this crime problem. Of course we know that they reneged on the contract with the OPVs and so on, so really they have put us back in terms of the crime issue. The point is they have accomplished a lot less with the \$200 billion which they have had at their disposal. And what do we have to show for it? I could only say that it is a wrecked economy, rampant crime and runaway corruption. [*Desk thumping*]

I am not just using mere words, I say runaway corruption because we have the evidence in the Auditor General's Report. I think it was the Member for Port of Spain South who had gone through the Auditor General's Report in detail, but all I could say is that—I would not repeat all of the details—but in that document you would find millions of dollars of over spending and wastage. And we did not say it, the Auditor General's office is almost like an independent one so we did not say it, it is the Auditor General's office which documented that, Mr. Speaker. So that is why I simply cannot support, with all that wastage, \$200 billion spent, nothing to show for it, I cannot support this Finance (Supplementary Appropriation) Bill. I will wish to have it, Mr. Speaker—I will wish to have it named “the wrecker Bill”. Right?

1.30 a.m.

Hon. Member: With those few words—

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon: And also, Mr. Speaker, it is—“doh come with this”. I am now starting.

Hon. Member: Oh geez.

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon: Okay? I am going to try to truncate, but if you urge me on, I will take my full time.

Hon. Member: Take it. “Take yuh time.”

Mr. De Coteau: “Take yuh full time.”

Hon. Member: “Take yuh full time.”

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon: But I also have a very sneaky suspicion, and this is just based on past behaviour on their part, that maybe an intent of this Bill was also to provide for funds for election purposes [*Desk thumping*] because I have

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examined the Ministries to whom large allocations were made, and in light of the upcoming local government elections and the Chaguanas West by-election, I have no doubt in my mind that this has something to do with election funding, and this is why the Bill catered for a large amount for food cards.

I mean, that could have been projected in the main budget, [*Desk thumping*] but this Bill catered for a large, substantial amount for food cards. And I do not understand where this goes because in Point Fortin I have trouble having food cards approved, and now that the manager of the food card division in Point Fortin has gone on a month's vacation, you cannot get any food cards approved for the month at all, and that is ludicrous. But here we have in this Bill again, another \$66 million to be spent by the Ministry of Sport, including the provision of janitorial services. So could you not have predicted what janitorial services were required from when you were planning? No— \$66 million.

And then, I mean, let me not talk about the amount of money that had gone to the Ministry of Housing, some \$142 million for CEPEP work—\$142 million for new high-traffic environmental work areas; four additional contractors. But we are talking \$142 million. Just wait: four contractors, new high-traffic environmental work areas and training—training in management and business and so on, and literacy. I “cyar” believe this.

I know the public would not believe—\$142 million, I just cannot quantify in terms of—I do not understand the justification that you have given at all, so that I can only surmise that this is really preparing your election machinery. But, Mr. Speaker, it did not work for them in Tobago and, therefore, it will not work for them in Trinidad [*Desk thumping*] but I believe it is the only approach which they know. Very unfortunate!

But let us just say—and if, God forbid, that in the very unfortunate and unlikely event that this Government were to be successful, based on their track record, all they would do is proceed to further wreck and further damage this country and the economy. So the population needs to look out for them. That is their modus operandi. That is how they operate. But I think, too, the population is beginning to see them for who they are and what they are, Mr. Speaker.

You would not believe that a constituent of mine, a businessman, called me yesterday and asked me to find out all of those Ministers who were present in Cabinet. He wants a list of who witnessed that \$6.3 million approval. So this is the kind of request coming from the constituents. This is what the businessman has asked me, and I have no choice but to comply. It is a question that is going to go on the Order Paper: who where they, Mr. Speaker. As it is—

Dr. Browne: “They not saying a word.”

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon: As it is—they are not saying a word, but the Member for St. Augustine and the Member for San Fernando West already disassociated themselves from this whole fiasco—that we know—from the decision to hire the wrecker or pay for the wrecker post-completion of the work.

And, Mr. Speaker, I have great respect for the legal acumen—if nothing else but for the legal acumen of the Member for St.: Augustine—and I am sure that he must be acquainted with the murder felony rule and the legal tradition regarding joint enterprises. No doubt, I am sure the Member is quite familiar with that. I mean, I am not a lawyer; I am not even a bush lawyer, but what I do know is that you cannot be in Ali Baba’s gang and then pretend that you are not one of his 40 attackers—attachments, swindlers, thieves, whatever you want to call it. You know?

So that the Member must have been—the Member has been a full participant in a joint enterprise, and not only this one, the joint enterprise that was also the early proclamation of section 34.

Dr. Browne: He is an accomplice.

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon: And he is—he knows and he is aware of this as well. I am very sorry for the Member for San Fernando West, that she has found herself in her situation, but—

Dr. Browne: She chose to remain there.

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon:—but it is her choice. It is her choice, Mr. Speaker. They both sat—the point about it is, they both sat; they are posturing themselves differently, but they both sat, along with all the other Members of Cabinet, and witnessed the approval of this \$6.8 million for the removal of a wrecker which the army said could have been removed without any cost. Right? So I cannot—I cannot support this Bill because the Government has shown, quite clearly, that they have lost all credibility in their handling of its financial affairs.

So today we are here to ask for wreckers. We are asked to vote for more wreckers with this Bill which we have before us, Mr. Speaker. We are asked, for instance, to approve \$22 million for the Ministry of National Security for the purchase of vehicles, but how are we to know that these vehicles are not costing \$5 million, given the track record of this Government? How are we to know the true cost of these vehicles? And it is a very, very legitimate question to ask based on their track record. I mean, I cannot believe that things would have changed

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simply because they have a new Minister. The point about it is, the rest of the Cabinet remains, and that is why we would always have concerns about the mindset or credibility in terms of financial affairs.

And I can give you another example. The Member for Diego Martin North/East spoke to a transaction about an \$800-million building to be put up at National Gas. But let me backtrack a little bit. I was looking at television and I heard the Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs speaking in the other place. He was actually criticizing the Board of Petrotrin for embarking on this project to build headquarters for Petrotrin, costing some \$440 million, and it was subsequently reported in the newspapers and I can quote now from the *Express* of Wednesday, June 04. He said that this particular building, the corporate headquarters for Petrotrin, was outfitted, and I quote:

“with a degree of opulence and grandeur fit for royalty.”

Then he went on to use it as an example of the wastage which he said had occurred under the previous administration. But, Mr. Speaker, I cannot believe that it is this same very Government, of which he is a part, that has approved a headquarters building for the National Gas Company for almost twice that figure. Petrotrin, they are criticizing for building headquarters costing \$440 million, where they are now building the National Gas headquarters for twice that figure, \$800 million.

Dr. Browne: A smaller company.

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon: Yeah. I will give you the details about that. Let me quote from the *Sunday Express* report of January 09, 2013, headlined “\$800m contract for top Govt financier.” And this was done by Asha Javeed, who is a CCN senior multimedia investigative journalist. I hope they “doh” want to know how she walks and whether she drives. But this is how the quotation goes:

“A major financier of the People’s Partnership administration is tipped to secure an \$800 million construction contract from the National Gas Company (NGC).

The *Sunday Express* understands that the Krishna Lalla-owned Super Industrial Services (SIS), a financier”—

This is all quoted:

“of the UNC-led People’s Partnership Government, is earmarked to secure the contract for the design-build services for the NGC’s new corporate campus in Brechin Castle, Couva.

The cost of the project has also changed by nearly \$100 million.”

Changed before it is started. I put that part in:

“According to the 2013 State Enterprises Investment Programme (SEIP), the corporate campus was initially expected to carry an estimated cost of \$710 million.”

And then they went on to say:

“The projected expenditure for the period October: 2012 to...2013 was budgeted at \$650 million....”

And it goes on and on. The point about it is, the figure is now \$800 million. But I did not even hear the hon. Minister when he spoke—and he was, in fact, the NGC chairman at one time, not so? Yeah. But when he was speaking about those activities which will kick-start the economy, it is certainly not one of the construction activities that he mentioned at all.

But anyway, this is the project. But let us do the analysis, Mr. Speaker, because according to Petrotrin’s corporate website, I know that Petrotrin has a labour force of something like 5,000 persons, but not all of those persons would be, of course, residing in that office—corporate headquarters. But at the same time, I am giving you an idea of the size of the company and trying to justify the amount of money being spent on a corporate headquarters to suit that large-sized company.

So that Petrotrin has a labour force of about 5,000 workers. NGC, on the other hand, when I checked their website, has a corporate—employs only 800 persons. So there you have an entity with 5,000 persons and an entity with 800 persons. The entity with 5,000 spending \$440 million on their corporate headquarters, but NGC is spending twice the amount and having a staff complement of, perhaps, one-fifth. Is that the math? I am not sure. In fact, less. In fact, when you look at the 800 employees which NGC has, that building is being put up at a cost of \$1 million per employee.

Dr. Browne: What? Everybody is a millionaire in there?

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon: Member? [*Member takes seat*]

Mr. Hypolite: “Is all right.” Go ahead.

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon: You “doh” have a quorum?

Mr. Hypolite: No, no. Yes. We were looking at that.

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon: Okay, fine. That is fine.

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So when you want to talk about waste and extravagance with regard to Petrotrin, I want you to examine this project where you are building corporate headquarters at a cost of \$1 million per employee. This is ridiculous, and this is lofty, [*Desk thumping*] and this is opulence, and this is wastage; this is scandalous; this is obscene. [*Desk thumping*]

Miss Hospedales: Yes.

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon: Right? It makes no sense to me, a building costing \$1 million per employee, Mr. Speaker, and you are talking about a wrecker? This is a wrecker! This is damage to our economy, Mr. Speaker.

Now, you also—I am trying to just focus so that—it is so late into the night, I want to just focus. You are talking about opulence and grandeur fit for royalty, and I want to tie that into the firm who has won the contract for the National Gas Company because I note that the story by Asha Javeed said that the company had done work on the private residence of the Member for Siparia—

Mr. Speaker: You see that? You are going into the conduct of a Member of this Parliament.

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon: Conduct?

Mr. Speaker: Do not use quotations. You must take ownership of quotations, and you cannot use quotations to breach the Standing Orders. So I am saying that where you are going, it is dangerous. Do not go there, please. You are imputing improper—take your seat.

First of all, you are imputing improper motives to a Member of Parliament. Secondly, you are dealing with the conduct of a Member. File a substantive Motion and do not use quotations to violate the Standing Orders. Okay? Continue, please.

1.45 a.m.

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon: Mr. Speaker, I am not quoting here.

Mr. Speaker: Well, I am telling you, do not go that route.

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon: But I am not quoting. You said I am quoting—

Mr. Speaker: Take your seat! Take your seat!

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon:—and I am just—

Mr. Speaker: Take your seat! Take your seat! Take your seat, Madam! Once I am on my legs, you take your seat. Do not stand while I am standing. You

were going down a particular path, and I am telling you, do not raise any matter concerning any Member's conduct in this House, even if you are quoting. Bring a substantive Motion. So do not argue with me. Move on!

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon: Mr. Speaker, I think I reserve the right to say I was not quoting. What is wrong with saying that?

Mr. Speaker: Well I am taking in front.

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon: That is all I am saying.

Dr. Browne: Exactly!

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon: I am not quoting. Sometimes I think that—let me not go there.

Mr. Speaker: Please. Better not go there otherwise you will take your seat quickly.

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon: Mr. Speaker, please speak to me with respect. I am an honourable Member [*Desk thumping*] of this House.

Mr. Speaker: Anyway, take your seat. Take your seat!

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon: Just the manner in which you speak to me—

Mr. Speaker: Take your seat!

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon:—I am an honourable Member.

Mr. Speaker: Take your seat! You want to raise issues in this Parliament that are in contradiction and contravention of our Standing Orders. I am telling you not to go there. If you find that I am being disrespectful to you, you can take your seat, discontinue, and I will get somebody else to speak at this time. Otherwise, I am not taking that kind of response from you or from any Member. You either observe the Standing Orders or you do not. I am guiding you. Continue, please!

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon: I am not going to go any further on this point. I think I have respectfully given my view on the approach taken, but let me just sum up this little area and say that if it is this hon. Minister of Finance and the Economy cannot stop a contract as the one which has been approved for \$800 million and that he cannot stop a contract which has also been approved for \$6.8 billion for the fire service wrecker—

Hon. Member: Million.

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon: million dollars, and it does not matter the amount. I am talking about the principle of the matter. The point is if you could not stop a

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ridiculous contract as the \$800 million one, or a ridiculous contract as the \$6.3 million one, I cannot trust him and I cannot have confidence in him and, therefore, I cannot support this Finance (Supplementary Appropriation) Bill of \$2.8 billion.

The point about it is, we are talking about a firm—this is what makes it worse—who we know has contributed substantial sums to the UNC election campaign. I think he was on record as saying that he had contributed something like \$60 million to the UNC election campaign, and I believe that this is also in the court records on a sworn affidavit as well. So, I cannot in all honesty, and we cannot in all honesty, come here to approve funds that with all honesty end up being used the same way that funds were used with that wrecker fiasco, Mr. Speaker.

So the last time we were here to discuss budget allocations and variations, I had no idea and no one in here would have had an idea that what we were in fact approving was money that could be misspent in the way that it has been misspent. Again, the Auditor General has documented all of the wastage and corruption, and the wastage and corruption are in some of these very same Ministries that we are being asked today to approve allocations for; very, very same Ministries. For instance, the Ministry of National Security, we were being asked to approve sums amounting to \$22 million, but the Auditor General has said that there are about eight contracts at the Ministry of National Security amounting to \$5.9 million that they have not seen at all. Yet we are approving more moneys for the Ministry of National Security. That is moneys paid that we have absolutely no evidence of and to whom they were paid.

I do not know who those contracts were for, and certainly the Auditor General does not know either. I do not know if it was for the Flying Squad. It may very well be, but the point about it is, nobody knows what these moneys were for. It is not about the Ministry of National Security alone, it is the Ministry of Education as well. Seventeen contracts, I believe, from the Ministry of Education amounting to \$4 million were not seen.

Then there were contracts at the Ministry of Works and Infrastructure valued at something like \$6.8 million, again, not seen. And then, of course, the Member for Laventille East—I spoke about the contracts in the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service as well. I think it was five contracts amounting to \$2.3 million and not seen. So we just seem to have records everywhere and, the wastage, Mr. Speaker, is not only in terms of moneys spent, but I have found as well that the

wastage is also in revenue foregone. You would not believe that there are instances where this Government is just not looking at the level of revenues that they are foregoing at all.

In fact, I have a copy of an agreement which this Government signed on May 22, last month, and at that time I think we were very busy in the House. We were discussing all of the issues of emailgate and so on, and that agreement is called the Status of Forces Agreement. That agreement, Status of Forces Agreement, bears direct relevance to what we are discussing here today about funds as well.

It pivots around another issue, but it has direct relevance in terms of revenue foregone because the agreement, Mr. Speaker, provides for a waiver of taxes for the US Government, and that is for the importation of certain kinds of equipment. So, that is, giving up revenue which the people of Trinidad and Tobago need urgently. I want to quote from the agreement, and I am going to explain what the SOFA is about after, but I am tying it into the Bill and, therefore, I am speaking to the question of the waiver of taxes. Let me quote from the agreement that:

“The Embassy further proposes that the United States Department of Defense and United States personnel shall not be liable to pay any tax or similar charge assessed in connection with activities under this Agreement within Trinidad and Tobago, and that the United States Department of Defense and United States personnel may import into, export out of, and use in Trinidad and Tobago any personal property, equipment, supplies, materiel, technology, training, and services in connection with activities under this agreement.”

And I continue with the quotation from the actual agreement:

“Such importation, exportation, and use shall be exempt from any inspection, license, other restrictions, customs duties, taxes, or any other charges assessed within Trinidad and Tobago.”

So what it amounts to really is a blank cheque giving the United States a tax holiday, but we in the PNM Government—I will tell you, we did in fact agree to a temporary arrangement, a temporary agreement with the United States.
[*Interruption*]

Dr. Rambachan: Embassies have that all the time.

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon: You can speak after, Member for Tabaquite.

Dr. Rambachan: Embassies have that all the time.

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon: You can speak after. I am saying that in 2009, we did agree to a temporary arrangement, a temporary agreement and it was just for a few months, and it had all to do with the hosting of the Fifth Summit of the

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Americas. It was not the blanket agreement, the permanent agreement that this administration has now secretly signed with the Americans and I will tell you why. I would use the word “secretly”.

Dr. Rambachan: It is in the public, so what is secret about that?

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon: You can speak after, I have said.

Dr. Rambachan: So what is secret about something that is in the public?

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon: You can speak after and correct it if you wish, but what I am saying is, that what we had agreed on before was a temporary agreement. What you have put in place is a permanent agreement and that is what I take issue with. I am citing just the particular issue with regard to the fact that we have to forego revenue because of the fact that we are foregoing taxes.

But there is another side to it. I speak to that part of it connected with the Bill, but the worst part is that I did not expect that to come from the Minister of Foreign Affairs, who was a Minister of Finance and can understand these details. But then, again, he is the champion of new politics and, maybe this is new politics. I am not sure about it. But the point about it, it is a very significant agreement and it is something that I think must be put in the national domain because it has the effect of Trinidad and Tobago taking sides, sides in a war for instance. It has the effect of Trinidad and Tobago taking sides and when you take decisions like that, you need to be cautious. Not a word was said in the Parliament about that. Surely, it would have gone to Cabinet. You would have needed Cabinet’s approval. But nothing was said in Parliament, not a word was said to the people of Trinidad and Tobago about such a significant agreement.

Here we are, the Minister of Finance and the Economy boasting and speaking about the fact that we have realized greater than expected revenue this year on account of the price of oil. Yes, that is so. We know the petroleum sector accounts for more than 40 per cent of our GDP, but, Mr. Speaker, I just want to, for instance, draw into this discussion the fact that it was only last year, I think, in 2010, this Government had signed a unitization agreement with Venezuela and hoping to advance further to the point where we can both monetize the gas resources within the waters between Trinidad and Tobago and Venezuela.

That accord had said that Trinidad and Tobago owns 27 per cent of the gas and that Venezuela owns 73 per cent of the \$10 million Tcf certified reserves of the Loran-Manatee fields which span our borders. But, I am so uncomfortable about this agreement from the point of view that it may jeopardize the opportunity

to monetize these resources. But, I am very happy that I understand that the President of Venezuela might be visiting Trinidad and Tobago shortly. He might be part of the Caricom Heads of Government Conference, and I am hoping that we, as a country, but certainly you as a Government, will be able to give him the assurances of our position on the SOFA and the fact that they will be comfortable enough with us—this is the Venezuelans—to move ahead with bringing this gas to market.

In any event, I do not know that we should be delaying this whole gas extraction much too long again. The point about it is, we need that gas—and this is an aside—we need that gas that is in there; we had not been successful. We were following protocol and so on in terms of getting the Venezuelans to move ahead with the extraction of the gas, but they too were busy with their own internal goings-on within their country and with the election and the death of President Chavez and so on. But the point is, we need to start looking at the legal ramifications and whether we need to go to arbitration to take what is ours out of the gas fields.

2.00 a.m.

The point is we need the gas, we need to extract it, we need to improve our bottom line, and it is about time, I think, that the Ministry of Energy and Energy Affairs starts to look at other ways in ensuring that we take what is ours—in terms of our hydrocarbons—out of the gas fields which we share.

But, nevertheless, going back to the SOFA, I hope that the Government has something to say to the President of Venezuela if, in fact, he comes here. I must say that I am very displeased that neither the Minister of Foreign Affairs, nor the Prime Minister, has accounted to the people of Trinidad and Tobago for the signing of this SOFA (Status of Armed Forces Agreement), but then, again, as I said, this might be new politics. Right?

But, you see, it has to do with revenues as well. In many countries like Egypt and Pakistan, the signing of such agreements are, in fact, sources of revenue amounting to billions of dollars. And, in fact, there might be about 100 such agreements signed already, but usually, they are accompanied with some kind of aid. So that in exchange, what happens is that the Government allows its territory to be used as a base for the US military should the need arise.

What the agreement does is that it governs the legal status of the US military officials in the host country, and it speaks to the whole question of immunity for

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the US soldiers from criminal and civil action and so on, and again, bringing in the military equipment, without needing the permit, as I have said and so on, and that kind of thing.

But, there are concerns, and that is why I am saying that it should be discussed—there are concerns—because if it is that a Trinidad and Tobago citizen is harmed in any way as a result of activities of the US military on our soil, there is no real legal recourse for them. In fact, the agreement provides in these circumstances that the US courts will try their citizens rather than the local courts. So these are the kinds of concerns we have because they would be operating here without regard for our laws and regulations, so it is almost like they have a virtual base here.

But, usually, as I said, these agreements come with billions of dollars, millions of dollars, billions of dollars, in some kind of compensation from the US Government. I am saying that—and it is usually provided in the form of aid, but I am not sure that Trinidad and Tobago benefited, and I do not think that we got any large sum of money or anything like that. I know that we got four used vessels. I have to think, well, what else was compensation for the granting of that agreement? But, these are the kinds of questions we have to ask, because, as I said, in terms of dollars and cents, we have received nothing, nothing at all—nada, zilch—

Hon. Member: “Yuh get to hug up Obama!”

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon:—and that is why I believe that the Government has been so embarrassed to let the public know that we signed such an agreement and the public does not even know what the terms are, but we do not even know what the trade-off is.

So, I am very concerned, as I said. I do not want to be—I do not think Trinidad and Tobago wants to be at loggerheads with our neighbours. I do not think we want to appear to be taking sides, and at the end of the day, we really have nothing to show for it. So, it is a great concern to me, it is a great concern also to my constituents—would you believe it extends to them as well—in Cedros, because you would be surprised that they too may be affected because of the kind of diplomatic arrangements we had made in the past. They can freely fish in those waters and enjoy the freedom to fish, but you have to look at the repercussions when you enter into such arrangements. So that I can say that it can even affect the constituents, the fishermen of Cedros and so on. I do not know how long they can continue to peacefully fish in those waters. I just do not know!

So, I am expecting that the hon. Minister of Finance and the Economy would speak to the quantification, I would say, of moneys foregone in terms of taxes and so on. Give us some idea of what the revenue that we would lose and—

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

Motion made: That the hon. Member's speaking time be extended by 30 minutes. [*Mr. N. Hypolite*]

Question put and agreed to.

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon: Thank you to my colleagues for recommending that I should speak for another 30 minutes.

Dr. Gopeesingh: “Why yuh didn’ go for 75?”

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon: I was just finishing off the discussion on the agreement as it relates to finance, and I also raised the geopolitical concerns, as well in terms of where it puts Trinidad and Tobago in relation to other countries, avoiding at all times the appearance that we are taking sides or so.

We have always in the PNM observed—and it is one of our foreign policies—the non-intervention into the affairs of other states, and I think we need to be very careful that we keep that posture all through. We are a country that depends so much on foreign direct investment that our relationship with countries must not at all be harmed at any time. You really have to look beyond because the effects of such agreements can be really far-reaching in terms of Trinidad and Tobago, as I said, being a small economy, open economy and so on, and having a heavy dependence on foreign direct investments, and therefore on good relations with all states.

I was a little bit disappointed, but I think there were many Ministries that had requested increases in expenditure, and perhaps the Ministry for which I would have welcomed a request for urgent and critical funding would have been the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This is not a joking matter at all. I think it would have been—I would have liked to hear something, perhaps about moneys for projects in the Ministry. Certainly, a large consultative group made up of foreign affairs, international affairs persons, protocol practitioners and so on, and experts, to, with immediacy, attack particular projects.

One of them—because all of these things, as I said, they are little things but they really affect our image, and of course, they affect our ability to attract

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international investors. It is so easy with communication being as it is now, you want to be and always take the pains to ensure that your country is portrayed properly.

But, there are a couple of things, urgent matters that need to be dealt with in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. One of them is the list of precedence and the current one being very, very outdated. On that one, for instance, the President of the CCJ—and we are guilty as well, I have to say in that in the time that I was in office, I was never able to do very much with that list of precedence, but I am saying that the Government is there for three years now, and in view of the kind of protocol blunders that have been taking place and that the country has been experiencing, and that the country has seen—

Hon. Member: “Like sitting down on de President!”

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon: Blunders caused by probably a number of reasons, but also the lack of proper preparation for the recent foreign visits. There are some things that you really need to act with immediacy and I am speaking about the list of precedence because it excludes a number of persons, and therefore, causes a lot of hiccups when you have these ceremonial occasions and so on.

For instance, the President of the CCJ is not there; the Chairman of the Equal Opportunity Commission is not there; the Chairman of the Environmental Commission is not there; the Chairman of the Tax Appeal Board as well; the President of the Industrial Court, tribunal and so on. All of these persons who are there—these are all—when you look at the requirements of the person to fill those positions of Chairman and President of these offices and they are all superior courts of record, they are all judges who would have had at least 10 years’ standing, and many of them have at least 15 years’ experience, and therefore, they are similar in stature, I believe, to a High Court judge, and in some cases a Court of Appeal judge.

So that you want to ensure that these things are fixed right because when the holders of high office are not recognized, it really—it is not that you are affecting their egos, what it does is that it diminishes, in the eyes of the public, the institution. So if you want to give credibility to these institutions, it means that you have to look at the entire thing, and certainly the heads of these institutions who are senior members, who are liked judges. As I said, these are superior courts of record, you have to accord the type of protocol that is necessary.

So therefore, you need to actually revisit the entire actual order of precedence and to consult again with regional and extra-regional countries about proposals as

to how you may do that. So that, I would have liked to hear that funding was required for that. Also, along those same lines, perhaps for a protocol manual as well, which would guide and communicate office holders as to the expectations when you have protocol matters and ceremonial matters and so on.

Again, I bring this up because of the very glaring lapses—protocol lapses which we have had and for which the Ministry of Foreign Affairs must take responsibility. But, I am not going to go through these omissions and failures. [Crosstalk] This is not the place for it. The point about it is the public has already said much that they have had to say on it. I mean, I would say the lapses were unpardonable, [Crosstalk] especially with the kind of high standards that the public has come to understand, given the standards set by us in 2009 when we had more than 60 heads of states and government visitors visit us in Trinidad and Tobago. [Crosstalk]

But, as I said, I am not going to denounce the failures here, the public has already done that and so on and no amount of explanations about personal touches and so on, and [Crosstalk] excuses by the Permanent Secretary could cure that. All I am saying is that there has been a serious regression and [Crosstalk] I am making a suggestion that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs—

Dr. Gopeesingh: “Do so eh like so.”

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon: No, no, I am making a suggestion—

Dr. Gopeesingh: “Doh go dey.”

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon:—that we move forward—

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yes.

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon:—and that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs come forward requesting funding for consultation on these matters for the production of a protocol manual for any Government that comes in place; one that would probably last for the next 50 years.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Why you did not do it?

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon: But it—the point about it, it needs to be done.

Hon. Member: “Yuh have 45 again to go!”

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon: I need to be protected from the Member for Caroni East.

Hon. Member: “Yuh have 45 years to go again!” [Laughter]

Mr. Speaker: Could you allow the Member to speak in silence.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Sure, sure, sure.

Mr. Speaker: Continue, hon. Member.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon: Yeah. I mean all I am trying to say is that it is very important that our image and our standing in the international arena are always intact. Right? I feel that it has been impaired and I want to only offer solutions, especially now that we seem to have a very peripatetic Prime Minister who is wandering off now to China and so on. China, I understand, South Africa, Sri Lanka, all of these visits are to take place during this year, so we want to make sure that protocol, which in essence is about good taste, which is subjective, but it is also about the observance of good sense, and the need for order in the conduct of national and international affairs.

Mr. Speaker, we just want to make sure that all of these rules in every sphere of interaction are, in fact, laid down and communicated and recognized so that all persons in the position—all office holders would understand, of course, and respect will be given to the offices, et cetera. Mr. Speaker, perhaps the most glaring was the—I think was—only this one I will mention—the fact of the President walking ahead of the Prime Minister—sorry, the Prime Minister walking ahead of the President. It happened as well with the visit of President Goodluck Jonathan from Nigeria, and I am saying in a situation like that—unpardonable, but again, your protocol manual would, in fact, cover that, and we need to put such projects in the hands of suitable individuals.

The other project that I would like to see coming—and we would agree, I am sure, on this side for the funding for that—would be for the establishment of the diplomatic academy, because we have scores of persons in the Ministry, young contract officers. We have young foreign service officers.

2.15: a.m.

Also, we have a large number of political appointees in our missions outside as well and I know that many of them are not performing. They are floundering and I think it is about time that the Minister of Foreign Affairs is able to say something about what these political appointees in these missions are doing. But the point about it is we need, I think, to establish this diplomatic academy to ensure that all of these officers, both the ones in the Ministry and also the political appointees are, in fact, trained. That training is very, very important and even if

we cannot go in the way of raising the funding to establish an academy in its entirety, perhaps, we can use the Institute of International Relations to jumpstart the process, given that most of the required resources are already available there. I mean, the situation is desperate.

I want to speak a little about the China/US visits only to the extent that—I want to tie it back to the Bill—I would only speak on those aspects that affect the bottom line and affect our economies more than ever. We welcome—let me say from the onset that we certainly—all high-level visitors to our country. In fact, in the case of the President of China, I think it was quite historic and certainly, I think it can only do good things for our country.

But, it must be noted that the visits were really to Caricom states first and foremost. But, of course, and you say in Trinidad, Trinidad and Tobago were the hosts and rightfully so. So much so that it amounted to a Caricom meeting more than anything else that I know that both leaders had held—certainly the Chinese leader—bilaterals with every member country with whom it had relations and naturally Trinidad and Tobago, being the most economically advanced and the most summit-prepared, especially based on our 2009 successes, the natural leaning was for us to host.

But let us also remember the value of Caricom to the visitors. I am pointing out that these visitors do have a great interest in coming to us because Caricom to the US represents 15 votes—with regard to the UN as well—and Caricom, with regard to China, represents, I think, 10 votes as well. So it is very important to them. But in any event, I think that the visit by Vice-President Joe Biden really was a consequence and a direct follow-up of President Obama's visit in 2009 for the Fifth Summit of the Americas, when in fact some \$200 billion had been promised through the Caribbean Basin Security Initiative to focus on all of the crime-fighting and illicit-trafficking issues, and so on. So, that came out from the visit of the President in 2009 and I think this other visit was in furtherance of that last visit.

But what came out of it and which I have a concern, in terms of the economies of the region more than ever is the signing of the Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA) between US and Caricom countries. I am concerned about that TIFA or whatever you would call it because it significantly will impact the bottom line of Caricom countries and also Trinidad and Tobago.

It is not the first time that we signed a TIFA agreement. We signed one, in fact, in 1991 but nothing came of it. Then we, of course, went on and we signed, and

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these are welcomed agreements, in terms of the vast market that the US represents for the exchange of goods and services. We had signed also the CBERA and the CBTPA—I think one of them will expire in 2014—that is the Caribbean Basin Economic Recovery Act and the Caribbean Basin Trade Partnership Act, all designed to give unilateral preferences to the region. So, there is a direct effect on the bottom line.

What is interesting now is whether or not these countries can in fact benefit from these agreements when we put this. It is one thing to say that we put these things in place and to spend a couple hundred thousand dollars on ads, full-coloured-page ads, about these agreements that we sign, when the question still arises: Can we take advantage of these agreements which would have been signed? We would be better positioned, given the fact that we have a very mature manufacturing sector, but I am not so sure that is the case with the rest of the Caribbean, many countries of which are in fact bankrupt and that is evidenced by their very high debt-to-GDP ratios and they are in fact helpless.

But the point about it is, my view on it is, that Trinidad and Tobago is expected to play a more leadership role, in terms of spearheading these economies, these Caricom economies, in terms of having a policy, being able to influence a way forward, as well. And I think one of the ways that can come is through some kind of integration and so on, but I know the Government has been very clear, very vehement, about any kind of economic integration at all.

As a matter of fact, very early when they came into office, there had been on the table before an attempt—there were two volumes written by Professor Vaughn Lewis and by Dr. Cuthbert Joseph as well—on a possible integration and you were very early to say that you will engage with the regional integration process and contribute to the strengthening of Caricom and the CSME and so on, but with regard to the recent initiative, you said very clearly that you considered it to be divisive and it will be reversed.

Yet, three years later, we have had no policy from this Government on Caribbean integration, as far as it extends to the economy and the CSME, and in terms of the integration of economic spaces which is what we need if in fact we are going to see any turnaround in the economies of these Caricom countries and, in fact, we would be able to take advantage, they and us, of these economic arrangements which were made with the US. So those are the kinds of concerns that I have.

I think we must really tally the kind of benefits that we have had from the

Ministry of Trade and Industry and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. I would like them to tally the kind of benefits we have had from the Caribbean, in terms of the Caribbean being our second largest export market, in terms of the number of professionals, the number of persons of Trinidad and Tobago who work in all of these territories, who find gainful employment in all of these territories. And then, of course, the scores of businesses that are spread right across the region, branches with head offices in Trinidad as well.

I would like you all to quantify the kind of benefits that we have had from Caricom, because I am not satisfied. I am not satisfied with the approach which we have had. There is a current fiasco, with regard to Jamaica and Trinidad on trade matters. I do not know that we have had any solution with regard to the Clico investments within the islands as well. I do not know that there is any solution on the table, from our end, with regard to the CAL/LIAT fiasco.

Generally, I feel that we have not—I do not think we have given any great assistance with regard to surveillance as well. I am talking about security surveillance. So I think I want to demand some kind of resurgence of leadership by Trinidad and Tobago; some kind of policy with regard to—especially as we go forward to being the Chair of Caricom for the next six months. I really wish to see that Trinidad and Tobago adopts a more leadership role and a very concerted effort and that it should start with policy.

I want to ask: how much time do I have, Mr. Speaker?

Hon. Members: No more.

Mr. Roberts: “It eh have no more. Done. Finish.”

Dr. Khan: “We hearing the same thing over and over.”

Mr. Speaker: Eleven more minutes.

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon: Eleven minutes. I have a concern—and I am going to go all the way with the 11 minutes—as well.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Empty vessels.

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon:—I have—*[Interruption and crosstalk]* Please, I seek your protection.

Dr. Khan: The same thing, tedious repetition, Mr. Speaker.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Thirty-six, one.

Miss Hospedales: “Eh-eh, no”.

Mr. Speaker: Member, I do not want to—

Dr. Khan: Over and over, the same thing.

Mr. Speaker:—break your trend but I just want to let you know that you have introduced matters that not even the Minister of Finance and the Economy, the mover of this Motion, has touched upon and there is nothing that is before me that deals with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. I have given you a lot of space to proceed, so get back to the Bill and try to link your contribution to some head of expenditure because, really, you have spent the last, almost 30 minutes, or I would say 15 to be generous, dealing with China and the United States and these are not matters that are properly before us. But if you can link your contribution to the heads of expenditure I will appreciate it very much.

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, but I think the Minister of Finance and the Economy did speak about our economy and in every regard I am linking back to our economy and things that affect our bottom line and certainly Caricom is integral to Trinidad and Tobago. And, therefore, I speak to—I have to speak on it.

You talk about the—for instance, the Caricom Petroleum Fund which we, again, put on the table owing to the fact that Caricom is our second largest market. The Caricom Petroleum Fund that is available for the assistance of our Caricom neighbours, I want to put a question to the hon. Minister of Finance and the Economy to tell me what were the inflows and outflows for the Caricom Petroleum Fund for fiscal 2010, 2011 and 2012 and year to date, 2013 as well, giving us details as to the purpose of the outflows.

We have had significant oil revenues, which would impact the quantum of funds which go into the fund and we would want to have details on how that money is being spent. Generally, I want to say that I expect that when the Prime Minister takes the Chair, I expect a leadership role to be adopted and, perhaps, they can start by saying to Caricom: I am sorry. I apologize. Trinidad and Tobago apologizes for all of the gaps in the relationship. Right?

I want to go very quickly to the Point Fortin Hospital to say that I am quite disappointed that—*[Interruption]*—and it does not matter, Member for Caroni East, what was supposed to have been done. I too would always take responsibility for that but I am speaking here—*[Interruption]* oh yes, I would take responsibility—to the fact that you are in office for three years now and in your Prosperity for All manifesto 2010, it was stated here that—but again it was an election manifesto but you said it became your plan—

Miss Hospedales: Policy.

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon: Your policy, but it says here:

Improve physical infrastructure of public health care facilities.

Construct new hospitals in the catchment areas of Point Fortin, Arima and Chaguanas.

And here we are. There is mention of the Arima—

Dr. Khan: Two out of three is not bad.

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon: And the Minister is saying two out of three is not bad, as if this is a trivial matter.

Mr. Speaker: You cannot go to the manifesto. Try to link your contribution to the heads. This has nothing to do with the manifesto. There is nothing about health here. You are going to Point Fortin, try to link your contribution to what is before us, please.

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon: The point about it is, I am making reference because the Government of the day promised Point Fortin the Point Fortin Hospital. The Minister of Finance and the Economy came here today and there was no mention about the Point Fortin Hospital. There is mention about another \$2 billion being spent. There is mention of wastage by all my colleagues as well, but there is no mention of the erection of the Point Fortin Hospital, which is so badly needed and which was promised to us.

But, again, what we hear about is the Arima Hospital being built. I understand that funding was secured for that by the Chinese but I understand, as well, that Arima is probably a constituency that you want to hold on to for the local government election.

You already have it and maybe this is an election gimmick, but in the case of Point Fortin which you know you would never win, [*Crosstalk*] you do not think that this is the right time to spend money on that as well. Right? [*Crosstalk*]

2.30: a.m.

But health care is important. You did address it in your manifesto which has become your—you said it, your policy document. You said it, this is now your policy document, and Point Fortin is still without a hospital and really puts the residents at risk; that is the point. The facilities are so very poor, the Minister of Health promised that by the first quarter of 2013, the sod would have been turned,

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and let us agree, it has not been done, and no direction has been given as to when it will be done. All I am saying is that funding has been arranged for Arima, funding has been arranged for the Children's Hospital, and nothing is said about Point Fortin, and I am concerned about the poor health care that is being given in Point Fortin

The Minister has visited—you know the state of health care in Point Fortin; it is poor. The only services conducted there are—the only specialty services are gynaecology services, that is it. Sometimes you do not even have an anaesthetist there, so you cannot even do gynaecological-related operations at all in an emergency; and we have had cases like that where we have had to call you to have these cases transferred to San Fernando in an emergency. I am saying you cannot have a whole peninsula—I mean I could not tell you what the population is in terms of the number of persons who impact that hospital—who would need that hospital—and certainly it will take a lot of strain off San Fernando, but you cannot ignore, you promised—

Dr. Khan: You all do not have—[*Inaudible*]

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon:—you gave a timeline, you have gone beyond that now, and I am saying that in the light of all the moneys being approved here, I would have been pleased, the people of Point Fortin would have been pleased if you had come forward and mentioned a hospital.

When a Minister comes before us to speak on a Finance (Supplementary Appropriation) Bill, you cannot ask for money unless you account. You must account as to the money you have spent—[*Desk thumping*] and I am saying that there has been wastage, the money has not been well spent, and yet the Minister has said nothing about these large projects which you have promised. You are on record saying that the sod would have been turned by the third quarter of 2013.

I am saying that this is a very, very, serious state of affairs. We have had some cases that should not have happened. In some instances it amounted to death, and I want to work with the Minister of Health on it, I want to work with the Government. I will be grateful for this project to be done, but the point is you cannot make these promises, knowing [*Crosstalk*] the state of health care, you cannot continue to deprive the people of Point Fortin in the way you have done in the three years that you have been there.

Just a quick point about the UTT Campus which my friend—which the hon. Member for La Brea spoke about; the UTT Campus in Point Fortin. It seems to me that the Government is concerned about a seamless education system for

Chaguanas and for Debe, and so on. I have no problem with that, but we also want a seamless education system in Point Fortin as well. You met it on the table, Point Fortin is an industrial town, La Brea is part of the south-western peninsula as well, and we are saying we need a UTT Campus in Point Fortin. We need to have a seamless education system for the people of the south-western peninsula as well. All of the other opportunities which I have asked for from the Senator, Fazal Karam, the Minister of Tertiary—

Hon. Member: Karim. Karim.

Mrs. P. Gopee-Scoon:—Karim, sorry, the Minister of Tertiary Education and Skills Training, all of the opportunities we have asked for in terms of ttconnect express, mobile computer library training, ACTT students caravan, THTI Sustainable Community Based projects, all of the short courses we have asked for, all of the YTEPP programmes, an entire list, a MuST, MIC merger, and again the UTT Campus, all of this has fallen on deaf ears. We have gotten absolutely no support at all from this Government.

So, I am saying, I am disappointed in the level of profligacy by this Government. I do not think that the Minister has come here with enough—[*Mr. Speaker indicates time to wrap up*—I am wrapping up. I do not think that the Minister has come here with enough explanations about past expenditure and, therefore, there is no way that I can support any further moneys for expenditure by this Government.

Thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker: Members, I want to remind Members, this time of the morning, Standing Order 33(6). I want Members to observe that reading without the leave of the Chair will not be permitted for the rest of this sitting, and I want Members to pay attention to Standing Order 43(1) and (2), repetition and relevance. Who is next?

Hon. Member: Arouca/Maloney.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Arouca/Maloney. [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Members: “Oh gorm.”

Miss Alicia Hospedales (Arouca/Maloney): Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I am thankful for the opportunity to contribute to this debate on the Finance : (Supplementary Appropriation) Bill, 2013. I would like to agree with my colleague, the Member for Point Fortin when she said that the request made by

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the Minister of Finance and the Economy for additional funding is really—cannot be supported because of the fact that you all have wasted the money. There has been wanton wastage. And, Mr. Speaker, you know, the Minister of Finance and the Economy came to this House to ask for over \$2.8 billion and there is some concern, I would say a lot of concern, concerning this request. Right?

Mr. Speaker, one of the things all of us on this side say is: How can we support it? How can our constituents support it? How can members of the population support this request and feel comfortable knowing that the UNC Government has squandered the money, has squandered our money on tea parties, frolics, et cetera. [*Crosstalk*] Why we are saying that they have squandered our money, they have not given account, they have not been transparent. It is embedded in a report by the Auditor General on the Public Accounts for the financial year 2012, which brings to light and confirms the way in which they have misused and abused—if we can use that word—

Hon. Member: Yes, we can.

Miss A. Hospedales:—their use of money as well as in terms of their lack of accountability and transparency as well.

Mr. Speaker, the report of the Auditor General made specific reference to the fact that there was a lack of documentation, to verify millions of dollars in expenditure at identified Government Ministries. The report also goes on to say that there were no responses to requests for more information on money spent—that speaks of a lack of accountability and transparency. There is also non-compliance with respect to financial institutions, non-compliance with financial regulations, non-compliance with other financial directions.

You know, this tells us that we have to be very, very, very concerned as a people because of the fact that they have not used the money well, and failed—not that they only have not used the money well, they have failed to account for the way in which the money has been spent. No documentation, no responses, non-compliance, all of these things. [*Crosstalk*] Member for Barataria/San Juan, we are talking about what the Auditor General has said, yes. [*Crosstalk*]

Dr. Khan: The Auditor General always does that—[*Inaudible*]

Miss A. Hospedales: Mr. Speaker, there were also omissions of very important information in certain appropriation accounts submitted for audit. The other thing that was said is that there was inconsistent presentation of information.

So, the Government has proven to be very, very irresponsible when it comes to spending money, when it comes to giving account for the money spent, when it comes to providing the evidence, right, for the money which has been spent.

They have failed to give account as I indicated. We on this side, and I am sure members of the population who are looking on, members of Arouca/Maloney, would not be able to agree with the approval of this over \$2.8 billion. Something has to be terribly wrong with the logic, they are coming here to ask us to approve all of this money, and they cannot give account for any of the money which has not been spent properly. They cannot give proper account—and that is what was said in the Auditor General's report.

I hear the Member for Couva North saying—what?—I can give you the copy of the report so you can actually take your time and read it and you will see—

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: “She doh want to read it.”

Miss A. Hospedales:—the evidence that is there. We were asked by the Minister of Finance and the Economy to agree to the approval of an additional \$66,689,000 for the Ministry of Sport. You know, I am again, you know, very, very concerned because the sums of money being requested, you know, millions and millions of dollars, and we are asked to just sit here, bang the desk and say, yes, we support, we support—

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Yes.

Miss A. Hospedales:—when all of these discrepancies exist, Mr. Speaker. For instance, under Nonprofit Institutions, they are telling us that \$29,689,000 is being requested for the Elite Athletes Assistance Programme, financial assistance to clubs, leagues, sports-serving organizations, as well as subventions for national governing bodies of sport, and expenses relating to hosting of seven Olympic Caravans which were scheduled for August 2012.

One of the things we had asked the Minister of Finance and the Economy to provide was information on the number of clubs, the number of leagues, the sports-serving organizations, the national governing bodies of sports and a breakdown of the funding received by each. And, you know, the Minister of Finance and the Economy did not provide us with the information. Again, we talk about transparency and accountability.

The Minister of Sport came here waving a document saying that he has all the information there, and oh, he would want to give it to us, but because of other things said by the previous debater, he wants to respond to that and he did not

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give us the information at all. All he came and said was that where the youth camps are located, and I think that is about it, but in terms of answering the specific information, he did not give an account. He did not demonstrate transparency and accountability Mr. Speaker.

We were also told that \$31 million was being required for the Sports Company of Trinidad and Tobago to meet the cost of janitorial, security, landscaping services at 13 sporting facilities; funding is also required to host youth camps throughout Trinidad and Tobago over the July/August period. Once again, we were provided with no responses to the questions asked, with respect to the naming of the service providers for the security, the landscaping and janitorial services.

We also asked that the amounts payable to each of these service providers be provided, and that the cost to host the youth camps be provided as well. Again, we did not get the answer. The Minister of Finance and the Economy did not give us a response, and the Minister of Sport again, just—you know, I almost thought we were in a stand-up comedy, you know, while listening to him, you know, he did not take the issue very seriously, did not even consider that answering us was a serious issue, you know. So, Mr. Speaker, so there was no disclosure, no transparency, on how money is spent at the Sports Company of Trinidad and Tobago—and even at the Ministry of Sport.

2.45 a.m.

We also asked about the \$6 million required by the Sports Company of Trinidad and Tobago for the repayment of interest on a loan secured with the First Citizens Bank for the Pathways Programme—our “life sport”—but got no response, only a document waved in our faces. We got no response whatsoever.

No response was provided as to where the \$77.2 million was spent in the LIFE Sport Programme. No response was provided, Mr. Speaker, so it really causes me great concern with respect to the level of accountability and transparency by the Government.

We are asking all of these questions; we are getting no response. It is the same thing the Auditor General reported—no response when additional information was required; no response when they were asked to provide evidence of their expenditure; no response whatsoever. Where is the accountability and transparency where the Government is concerned?

A lot of us already know they have none whatsoever and it is almost as though there is a “doh-care” attitude. You know, we “doh” have to give an account, so we are not providing the information, and it is really, very, very sad for us in terms of having persons in leadership positions and those persons not giving account for what they do.

Mr. Speaker, let us look at what the Auditor General had to say about the Ministry of Sport in the 2012 report. The Ministry of Sport, according to the Auditor General’s report, made two payments totalling \$11 million but when they look at the available statements, the statements showed the payment actually totalled \$5,611,933.25, when compared to the \$11 million that was presented and, Mr. Speaker, additionally a payment of \$2,579,920.94 was made, but the available expenditure statement for that payment showed \$2,449,950.94, so there was a discrepancy there and it was highlighted by the Auditor General.

Ah! Oh God, I think this one was the most amazing, in that there is a vote for non-profit institutions and in that vote \$180,737 was actually paid out for funeral arrangements for an individual.

Hon. Member: How much?

Miss A. Hospedales: \$180,737 was paid out for funeral arrangements for an individual, so we would like to ask, Mr. Speaker, who was this person? Who was this individual this amount of money was paid out for? The non-profit institution’s vote was not to be used as a funeral grant vote and if the members or whoever it is who would have paid out this money knew about the Ministry of the People and Social Development, they should have referred the grieving family to that Ministry where they would have gotten a grant of seven thousand, seven—

Dr. Browne: They would have been considered for a grant—

Ms. A. Hospedales: Yes, they would have been considered for a grant, rather than have to use \$180,737 from the non-profit vote—and this was a major discrepancy that was highlighted by the Auditor General.

Mr. Speaker, another thing they highlighted was the fact that there was \$992,900 paid without supporting time sheets, which was reported to have been for the football programmes. So time sheets were needed to have been supplied for the coaches and persons under this particular programme, but none of the time sheets were provided, but money was paid out. What they also found was that the money was used for football programmes other than the one it was intended. So this is the same Ministry, the Minister of Finance and the Economy is coming here today to ask us to give support to giving an additional \$69,689,000.

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How can we, as you know, sit here and say “yea”, yes, we are going to give support to a Ministry that had so many discrepancies with respect to the use, the way it spent its money; with respect to the fact that there was no documentation in some instances; no accountability; very low, very, very, very low accountability, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, this Ministry, the Ministry of Sport, according to the Auditor General’s Report, failed to disclose, again, very important information such as a total of \$31.7 million in cheques. It failed to verify the information with respect to the amount of money that had to be paid out and it used money for purposes it was not to be used for.

So, Mr. Speaker, you know, those things cause us to be very, very, very concerned because when you hear those kinds of things, you know, you would want to know what is really happening at the Ministry of Sport. We want to ask that question: what is happening at the Ministry of Sport? This is just a little bit of information. I am sure if further investigations were to be done, there would be many, many, many more discrepancies coming from that Ministry.

When the Minister of Sport, again, had the opportunity to really stand up and give proper accounts, again he dodged and ducked and, you know, pretended again to ignore the fact that there were pertinent questions that were asked and that he needed to, as a responsible Minister of Sport, stand up and give proper accounting to this House and to the people of this country, even to his constituents of D’Abadie/O’Meara. Mr. Speaker, I do not think that he really knows what accountability is all about.

Mr. Speaker, another issue is that \$25,875,000 is required by the Government to increase the number of food cards being used. I almost dropped when I heard this because, once again, through the Minister of Finance and the Economy, the Government failed to give an account and failed to be transparent by refusing to respond. There was no response. I remember when they handed us the response to the questions that we would have asked during the Finance Committee meeting, I looked at the responses and I was looking for a response to these questions and did not find any.

So the Minister of Finance and the Economy failed to respond to questions posed both by myself and the Member for Point Fortin, with respect to—we asked for the breakdown of the number of permanent as well as temporary food cards issued by constituency from June to this present time, and actually we also asked about the projected increase in the number of food cards that are expected over

the next six months. No response whatsoever. None! And that again causes us concern. They are coming here asking for over \$25 million and we are supposed to say, yes, give it to them.

Mr. Speaker, if they had nothing to hide, I would say they would have given us the information. It would have been readily available. You know, I have a concern regarding how food cards are being distributed and who really are the beneficiaries of these food cards. Let me tell you why I am asking this and expressing this concern as well, Mr. Speaker.

Earlier on, yesterday, while at home getting ready, a neighbour of mine, who is a retiree, said a vehicle pulled up by his home. The person came out and said, I have a package for you that he needed to sign for. He came out, he signed for the package and when he examined the package, you know what he realized? That he got a food card with his name written on it. Right? How he got the food card, he does not know. He never applied for the food card because, number one, he would have never qualified for it based on his income bracket. Based on his income bracket, he would have never qualified for it.

Mr. Speaker, this is very, very dishonest.

Dr. Rambachan: What is his name? Tell him to give it back to the Ministry.

Miss A. Hospedales: Yes, because in having discussion with someone else, they said that people may be randomly selected; their names going through the phone book, randomly selecting people and just distributing it to their homes. Mr. Speaker, this is a matter of grave, grave, grave concern.

Dr. Rambachan: Tell us who is the neighbour?

Miss A. Hospedales: Mr. Speaker, this is a matter of grave concern. How many of these food cards have been distributed in this manner? I would like the Government to tell us: how many of those food cards have been distributed in this particular way?

I remember, in November of last year, the Chief Secretary Orville London of the Tobago House of Assembly, he called on the Prime Minister at that particular point in time to launch an investigation into the willy-nilly—that is what he said—the willy-nilly distribution of government food cards to undeserving recipients in villages in Tobago.

Mr. Speaker, you know, because he recognized that food cards were just being distributed over there to any individual without any proper assessment, people

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were not even applying, just like my neighbour. He never applied for the food card, was never interviewed, no house visit was ever done, a food card just appeared in front his house—

Miss Ramdial: A magic wand.

Miss A. Hospedales: No, no, no. Somebody distributed the package to him, his name is written on the food card and he never applied.

Mr. Speaker, this is the kind of thing that Chief Secretary Orville London was speaking about, the willy-nilly distribution of food cards and he asked then for an investigation into the distribution of food cards in Tobago and, Mr. Speaker, today I am asking for an investigation to be done into the distribution of food cards in Trinidad. Mr. Speaker, just like he did, I call upon the Prime Minister to ensure that such an investigation—as a responsible leader, to ensure that such an investigation is done. [*Desk thumping*]

We are also calling for an investigation to be done into the regional offices of the food card—you know, the Targeted Conditional Cash Transfer Programme. We are calling for an investigation to be done and why we are asking for an investigation to be done, we would like: one, to find out how many regional managers there are; how many of the numbers of regional managers are actually qualified for the positions that they hold. We would like to know because there were specific qualifications laid out for the positions of regional managers and, as far as we are aware, persons are occupying those positions and they are not qualified. What has happened is that the qualified members of staff—persons with first degrees and masters, et cetera—have been bypassed, and persons who are not qualified are actually occupying the positions.

I would like them to pay special attention to the Sangre Grande Regional Office and to explore the qualifications of the regional manager at the Sangre Grande Regional Office. We would also like them to explore or to investigate the relationship of this regional manager with a particular high government official.

3.00 a.m.

Mr. Speaker, the other thing we would like to find out is the number of liaison officers who also are not qualified to be in those positions based on the set qualifications. Mr. Speaker, the other thing we want to know is, why? Why? Because, you know, that question is being asked. Why were staff with the qualifications bypassed for those specific positions of regional manager as well as liaison officer? Why were the staff members bypassed? We would like you all to tell us, you know. [*Crosstalk*]

The other thing we are asking is, why staff members who are living in Rio Claro are actually sent to work in Tunapuna when there is a regional office in Rio Claro? Could you please, you know—I do not know which one of the Ministers would decide to answer us, if it is the Minister of Finance and the Economy or the Minister of the People and Social Development—but why do staff from Rio Claro have to come to work in Tunapuna?

Mr. De Coteau: They joined the public service, they say they would work wherever they are placed.

Miss A. Hospedales: Why do staff from the west have to go to work in Rio Claro?

Mr. Jeffrey: Good question! Good question!

Miss A. Hospedales: Why should staff from the west have to go to work in Sangre Grande? It just does not make any sense—

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: No sense! The Government makes no sense, anyway.

Miss A. Hospedales:—when there are offices closest to where they live. It really does not make any sense. We are saying that an investigation is needed with respect to the operations, the staffing and all of the relevant procedures, et cetera, with respect to the food card offices, the regional offices.

Additionally, I would like to highlight another issue. We were told by the Minister of Finance and the Economy that the Ministry of the People and Social Development needed an additional \$210,438,000 to meet expenditure incurred to the end of fiscal 2013 for Senior Citizens' Grants to the tune of \$181,238,000; Disability Grants, \$27 million; urgent temporary assistance, \$2,000,200.

Again, we were told that we must approve—we must agree to the approval of this money—but when we asked questions of the Minister of Finance and the Economy, particularly, the Member for Diego Martin Central, requesting an account of the increase in the recurrent expenditure under the Senior Citizens and Disability Grants, no response was provided. Where is the accountability? Where is the transparency? Mr. Speaker, none exists. No response was given for the full breakdown of the cost, none whatsoever. You know, that causes us concern, when these Members are sitting there, and not being able to account or refusing—not that they are not being able to, they can account, but they refuse to account for the money that is being spent. They refuse even so to account for the money that they have requested.

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Mr. Speaker, the \$210,438,000, they are saying it must be approved, and we must not ask any questions, or they would not give us answers to any of the questions we have asked. Mr. Speaker, that is very, very, very, sad. It is unacceptable and we are calling on the Members of the Government to give account; not just for the money spent, but for the money that you have requested; give account. We know the response. There would be no accountability whatsoever.

Dr. Khan: Anticipation! Do not anticipate.

Miss A. Hospedales: We were also asked to agree to the approval of \$314,676,100 for the Ministry of Education. You know, I remember during the Finance Committee meeting there was a lot of discourse regarding no statement, no explanation, made by the Ministry of Education with respect to how this particular money was going to be used.

Again, I want to go to what the Auditor General would have stated with respect to the Ministry of Education. [*Crosstalk*] The Ministry of Education, the Auditor General Report said it had no register of contracts that was provided to the auditor. There was also—the total number of contracts awarded could not have been determined. So there was no determination or no way that the auditor could have determined the total number of contracts.

Mr. Speaker, the other thing that the Auditor General's Report revealed was that there were outstanding commitments of over \$7 million that could not be verified. This happened in the Ministry of Education—over \$7 million of commitments—outstanding commitments that could not have been verified.

Additionally, what the Auditor General's report said, is that there were critical supporting documents such as the memoranda of understanding, project status reports, plus signed contracts which were required for verification of payments totalling \$10,781,552, but all of those were not produced for audit as at August 31, 2012. No documentation, no response.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Ask the Permanent Secretary.

Miss A. Hospedales: No statements for verification, Mr. Speaker.

Dr. Gopeesingh: That is their job. Do not ask the Minister.

Miss A. Hospedales:—and this is cause for great concern. Where is the accountability? Where is the transparency? They must be held to account. The report showed again that there was non-compliance with financial instruction.

Financial statements were also signed by someone who was not authorized as the appointed ministering officer. Mr. Speaker, all of this is happening at the Ministry of Education, and they want more money.

Dr. Gopeesingh: We want money to pay the teachers their back pay for the three years. [*Laughter*]

Miss A. Hospedales: So, the Minister of Finance and the Economy knows all of this because I am sure he would have been privy to the Auditor General's Report, and he is still coming here to say that we must approve, or agree to the approval of \$314,676,100. Mr. Speaker, we cannot, we cannot, we cannot approve those sums of money.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Well, do not support it.

Miss A. Hospedales: We cannot support it. Mr. Speaker, I just want to talk a bit about the Student Support Services. I heard the Minister of Education come early and talk about his grandiose plans about how many staff members they are going to hire and all that kind of thing. I just want to tell him that I was a member of the Student Support Services. I was.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Member for Caroni East.

Miss A. Hospedales: The Member for Caroni East, yes. I want to tell the Member for Caroni East that I was a member of the Student Support Services, and I am aware that since January of 2012, the unit was operating without a manager. The manager had retired and the unit was operating without a manager.

Dr. Browne: No wonder!

Miss A. Hospedales: Prior to May 24, 2010, there were 50 social workers and 19 of them were sent home.

Dr. Browne: What!

Miss A. Hospedales: Their contracts came to an end and 19 of them were sent home. So you could imagine how those individuals were. They would have been devastated because they relied on that particular job to provide them with security for their loans on their homes and their cars; 19 of them.

Dr. Browne: What about their children who are depending on them?

Miss A. Hospedales: That is right. The termination was abrupt. They were not able to terminate properly with the students that were under their care.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Stop talking foolishness!

Miss A. Hospedales: Mr. Speaker, 19 were sent home; 14 I am aware have contracts up until 2015. Two of them, their contracts ended last month and 15 social workers they go by a month-to-month. So it is by ear, you know, “This month if ah feel to keep yuh, next month well ah would keep you, if ah feel to keep you the next month, I would keep you” and, Mr. Speaker, that provides no security for any of the social workers because they cannot go to the bank.

A lot of the social workers actually have to travel far distances to get to the schools that are within their clusters and having no security and working on a month-to-month basis. That does not give them—you know, they cannot approach a bank to say that they can get a loan for a car, or even to get a loan for a mortgage. They cannot because the job that they have does not offer them any security.

Mr. Speaker, additionally, just imagine that these professionals work under conditions where they have no vacation, they have no sick days, they have no security and, again—

Dr. Gopeesingh: Why are you trying to mislead the House? Why are you trying to mislead the House?

Miss A. Hospedales:—I am actually stressing that they had no security for loans.

Dr. Gopeesingh: No sick leave and no vacation. What foolishness is that?

Mr. Speaker: Member for Caroni East, please.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yes.

Miss A. Hospedales: They were also attached to the Student Support Services Division. There is also no psychologist and, additionally, the guidance counsellors, prior to May 2010, there were over 100 guidance counsellors. Today there are approximately 79 and they are also working month-to-month. Right?

Mr. Speaker, all the social workers—I was told that all the social workers, even those who worked as far back as 2004 actually have to reapply; every one of them, the social workers and the guidance officers. So even though they were with the Student Support Services Division since 2004, they have no security and they are all required to face an interview again. They are not even sure that they

would get through. Another thing is that, there are no diagnostic specialists. Contracts were not renewed for the ones that were there prior to 2010. Contracts were not renewed.

Mr. Speaker, special education aides, they also work month-to-month. They have no security as well. The special education teachers, their contracts, for many of them, were not renewed. So, Mr. Speaker, the Student Support Services Division—the structure that was being established, the solid structure that was being established has been dismantled because of the number of persons that were sent home, the contracts that were not renewed, the current existing situations that workers have to work under, all of this occurred after May 24, 2010.

It is really sad to know that a unit that was so strong and bringing such benefit to the children of this country has come to this particular state where it is in disarray, it does not even have a head. People are just basically doing what they can to support the children under their care, but they are just doing what they can and many of them, they will tell you that when they go to the schools they do not have a space to operate from. They are either in the library where they are frequently disturbed or operating out of their cars from the trunk. I mean, it is a very, very, very, terrible situation that the social workers and even guidance counsellors actually have to work under.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to go to another aspect of the Auditor General's Report. The Auditor General's Report also highlighted the abuse and misuse of funds and reporting and other procedures for the Ministry of Local Government. Mr. Speaker, for the Ministry of Local Government, it said that in the Ministry of Local Government there is the development of rural communities, and under this programme there were no contracts, no memorandum of understanding was produced to support payments totalling \$8,308,300 made to the executing agency for the development of rural communities.

3.15 a.m.

Mr. Speaker, according to the Auditor General, payments were not verified. They were not able to verify the payments because there were no supporting documents. The contracts, the memorandum of understanding, et cetera, the documentation that they needed to verify the payments was not there.

Mr. Speaker, under “community improvement services”, there was no memoranda of understanding, again, that was produced for any of the projects for payment of \$17,235,992.04. Mr. Speaker, no accountability again, no

transparency with respect to how money is used in the Ministry of Local Government. Mr. Speaker, I also want to highlight an issue with respect to the Tunapuna/Piarco Regional Corporation because the constituency of Arouca/Maloney falls within the boundaries of the Tunapuna/Piarco Regional Corporation.

Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General reported that there were updated cash books, bank reconciliation for September 2012—they were missing. Well, bank statements for September 2012 were missing, the stock register for cheques was missing and the cheque payment register was also missing. And, Mr. Speaker, all of these needed to have been provided to the Auditor General for examination and they were not provided at all. Where is the accountability? Where is the transparency, Mr. Speaker?

The Minister of Finance and the Economy, again, wants us—after knowing all of these things with respect to the Ministry of Local Government, and I am sure I have not even touched the surface regarding the discrepancies that occur at the Ministry of Local Government—but after knowing all of this he is coming to us to say, “Approve \$257 million for the Ministry of Local Government”. How can we—how can we sit here and say, “Yea”, to the, “Yes we approve. Yes, we agree to the approving of the finances, the \$257 million for the Ministry of Local Government”, when there is no accountability, no transparency—

Dr. Rambachan: So you would not pay your workers their increased wages?

Miss A. Hospedales:—no statements, no documents, in no way for the Auditor General to verify the information. Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about the Tunapuna/Piarco Regional Corporation. Just recently I sent an email to the Minister of Local Government—

Hon. Member: anan@gmail?

Miss A. Hospedales:—and I told him about the fact that the residents of Bon Air Gardens, Arouca are taxpayers also. The reason why I had to write this particular email is because for three years we have been asking for roads to be patched, roads to be paved. You know what we started to do? Today we started our own road-patching programme. You know what we are doing? We are patching our roads with cement.

Dr. Rambachan: Very good.

Miss A. Hospedales: We are patching our roads with cement. We started our own road patching exercise because the roads in Bon Air Gardens are getting

worse and worse, and with the rainy season that is already here if those holes remain as big as they are they will eventually take over the entire road. That is to tell you how big the holes are. Quarter of a tyre can fit down inside it. So we are saying—

Hon. Member: First time [*Inaudible*] fill a drain?

Miss A. Hospedales:—for three years—yes, in the constituency of Arouca/Maloney. For three years we have been asking for those holes to be patched and the Chairman and the CEO of the Tunapuna/Piarco Regional Corporation have done nothing.

Mr. Speaker, additionally, we have been asking for street signs to be—
[*Interruption*]

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: I am going to report him to the Commonwealth.

Mr. Speaker: Too many persons are speaking whilst the Member is on her legs, and I would like to hear her, and Hansard has to record her contribution. Continue, hon. Member, please.

Miss A. Hospedales: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for your protection. Yes, Mr. Speaker, again, I am saying, for three years we have been asking for street signs to be replaced. The community of Bon Air Gardens is a very old community. Over 30-something years old and the street signs are now in need of being replaced, some of them are actually missing.

We submitted over 25 street signs, a list, you know; we submitted them to the regional corporation, and you know what? They actually gave us three in three years. Just imagine that. In three years, Mr.: Speaker, you know. So we even decided that we are going to put in our own street signs as well. We will get people to donate and we will put on the street sign “Donated by” and the name of the person, because we cannot—

Dr. Khan: That is a good idea.

Miss A. Hospedales:—continue to wait on the regional corporation; we will get nothing as they have been doing.

Mr. Speaker, “doh talk fuh de recreational grounds.” On May 30, the village council in the community, the Bon Air Gardens Village Council hosted their annual sports, and you know what? The marchers had to march on one foot of grass. The grass was high. There was no place for the marchers to march, and they said that they had gotten the assurances from the Chairman of the

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Tunapuna/Piarco Regional Corporation that they would cut the grass. That was such a shame to see the marchers having to march, and even the athletes run through this tall grass.

Mr. Roberts: That is good for speed.

Miss A. Hospedales: Mr.: Speaker, and there is so much. I remembered recently having to send them a list of over—[*Interruption*]

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

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

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. Speaker: You may continue hon. Member. [*Desk thumping*]

Miss A. Hospedales: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as I was saying that—

Mr. Roberts: “Oh God, say, ‘Thank you’ nah.”

Miss A. Hospedales: Okay, thank you Member for D'Abadie/O'Meara, I see you looking for attention at this hour of the morning. Mr. Speaker, you know, having all these outlying issues with respect to the Tunapuna/Piarco Regional Corporation really causes us concern, because I am almost convinced, you know, I mean because after having asked for three years I am almost convinced that the residents of Bon Air Garden are being discriminated, because that is the community that I live in.

Mr. Speaker, you know none of the concerns that are raised by the residents are actually responded to, and it really causes us concern. The recreational ground: in 2010 the recreational ground was approved to be upgraded by the Sports Company of Trinidad and Tobago, and I wrote to the Minister, asked questions in Parliament regarding it and up till today the recreational ground still remains the same—“same old, same old, same old”.

Mr.: Speaker, the community centre, the Member for Mayaro, was approved to be constructed in 2010; the remedial work had already been done. The contractor was already on site. When the election on May 24, 2010 came they stopped the project. Up to today the community centre has not been touched. The area—the land allocated—has not been touched, and this community had been requesting this community centre for a while now and it is a shame to know that

the Government has chosen to respond to the residents of Bon Air Gardens, Arouca, the way that they are responding to them right now.

Mr. Speaker, you know there are so many other issues. We have sent—there is an area in Bon Air Gardens that, you know, it is a river bank that runs parallel to the houses on 7th Avenue in Bon Air Gardens, and I have written to the regional corporation, asked the CEPEP contractors, nobody wants to cut the grass. The grass is 20 feet high, and you know what happened?

Mr. Roberts: Twenty foot grass?

Miss A. Hospedales: Yes.

Dr. Gopeesingh: “Dat is ah tree.”

Hon. Member: Grass?

Miss A. Hospedales: The grass, I am telling you. You must come and visit, I am inviting you to come and visit. Mr. Speaker, you know what has happened? Thieves actually hide their loot in the grass because it is so high. Police have had to fish out bandits from inside that very said grass, not once, not twice, but about three times.

Residents have experienced bandits coming over their fences from that same grassed area. It is a major security risk for the residents of Bon Air Gardens, and not one agency has responded to the need to have that area cut. I remember one night coming home and there was a major bush fire in the dry season. I stopped on sight, called the fire service so that they can come and out the fire; if you see how quickly the fire started to spread. You know, Members on the other side are actually laughing at this issue. It is a very, very serious issue: mosquitoes, rodents, name it. The residents are actually plagued because of this overgrown grassed area behind their homes that I have been begging the regional corporation to cut for three years.

Dr. Rambachan: What happened before that?

Miss A. Hospedales: It was cut. It was cut before that, so we have been asking the regional corporation—

Hon. Member: The grass higher than [*Inaudible*]. [*Laughter*]

Miss A. Hospedales:—to cut the grass for three years. And you know the Prime Minister even makes this a joking matter. It is not a joking matter, it is serious. [*Crosstalk*] It is a very serious matter and, Mr.: Speaker, there are so many other issues with respect to the Bon Air Gardens area, and you know,

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Minister of Local Government rather than you criticize or you cast aspersions, I would like you to visit the area and to respond to the needs of the residents because you all have not been doing that. You all have not been responding to the needs of the residents of Bon Air Gardens, Arouca, and it is a shame. It is a big shame.

Dr. Rambachan: Who is the representative?

Miss A. Hospedales: I cry shame on you.

Dr. Rambachan: It is a shame on you as the representative.

Miss A. Hospedales: I cry shame on you because you are the one who is supposed to respond. You are responsible for local—[*Interruption*]

Dr. Browne: Mr. Speaker, Standing Order 40 (b) and (c): he is being very disruptive of my colleague.

Mr. Speaker: Yes. Hon. Members, may I ask you to allow the Member for Arouca/Maloney to speak in silence, please. Continue hon. Member, please.

Miss A. Hospedales: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I cry shame on the Minister of Local Government because the regional corporation is non-functional, and it is not only for that area. If I were to go through every single area of the Arouca/Maloney constituency and neighbouring constituencies—

Hon. Member: But you are a poor representative.

Miss A. Hospedales:—you would realize that you all have not been responding to the needs. [*Desk thumping*] The regional corporation has not been responding to the needs of the residents. And all of us on this side, all of us can say the same thing: the regional corporations have not been responding to the needs of the constituents—[*Desk thumping*]—so it is a reflection on you.

Mr. Speaker, the Member for Couva South spoke about the equal distribution of his Government and, Mr. Speaker, you know, I mean we all know that this is not true. When we look at the response provided by the Minister of Finance and the Economy with respect to the flood mitigation, Mr.: Speaker, every single, 13—let me see how many.

Mr. Speaker: You are not going through that again? [*Laughter*]

Miss A. Hospedales: No! No! No! I am just highlighting the fact that there are 24 areas that were selected and none of them—

Miss Ramdial: Would the Member give way? Would the Member give way?

Miss A. Hospedales: No! No! No, my dear, not at this hour of the morning. No! No! No! Twenty-four areas that have been highlighted and none of the areas are areas represented or located in the Opposition constituencies.

Dr. Gopeesingh: “None is”, not “none are”, none is.

Miss A. Hospedales: None of the areas are—none of the areas are, Mr. Speaker. Areas are, “eh”, Sir. Mr. Speaker, \$30 million has been allocated, and we are expected to approve, to say “yes” to \$30 million being approved. I want to say that even for the Arouca/Maloney constituency, three years again, I have written making requests for the desilting of a river that runs parallel to Nicholas Gardens and Bon Air Gardens, Arouca, and up to this day the river has not been desilted. Several letters were sent, the river has not been desilted, and you know that is cause for a major, major, major, major, concern.

3.30 a.m.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to say that with a deficit of \$17.9 billion in three years, we are asked to say yes to this additional expense of over \$2.8 billion. We are asked to approve and agree with all the different allocations made by the specific Ministries; we are asked to sit here and bang the desk in support of this additional request made by the members of the Government, but how can we after looking at all the discrepancies? The fact that there is no accountability, there is no transparency, they have not given account for the moneys spent, they have not even given account in many areas for the money that they are requesting. Mr. Speaker, we cannot, we cannot, and I am saying it again, we cannot give support to the request for over \$2.8 billion made by the Ministry of Finance and the Economy.

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

Mr. Speaker: Member for Laventille West.

Mr. NiLeung Hypolite (*Laventille West*): Thank you kindly, Mr. Speaker. At 1.30 yesterday we came into this House to debate this Bill. It is now 3.31—

Dr. Gopeesingh: “How much hours is that?”

Mr. N. Hypolite:—some 14 hours, am I correct, Mr. Minister of Education?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yes.

Mr. N. Hypolite: Yes.

Dr. Gopeesingh: You are correct.

Mr. N. Hypolite: Thank you so kindly. Mr. Speaker, and within those 14 hours, I thought I would have heard from the Minister of Local Government, the Minister of the People and Social Development, the Minister of Housing and the Environment, the Minister of National Security, the Minister of Works and Infrastructure. *[Interruption]* I thought I would have heard from those Ministers, but you know what, Mr. Speaker—*[Interruption]*

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, allow the Member to speak. *[Crosstalk]*

Mr. N. Hypolite:—I believe that if we have a proper system in place, whereby Bills like this can be debated over a two-day period, we will be able to get a lot more done and a lot of people would be able—*[Interruption]*

Mr. Roberts: Arouca/Maloney.

Mr. N. Hypolite: A lot of us would be able to contribute properly; a number of us would be able to actually hear the explanations coming from the various Ministers. Therefore, may I suggest, through you, Mr. Speaker, to the Leader of the House that on occasions like this, we consider doing this debate over a two-day period rather than trying to fit the entire debate within a 14 to 16 hours, one session. *[Interruption]*

Mr. Speaker, as I go forward I wish to just touch on a couple quick issues and I would be relatively short. *[Continuous interruption]* The Member for Couva North indicated that the Opposition—it is Opposition's—

Mr. Roberts: Mr. Speaker, Standing Order 40(b) and (c) please. Point Fortin, Arouca/Maloney, I am trying to listen to the Member for Laventille West at this hour.

Mr. Speaker: Could you allow the Member for Laventille West to speak and give him your full cooperation. Please! Continue hon. Member for Laventille West. *[Desk thumping]*

Mr. Roberts: Thank you, Sir.

Mr. N. Hypolite: Thank you kindly, Mr. Speaker. The Member for Couva North indicated that it is the role of the Opposition to do everything or anything possible—*[Interruption]*

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Mr. Speaker, 40(b) and (c) please. Members on the other side are disturbing their own Member. Most disrespectful.

Mr. Roberts: Yes, that is very disrespectful.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, could I ask for your cooperation. You are disturbing the Member for Laventille West. Thank you very much. Continue hon. Member.

Mr. N. Hypolite: Thanks again, Mr. Speaker. The Member for Couva North indicated that it is the role of the Opposition to do all in its power to make the Government look—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Roberts: Bad.

Mr. N. Hypolite:—bad. But may I say, Mr. Speaker, that we do not need to do that. We do not need to contribute in doing that. [*Desk thumping*]

Miss Ramdial: Oh, come on.

Mr. N. Hypolite: The Government itself is doing it all by themselves.

Miss Hospedales: That is right, you do a good job on your own. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. N. Hypolite: May I also say, Mr. Speaker, that the Member for Couva South indicated a number of issues with respect to the Opposition. In fact, he carried us down memory lane and he reminded us of a number of things, and all I would like to do, Mr. Speaker, is just to add to some of the things that he started to remind us, remind the people of Trinidad. [*Interruption*]

Let me assist you in just sharing with you a couple of things he may have left out, such as the diplomatic centre, Hyatt, NAPA—

Hon. Member: “SAPA.”

Mr. N. Hypolite:—NAPA south, the roads network, the financial towers, the Uriah Butler intersection or interchange, the Aranguez Flyover, the education for all policy, and all of these are things as I said that the People’s National Movement [*Desk thumping*] had on its agenda, had implemented.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Education for all is a PNM thing? [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. N. Hypolite: We also looked at the policy to deal with youth, the policy to deal with sports. Let us not forget the 26,000 houses that were constructed [*Desk thumping*] of which you, right now—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: Twenty-six—[*Interruption*]

Mr. N. Hypolite: Twenty-six thousand houses—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Jeffrey: Tell them, man; tell them.

Mr. N. Hypolite:—that the PNM constructed over its eight-year period, of which you all are presently distributing. [*Interruption and desk thumping*]

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Let me also indicate the lighting of the various recreation grounds throughout the entire Trinidad and Tobago, community centres throughout Trinidad and Tobago. Let us not forget the water taxi—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Jeffrey: Oh, yes.

Mr. N. Hypolite:—all of these things under the People's National Movement. [*Desk thumping*] Let us not forget the early childhood centres that were also built. [*Interruption*] So, I am just assisting the Member for Couva South as he started to list a number of things that the PNM would have done. [*Interruption*] I am just assisting you, my dear friend. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker, when one looks at the Bill in front of us, one would want to look at Head 71, Ministry of the Environment and Water Resources and when you look at the Ministry of the Environment and Water Resources, you see whereby there is some \$30 million that is being requested as funds are required to meet the cost of flood mitigation works, stabilization of river banks and clearing of underground drains in Port of Spain along the Eastern Main Road, from Port of Spain to Arima as well as Chaguanas and Couva. Mr. Speaker, I just want to highlight, clearing of underground drains in Port of Spain along the Eastern Main Road from Port of Spain to Arima as well as Chaguanas and Couva. But, as we get the list of the various watercourses, drains, we see places such as Siparia, Pointe-a-Pierre, Caroni East, Barataria. Yes, Barataria is along the East-West Corridor.

Miss Ramdial: I know that. [*Laughter*]

Mr. N. Hypolite: But you look at Malick river—you see St. Augustine, Caroni Central, Naparima, Chaguanas East—[*Interruption*]

Miss Ramdial: Would the Member give way to clarify?

Mr. N. Hypolite:—Talparo, La Horquetta, Couva South, Couva North—[*Interruption*]

Mr. De Coteau: Member, forget him.

Mr. N. Hypolite:—Talparo, La Horquetta, Mayaro, Chaguanas West Mayaro, Nariva, Couva North, Naparima, Tableland, Moruga, Nariva, Caroni East, Point Fortin.

But, Mr. Speaker, when you look at the wording here, Port of Spain along the Eastern Main Road, from Port of Spain to Arima—Mr. Speaker, I am not hearing nor have I seen—[*Interruption*]

Miss Ramdial: Would the Member give way to clarify?

Hon. Member: No!

Miss Hospedales: This hour of the morning?

Mr. De Coteau: Oh gosh, Arouca/Maloney.

Miss Hospedales: Not this hour of the morning.

Mr. N. Hypolite: Mr. Speaker, I have not seen nor have I heard from the member who is now asking to clarify—all right—there is nothing here, Mr. Speaker [*Interruption*] pertaining to drains within the Port of Spain area. A very key drain—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Roberts: The river dry—[*Inaudible*]

Mr. N. Hypolite:—that should be looked at is that of Beetham. Beetham has five key drains that run from north to south and, of course, one that runs parallel along the Priority Bus Route. It is not here.

All you are seeing, Mr. Speaker, is that of Barataria, [*Interruption*] St. Augustine, and then all the others gone south such as Chaguanas, Naparima, and it goes on. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker, not only that, but we also have Sea Lots.

Miss Mc Donald: That is right.

Mr. N. Hypolite: Thirty million dollars spent [*Crosstalk*] for drains in Port of Spain along the Eastern Main Road from Port of Spain to Arima.

Mr. Roberts: Not spent yet. It is to be spent.

Mr. N. Hypolite: Well, these days you “doh” know [*Laughter*] because you have fire truck going down—what?—300 feet, which is 40 feet. All right?

Dr. Browne: Sixty feet.

Mr. N. Hypolite: And you are hearing that \$6 million spent, then you are hearing it is not \$6 million, it is supposed to be \$10 million, so you “doh” really know what is happening these days. It is all about fiasco. [*Laughter*] It is all about fiasco.

Mr. Roberts: That was quite smooth. [*Desk thumping*] I like that one.

Mr. N. Hypolite: But, Mr. Speaker, we would like to know, the people of Sea Lots, the people of Beetham, the people of Pelican Extension, the people of

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St. Barbs, they want to know when these drains of which \$30 million is being set aside for, will get done? [*Interruption*]

And just in case the Member for Tabaquite does not know, I am in my constituency almost every single day. What about you?

Hon. Member: How come you did not see? [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. N. Hypolite: Mr. Speaker, with respect to the restoration of the President's house—[*Interruption*]

Mr. De Coteau: “Doh go there, you know.”

Mr. N. Hypolite: With respect to the refurbishment of the President’s House, there is an estimated figure of \$56 million of which \$5 million would have been spent and there is some \$22 million for phase one on construction of the roof. Mr. Speaker, \$22 million—

Miss Mc Donald: \$17 million.

Mr. N. Hypolite:—with a shortfall of \$17 million.

Miss Mc Donald: Okay.

Mr. N. Hypolite: All right, a shortfall of \$17 million. Mr. Speaker, it was reported quite recently that the cost for refurbishment of the President’s House is in vicinity of some \$100 million.

Miss Mc Donald: Better we build a new one.

Mr. N. Hypolite: One would like to have that clarified. And if it is in the vicinity of some \$100 million, I would like to know whether or not the Government would be coming once again to ask for more money. If not, why we do not put it in one time, take the full thing.

3.45 a.m.

Mr. Roberts: We cannot spend all one time.

Mr. N. Hypolite: You cannot spend all one time. So what you want to do is see about the roof now, and then—

Mr. Roberts: And then the next budget we—

Mr. N. Hypolite: But it is approximately \$100 million, roughly that.

Mr. Roberts: Yeah.

Mr. N. Hypolite: Thank you so kindly. Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Roberts: I do not know that, but we will find out, if you say so.

Mr. N. Hypolite: It was reported.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: But at least we are fixing it. We are going to fix it. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. N. Hypolite: Mr. Speaker, within the Laventille West constituency we have a number of roads to get fixed of which throughout the debate we have been hearing about equity and equality and all of this sharing of the resources. I have to indicate, Mr. Speaker, that within the Laventille West constituency I would have submitted a list of roads to get done of which none of those roads—I want to stress—none of those roads have been fixed to date; none. And after 40 years of PNM—

Mr. Roberts: “They in ah mess.”

Mr. N. Hypolite:—and three years of the PP Government I am still not getting roads done in the Laventille community even though the PP Government indicated that they would be seeing about everybody.

May I state, Mr. Speaker, that they are not seeing about the people in Laventille and from the clap I am hearing, they are not seeing about the people in Port of Spain either.

Miss Mc Donald: That is right.

Mr. Roberts: “Eh”, be careful about what you are saying.

Mr. N. Hypolite: So, Mr. Speaker—

Miss Mc Donald: I have to get my roads done.

Mr. Roberts: Me too—

Mr. N. Hypolite: We need in Laventille the same way the people in Oropouche, Siparia, Couva and all these different places—La Brea, Diego Martin we all need.

Mr. Roberts: D’Abadie/O’Meara.

Mr. N. Hypolite: D’Abadie/O’Meara, we all need. Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Arouca/Maloney spoke about some of the services at social development, but, Mr. Speaker, it is sad to know that the Minister for the Ministry of the People and Social Development is not here because there is a particular issue that I have to deal with, with respect to that particular Ministry, and that is a

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lady by the name of Miss Violet Revere. And Miss Violet Revere was promised by the Minister to have some repairs done to her home. And that promise was made about—over a year ago. And this lady is 105 years old. You will find me speaking about this every time I come to the House, simply because the Minister is the one who went home by her with cameras and promised this 105-year-old lady to fix her home for her.

Mr. Jeffrey: Yeah, “it sad, it sad.”

Mr. N. Hypolite: He promised her that in three fortnights, that room will be taken care of. To date, I am being told that some guy by the name of Anthony Hunte would have called that residence and indicated to the person who answered, which would have been the granddaughter of Miss Revere, that the project ended and that instruction came from one, Mr. Thomas. I want to believe that the only Thomas I know that works in that particular Ministry is Barrington Thomas. But the fact of the matter is, Mr. Speaker, this is a lady, 105 years old of which the Minister promised—

Dr. Browne: Right here in Parliament.

Mr. N. Hypolite:—and he came in Parliament here and he continued to promise that he is going to assist her. Through you, Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the Prime Minister if he can ask—

Mr. Roberts: If she can ask—

Mr. N. Hypolite: Sorry, if she can ask—

Mr. Roberts: Is a good looking man. [*Laughter*]

Mr. N. Hypolite: Is a good looking man, oh God—if she can ask the Minister to make sure that the promise he made to this 105-year-old lady can be fulfilled and can be fulfilled immediately. [*Desk thumping*] I think it is a bit unfair to that lady—he went there with cameras and all.

Dr. Moonilal: Who is Arnold?

Mr. N. Hypolite: And all. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Roberts: “I didn ask nutten yuh know. I behaving good.”

Mr. N. Hypolite: Mr. Speaker, one can stand here and talk about a number of things. We can talk about the CAL issue; we can talk about the \$800 million; we can talk about the \$200 million; we can speak about the Hoop of Life; we can speak about NIPDEC; we can speak about the plans by NIPDEC to spend \$2 billion

in the year 2012 of which a tender for the motor vehicles authority was supposed to take place—if it took place, we do not know, because here it is NIPDEC was supposed to get that \$2 billion, all right.

Dr. Rambachan: We want some doubles, boy. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. N. Hypolite: So, Mr. Speaker, we can stand here and speak about those things. We can speak about the Hoop of Life—

Mr. Roberts: Fantastic programme.

Mr. N. Hypolite: We can speak about the Morvant/Laventille improvement programme. We can ask the question, what is happening with that particular programme? It was launched, and then that was it, you heard nothing else after that. The Hoop of Life, good initiative, 1,000 persons off the streets, but the question there is, Mr. Speaker, out of that 1,000 persons, how many of them would have been involved in criminal activities outside of that programme? So maybe what we need to do is really and truly target the persons who really and truly need that programme and not necessarily those who are.

Mr. Roberts: We link the Hoop of Life with the LIFESport, that is what we did, great idea.

Mr. N. Hypolite: Good, all right. Mr.: Speaker, there are so many things that we can speak about—

Mr. Roberts: Yes, man, yes.

Mr. N. Hypolite:—but at 3.53 a.m. it is really and truly quite difficult, all right, quite, quite difficult and that is why I am once again making a request through you to the Leader of Government Business that when we have debates like this, instead of rushing everything within a 14-to 16-hour time span—

Mr. Roberts: We have a vacancy over here.

Mr. N. Hypolite:—to try and spread it over a two-day period so that we will be able to hear from the Minister of Local Government, from the Minister of Housing, Land and Marine Affairs; from the Minister of Education and even from the other Ministers who would not have spoken because, if not, we would have been sitting down here—ah, before I end—

Mr. Roberts: De Coteau?

Mr. N. Hypolite: The Member for Naparima—

Hon. Members: Naparima?

Mr. Roberts: Moruga/Tableland.

Mr. N. Hypolite: Not Naparima, Moruga/Tableland—that is what happens when you spend 16 hours sitting down, listening, sleep, question.

Mr. Indarsingh: Like you does spend some restless 16—[*Laughter*]

Mr. N. Hypolite: Question, Mr. Speaker. That is true, so, so true. And you was right there—

Mr. Roberts: “Doh worry, yuh going good.”

Mr. N. Hypolite: You were right there—there was a—yeah, Member for Moruga, with respect to those in the independence parade, there is a question with respect to the independence parade that we had asked. I wish for you to clarify that one for us. We had asked whether or not the activities will be removed from the Ministry of National Security or exactly what will be taking place. All right, so we just want to get your response on that.

Mr. De Coteau: I will talk when you finish.

Mr. N. Hypolite: No, you are not talking after. So, Mr. Speaker, I would like to know from the Minister, the Member for Moruga/Tableland, with respect to item No. 74: Hosting of conferences, seminars and other functions, \$1 million. Funds are required for Government’s hosting of functions in commemoration of Independence Day and Republic Day celebrations. Exactly what—and, Mr. Speaker, I will sit for two minutes for him to tell us exactly what will be taking place with respect to that Independence Day function, because normally I am aware that the Ministry of National Security will handle that, if you so kindly—

Hon. Member: Speaker say do not stay too long. One minute.

Mr. De Coteau: Mr. Speaker, this comes under citizen facilitation where we help the communities, at the community level. It remains at the national level with the Ministry of National Security and the Ministry of Arts and Multiculturalism.

Mr. N. Hypolite: Thank you. You said community level. So what will be taking place? Each person, each household will be getting a national flag? It is a million dollars we are spending and, Mr. Speaker, I would like to know, it is a million dollars we are spending and I would like to know—what this will be doing, because I am aware it is normally handled through the Ministry of National Security, and once I get a good answer, “I done”, we going home.

Mr. De Coteau: Mr. Speaker, the different communities would apply—groups, the groups in the community right, and they will make their requests and we will facilitate.

Mr. Roberts: Well said.

Mr. N. Hypolite: We thank you so kindly, and with that, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank you.

Mr. Roberts: Well done, well done.

The Minister of Local Government and Minister of Works and Infrastructure (Hon. Dr. Surujrattan Rambachan): Mr. Speaker, it is now 3.57 in the morning—

Mr. De Coteau: Go the distance man, go the distance.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: Two minutes to four in the morning, and, Mr. Speaker, one thing I have noticed very carefully is that we have a leaderless Opposition; that when it matters, the Opposition Leader is never here to lead those troops, but our beautiful Prime Minister is here—[*Desk thumping*] at four o'clock in the morning to lead her troops and to do what is necessary here in the interest of Trinidad and Tobago. Where is he? Sleeping comfortably and abandons the work of the people, abandons the Parliament. Right? Came here to debate a Motion recently and ran away from his own Motion and everybody followed him and he has left all of you all to carry the weight, imagine this, what a shame.

Mr. Speaker, I heard about squandermania from the Member for Arouca/Maloney. The Member for Arouca/Maloney has a very short memory, short memory—

Hon. Member: Big mouth.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: Suddenly there is no mention of the Tarouba Stadium and \$1.1 billion of money—that short memory. What about Bamboo Networks? Anybody remembered about the US \$5 billion that just disappeared in the Bamboo Networks and e TecK? How about the \$2.7 billion for WGTL project at Petrotrin? How about the cost overruns at Orchard Gardens, Current Hill, East Grove and Greenvale in terms of housing projects? What happened to the \$110 million share controversy with the Home Mortgage Bank and Stone Street Capital?

Dr. Gopeesingh: That is right.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: What happened to the Broadgate scandal that gave, possibly, a liability for about a billion dollar? What happened to the \$45 million scholarship fund, the slush fund in which their former Prime Minister said: "Please keep this quiet". What happened to the six fast-patrol boats that were

bought from the Australian firm Austal for \$400 million, given to the Coast Guard in February 2010 and never functioned after that, and what was mentioned here today, the \$500-million-plus Rapid Rail?

4.00 a.m.

So when you talk about squandermania, go back into your own history of squandermania. [*Desk thumping*] And do not let me go back to the DC10 scandal also.

Hon. Members: No!

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: “Doh leh me go back quite there, because the PNM ha ah lot ah history ah scandal, and a history of squandermania, coming down the hill, and I am energized at four o’clock in the morning, eh, so be careful.” [*Desk thumping*]

Dr. Gopeesingh: That is when you used to do your morning programmes.

Hon. Member: Ask them about the 20-foot grass.

Dr. Gopeesingh: By the way, Mr. Speaker, if you look at the floor to the ceiling here, that is about 12: feet. Imagine 20-foot grass above that.

Mr. De Coteau: Guinness book of records.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: That is a Guinness book of records. Just like the neighbour who got a food card, I want to know who is this policeman you say now, because you say it is a policeman who got this miracle food card that came. Let us see who is this policeman. The policeman who is your neighbour should come forward and say how he got this food card.

I could go on and on about this squandermania you talked about, but I would not do it because my point is made. But you said in your contribution—the Member for Arouca/Maloney—you said that you were not going to support this appropriation—this supplementary appropriation. You said you are not going to support it, and you made particular mention of \$257 million under local government.

I want to ask you the question: are you refusing to support paying people their legitimate arrears of wages and COLA? Because, you see, the Member for Arouca/Maloney did not seem to understand what the \$257 million was about because if you had gone into the details, you would have seen, under this document that was circulated: “Schedule Relating to Supplementary Estimates 2013”, you will see under Head 42, which is Ministry of Local Government, that \$240 million, “Current Transfers to Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies”.

What it means is the following: that the Port of Spain City Corporation, salaries and COLA, \$5,727,000. That is arrears to monthly-paid officers, and \$21,740,000, arrears to daily-rated workers in accordance with the revised collective agreement, 2008/2010 CPO circular, which the PNM never negotiated and which we have negotiated and which we are paying! [*Desk thumping*] It is a shame that you can—that a Member of the Opposition could stand here and say, “I am not supporting the payment of legitimate earned wages and COLA to people who have worked in this country”.

Hon. Members: “All ah dem.”

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: It shows the disdain with which you have treated labour in the past and the disdain with which you still hold labour in this country. [*Desk thumping*]

We ought to congratulate the Minister of Labour, Small and Micro Enterprise Development the foremost labour leader in the country, [*Desk thumping*] for settling these agreements, and the Minister of Finance and the Economy and the Prime Minister, for encouraging the settlement of agreements that had never been settled! [*Desk thumping*] And you are coming here to say—I can go one by one: San Fernando City Corporation, monthly-paid workers to get \$5.2 million. And we go to Arima Borough Corporation: daily-paid workers, \$11.096 million; Point Fortin Borough Corporation, \$7 million allocated; San Juan/Laventille Regional Corporation, \$48 million allocated; Tunapuna Regional Corporation, \$58.3 million allocated; Sangre Grande, \$13 million allocated; Couva/Tabaquite, \$16.4 million; Mayaro/Rio Claro, \$23.7 million; Siparia Regional, \$4.5 million; Penal/Debe, \$16.2 million; Princes Town Corporation, \$4.5 million—a total of \$240 million.

So that is the \$240 million, arrears of wages and COLA to people, and you are telling me that you are not going to support that; you are refusing to support that.

Dr. Gopeesingh: That they did not pay.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: So that you did not even read—the Member for Arouca/Maloney did not even read the documents, but came here to try to make a point that has now backfired, just like other matters will soon backfire on the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Roberts: And like the 20-foot grass.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: Like the 20-foot grass. [*Crosstalk*] Mr. Speaker, the other matter they talked about is discrimination. “Whole afternoon yuh hearing discrimination, discrimination, discrimination.”

Hon. Members: They have no shame.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: You know, I just want to go to the Member for La Brea who is talking discrimination. Member for La Brea, where is Neranthar Trace?

Dr. Khan: “He doh know where dat is.”

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: Where is Dublin Trace?

Miss Hospedales: Mr. Speaker, 33(4).

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: Do you represent there?

Mr. Jeffrey: Of course.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: Right. Where is Merrimac Extension? Where is Hubertstown?

Miss Hospedales: Mr. Speaker—

Dr. Gopeesingh: Twenty-foot grass.

Miss Hospedales: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Standing Order 33(4). I wish to reserve my right to speak—to respond—because the Member is misquoting me.

Mr. Roberts: What!

Mr. Speaker: Yes. Well, at the end of the exercise. Continue.

Mr. Roberts: Poor little thing.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: Yes. Mr. Speaker, I want to know where is Ching Fong Alley Extension. Where is Rail Road Avenue? Where is Belle View # 2? Where is National Mining Road/Delhi Grant Extension Trace?

Mr. Roberts: La Brea.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: All of those are in La Brea.

Mr. Roberts: La Brea.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: And all of those roads are being paved through the Palo Seco Agricultural Enterprises Organization—

Mr. Jeffrey: When? When?

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: In the current road-paving programme under the Local Government Road Paving Programme that is taking place.

Mr. Jeffrey: When?

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: And it is going to be done before the end of this fiscal year—before the end of this fiscal year.

Mr. Jeffrey: Oh, not yet?

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: Sheila Lamorell Gardens—

Mr. Roberts: La Brea.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: Is that not your area? Ashford Street, Mc Clean Street, Wharton Street.

Mr. Roberts: La Brea.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: So when you talk about discrimination, here is the evidence of what is going to be done. [*Interruption*] And he talked further about discrimination.

Mr. Jeffrey: When?

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: He talked further about discrimination. Member for Diego Martin Central, where is Figaro Road Bridge? Sorry, Member for Laventille West, where is Figaro Road Bridge?

Hon. Member: “Dah is by you. Dah is in de back by you dey.”

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: Where is Figaro Road Bridge?

Mr. Hypolite: Yeah, by me.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: Right. Where is La Fortune Bridge?

Mr. Hypolite: Yeah.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: Where is Brasso Seco Bridge—San Juan/Laventille Regional Corporation. You see why I am reading all this out? These are bridges—

Mr. Hypolite: Those bridges are not in Laventille West.

Hon. Member: No, no, St. Ann’s East.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: But they are under the San Juan/Laventille Regional Corporation.

Mr. Hypolite: Well, it is the San Juan Regional Corporation—

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: I am making the point, because you are saying : there is discrimination against PNM-run corporations. Right?

Mr. Roberts: Yes. [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: There is no discrimination, right? Because I can read for you. The Member for Diego Martin Central would know where is Winter Gardens Bridge; Member for Diego Martin Central will know where is Scorpion Alley Bridge—

Dr. Browne: Diego Martin West.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: The Member for Diego Martin Central will know North Post Road Bridge, Upper Harding Place.

Dr. Browne: That is central.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: Central, yeah. Will know opposite Beard Street Bridge. But all that is in Diego Martin. So when we talk about doing work, we are doing work all over Trinidad. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Roberts: All! All! [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: And the evidence is here. In fact, just to tell you, all of those bridges have been awarded to be built in this fiscal year. Tenders have been done and awarded under the Committee Improvement Services Limited. But since you cry discrimination, I am going to list them out one by one for you so that you will know that there is no discrimination; that if we build bridges in Siparia, we will build bridges in Diego Martin—

Mr. Hypolite: What about Laventille West?

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: And we build all over. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker, on that note, let me just put into the record for the benefit also of the Member for Point Fortin. Through the Palo Seco Agricultural Enterprises Limited, in the Point Fortin Borough Corporation, 32 roads are being paved. In the Siparia Regional Corporation, 45; Penal/Debe, 30; Princes Town, 22, Rio Claro/Mayaro, 33, San Fernando City Corporation, 42. I am only giving you this because I want to show you that what comes under Palo Seco Enterprises, Point Fortin has not been left out. So when this cry of discrimination comes about, it is not true.

Mr. Roberts: It is malicious.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: It is not true, and the evidence is there to show that it is not true.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Malicious.

Hon. Member: They want to divide.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Malicious propaganda. Malicious!

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: Mr. Speaker, maybe the Member for La Brea would like to tell me where Agapeto Branch Trace is.

Mr. Roberts: La Brea.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: And he would like to know where Salazar Trace is.

Hon. Member: File a question.

Mr. Roberts: La Brea.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: Right? Because the Palo Seco Agricultural Enterprises, acting on behalf of the Ministry of Local Government, is demolishing—removing and reconstructing bridges in Agapeto and Salazar Trace. Okay? So when you cry discrimination, come and ask before you do that.

But, Mr. Speaker—[*Crosstalk*] Mr. Speaker, if you look carefully at what is happening in the country, my friends on the other side were talking about squandermania and money not being used for proper purposes and so on. Mr. Speaker, I just want to give you what is happening with the money that is being used by local government.

We have three special purpose companies: Rural Development Company, CISL and PSCEL, and then take the opportunity to tell you what is happening under the Rural Development Company. Under the Rural Development Company, 13 pavilions have been tendered and awarded—13 pavilions tendered and awarded.

Mr. Hypolite: How many in Laventille?

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: Two in Sangre Grande Regional Corporation, one in Chaguanas Borough Corporation and 10 in the Couva/Tabaquite/Talparo Regional Corporation which covers Couva North, Couva South, Chaguanas, parts of Chaguanas and Tabaquite.

So far, five are 20 per cent complete; four are 10 per cent complete; three are 5 per cent complete, and all of these will be completed within budget by August 30, 2013. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Roberts: Yes.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: All. In terms of bridges, 17 bridges have been tendered and awarded in April of 2013; five in Sangre Grande Regional Corporation; two at Chaguanas Borough and 10 in the Couva/Tabaquite/Talparo

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Regional Corporation, and all of these, work has started on them and all are going to be completed by the end of August 2013—all of these. [*Desk thumping*] And that is only one special purpose company.

Mr. Jeffrey: Siparia Regional.

Mr. Roberts: “Take yuh time nuh. Take yuh time.”

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: And in terms of the road upgrade programme—they talk about contractors getting work. We have 99 roads at the moment—99 roads under the Rural Development Company, working on behalf of these corporations that have been awarded to 57 contractors. So we are spreading it.

You talk about nepotism and so on. Fifty-seven contractors are going to be working on these roads, so everybody is being given an opportunity. Forty-one roads in Chaguanas Borough; 32 in Couva/Tabaquite; 26 in Sangre Grande, and then 20 more have been tendered and are about to be awarded.

In addition to that, landslips: six landslips are being designed, three in Couva/Tabaquite and three in Sangre Grande, and all this means is that in all of these areas, work is going on.

In terms of the Palo Seco Agricultural Enterprises Limited, as I told you a while ago, I read out to you the 204 roads under the different corporations that are going to be done. Under Siparia, 45—and I read out your roads under that. And of course, with respect to Point Fortin, you may have one or two on the Point Fortin side also. So that is also being done.

Almost 800 roads are being paved—rehabilitated and paved between now and the end of August under these three special purpose companies, never done before—

Dr. Gopeesingh: All over the country.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: Never been done before, all over; all over the country. Not just one place, all over the country, similar with bridges. So that when you come and cry about discrimination—

Dr. Gopeesingh: Similarly with schools.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: It is spread all over.

Mr. Roberts: Nancy stories.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: Mr. Speaker—

Dr. Gopeesingh: Malicious propaganda.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan:—under the CISL, Community Improvement Services Limited, you have six pavilions being built: Blanchisseuse Community Ground, Hardial Park in St. Augustine, St. John’s Road in Tunapuna, Honeymoon Community Ground, Brazil Village Community, Four Roads. And Four Roads is a special one. Four Roads is in Diego Martin in the constituency of the Leader of the Opposition. Even there a pavilion is being built because he had requested a pavilion under the MP programme. It is a small pavilion and has to be specially designed. So where is the discrimination? Where is the discrimination?

Mr. Jeffrey: What about Lot 10 Recreation Ground?

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Is not everything—

Mr. Jeffrey: My constituency.

Dr. Gopeesingh: But you had nine years to fix up your constituency.
[Crosstalk]

Dr. Moonilal: And you were a Cabinet Minister.

Mr. Roberts: “All yuh was doing was hiding in ah green pickup truck.”
[Crosstalk]

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: Mr. Speaker, the Member for Point Fortin talks about discrimination and yet Spring Trace, Point Fortin is getting a pavilion, but so, too, is Sun Valley Recreation Ground on the Naparima/Mayaro Road, Glaude Street Recreation Ground, Naparima/Mayaro Road, Oropouche South Trace, Deoharry Road, Barrackpore. These were places you never built anything before! You never built anything before! [Desk thumping]

Rio Claro recreational ground in the constituency of the Member for Mayaro; Soogrim Street Recreation Ground in Gulf View; Cocoyea ground in San Fernando, in the constituency of the Member for San Fernando East; Lalbeharry Trace, Barrackpore; Dill Mohammed Trace, Penal; Antales Trace, San Francique; South Oropouche Recreation Ground in Fyzabad—every constituency is being covered that the Palo Seco Agricultural Enterprises, work in.

4.15 a.m.

Mr. Hypolite: What about Erica Street?

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: Mr. Speaker, this debunks the claim they keep making all night about discrimination. There is no discrimination. This

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Government is working on behalf of all the peoples of Trinidad and Tobago, [*Desk thumping*] and I wanted to say this tonight. They also speak about the matter of URP and where URP projects are being done or not done. I would like to ask the Members on the other side to tell me what projects they have submitted to be done under URP and to whom. Bring the projects to me and let me see where the projects are. What projects have come from Diego Martin Central? What projects have come from Diego Martin North/East? What projects have come from Diego Martin West?

Dr. Browne: Many.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: Where are they? Where are the projects?

Dr. Browne: It is written to the Ministry.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: Where are the projects? Mr. Speaker, in the Diego Martin area there are 17 projects going on at the moment. Seventeen projects in Diego Martin. I will read some of them to you. Ravine Road, Phase I; Ravine Road, Phase II; Manning Street—all these are box drains and retaining walls—Phillip Charles Street; North-West Drive; Dibe Road; North Post Road; Ragoo Road; Catol Trace; Sandy Trace; Smithy Terrace; Wee Road; Farm Road; St. Peter's Road. All of these are projects for box drains and so on, going on.

But, if it is that the Members of Parliament do not submit projects, but the councillors in the Diego Martin Regional Corporation, who are working hard and working in the interest of the people, submit their projects and get them done, then do not blame those councillors. Do not blame those councillors for doing their work. There are councillors of the People's Partnership there who have been sending in projects, but the people who claim to represent them at the MP levels, you are not sending in projects. So how do you expect anything to be done?

Miss Hospedales: That is not true.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: How do you expect anything to be done? Mr. Speaker, I just want to tell you some good news—some very good news. Since July 01, last year, to the end of September of 2012, 181 projects were completed under URP; [*Desk thumping*] and since October 01 to June 03, 168 projects have been completed and 73 are between 75 and 90 per cent completed. [*Desk thumping*] So, 241 projects have just about finished under URP.

Mr. Speaker, under the PNM, not in one year was that ever done.

Miss Hospedales: What!

Hon. Member: Ghost.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: Mr. Speaker, the URP Programme has been made into a productive programme under the People's Partnership Government [*Desk thumping*] where people are doing purposeful work through community projects and where community contractors are doing the work and doing it—there have been hardly any cost overruns. The only cost overruns that have occurred are minimal things, but 90 per cent of these projects have no cost overruns whatsoever. [*Interruption*] None whatsoever! None! I will like you to file a question and I will answer the question, because I have all the documentation in pages here for you. Just like my friend, the Member for D'Abadie/O'Meara, comes here with documents, I have my documents also here.

Mr. Roberts: “Gi dem.”

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: So, Mr. Speaker, given the rate we are going, by the end of this fiscal year in URP, at least 300-plus community projects will be finished under the URP Programme—[*Interruption*]

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Excellent.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan:—and the Member for D'Abadie/O'Meara will tell you about the quality of work that he has seen in his own constituency.

Mr. Roberts: Incredible.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: He was shocked at the quality of work that was being seen. Do you know what is interesting, Mr. Speaker? This work includes jogging tracks, pavilions. It includes things that URP had stopped doing. The very URP at one time which was building police stations and so on, if you remember, all these engineers who sit in URP have now been brought to do purposeful work, and they are feeling good about themselves. They are producing; producing for the interest of this country. This is a performing Government. The PNM had written off URP and using it only as a political tool. Now, we are using it as a developmental tool in the interest of the people of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, I wanted, therefore, to intervene in this debate in order to debunk the idea of squandermania and to show where the real squandermania took place in this country and, second, to debunk the idea of discrimination and to show that this Government, through local government, is working in the interest of everybody in Trinidad.

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I want to say one more thing, Mr. Speaker. When you look at it carefully and when you do the calculations, you will see that at the end of this fiscal year, approximately 2,300-plus communities or villages in Trinidad and Tobago will have benefited from at least one project under the People's Partnership Government. [*Desk thumping*] Twenty-three hundred, and that is no idle boast. That is no idle boast.

Mr. Speaker, I will give you the figures. Under the 14 corporations, 969 projects would have been completed—drainage, roads, cemeteries, recreation grounds. Under the URP Programme, approximately as I said, between June and this year, maybe 400 projects. Sixty bridges are being built right now. Sixty bridges under the Ministry of Local Government and the Ministry and the corporations. I have listed them out for you, and if you want me, I could list out more for you.

Mr. Roberts: List them out.

Hon. Members: List them out.

Mr. De Coteau: List them out, man. Take your 75 minutes.

Hon. Member: You have the whole day.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: Mr. Speaker, they really want me to do this you know. I may have not walked with all the documents here, but the point is, when you add all of these figures up, you will see, plus the 800 roads. Tell me, in one year under the PNM, which Ministry has done 2,300-plus projects? Tell me one year. Tell me one year in which that has been done.

Mr. Hypolite: 1965.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: Under the National Commission for Self-Help, while you argue about community centres and so on, and you left them in all kinds of unfinished state, do you know what is happening now? We have taken the small communities and we are working with the small communities and we are building activity centres under the self-help programme with the people of the areas. So that people in La Costena, Sou Sou Lands are getting an activity centre, in Carlsen Field an activity centre is being built, in Brazil—Wallerfield, an activity centre is being built, and these are being built for about \$800,000 and can accommodate at least 60 to 75 persons, where training can take place and a computer centre.

Mr. Roberts: Yes! “You preaching!”

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: Three buildings were built under the URP and were abandoned from 2000 to 2011, and when I discovered those buildings, each one worth over half a million dollars; I started to refurbish those three buildings. One in the constituency of Couva North, one in Dow Village and one in Whiteland, and those buildings the Member of Parliament will tell you, you should see what we have done with those buildings. And in those buildings now, they are going to be transformed into empowerment centres, particularly for women and girls, where you are going to have counselling for domestic violence, HIV counselling, mediation centres for conflicts in the community and what have you, and they are going to be run by the NGOs in the particular area.

You talk about building communities. Well, we are building communities by using the people to build communities. [*Desk thumping*] All of that is happening under the People's Partnership Government because our mission in local government is threefold: one, the delivery of better quality services which I have demonstrated to you; secondly, the building of better communities; and thirdly, facilitating stronger councils in order to get that done. This is why we are engaged in the reform process. But the reform process is not just a pie in the sky, it is not just about words, it is action and activities like these that back up that.

Mr. Roberts: And it is not wasted time, like Diego Martin West wasting time.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: So it befuddles the mind when you listen to my colleagues, including the Member for Arouca/Maloney, who suggests that she is not prepared to support the request, but does not understand that \$240 million is to pay people their wages and salaries that are legitimately due to them. When they do not even understand what is happening with the URP Programme, when they do not submit projects—[*Interruption*]

Miss Hospedales: That is nonsense. I have submitted over 25. None has been done. No team, only ghost.

Mr. Speaker: Please! Member for Arouca/Maloney, you have spoken. You sought my protection.

Hon. Member: A hundred times.

Mr. Speaker: I ask you to pay respect to this House and to the Member who is on his legs. Continue, hon. Member for Tabaquite.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: Mr. Speaker, the Member, for Arouca/Maloney, I believe falls into the Tunapuna/Piarco Regional Corporation and perhaps falls into

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Region V of the URP Programme. I will ask the Member to visit me and show me the projects she has submitted so I could deal with them.

Miss Hospedales: Yes, I could give you Mr. Bonaline.

Mr. Speaker: Yes, you will do that privately.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: Come in and show it to me.

Mr. Roberts: Do it privately.

Hon. Dr. S. Rambachan: Mr. Speaker, this was the contribution I wanted to make in this debate, to debunk these fallacies that are being presented as truth, to debunk these fabrications. We have new welders on the other side, welding information, but there are cracks in the welding—cracks.

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

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for St. Ann's East.

Mrs. Joanne Thomas (*St. Ann's East*): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Unlike the Member for Tabaquite, at 4.27 a.m., I am not energized—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Roberts: I will energize you.

Dr. Gopeesingh: We will energize you.

Mrs. J. Thomas:—after going through whole night. But, the Member got up and, of course, what energized him was the fact about discrimination, that he is saying it is an untrue fact.

Dr. Browne: He alone must talk about this—

Mrs. J. Thomas: I just want to let him know, for St. Ann's East—[*Interruption*]

Miss Hospedales: It is a reality.

Mrs. J. Thomas:—it is a reality. I look, for example, at even when the hon. Member for D'Abadie/O'Meara got up and he spoke about the youth programmes that they are going to have for summer. I looked at how he planned his contribution very carefully and after he spoke a lot, in his last two minutes, he just ran down all the places that he is going to have the programmes. When we look at it, two corporations you called, Member, the Tunapuna/Piarco Regional Corporation and also, the Diego Martin Regional Corporation and, of course, we all know those are all People Partnership-controlled corporations—Diego Martin Regional Corporation and Tunapuna/Piarco Regional Corporation. Just to let you know.

Now, as I say, Member, I am not like the Member for Tabaquite. I am not energized, but I just need to let you know the facts about what you just spoke about. Then we look at the CEPEP allocation and, Member for Tabaquite, I come here, I send letters, I beg, I send letters.

Hon. Member: Talk about it in Parliament.

Mrs. J. Thomas: I particularly asked for CEPEP gangs in the north coast area. North coast area is not just part of my constituency. That is the tourist hub of Trinidad, and I asked for CEPEP gangs.

I wrote a letter to the Prime Minister and I wrote a letter to the Minister of the People and Social Development. I do not know if you got it, Prime Minister, but I sent two letters asking for assistance for CEPEP gangs in these areas. Up to now, nothing has happened. My little time I am standing here, I just want to highlight some of the things in my area that need to get done. For example, I saw the allocation for tourism and, to the hon. Minister of Tourism, Fort Abercromby started under the former Minister, Member for Toco/Sangre Grande, I believe. He started the project, it stopped, nothing more has happened. The hon. Member for Chaguanas East promised to take care of it for me. I remind you, again, and as I say, I come here and I request, I beg, I write letters, I am again appealing to you.

Again, I refer to Maracas Bay, the car park—

4.30 a.m.

Dr. Browne: Oh, it is terrible!

Mrs. J. Thomas:—as we all mentioned, that is where every single visitor to this country, that is where they go. They go to Maracas Bay, they go to Las Cuevas Bay, they go for the bake and shark in Maracas Bay, and the car park there is in a dilapidated condition. The Minister has promised me he is going to deal with it. As a matter of fact, he told me he got approval for it, so I am looking forward to the commencement of that project very soon. I mean, promises came to me; I am looking forward for those promises. Right?

Hon. Member: “Yuh getting it!”

Mrs. J. Thomas: I just want to highlight to the Minister of Works and Infrastructure and the Minister of Local Government, there are several projects, Member for Tabaquite, that the former Ministers of Works and Infrastructure came, on my invitation, to my area to view some areas that the residents have been asking for a long time. I personally again wrote and I requested a visit by the

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Minister. Both Ministers came—Minister Jack Warner and Minister Emmanuel George; they both came and visited the place with me. I want to just highlight those areas to you, again, Member for Tabaquite. The La Hoe Road in Laventille Road, that has been outstanding for quite a while. The La Canoa Road in Santa Cruz; La Fortune Road, El Carmen Road in Gasparillo, Santa Cruz, Rincon Road and Grand Fond Road in Las Cuevas. That road, when the rain falls, the people cannot pass. People's houses, water reach almost to the roof, I mean it is such a sad sight.

You know, when I went there and you see people's stoves and fridges, everything, they are just floating. I mean, some of you here experienced what the floods can do, and I really, Minister, I really want to appeal for the fixing of those roads and the five bridges that are supposed to alleviate some of the problems there in Rincon Road and GrandFond Road.

Mr. Speaker, there are several things I had here to highlight as regards concerns I had, as regards even the allocation, because, when you look, the Minister has come for a \$2.9 billion increase, and you are looking at it three months before the end of the financial year, and even right now, I am sure the personnel working in the various Ministries are even preparing for the 2014 budget, and yet we come for \$2.9 billion increase.

So, these things just, you know, have me a little concerned and, of course, you see highlights in the newspapers about \$53 million for a no-good air system in three schools, you know and areas like that, but I would not get into that at this time. But I just needed to highlight these things and again to make a plea for those things in my area to get attended to because the burgesses of St. Ann's East are also citizens of Trinidad and Tobago.

Miss Hospedales: That is correct! [*Desk thumping*]

Mrs. J. Thomas: Mr. Speaker, I thank you for that little time. [*Desk thumping*]

Dr. Amery Browne (*Diego Martin Central*): Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Six o'clock we finishing!

Dr. A. Browne: Mr. Speaker, I am immediately interrupted by the Member for Caroni East. I do not intend to take us to breakfast time at all. We have been here for many hours, but there are some points that I wish to make in contributing to this Bill and I, as an elected Member of Parliament, would have the same

speaking rights as someone who would have spoken at 4.30 or five o'clock yesterday afternoon. [*Desk thumping*] So, if Members are tired, they would need to conduct themselves accordingly.

Dr. Moonilal: “How long yuh intend to talk?”

Dr. A. Browne: Mr. Speaker, we just had a very loud contribution by the Member for Tabaquite, and I think he was saying that he was energized, but by shouting he was trying to energize himself a little more. I do not know if the shouting was an attempt to conceal the ruinous state of local government in Trinidad and Tobago.

Hon. Member: Terrible!

Dr. A. Browne: That sector is in a ruinous condition. The logic on the other side sometimes truly defies description. The logic on the other side, or the lack thereof, truly defies description. The Member for Tabaquite gave us a classic example of that today. Because this Member, apparently, was so traumatized by contributions by PNM Members who have presented evidence of neglect, who have presented evidence of neglect systematically, and concerns on behalf of their constituents who we are elected to represent and we are doing exactly that. He was so traumatized by those representations, when he hears Members complaining about neglect and discrimination, that he rises shouting loudly—

Dr. Rambachan: Yeah!

Dr. A. Browne:—and what was his counter to that, Mr. Speaker? Let me tell you what his counter was. He stands up holding a mysterious piece of paper which has not been circulated which is not part of the documents in support of this debate at all, so he has this white piece of paper in his hand. This is his counter. This is his evidence to counter. He has this piece of paper and he starts reading out a list of things that he says—when we query a little bit—things that they will do. [*Desk thumping*] That is the counter: things they say they will do.

Mr. Speaker, no dates, no description, no details, no indication of any work having been done in these constituencies, and that is his counter—these cries of discrimination. [*Desk thumping*] How can we be satisfied with that? How can we be comforted by that? How can we be happy with that or how can our constituents and the citizens of this country be in any way satisfied or accept that as a presentation in a debate such as this? It is completely and totally unacceptable, and it does not counter anything that was said on this side. So, I do not know if the Member may have persuaded himself, but he certainly persuaded

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no one else in this Chamber, [*Desk thumping*] and I am including Members of the Government in that regard. It is simply unacceptable.

Mr. Speaker, I want to remind the Member for Tabaquite, the Prime Minister and every Member of this Government—in fact, every Member of this Chamber—that citizens in all 41 constituencies, guess what? Pay taxes. I do not know if taxes are collected by constituencies now or there is some distinguishing mark when people pay their taxes, but all citizens deserve equal and fair treatment across Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] If you do not treat with them equitably—and we have heard so many representations in this Bill accordingly—if you do not treat with them equitably, in my view—Mr. Speaker, I am not imputing any improper motives—in my view, it is a violation of oath of office. So these are very basic principles, and if the Government does not want to hear it, it is our job still to stand up and say it because this is the truth. It is a violation of oath of office.

Mr. Speaker, you know what they are saying right across this country?—Yes, the PNM did spend billions of dollars while we administered in Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] But the people are saying at least you can see something for that expenditure. [*Desk thumping*] Something tangible exists and the Member for Laventille West gave us, or gave the Member for Couva South, a list of some of the tangibles that people continue to benefit from, from that expenditure. [*Desk thumping*] But those same citizens out there are saying the current Government of this country has by now expended—how much?

Mr. Jeffrey: One hundred and sixty billion!

Hon. Member: About \$160 billion in three years, and they scan the national landscape and they can find no evidence of that expenditure. There is nothing to show for it. [*Desk thumping*] There is nothing whatsoever to show for it. This very building that we are standing up in is evidence, not of their investment—

Hon. Member: The PNM!

Dr. A. Browne:—but of PNM investment, [*Desk thumping*] so the tangibles are there.

So the Government seems to be in a spell of bewilderment because they cannot themselves understand where this money has gone. They have very very little, and as we go through budget debates and some of these supplemental Bills, you realize, Mr. Speaker, the Ministers have less and less to say. Less and less to say because at the beginning, many of them—the Member for Caroni Central is

the star in this regard—would have relabelled PNM programmes and come and, you know, just try to squeeze some milk out of the existing programmes. But, now that they are three years into their administration, past the halfway mark, you would realize Ministers have very very little to contribute, and the Leader of Government Business sometimes must shake his head in expecting fulsome contributions, and we are getting very little evidence of achievement.

I am surprised at the Member for Tabaquite, Mr. Speaker, because he is the type of speaker that can get—can turn this bottle of water into champagne, [Laughter] but somehow he did not have that magic today at all, even though he thought he was energized and energizing somebody. He could turn it into champagne but not today, because it was vacuous, it was an empty bottle, there was nothing in it whatsoever. So everyone pays taxes—

Dr. Rambachan: I will take you on a tour.

Dr. A. Browne: All right! Everyone—“oh, well, we gonna have a verbal tour of Diego Martin just now”. Mr. Speaker—[Crosstalk] Hold on! He is not energizing anybody even as he speaks right now. So there is something to see, something tangible for investments under the People’s National Movement because there is a record of construction—whether it is houses, whether it is offices, whether it is infrastructure, [Desk thumping] major construction: highways, interchanges and so on. There is that record of performance.

Under this current Government, even with these vast sums being expended, and sometimes in Parliament, we get so accustomed talking about million and billions. Well, I could say for myself, I am not accustomed talking about millions and billions; maybe some others might be accustomed talking about millions and getting accustomed talking billions. But the citizens out there, they are saying, “Are these people in a twilight zone?” Because citizens are struggling sometimes “for a dollar, struggling for a job” and the money is flowing, and it gives Parliament a very bad reputation when we adopt a very cavalier approach to it and it is only jokes. I mean, the Member for D’Abadie/O’Meara, today he was at his—he has reverted to form, just a whole raucous joking session when the citizens are really hoping for more, praying for more by this stage. They are praying for more!

Then, the Member for Tabaquite, Mr. Speaker, said, “Under this Government, everybody is getting a chance, everybody is getting a chance”. [Crosstalk] He used that phrase and it struck me almost violently because all the evidence before us is diametrically opposed to that statement. Everybody is not getting a chance

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under this Government. Mr. Speaker, this “everybody is getting a chance”, the Member for Tabaquite and the Government will have to tell that to the families who were managing gas stations across Trinidad and Tobago, who—without proper process, without tendering, without anything that is acceptable to a right-thinking citizen—have had those operations snatched from them and given to friends and family of the United National Congress, including friends of persons who share this Chamber with us. [*Desk thumping*] I see the Member for Oropouche West is not here today.

If, by some stretch of their imagination, there is some decency and process in how that is done, then the Government is doing a very poor job of sharing that with the national community, and a debate like this, Mr. Speaker, in my view, would have been an opportunity to do exactly that. By their silence on these matters, we can only conclude that there is a lot to hide in what is going on.

Miss Hospedales: Yes! [*Desk thumping*]

Dr. A. Browne: And there is a lot to hide in what is going on and a lot to be ashamed of in what is taking place in the corridors of governance at this time; more than enough.

4.45 a.m.

Everybody is getting a chance. The Member needs to tell that to the fishermen in Cocorite whose fishing depot has become so dilapidated over the last few years. We have been writing and raising the issue over and over and there is no sign, \$2.8 billion, no sign of any relief for them but everybody is getting a chance. Everybody is getting a chance.

The Minister would have to tell that to all the people who are waiting on houses in this country, patiently, quietly. They are not burning tyres. They are waiting and hoping, but all of this expenditure is taking place and the UNC cannot seem to build a house. I do not know what is wrong with this particular Government. They seem just unable to construct anything worthwhile for the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago and they cannot even finish existing projects such as the Victoria Keys and the Chaconia and the View Fort and so on. The Minister responsible for housing, I do not know what he really does when the day comes, but all of these projects are languishing. Where else?

Mr. Jeffrey: The community centres.

Dr. A. Browne: Yeah, do not talk about the community centres. Mr. Speaker, everyone is getting a chance.

The Member for Tabaquite has fled. He said everyone is getting a chance. He needs to tell that to the residents in Diego Martin and other parts of the country who, when they look outside at the road in front of their houses, they see a little URP sign: “Work in progress.” And they see that sign for weeks and months and—

Mr. Jeffrey: And nobody.

Dr. A. Browne:—not a soul turning up and then material appears and then material disappears and the sign is there, allocations are made, money is being spent, monthly-paid workers are being paid, managers rolling around and getting arrested and released and all sorts of things going on in URP but the citizens get zero value for it. Everybody is getting a chance but everybody is not getting a chance. That is what is going on.

The Government exists in one reality and the poor Minister of Finance and the Economy has to put a brave face in all of this, come here three months before the close of the fiscal year. I do not know, I mean, if this was a bank we will all be—

Mr. Jeffrey: Yea, yea.

Dr. A. Browne: I do not know—we would all have packed up and gone home long ago if this was a bank—three months before the close of the fiscal year.

This poor Minister of Finance and the Economy is forced to come here, all these Ministers and their delays and lack of implementation, seeking \$2.8 billion at this stage. It must be very embarrassing for the Minister, but I must commend him, he has maintained a sense of calm through the disaster of which he has now found himself a part. So, everybody is getting a chance but everybody is not getting a chance. “Where the money gone? Where the \$160 billion gone?”

Mr. Speaker, the Member for Tabaquite is so audacious. He knows, he knows, that we have been writing innumerable letters—

Miss Hospedales: That is right.

Dr. A. Browne:—and he has two of the letter-receiving Ministries now—the Ministry of Works and the Ministry of Local Government—innumerable letters. What we on this side are going to have to do is every sitting—

Miss Hospedales: Bring it.

Dr. A. Browne:—walk with copies of those letters, stand here and read them out for the Member for Tabaquite because he is saying: “where are the projects?”

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Where are the projects?" I mean, Mr. Speaker, come on, that really is a slap in the face of, I do not want to say decency, but reality to come here and taunt us like that, when he knows.

I do not know what they do with all these letters. They must have some special filing system or Rolodex or scanner to deal with all of those because it is mountains, but he says: "Where are the projects?" Come on man.

Well, do not talk about the Member for Oropouche East, I do not know. You could build a house with letters. But they laugh because these letters do not mean anything to them, but I want to tell the Member for Oropouche East and every Member of the Government, through you, Mr. Speaker, those letters sometimes represent the last hope or breath of a poor person in Trinidad and Tobago—[*Desk thumping*] who—sometimes coming to an MP is not their first recourse but they have tried, they have knocked at various doors.

They have gone down to Chaguanas West, which is like the MP extraordinaire for the country and they have not gotten through and sometimes they come to their Member of Parliament and they say: "we got a letter last time, we did not get a response but send one again because we do not know what else to do. We do not know how else we could get through with a house. we are seeing all kinds of people getting houses. We need to get out drains fixed, our roads fixed. We do not know what else to do", and then the letter goes and no response is forthcoming and then you have a Minister standing here and taunting us: "Where the projects? Where the projects?" I mean, Mr. Speaker, it is ridiculous, absolutely ridiculous and I do not think I can accept hearing that without responding very directly to it.

Mr. Speaker, the accounting to the Parliament by this Government thus far is extremely poor.

Dr. Moonilal: He is asking you what you do with your life.

Dr. A. Browne: No, I am not going to ask the Minister about any \$10 million. I do not know if that is what you are alluding to, but I do not go there at all. That is your business.

The accounting to the Parliament by this Government, so far, has been extremely poor. They boast about answering questions and so on and you realize their percentage, as the season goes on, has begun to fall. You notice that. There is a difference in how they answer questions and how, when questions are answered, a PNM government answers questions because there is a parliamentary process and when a PNM Minister in his balisier tie stands to answer, the first

thing he would say on most occasions: “I have been approved by the Cabinet to provide the following response.” Do you know what that says? It says the answer has passed through process.

What you see on this side is extemporaneous Ministers, you know, who are so confident on their feet volleys they would just stand and talk. They do not even have a piece of paper in their hands and anything comes out of their mouths sometimes. If they are in a bad mood, they are rude and surly and insulting sometimes. I mean, I do not want to use stronger language than that.

I am going to give an example later on, as the Member for Oropouche East seems very curious and is seeking examples of what I am saying. I try to back up what I say and I would provide you with an example. Remind me in case I forget in the second half of the 75 minutes exactly.

Let me move on because I really do not want to take us to breakfast. I said that before. I cannot afford to take us to breakfast. No, no. As I was saying, the Government has done an extremely poor job of accounting to Parliament thus far and I see that. Either they do not understand the role of Parliament. Some of them have the experience, and they should. They do not understand the role of Parliament in being the body, the agency of state that provides oversight over the Executive. Mr. Speaker, you know these things. You are the expert on these matters, to provide oversight. So coming here is not a burden. It is not a formality. Members should not be sneering and saying: “well doh talk and so on and so forth” because this is a very important part—if we do our jobs properly—of the democracy of the country.

Ministers on the other side, like the Minister of Education, he seems so offended when the Member for Arouca/Maloney asked questions about the Ministry of Education. But he cannot expect—where else will that scrutiny be provided for \$314 million, which we know is going to pass through like a vapour?

Mr. Jeffrey: Salts.

Dr. A. Browne: And nobody really sees anything out of it. If we do not ask the questions here, where will they be asked? Staff members in the Ministry dare not ask them those types of questions. Who is going to ask the questions? The media may not have time to ask those questions because they are busy tracing all the disasters this Government is leaving in its trail. So that is the job of Parliament and that is why we have to stand up here and I think Members, by and large, have done exactly that and have asked the hard questions of this Government. Unfortunately, very few specific answers have been provided. So either they do

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not understand the role of Parliament or they are sitting there in defiance of the role of Parliament and that would be very unfortunate. That is why we are here.

They should not resent it. That is why Parliament exists. That is why all this money is expended on these facilities, on meals and all sorts of other things just to facilitate us in executing our role. And the Government needs to be—and the Minister of Finance and the Economy needs to ensure that he and his Ministers are much more forthright in the future when it comes to giving details on these matters. [*Desk thumping*]

The Finance Committee we had on Monday is not a formality. This debate here is not a formality because the citizens have no one else to really ask those questions for them and when we ask the questions, really, at least a greater effort should be made. Some effort was made but there are areas, and I will point out a few of them, where clearly it is a very dismissive approach to requests for details. Do you know what is going to happen? The Government will use its majority, whether or not we vote with them, and this Bill gallops on. Money gone and then we are going to come later on. I did not say that as yet.

Mr. Speaker, so we are asked to approve an additional \$315 million for the Ministry of Education. And you know what? We still have to pull volunteers together in some of these poor communities such as in Cocorite.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Education—I do not want to get him as upset as the Member for Arouca/Maloney—did a tour in the constituency and visited some of these schools, including the Cocorite Government Primary School and the Minister, he was almost moved to tears because he has a heart. When he saw the condition of that school and the poor children, the yard is overgrown, the toilet facilities are horrific beyond what you would accept in a jail. The school is in a dilapidated condition. The Minister is there and he is saddened and then these poor children are coming and they approach us and they want autographs and different things. I mean it really, it would tear your heart out. So many months after that nothing was done.

Do you know what we had to do as members of the community with the involvement of the MP? Raise money, go to the hardware, buy Sherwin Williams paint. We took a Saturday morning. We got the principal, teachers and some parents. We went into that, a government school and painted it ourselves.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: “They doh care.”

Dr. A. Browne: An additional \$315 million goes to the Ministry.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Would you give way? The 300—

Dr. A. Browne: No, no, no, I have not given way as yet. Do not be presumptuous. *[Interruption]* I know, but Minister you gave a hint. You revealed your hand. Mr. Speaker, I am not saying that is what this \$315 million is for, you know. They have their agenda—*[Interruption]* exactly. But what I am saying is, for the citizens out there, for the parents of the children in that school, if we do not ask the right questions they would just be seeing large sums going through Ministries and then they are not seeing results on the ground. Do you understand?

Dr. Gopeesingh: It is for back pay.

Dr. A. Browne: Do you understand?

Dr. Gopeesingh: The back pay for teachers is over 600—

Dr. A. Browne: I am going to assume he understands. He is not indicating any understanding, but for the sake of brevity I am going to move on.

Mr. Speaker, the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service, much maligned police service, is receiving, in this Bill, \$661 million. The citizens will hear that and they might read that in the newspaper and then we still have stations, when you call them there is no vehicle and the same old excuses from years ago. I am not saying that, I am just telling you there is a greater burden on the Government to explain what is happening here to citizens because they do not understand, while these same officials who are not providing the details are riding up and down in black Prados, crashing them more than the Toyota Research Division and are not providing those vehicles to the police but expect us to understand that somehow we must be patient with them for two more years.

There was a lot of talk about flooding and I cannot contribute to a debate like this without at least devoting a portion of my time to some of what has been said and some of what should have been said on this particular issue.

The Member for Couva North is trying to make herself into the “Vice-Minister of Flooding and Drainage”, and so on, and there are other Members across on the other side who, I thought in a very cavalier manner—of course, the Member for D’Abadie/O’Meara, once you use the word “cavalier” you have to mention him. We referenced the issue in passing, and so on but this is a very, very serious matter.

Mr. Speaker, the rainy season has officially started and I am here to tell you that there are thousands of human beings, families, in Diego Martin Central, Diego Martin North/East, Diego Martin West and other constituencies in the East-West Corridor and across the country, who are currently in terror. People have

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insomnia. They sleep very lightly because one ear is always tuned to hear; if they hear any water on the galvanize, because that water might not just be water, that might be the loss of everything they own. That is the reality in Trinidad and Tobago today. This is after we had a Government Minister and chairman of the ruling party, for years, who—[*Interruption*] What?

Mr. Speaker: I would like to suggest that we suspend for about 20 minutes, let Members have a little coffee, some tea and crackers and we shall resume at 20 past five. This sitting is suspended until 20 minutes past five.

5.00 a.m.: *Sitting suspended.*

5.20 a.m.: *Sitting resumed.*

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Diego Martin Central. [*Desk thumping*]

Dr. A. Browne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just want to pause to salute your own efforts in this long debate. I understand that there is no substitute and it must be a bit tough. So you see I have a heart as well.

I was on the point of referencing the terror that is existing in Diego Martin and in other areas as well, now that the rainy season has started—because, over the years the residents have become personal experts on their own flooding situations, with their households, their yards and their immediate neighbourhoods; they have become experts. So they themselves are fully aware of when, let us say, a minimum of work is done to treat with flooding or flooding mitigation and they are aware when insufficient or no work is done. You “cyar” fool residents of Diego Martin on this matter.

I have been seeing the various Ministers and—“yuh could fool some, eh”—we have seen the Diego Martin Regional Corporation making the most outlandish pronouncements on the issue of flood mitigation, when you know, “dey could run, but dey cannot hide” because the rain is coming, the rain is falling and we know what is going to happen.

Mr. Speaker, a question was asked earlier about the Member for Diego Martin North/East when he had the privilege of serving in the Ministry of Works, and he gave his own type of answer, but I just want to say from my own observation, and those of the constituents who report to me, the basic maintenance of the major rivers and other watercourses in the western peninsula has plummeted. Whereas during the dry season, there was a routine cycle, and we were never completely satisfied. We would send requests and so on, but at least the basics were being done.

So you could look into the Diego Martin River, you could look into the Maraval River, you could look into the river at Blue Basin and other points, and see equipment doing work, clearing for the passage of water because the rainy season is going to come. [*Crosstalk*] But, Mr. Speaker, what we have been saying—and I do not think anyone on the other side is taking cognition of it—that is not being done, and that does not even take into account the additional drainage works that need to be effected to protect the people in the future. I am just talking about taking care of what has already been built by the PNM and they are not doing it.

So that is why the residents are in terror today, and that terror is not going to recede unless the Government actually does its work. The best evidence of that is right here in the Bill. The Government provided—well, first of all, the questions were asked because under Head 71, Ministry of the Environment and Water Resources—a new creation of the Prime Minister, Environment and Water Resources—almost a Ministry of WASA [*Laughter*] plus the Drainage Division got \$84 million in this particular Bill.

Under Goods and Services, Other Contracted Services, \$30 million; Ministry of the Environment and Water Resources, funds are required to meet the cost of flood mitigation works, stabilization of river banks and clearing of underground drains and, Mr. Speaker, I got so excited when I read this because I said maybe they are going to do the work that we need in the western peninsula and then I see in Port of Spain, Eastern Main Road to Arima, Chaguanas and Couva. Then I said well, wait, that does not sound like in keeping with what happened in the rainy season at all, and all their disaster zone declarations, Minister in boots and pizza sharing and whatever. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Speaker, we got a further explanation and elucidation, responses to questions, so we had the Finance Committee meeting, we asked the questions, and then the goodly Minister of Finance and the Economy provided us with written responses. I believe it was late on Tuesday night for the debate on Wednesday—and the response to this area. So we asked for a breakdown and specific locations, the contractors' selection processes, et cetera, and we got the list coming out of the worst natural disaster in my own estimation that this country has seen in many a year in 2012, and those who cared and came would have seen it. You did not care and you did not come.

Under Head 71, this is the list that has been provided to the Parliament and the people of Trinidad and Tobago against the backdrop that I just indicated. I am giving the constituencies—this is works, this is not emergency works; that was a

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different list; this is works for watercourses, flood mitigation works, stabilization of riverbanks, clearing of underground drains. The Caura River in Siparia, the Soledad River—

Hon. Members: Coora River.

Dr. A. Browne:—Coora, sorry, Coora River in Siparia, the Soledad River in Pointe-a-Pierre, the Arena River in Caroni East, the Harkoo River in Caroni East, Malick River in Barataria, Guayabal River and tributaries in St. Augustine, tributary to the La Quasa River in Caroni Central, Ciperio River in Naparima, Martin River in Chaguanas East, Mammoral River in Talparo/La Horquetta, Caroni main drains, Couva/Mc Bean in Couva South, La Quasa River running through Couva North, Carapo River, Talparo, Carapo River in Chaguanas West, what—the Diana River in Couva North, the Killdeer River in Mayaro, Ortoire River in Mayaro, the Nariva River in Nariva, the Julio in Nariva—

Hon. Members: What?

Dr. A. Browne:—the Papourie River in Naparima, the Moruga River in Tableland, Moruga, the Aripa River in Nariva—two more, only two more—the Cupunia River in Caroni East and the channel three south bank in Point Fortin.

Miss Ramdial: Would the Member give way to clarify? [*Crosstalk*]

Dr. A. Browne: Mr. Speaker, let me make the point and then I will—

Mr. Imbert: “No, doh give way.”

Mr. Speaker: I would not want to, in any way, interrupt your flow, Member for Diego Martin Central, but I must remind you of Standing Order 43(1), and to also remind you that many of our colleagues on the Opposition Benches have spent a considerable amount of time on this particular item. So I do not want you to go too deeply into it, otherwise you will be guilty of violating Standing Order 43(1). So just be guided. Thank you.

Dr. A. Browne: Thank you for your guidance, Mr. Speaker. So just to make the point on this matter not en passant, this is the central point. The fact of the matter is the Government declared the western peninsula a disaster zone in August 2012. The Government has come here today with a Bill requesting approval of \$2.8 billion. They found room for \$84 million for the Ministry of the Environment and Water Resources for flood mitigation, riverbanks, stabilization and clearing of drains, and not a single cent of that money is going into the western peninsula.

In the face of that evidence that they have provided to the nation of Trinidad and Tobago, I am repudiating the entire contribution of the Member for Tabaquite and every pronouncement of fairness from every Member of this Government that they have ever made in this Parliament. That is a shameful record [*Desk thumping*] and a disgrace to this country.

Miss Ramdial: Would the Member give way.

Dr. A. Browne: And I am speaking on behalf of the residents of Diego Martin and environs—in fact, every flood-hit area of this country that is not listed on this particular schedule—to say shame on the UNC! Shame on the COP! Shame on the—who else is there?

Hon. Member: MSJ. TOP. [*Crosstalk*]

Dr. A. Browne: No, not MSJ, congrats to the MSJ. Shame on the TOP as well because this is just wrong, and I cannot say it any differently to that. This is just wrong and if the Minister of Finance and the Economy—

Miss Ramdial: Would the Member give way to clarify?

Hon. Members: No, no, no!

Dr. A. Browne: No. No, because I do not want to extend the point, the Speaker has already guided me. If the Minister of Finance and the Economy would approach this with his banking acumen, he would insist at the next meeting of Cabinet or the next opportunity with his colleagues, that “yuh see dis matter, this injustice, find a way to correct it”. This is wrong! [*Desk thumping*] I cannot say it any other way. This is wrong.

I am going to move on to my next point. [*Interruption*] Hear the Member for Tobago West, “inaccurate”, but he has the opportunity to tell me—these are their documents. I read it about 25 times looking to see, maybe I missed it somewhere, maybe it is another misprint. It is not. This is what they intend to do, and this is disastrous. This is a natural disaster.

Miss Ramdial: Would the Member give way to clarify?

Hon. Members: No, no, no.

Mrs. Alleyne-Toppin: “No, you jus cyar be putting on yuh microphone and interrupting him.” Come on. Come on.

Dr. A. Browne: “I try dat trick ah ready, ah didn get away with it.” [*Desk thumping, crosstalk and laughter*] “Nah. Nah. Nah.”

Hon. Member: “Cyar do dat.” [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. Member: No, that is unfair. That is unfair.

Mr. Imbert: Ignore that.

Dr. A. Browne: All right, I have been guided by my senior. I was going to give way and—

Mr. Imbert: No!

Dr. A. Browne:—my senior colleague told me do not give way.

Mr. Imbert: Ignore that.

Dr. A. Browne: I will take good advice. I am going to move on to the next point because I do not want to keep us till breakfast because I cannot afford to pay for breakfast for the Parliament.

Mr. Speaker, I move on to the next Head that I want to touch on, and I am not sure, I do not believe this point has been made, but I can trust your wisdom, guidance and fairness in these matters. Head 22 under the Ministry of National Security and again, the Member for Oropouche East is pure merriment, but these are serious matters. These are serious matters. These are not cookies; these are lives.

Mr. Speaker, the Ministry of National Security. The question was asked under Head 22 because we saw some unusual content in what was presented at the Finance Committee, and as good stewards of the people’s interest, the Members of the Opposition, we asked some questions. So, there was content about CCTV cameras and, again, Members asked for further details. And what we see in the responses under Head 22, response by the Minister of Finance and the Economy, cameras have been installed throughout Trinidad and Tobago; broad statement. The command centres are located in TEMA, Tobago; Staubles, Tobago; and police administration building. As at June 10, 2013, 738 cameras are operational.

Mr. Speaker, again, I appeal to the banker in the Minister because that might be all there is to appeal to. On these documents we are getting the numerators, but we have no idea what the denominator is. We have no idea what is the outcome. We have no idea what is the value.

So, I am going to ask: Where are these cameras? How are they distributed? Who made those decisions? How many are operational today as we speak? How many are not operational? How many are actually being monitored, and how many are simply sitting at the sides of the roads? How many cases have been

advanced based on the use of any of these cameras? How many are located in Richplain where we are aware of an informal, illegitimate curfew that has been declared in Richplain, in the constituency of Diego Martin West? With hard-working people living all around, a curfew has been declared under threat of violence. Are there any down there? What is the Government doing about that?

So, 738, but we are not really getting any details at all. Do these cameras work? We saw there was one—I am aware of one particular incident of national concern where there was a vehicular slaughter that took place in Sea Lots. Vehicular slaughter took place, allegedly involving a member of the protective services and, guess what happened? Guess what the nation has been told? The camera was not working. Brand new, it was not working.

5.35 a.m.

So, we cannot just come here and approve these funds and accept this as sufficient detail—738 cameras operational. I am not satisfied with that and no citizen should ever be satisfied with that type of blasé treatment by the Government.

Again, under the Ministry of National Security, Head 22, we see something that has yet to be explained, breaking down some costs. The warehouse upgrade programme, Minister, and then he puts a note: The US State Department has given approval for five warehouses in Trinidad and Tobago in the process for site preparation and approvals, \$1.5 million.

What? Mr. Speaker, you heard that? The US State Department has given approval for five warehouses in Trinidad and Tobago. What is this based on? When was the Parliament taken into the confidence of this Government about any project involving the US State Department's approval for any facility in this country, far less five warehouses for the ODPM to store materials to save citizens' lives?

Mr. Speaker, again, they do not want us to talk at all, just leave them, rubber stamp and move on. But then who is going to ask these questions?

Miss Hospedales: That is correct.

Dr. A. Browne: Who is going to oversee what this Government is up to? I do not know what on earth this is about and I do not know why we need State Department approval for any facility, warehouse or otherwise, in the sovereign jurisdiction of the nation of Trinidad and Tobago. I do not know when this was negotiated and I do not know if this is part of the new phase of naiveté in how this country conducts its foreign affairs and international relations. I am not sure about that at all.

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Moving right along, Mr. Speaker, I asked a question about this Morvant/Laventille initiative. The Minister of Sport kept threatening: I have all the answers here, but I want to continue dealing with the Member for Diego Martin West and he took his entire time just making those references. He had no answers; he really just wanted to rally against the Leader of the Opposition because he likes to deal with the big fish. So when the internal stuff, he “rally for leader” and he sees himself somehow as a match, but we all know better. There is no match there.

So the breakdown: the question was asked about the breakdown of this \$8 million for the Morvant/Laventille initiative and which NGOs were involved. We got a breakdown here of \$8 million which, of course, does not add up to \$8 million. But what we are seeing is a million dollars for the lease of vehicle and maintenance, singular—lease of a vehicle and maintenance for \$1 million.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance and the Economy is obliged to tell us right down to the chassis number of this vehicle that is being leased for \$1 million, inclusive of maintenance. That would have to be a Ferrari or an Aston Martin. I do not know what they are transporting these Hoop of Life officials in. What vehicle is that? [*Interruption*] What? It is a lease for a million dollars and you bring the document here and you expect us just to shrug this off or ignore it or pretend we do not see it.

So Minister, I know you are a quick “winder-upper”, but I implore you, do not skip over some of these very specific things because these questions are going to remain on the national psyche. It might be very easy for you to explain—I will be surprised if it is—it might be, but the explanation is not just ignoring it. At least make an effort. So a million, a vehicle and maintenance, for that vehicle is a million dollars.

Mr. Speaker, moving right along because breakfast is approaching. And then the question was asked which NGOs are involved in this programme. Now, this is a community programme, this Morvant/Laventille initiative, inclusive of Hoop of Life and whatever. The response—one, two, three, four, five words—no NGO is directly involved. This must be a record for a community-based initiative, spending an additional \$8 million of taxpayers’ resources without direct involvement of a single NGO.

What brain did this thing come out of, Mr. Speaker? What brain designed this community initiative without any NGO involvement? There are fundamental errors in what the Government is asking us to approve and endorse. Fundamental!

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

Motion made: That the hon. Member's speaking time be extended by 30 minutes. [*Mr. N. Hypolite*]

Question put and agreed to.

Dr. A. Browne: [*Desk thumping*] Thank you, Mr. Speaker and Members, for that robust and rousing extension. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Speaking, moving right along, because another very specific question arose with regard to the helicopter acquisition because there was some unusual text in what the Minister provided to the Finance Committee and both the Member for Diego Martin North/East and Member for Diego Martin Central, myself, asked some specific questions about this one.

Let me tell you what this sentence was, the offending sentence. They are asking for \$126 million for four helicopters—small change for the UNC—\$126 million. And this is the text:

The sum of \$100 million was allocated in 2013 to meet the interim payments—already allocated, \$100 million. However, due to the non-finalization of financing agreements, an additional sum of \$176 million would be required to meet the expenditure.

Mr. Speaker, anybody with sense reading that, red flags would be flying in the air because it suggests very strongly that the ball has been dropped by the Government, yet again, in a matter of procurement and that while, for the year, the entire year till September, \$100 million was allocated to meet interim payments, because of the non-finalization of the financing agreements, an additional—not \$10 million, not \$50 million, not a hundred million—an additional \$176 million would be required and that is the end of that, you know. So we asked for an explanation of that, Mr. Speaker, and the Minister sent what he is proposing as an explanation:

The financing arrangements for the purchase of the four helicopters were finalized in 2010—finalized “eh”—with two banks. The financing arrangements for the training and maintenance relating to the four helicopters have not yet been finalized.

And he moves on to the next response.

How is that an explanation for this? We are asking for details. When you say \$176 million, what does that mean? What does that entail? Is that a fee? Is that a penalty? What is that about? Tell us. If you do not know, it means you are not

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doing your job. If you know, you are obliged to tell us. The questions are asked and the citizens deserve to know and this is based on the content that the Government has provided.

So, I do not know if we are wasting our breath with this Minister of Finance and the Economy, but again, I am appealing to the Minister to do a much better job in the winding-up of satisfying the concerns of the representatives of the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Speaker, I can go on and on, but I do not want to go on and on, I will just go on. Just briefly because I see the Member for St. Augustine may have decided that this is not a debate in which he wishes to participate, and I do not want to change his mind about that at all. There is some confusion in this House right now about this constitutional reform cost because even from Members of the Government I do not think they are very clear in their heads as to what has been expended thus far and what is being requested right now.

The Minister might be clear, but I can tell him that his colleagues are not clear and certainly Members on this side are not clear. So it would be good, not that he should speak, but if he passes a note of clarity to the Minister of Finance and the Economy—that is just my suggestion—so that the Minister could clarify this matter once and for all.

I cannot see—and I did attend one of the consultations in Diego Martin and it was in the hall of a former junior secondary school—it is now Diego Martin North Secondary—and I did not really see, if we take 17 consultations at \$10 million, I did not see \$50,000 worth of anything physically present in that particular consultation. It was invisible to me. I am not saying money is being squirreled, or I am not making any accusation along those lines, but if that was a typical consultation, then there were no serious or extreme facilities cost or rental fees or anything else like that. So the math is not adding up to me at all. It is very far from adding up with regard to 17 consultations at \$10 million and that is why the Member for Diego Martin West, I think, became very alarmed and asked questions and so. So I am hoping the Minister of Finance and the Economy would do a better job on that particular issue in his winding-up.

Mr. Speaker, these are very serious concerns. I just want to take maybe two more for the benefit of the Members on the other side.

Mr. Imbert: Only?

Dr. A. Browne: Well, I could go on longer. Mr. Speaker, there was another question falling under the Ministry of Education, yes, Head 31. No, it was Ministry of Public Administration. This has to do with scholarships for teachers,

which falls under the Ministry of Public Administration. There was a request for \$5 million and the content provided specialized areas of training which are not available in Trinidad and Tobago for some of the teacher awardees needed to attend universities abroad. An additional \$5 million is required to settle outstanding expenses. So this is money that was money already committed, spent, and the Government is asking for \$5 million more for this programme for these specialized areas which are not available in Trinidad and Tobago.

But then, in the further explanation the Minister provided, he says: presently no teachers are on scholarship abroad, no teachers are on scholarship abroad, but upon selection, Cabinet approval is sought for the scholarships to be awarded.

So if we do not have any teachers studying in these specialized areas abroad, then why are we approving \$5 million to settle any outstanding or ongoing expenses? I do not understand what is happening here at all and the Minister of Education did not. The Minister is asked to really clarify what is being accounted for here if there is no activity under this area. Why this \$5 million?

Mr. Speaker, and then there was the breakdown of the food cards and the Member for Arouca/Maloney touched on it. I just want to say that today we got a further document. I am not even sure if the Member for Arouca/Maloney received that. An Appendix I, which gives three periods: August to September 2012; October to December 2012; and January to March 2013, number of cards produced.

Now, we asked for a breakdown of number of cards delivered. The Government decided no, no, no, they do not want us to know that, they will give us a breakdown of number of cards produced, which is of no significance to any citizen of Trinidad and Tobago because you can produce cards and have them in a drawer, as has happened in that Ministry, and people are not getting them.

The numbers speak for themselves. In the first three-month period in, let us say, Caroni Central, 200 cards produced; second three-month period, 100 cards produced; the third three-month period, 100 cards produced. That is 400 in all.

In the constituency of Caroni East, first three-month period, 200 cards produced; second three-month period, 200 cards produced; third three-month period, 100 cards produced, 500 in all.

Then you go to, let us choose a good PNM constituency. Let us say, Diego Martin Central. The first three-month period, 200 cards; the second three-month period, zero cards produced; third three-month period, zero cards produced.

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Mr. Speaker, what is going on here? What is going on here? This is the breakdown they have brought. They are asking for large, enormous sums of money under this particular programme—additional funds—and they are presenting evidence of discrimination, maladministration of the most horrific kind, and the Minister is nowhere around to assist us with these matters. We do not even know how many of these have been delivered or distributed, but what about Laventille? What about Simeon Road? Cocorite? Four Roads? Diamond Village? Cadette Hill? And then how many temporary cards? Are these temporary cards or two-year cards? What is going on?

5.50 a.m.

We know the Minister has come up with a new device, cards with no name on them, temporary cards—no name, no identification, no screening, no triage. So when you go and you walk about in Bagatelle or wherever, you could have a vehicle there with the springs breaking down with cards in the trunk, and cards can be sharing like Crix, like peewah in the road. That is a new device.

You go to Chile where this programme came from, Mr. Speaker, originated, you will never see anything like that, because that is Trini innovation to get people addicted, not to the Ministry, to the Ministers. That is what that creates. “Gih meh ah card” and you are able—“Look ah card. You want ah card? Look ah card”. That is how they are moving; that is how they are rolling. There is no accounting for that.

Miss Hospedales: That is right.

Dr. A. Browne: We have seen the expenditure, hundreds of millions of dollars, but there is no accounting for that, and this is what they call a response with detail. Unacceptable, Mr. Speaker, in any Parliament in the world and, if that is the case, it should be unacceptable here.

The Senior Citizens’ Grant: ask a question because remember these are supplemental approvals the Government is requesting. This is not the national budget that went already—a forecasting and estimating till September 2013. Not so Minister? Fifty billion-odd dollars already allocated including—58—to the Ministry of the People and Social Development, specifically for the Senior Citizens’ Grant. This is a statutory grant. People do not rise up out of the ground or fall from the sky and start accessing this grant. We know the criteria, we know the age group. The Government has played games with that. We know what it is. It is in the law as it was before.

So how on God's green earth can you have done those projections which are done every single year by the staff and find yourselves in a situation, three months before the close of the fiscal year, requesting—how much? Mr. Speaker, \$232 million supplemental for the Senior Citizens' Grant. We ask the Minister to just explain that to us. What went wrong in the Ministry of Finance and the Economy? He gave no explanation whatsoever; none whatsoever.

So are we just to take it on faith, and when you include the disability grant, an additional \$35 million, there is an unexplained—coming to the Ministry of the People and Social Development—\$260 million. We are supposed to take it on faith because they do their business so well in that Ministry. They are so highly accountable that we will just take it on faith that \$260 million, in addition, on a predictable allocation is just provided and let us move on because we have Cabinet today.

Mr. Speaker, we are not going down that road because we have learned not to trust this Government. [*Desk thumping*] We have learned not to trust them even on the elusive things. [*Desk thumping*] When something is as obvious as this—when they are begging questions as obvious as this, we have to ask them, and we have to insist on answers.

Mr. Speaker, I am now in danger of breaking my word because I said I would not go on too long. I just have two additional points that I would like to make. The one that I would want to make is in response to the Member for D'Abadie/O'Meara. I do not know why I would respond to him, but he made heavy weather of the Children's Life Fund. He thought that was a strong point to make. Mr. Speaker, I feel very strongly about the Children's Life Fund because that is a Bill that I voted for, and that is a Bill that myself and other Members spent time researching, contributing to on our legs, and contributing to, very specifically, in the committee stage. So we are also invested in that Bill and we voted for it. You would remember. We are invested in that. We have contributed our intellectual content to help make that programme work. [*Laughter*] He laughed it off because he does not see the value of the Parliament. Mr. Speaker, that Bill is the product of minds on both sides of this House.

Mr. Speaker, so when the Member for D'Abadie/O'Meara comes and tries to extract some government self-glorification out of this, I became a little bit concerned. But, Mr. Speaker, I took the opportunity to go back into the *Hansard* to see what some of the concerns were over how this particular fund would be utilized by the Government. There is an interesting section in the *Hansard* of

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Friday, November 12, 2010, the Member for Diego Martin Central—sorry to quote myself, but I said something that the House needs to be reminded of. It says:

“Another concern—it is interesting to voice it now—is the need to respect the privacy and dignity of the children and families that may benefit from this Fund...We are talking about the Fund.”—they were trying to interrupt me—“If you have beneficiaries there may be the temptation to put them on the front page and have a politician bestowing on them what is really the taxpayers’ resources. I hope and pray that is not...the intention of this...approach. The sick children and their families would do well to avoid the public gaze in that manner.”

Mr. Speaker, there is actually a section in the Act itself—the Act seems to have fallen asleep, because it has escaped me. There is a section in the Act itself, section 31—oh here it is. Section 31 of the Children’s Life Fund Act subsection (1) says:

“Save as authorized by this Act, it is an offence for any person to disclose any information obtained by him in the performance of his duties, powers and functions under this Act.”

designed to protect the anonymity and confidentiality of the families, the children, the parents, who would be benefiting from the State, the taxpayers’ resources. You heard the concern—to respect the privacy and dignity of children and families benefiting—and it is actually noted as an offence to breach that.

Mr. Speaker, and then it came to my attention, the *Newsday* newspaper, Wednesday October 10, 2012 page 21—I would not display it for long—*[newspaper in hand]*—guess what? Exactly what we warned the Government about and exactly what section 31 was designed to help prevent; breaches of information, confidentiality and anonymity, parading a family for public relations benefit. The Government was warned about this in this Parliament, and they have gone and done—they cannot help themselves—exactly that.

“Alex will now grow up to say ‘Thank You’—and they named the child.

To those of us at the Children’s Life Fund, it is a fulfilment of a commitment...Six-month-old—and they named the child—diagnosed with a congenital cardiac defect. He received his life-saving surgery at the Wolfson Children’s Hospital.”

Picture of the child, picture of the parents, picture of a teddy bear, et cetera, et cetera.

Mr. Speaker, this Government has no shame. They do not take good advice, and that kind of behaviour is exactly what we should avoid if we are seeking to do the business of this country in a proper fashion. This fund was not designed to be a PR tool or it should not have been. When we contributed and we voted for it, we did not vote for that, and we warned the Government specifically about that, but they cannot help themselves. Anything, they see the potential for self-glorification and public relations. That is their view of governance of Trinidad and Tobago. That is a view, that is an approach, that is categorically rejected by the People's National Movement and the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] We will have no part of that, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I wanted to deal a little further with the Member for Caroni East but I would avoid doing so. I just want to say that the Government has come here for this \$2.8 billion. They have not done a good job of explaining some of this expenditure at all. They have not answered the questions that we have provided to any degree of satisfaction.

I have said before, with regard to the Ministry of the People and Social Development, that that Ministry has been transformed into almost a grand secretariat for this self-promotion of certain high public officials—from a Ministry to serve a number of functions to a secretariat for self-promotion and public relations. But, unfortunately—we are seeing evidence week after week—I have to conclude that the Government itself has been transformed over time into a secretariat for a different type of interest, and we see some of the strange contractual decisions being made—and these are usually traced back when you really do the investigative work—to financiers and funders [*Desk thumping*] and very wealthy people in this country. You would realize that our Government, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, has been transformed over time into a grand well-dressed secretariat for the interests of financiers and funders. [*Desk thumping*]

That is a very serious and alarming development, and that is something that Members of the Government—the right-thinking Members who may exist within the Government, should take immediate action on. And, again, I am leaning on the Minister of Finance and the Economy because he is a banker, and he should be terrified by that. Terrified! Because you cannot develop a country or build an economy on that kind of mentality, but they have done nothing about it. They have made it worse.

Mr. Speaker, I again—I did it before—I want to challenge this Government and this Minister, if they are serious at all about turning around their plummeting

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fate in the politics of Trinidad and Tobago and turning around the distrust that people have established in this Government—total and complete distrust—one of the suggestions I have for them is—in short an order as possible—to bring legislation to this Parliament to focus on campaign finance reform. Seeing that it was not done before is not good enough because you came into office promising change. Yes, Member for St. Augustine, you could nod because it is true, but you have not brought that change, and let us not wait until the PNM comes for that to be done.

Mr. Partap: That would never happen.

Dr. A. Browne: Right. So why do you not do it now? [*Crosstalk*]

Dr. Khan: You did not want to do it.

Dr. A. Browne: You do not want to do it, Member for Barataria/San Juan! Mr. Speaker, you understand where this Government is. The citizens have far outpaced them and outstripped them in thinking. They are way behind, and they will pay a dire price—I suspect even before 2015—for that kind of cavalier approach. [*Crosstalk*] The Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla has already paid a price of sorts.

Mr. Speaker, I am winding up now. As I was saying, sadly, this Government has been transformed into a secretariat for financiers, and that is where we come to this fire-truck debacle. Mr. Speaker, just to make one statement on it—the Prime Minister has spoken on the matter. The Prime Minister has said that she is awaiting a report from the chief fire officer and other parties involved. She has already described it as a fiasco and is awaiting the report before she says further.

Do you know what happened today? A Minister in her Government—a Minister of Sport who has nothing to do with towing or “fire trucking” or fires, or the Ministry of National Security, on the face of it—rises and mounts a passionate defence of a project that the Prime Minister has told this country is a fiasco and, it appears, Mr. Speaker, that he is carrying a brief or representing the views or concerns of somebody else who is not currently in the Government, and who might be connected to the financiers. I could call their names if people are afraid to call their names. They like to call names of small people in the Parliament but not big people—Junior Sammy and Company Limited—and those who might have been involved in the towing— [*Crosstalk*]—

Dr. Khan: The PNM gave them more money—

Dr. A. Browne: Hold on! It is not a matter of more money or less money. [*Crosstalk*] It is the population that said this is an odious example—

Dr. Khan: That is your financier.

Mrs. Seepersad-Bachan: That is your financier.

Dr. A. Browne:—of malgovernance.

Dr. Khan: That is your financier.

Dr. A. Browne: It does not matter. You do not think he is financing the UNC? Mr. Speaker, I am going to ignore him. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker: Please, please. Members, Members, could you allow the Member for Diego Martin Central to speak in silence, please.

Dr. Khan: He is misleading the House; he is misleading the House.

Mr. Speaker: Yes. Well, you rise on a point of order.

Dr. Khan: I would do that, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Yeah, but do not engage in crosstalk, please. Hon. Member for Diego Martin Central, you may continue.

Dr. A. Browne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. [*Desk thumping*] Mr. Speaker, it is amazing, you know. I referenced the Ministry of the People and Social Development which sent over 100 persons in the build-up to the THA election to Tobago, staff members. Do you know where 61 of them stayed, Mr. Speaker?

Hon. Member: Where?

Dr. A. Browne: At a hotel owned by Ishwar Galbaransingh.

Hon. Member: Wow! [*Desk thumping*]

6.05 a.m.

Dr. Browne: The hotel where most of those staff members came is a hotel owned by Ishwar Galbaransingh—

Hon. Member: “Nothing wrong with that.”

Dr. A. Browne:—another financier of the UNC, and you know what they are saying, “Nothing wrong with that, nothing wrong with that”. The citizens are saying something is wrong with that mentality. [*Desk thumping*] We have had enough of it in this country. They promised to deliver change, they have done none of that, they do not even want to do it because they become addicted to that cycle: money, politics and greed.

So \$2.8 billion chasing \$160 billion. They complained a lot about the issue of financing and financiers and bad decisions before. They are now in a position to

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do something about it. The Minister of Finance and the Economy started off by saying, “If we want to develop, we need to develop a legislative agenda that would make this country more attractive to foreign investors”.

My suggestion of where he should start, if he means what he says, is the focus on campaign finance reform. [*Desk thumping*] That will make this country more attractive, not just to foreign investors but also local investors, and also to attract the trust once again of the people of Trinidad and Tobago, because they placed their trust in this Government, heavily, in 2010, and they have now withdrawn that trust—I will use language the Minister will understand—they have withdrawn that trust with interest, and that is why we have lost interest in supporting this particular Bill. Mr. Speaker, I thank you.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Moruga/Tableland, Minister of National Diversity and Social Integration.

The Minister of National Diversity and Social Integration (Hon. Clifton De Coteau): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I stand this morning to support this Bill. Mr. Speaker, I listened to the learned Member of Parliament for Diego Martin Central and, as usual, his delivery is veiled as though he is the mirror of chastity and the pinnacle of political virtue.

Hon. Member: Ah!

Dr. Browne: Make a serious presentation, Sir.

Hon. C. De Coteau: Give me a chance, Sir.

Dr. Browne: Okay, go ahead.

Hon. C. De Coteau: Please. You talk about the disrespect and you are displaying it now. I am surprised. [*Crosstalk*] Please! Please! Please! Please! Please! Please! Please! Mr. Speaker, I have been advised by my colleague from Couva North—in response to one of the usual unsubstantiated contributions—to explain that the level of siltation when you are talking about the drainage, at that point in time when they visited, the level of siltation noticed did not require any dredging nor desilting, nor embankment. However, during the course of time it would be revisited and once there is the necessary accumulation, it would be addressed.

Mr. Speaker, the Ministry that I am attached to—

Dr. Browne: Privileged to be.

Hon. C. De Coteau: Privileged to be—thank you, Sir—is one that champions patriotism, unity in diversity, nationalism and the promotion of a cohesive society.

Mr. Speaker, as we spend these long hours, surely, this is patriotism at work. You know, Stephen Matterson, one who has written a total book on patriotism said, patriotism is a “special affection for one’s own country”.

Mr. Roberts: Yes! [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. C. De Coteau: It is your sense of identification with the country. It is a special concern for the well-being of the country; a willingness to sacrifice to promote the country’s good.

Mr. Speaker, I reflected and I wondered; our constituents, how would they evaluate us? Would they see us as patriots or would they see us as fools? How would they evaluate us? Here we are really trying to work for the good of the country, whether you are on this side as messengers of hope, or on that side as messengers of hopelessness, the point is, how would they evaluate us? How would they evaluate us? Here we are sacrificing.

Mr. Roberts: Yes!

Hon. C. De Coteau: Would they say, “You know, our health is our wealth”?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yes!

Hon. C. De Coteau: Are we sacrificing that wealth of us? Should we fall down now, what do they say? Would they laugh at us or would they sympathize with us?

Hon. Member: [*Inaudible*]

Hon. C. De Coteau: Sympathize? [*Laughter*]

Dr. Khan: “He go say yuh look for that.”

Hon. C. De Coteau: Patriotism is not obliterating our sins of the past. Patriotism is not now being in Opposition saying, “I am squeaky clean. I have committed no sin.” Or “I have forgotten my sin”, or “we feel that our population—they have forgotten our sins”, then it would be fooling ourselves. So those of us who are saying, “We coming in 2014” [*Interruption*] Mr. Speaker, I have learned as an educator, in a class sometimes, to ignore the direction of the sound, but coming from a lady, a champion from Port of Spain South, I would not complain.

Miss Mc Donald: Thank you.

Hon. C. De Coteau: She has a sonorous voice and a beautiful face. Patriotism is defined as love for one’s country, identification with it and special concern for the well-being and that of compatriots.

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Mr. Speaker, most of the contributions on the other side said that we did not identify, we did not talk. One of the reasons for this increase is so that we could complete our year of patriotism. What I would say is that I feel a bit saddened that we have had some patriotic walks and we have invited my colleagues to join with us and they never turned up.

Mr. Roberts: Never!

Hon. C. De Coteau: Never turned up.

Mr. Roberts: Oh my goodness!

Hon. Member: It is a shame.

Mr. Roberts: Shame! Are they patriots?

Hon. C. De Coteau: What is the loyalty? The President of the United States of America while he was a Senator, on Monday, June 30, 2008 at Independence, Missouri he said:

“That is why, for me, patriotism is always more than just loyalty to a place on a map or a certain kind of people. Instead, it is loyalty to America’s ideals - ideals for which anyone can sacrifice, or defend, or give their last full measure of devotion. I believe it is this loyalty that allows a country teeming with different races and ethnicities, religions and customs, to come together as one.”

Not to offend my colleagues, patriotism—

Dr. Khan: Offend them! Offend them!

Hon. C. De Coteau:—is not no divine right that the PNM is the only people who could run this country.

Hon. Member: Oh yes, good. [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Member: Not at all.

Hon. C. De Coteau: That is not patriotism.

Hon. Member: Not at all—[*Inaudible*]—common sense.

Mr. Indarsingh: No, they feel they have—[*Inaudible*]

Hon. C. De Coteau: Common sense is not so common, you know. If it was common then a lot of people on the other side would have had it.

Dr. Khan: Then they would have had it.

Hon. C. De Coteau: Mr. Speaker, I just want to let the—I would not go into all the details of what we did during our patriotism drive, but I want to just put one point.

I am not claiming any copyright for patriotism because, Mr. Speaker, my dear friends on the other side, they championed the idea of patriotism. They championed the idea of patriotism and, unfortunately, they were unable to implement it, because as early as in September 2003, the Cabinet in Minute No. 2326 approved a proposal developed by the Cabinet, and it was Patriotism Week, and all the things about patriotism. I was cautioned by one of my friends on the other side, “Do not use that to slap the PNM in the face”, but they developed the mentality, as far as they are concerned—and my good friend from La Brea, keeps regurgitating it; “Call election now! Call election!”, because they have been so conditioned into going at two and a half, 20/20 for them, not a 50 overs [*Inaudible*] short.

Hon. Member: Yes, man. [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. C. De Coteau: Short and swift, not sweet, because their shortness leaves a certain amount of bitterness in their mouths and in their hearts—

Hon. Member: Oooooo!

Hon. C. De Coteau:—and a certain amount of division on the other side. Bitterness and division that still to be yield, still to be yield.

Mr. Roberts: “Dey like ah young aloe vera plant.”

Hon. C. De Coteau: [*Laughter*] Mr. Speaker, what is this patriotism we are trying to—it is difficult because when I listened here last night and I heard the contribution by the Member for Laventille East/Morvant, and the Member was disclosing the kind of information, I say, “Where is the love of country?”

Hon. Member: Where? Where?

Hon. C. De Coteau: Why, if you have something like this, you cannot meet whosoever is responsible and say, “Listen, deal with it”. Why do you have to come out here in an open forum—to score marks?

Hon. Member: No.

Hon. C. De Coteau: “Eh?” To get a headline?

Hon. Member: “Nah.”

Hon. C. De Coteau: No! No! No! That could not be patriotic.

Hon. Member: “How they go do that?”

Hon. Member: “Doh do that, yuh cyah accuse him ah dat.”

Hon. Member: “How it go look?”

Hon. C. De Coteau: No! No! No! No! No! Scoring cheap points. If you know someone is getting the food card, the same way you would meet the Member, the Minister, and ask him, call him up and say, “Listen man, there is something wrong here”.

Dr. Browne: “Doh tell de Parliament?”

Mr. Roberts: No, you could tell the Parliament also.

Hon. C. De Coteau: If he takes no action, then come out and do it. But the point is, I believe we should really approach things differently. Names are called, people cannot really defend themselves when we call the names? [*Crosstalk*] No! No! No! You see—so we are about to maintain social integration and cohesion and other, I want to just identify for some people what we are planning to do for the rest of the patriotism year—

Mr. Roberts: Yes, man.

Hon. C. De Coteau:—because you all are saying that we are not a— [*Crosstalk*]—yes.

Hon. Member: We have plenty time.

Hon. C. De Coteau: [*Laughter*] We intend to have the patriotic school competition, again.

Hon. Member: [*Inaudible*]—straight to Cabinet.

Hon. C. De Coteau: Pardon me, Sir.

Hon. Member: [*Inaudible*]—straight to Cabinet.

Hon. C. De Coteau: I would ignore that.

Hon. Member: Ignore him.

Hon. C. De Coteau: We will have the continuing patriotic fair— [*Interruption*]

Dr. Browne: In the words of the Speaker.

Hon. C. De Coteau: In the words of the Speaker, yes. I want to fast-forward the thing. We intend to develop a public relations campaign on patriotism. We

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intend to have a roving patriotism caravan. We hope to have the amateur photography competition which would encourage participants of different age groups to capture images that in their opinion best portray the spirit of patriotism. We will have the essay competition. This youth intervention will be divided according to the different age groups and is aimed at inculcating a sense of pride, respect and dedication for one's country.

Hon. Member: Wrap it up big.

Hon. C. De Coteau: We need that. We need that. We have the "Text the right answer" competition. We will have a public-speaking competition for children, the value of patriotism. We will have a national patriotism college quiz.

Mr. Speaker, I want to go quickly to heritage. Mr. Speaker, there are 381 heritage sites, but we keep boasting about the Magnificent Seven. [*Desk thumping*] Mr. Speaker, the plantocracy, the church and the Government. Right?

Hon. Member: "Imbert grandfather."

Hon. C. De Coteau: Stollmeyer estate built in 1902, started in 1902, completed in 1904; Whitehall, 1904; the Archbishop's Palace, 1903, and it was by the fifth Archbishop of Port of Spain, Patrick Vincent Flood; the Ambard's house called Roomor, 1904; Mille Fleurs; the Anglican Bishop conceptualized in 1904, started to be built in 1908 and into 1910, and QRC.

6.20 a.m.

I listened about people talking about spending and not spending. People jog around the Savannah and every time they pass, they should remark, shame.

Dr. Khan: PNM shame!

Hon. C. De Coteau: PNM shame. In their contribution they boast, yes. [*Interruption*] But they neglected our heritage. Heritage meant nothing to them. Absolutely nothing to them. [*Interruption*] Mr. Speaker, we have Mille Fleurs. They allowed the—you know, someone say why spend so much money on the President's roof?

Dr. Khan: Shame!

Mr. Roberts: What a shame! How could they say that?

Hon. C. De Coteau: Just before their political demise the President's roof caved in.

Mr. Roberts: Yes.

Dr. Browne: He get a—[*Interruption*]

Dr. Khan: Yes, you said that.

Miss Hospedales: Nobody said that.

Dr. Khan: He say it then.

Miss Hospedales: He probably—[*Inaudible*]

Dr. Khan: You say it.

Mr. Speaker: Just ignore the Member for Arouca/Maloney, please.

Hon. C. De Coteau: Mr. Speaker, Mille Fleurs House, built by Dr. Enrique Prada and his wife, and it was built by that renowned builder George Brown.

Mr. Roberts: And George Brown say to wrap it up—[*Inaudible*] [*Laughter*]

Hon. C. De Coteau: It was owned by the families of Joseph Salvatori and George Matouk. It was purchased by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago in 1979, Scottish-style architecture, roof and pagoda deck—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Roberts: Yes.

Dr. Khan: Tell them, tell them.

Hon. C. De Coteau:—lace like cast iron rails from Scotland—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: “North jacuzzi by Karim.”

Hon. C. De Coteau:—original Welsh slate tiles.

Dr. Khan: By who?

Hon. C. De Coteau: The bottom line, it was among the earliest buildings in Port of Spain. [*Interruption*] It was one of the Magnificent Seven and designated a national treasure.

Dr. Khan: Teach them, teach them.

Hon. C. De Coteau: It was listed as a monument of the Greater Caribbean in 1988 by the OAS and it was associated because Dr. Enrique Prada, he was one of the first owners and he was one of the early mayors in Port of Spain.

Dr. Khan: You hear that?

Dr. Browne: [*Inaudible*]

Hon. C. De Coteau: Yes, Enrique Prada.

Dr. Khan: The same fella.

Hon. C. De Coteau: Mr. Speaker, they have allowed that place to run down.

Hon. Member: Shame!

Hon. C. De Coteau: Shame! And the same way they allow that place to run down—*[Interruption]*

Dr. Khan: Read it for them again.

Hon. C. De Coteau:—is the same kind of rural neglect we have right in my constituency.

Dr. Khan: Read it for them again. Read it. *[Desk thumping]*

Hon. Member: Tell them.

Hon. C. De Coteau: And I hear my friend from La Brea talking about “worstest”

Dr. Khan: “Emorsis, emorsis”.

Hon. Member: “Morsis.”

Hon. C. De Coteau: No, “worstest” he say, while he was with the “fellas” and them, they say we are the “worstest—*[Interruption]*—worstest or worsoris”, I never heard it. *[Interruption]* That is a positive, a superlative positive. Right? *[Crosstalk]*

Mr. Speaker, they can be crowned the “worsehis”, using “his” when it came to neglect.

Dr. Khan: Not patriotism.

Hon. C. De Coteau: Where patriotism is concerned.

Dr. Browne: We are still having a lot of issues down—*[Interruption]*

Hon. C. De Coteau: “Wha”?

Dr. Browne: We are still having a lot of issues down in your constituency.

Hon. C. De Coteau: Mr. Speaker—*[Interruption]*

Dr. Khan: “Doh listen to he, you know.”

Mr. Indarsingh: Do not be sidetracked.

Hon. C. De Coteau:—when we talk about the heritage—*[Interruption]*

Dr. Khan: Tell them about the Magnificent Seven.

Hon. C. De Coteau:—they are trying to corner me and I want to go quickly. They have asked me, De Coteau—*[Interruption]*

Dr. Khan: Keep going, keep going.

Hon. C. De Coteau:—what are you doing for Emancipation? I want to fast-forward. Mr. Speaker, I want to assure them that we will be having a Ubuntu festival—*[Interruption]*

Dr. Khan: You hear that?

Hon. C. De Coteau:—which is a focus on African philosophy and brotherhood *[Interruption]* and this will be taking place at the Lopinot Ancestral Heritage site.

Dr. Khan: All are invited.

Hon. C. De Coteau: All are invited. All would be invited in due course.

Dr. Khan: Do not go and play golf now, you know.

Dr. Browne: Golf?

Hon. C. De Coteau: Mr. Speaker, we also would be involved in a certain amount of signage *[Interruption]* of things that our African brothers and sisters would have contributed to. *[Interruption]*

Mr. Speaker, you will know that one of the oldest concrete structures, as they said in Trinidad, is on Nelson Island built in 1802 by the African slaves. There will be signage to that effect.

Mr. Indarsingh: They will be going back there.

Hon. C. De Coteau: There will also be some signage to areas that would be of value to our African brothers and sisters. *[Interruption]* Mr. Speaker, why do we concentrate on Lopinot?

Miss Hospedales: What about Arouca?

Dr. Khan: You will get your sign.

Hon. Member: He said you will get your sign.

Miss Hospedales: Arouca has a historical site. *[Crosstalk]*

Hon. C. De Coteau: Mr. Speaker, I just want for the record, in the same way we identified that during the period we had 147,600—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Hypolite: Mr. Speaker, 36(1).

Dr. Khan: “Wha is the problem?”

Hon. Member: “I doh believe you did that.”

Dr. Khan: Sit down, nah! [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker: Overruled, continue. [*Desk thumping*]

Dr. Khan: Thank you, thank you.

Mr. Roberts: “Aaah”.

Dr. Khan: Patriotism, learn. [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. C. De Coteau: It said patriotism and the plans and; I am trying to identify some of the plans.

Mr. Speaker, you know, as a former teacher—he would not say it now—we used to say it something like this: let me think that you are a fool, do not open your mouth and convince me that you are. [*Crosstalk and laughter*] I rest my case.

Mr. Speaker, there were 65,000 Africans registered between the period 1814 and 1834. [*Interruption*] We are going to identify some of these sites; [*Interruption*] we will be identifying how many persons came; where they came from; [*Interruption*] we are going to identify the areas because it all comes under Head 74.

We are going up to Lopinot as we said and we will signage. There is an Anglican church which was called “the slave church”. It was built specially for worship by slaves. We are going to identify that area. There are nine caves where the slaves hid to escape their masters and the turmoil they represented; we are going to identify those. The largest cave is called the Gomez cave, and it is expected to be developed as a new heritage site.

Mr. Roberts: They used the back door or the front door?

Hon. C. De Coteau: The “colado” cave will also receive similar treatment. This is in the Lopinot area, and this would be in collaboration with the Lopinot Village Council and the tourism board. [*Interruption*] There will also be the “shango” festival in July leading up to emancipation.

Dr. Khan: Teach them.

Hon. C. De Coteau: Mr. Speaker, these sites would be significant, especially to our African American visitors who would be coming to this area. Definitely we will be taking them to—we will be identifying the Moruga area where we had the African Americans coming, where we call the Merikin. *[Interruption]*

And more so, we will be identifying the grave of Papa Neeza, one of the greatest and most renowned baba Orisha. All these factors would coincide with what we will call domestic tourism. We will also identify the homes of the great Pan Africanist George Padmore, *[Interruption]* the father of Pan Africanism; Henry Sylvester Williams—*[Interruption]*

Dr. Khan: Repeat that.

Hon. C. De Coteau:—who will get—the highest emancipation award given at our emancipation celebration. It is called the Henry Sylvester Williams Award.

Dr. Khan: Repeat that for them.

Hon. C. De Coteau: The Kwame Ture, the legendary Kwame Ture is well known to the Americas, a plaque will be placed outside of his home on Oxford Street. CLR James, friend and advisor to Nkrumah, who was another great Pan Africanist; Tunapuna-Arouca boy, his home site would be identified.

Dr. Khan: Very good.

Hon. C. De Coteau: Then we go to sites of maroons and marronage resistance.

Dr. Khan: “All yuh now learning”.

Hon. C. De Coteau: Negre Marron, a place of marronage accessibility behind Paramin, Diego Martin North/East place—*[Interruption]*

Dr. Khan: Put it as a House paper.

Hon. C. De Coteau:—where enslaved Africans fled from the plantation and established a free inaccessible community.

Miss Hospedales: “Up to now I ain hear ‘bout Arouca.”

Dr. Khan: “It coming, it coming”.

Hon. C. De Coteau: Negre Marron is patois for runaway African. *[Interruption]* Also in Paramin a cave where both Amerindians and Africans fled to escape enslavement.

We also have the Tamana caves and Brigand Hill; places of revolution and rebellion by enslaved Africans.

Dr. Khan: Take your time.

Hon. C. De Coteau: Brigand Hill is a place [*Crosstalk*] of slave revolt in the Manzanilla area; Daaga's burial site. [*Interruption*] The St. Joseph square is the site of the remains of Daaga [*Laughter*] who led the last great revolt against enslavement in Trinidad. Daaga was eventually hung in the St. Joseph square. So we have the sites of resistance and post-emancipation.

Mr. Hypolite: None of that exists, you know.

Hon. C. De Coteau: All of that does not exist?

Dr. Khan: Forget them.

Hon. C. De Coteau: You see, and this is the frivolity [*Laughter*] that they played with African history, and they want to play they championing the cause of the African man.

Dr. Khan: "Yes, they doh care."

Hon. C. De Coteau: You see it here, it is displayed. It is deployed. [*Interruption*]

Dr. Khan: They could not help it. [*Laughter*]

Hon. C. De Coteau: He laughs at that.

Dr. Khan: "He couldn' help it."

Hon. C. De Coteau: We are talking about identifying sites to make the black man proud and what he is doing. [*Interruption*] he is laughing at it.

Dr. Khan: He is laughing at it. [*Crosstalk*]

Dr. Browne: Would you give way, Minister?

Hon. Senator: No. No.

Hon. C. De Coteau: This is information he does not have.

Dr. Browne: Minister, would you give way?

Dr. Khan: "Doh geh him no way."

Hon. C. De Coteau: I am not giving way. I cannot give way. [*Laughter and desk thumping*] You are getting me angry. I would have thought a man of your intellectual capacity would accommodate this, but you are not!

Hon. Senator: "Heh, heh."

Hon. C. De Coteau: I could drama too, you know.

Mr. Roberts: Teach him.

Hon. C. De Coteau: All Stars Pan Yard, this is the site associated with the Canboulay riots of 1881. [*Laughter*] The newly emancipated Africans fought the might of the British colonial power for a right to their cultural expression. You know we owe our Carnival to this act of resistance.

I am not going to identify the 381 sites.

Dr. Khan: Tell them about Valencia.

Hon. C. De Coteau: I am talking about what we are going to be doing for emancipation. There will be signage on these sites where people are passing by every day and they do not know about them. It is the same way you are passing by City Gate and you would not understand the history of City Gate or Fort Andres right next door, and this is what we have to refurbish. Because you all were there all the time destroying all these things and cannot appreciate them. [*Desk thumping*] And you are talking about promoting tourism, but you do not know what to promote because you do not know your history. You do not know the history of Trinidad and Tobago.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Teach them, teach them.

Hon. C. De Coteau: I know it. Yes, I know it.

Dr. Khan: Tell them about Valencia.

Mr. Roberts: Teach them.

Dr. Khan: “Doh leh them rile yuh up.”

Hon. C. De Coteau: They “cyar” rile me up. [*Interruption*] You think is only the Member for Diego Martin North/East who could dramatize, “ha, ha, ha”. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Speaker, you think I am going to allow anyone here to get me vex, to rile me up early in the morning. “Yuh crazy or wha?” [*Laughter*] Signs of survival of significance the Yoruba village. Many Yoruba people came to Trinidad during the enslavement and also as indentured servants. They had a strong, a very strong presence in East Dry River which was once Yoruba Village. This belief system they have before Orisha religion remains the strongest manifestation in that area. They have a little sign there, but we are going to put up one of the standard signs. In the Valencia area, another place for—African Americans were given lands. There were two enclaves, one housed Muslims and the other non-Muslims. This is also a place that was home for the first people. [*Cellphone alarms*]

Mr. Mc Leod: 6.30.

Hon. Member: That is the time “you does” wake up, boy?

Hon. C. De Coteau: I told you about Nelson Island where the people—

Dr. Khan: You are going to hear about Maycock Place now. [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. C. De Coteau: We have Maycock Place which is situated in Belmont. Maycock Place and Zampty Lane in Belmont—I know you know about Zampty Lane in Belmont. Take their names—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker, let me just edify the Member for Diego Martin Central—[*Interruption*]

Dr. Browne: I want to learn.

Hon. C. De Coteau: I taught History. I am a historian. Good? And these are things, when you come to emancipation, they tell you they come from Africa, but where the local part of the history is concerned, the people do not know about it. Right?

6.35 a.m.

So Maycock Place, situated in Belmont; Maycock Place and Zampty Lane in Belmont take their names from the first free Africans to be given land in Belmont, then known as Freetown.

Fort George: the signal station was built about 1833 by Ashantee Prince Kofi Nti, who also designed the station. And you would know that when we start the emancipation trip, the Emancipation Support Committee, they start at the Treasury building. This was the home of the Governor at the time of emancipation. It was from there that the Emancipation Proclamation was read in 1834. [*Interruption*] Sometimes we grin as the Cheshire cat when resisting knowledge. Enslaved Africans are converged from all over the island, expecting total emancipation.

Another area that we are going to—we have the signage—is the home of Emmanuel Mzumbo Lazare. He was a lawyer at the time of the Red House fire, Valencia. One of the earliest Africans who rose to prominence in the post-Emancipation era, who insisted on keeping his African name. He was one of the early advocates to champion the case for the recognition of emancipation. He was a tireless advocate for the rights of ordinary Africans, especially during the water riots.

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Then we have the Rada Community. This is a place of great spiritual significance; the traditional African belief, with its roots in Dahomey and still practised here. There is also the sacred burial ground for the Rada people. Mr. Speaker, these are some of the things that we will be having for the Emancipation Day on the Lopinot heritage site.

Mr. Speaker, 2014: The Twentieth Anniversary of the International Year of the—*in fact, 2014 will be designated the International Year of the Family according to the Social Policy and Development Division of the United Nation's website, the 20th anniversary of the International Year of the Family 2014—this is still to be ratified, but I am just sensitizing—offers an opportunity to refocus on the role of the families in development.*

We will be taking stock of recent trends in families, policy reviewing, and we will be inviting families throughout to come together and have their own re-unity—all families. So some may be on Nelson Island, Sir some, may be all over. Those of you who have not visited Nelson Island, it is one of our proud places. It is like the Ellis Island—where all the persons who would have come here would have had some kind of connection to the area, and I would invite all to come there.

Members, I just want to be brief that you would understand why we are really trying to champion this patriotism. As I said, it is a qualitative aspect, the Ministry of National Diversity and Social Integration. It was the brainchild of our Prime Minister, and I think there is really merit in such a Ministry, because it hopes to keep the fabric of our society together. We can boast. We do not have to get a Desmond Tutu to come and tell us the rainbow country that we have here. We should be very proud of that, and we really have to congratulate each other, because one thing we can say that we may have verbal combating, but we do not do as other Parliaments; get up and throw the cuff, and pelt the chair, and all these things, and that is really grateful. Mr. Speaker, I thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

The Minister of Housing, Land and Marine Affairs (Hon. Dr. Roodal Moonilal): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to join this very lively debate, and to contribute on the finance measures before us. We are going on now to, I believe, 17 hours of continuous debate, and we have had the opportunity to meet with colleagues over the last 17 hours or so, and for some, regrettably, to look at our colleagues opposite throughout the night and for some pleasantly, for some, not so pleasant, but we have seen our colleagues throughout the night except, of course, for the Leader of the Opposition, who I thought we

spotted him at tea time yesterday, and then he lived up to his billing as TR—“talk and run”. So talk and run—[Crosstalk]—and I understand he passed through a back door in leaving. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, this gentleman who spoke yesterday, the Leader of the Opposition, who would seek to convince others that he is a worthy candidate to be the Prime Minister, [*Laughter*] confessed a few days ago that after three years in the Opposition Leader’s office, he discovered a back door, a secret passage—after three years in that office. And one would wonder, if this gentleman becomes the Prime Minister, he may take five years to discover a back door to the Cabinet room, and then complain of losing documents and minutes and notes and reports.

But, Mr. Speaker, a much younger relative of mine told me that he reminded him a lot of the Pink Panther movies of old, when the Pink Panther movies would begin: dum da dum. I cannot even do the song, but we know the rhythm. And the Pink Panther would be moving in cartoon-like finesse and would go up to a blank wall would pull out a pen and draw a door and then he would draw a door handle and then open and go through the door. [*Desk thumping and Laughter*] So the Pink Panther from Diego Martin West strikes.

If he needs help, there was a character in the Batman movies—in all the Batman movies. The butler’s name is Alfred. He is an old grey man. And Alfred, somehow, knew all the secret passages in the caves—in the mansion. You know, he would just appear out of nowhere, through a secret door a passage. So my friend has several people he can turn to, to help; the Pink Panther and Alfred. But, Mr. Speaker, such is the experience with this hapless Opposition Leader that he would speak of a secret passage where he lost items last year September but did not report either to the police or the national community. But, it could well be because he is extremely busy and he is extremely busy, up to other matters, which may not involve his official duties.

You see, had the Opposition Leader not pulled a TR on us yesterday, if he did not give us that TR, I wanted to ask him whether on May 15, 2013—to ask the question, whether on May 15, 2013, the Opposition Leader had a private meeting with a high official of the Integrity Commission—

Hon. Members: Whaaaat!

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal:—whether on that day—I would have asked him, had he not pulled a TR on us—a talk and run—whether or not he met at the home of a high-level official of the Integrity Commission, where he may have been discussing matters which he would later raise, and then deny knowledge of actions on the part of the Integrity Commission.

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You see, Mr. Speaker, I would have asked the member for Diego Martin West—because I myself am not sure. I would have asked him whether or not he had secret discussions at the home of a high level official of the Integrity Commission, and the implications of that on the integrity of the arguments he raised in the Parliament. But, Mr. Speaker, you will hear more of that in the coming days, because he may answer us. He may surface later in the day, appear through the back door and really give us the privilege of an answer; because the answer to that question is a very important one. Because if what I am asking is true, the Opposition Leader can stand accused of undermining the integrity not only of his argument but undermining the integrity of the Parliament. We will say more at another time.

Mr. Speaker, the Opposition Leader, in his response to this Finance Bill, spoke at length. On matters pertaining to discrimination, he made the bold declaration that the PNM represented opportunity for all. We believe it represented opportunity for all PNM. He spoke about discrimination in this administration and the Member for Tabaquite, I think he dealt with that issue effectively. [*Desk thumping*] I think he dealt with it effectively.

I think the Member for Tabaquite dealt with it effectively, and I will only add, to remind the Member for Diego Martin West, if he did not pull this TR on us—which is not the first time he did this—that when we had fires in Pleasantville, San Fernando, in the HDC community, in the constituency of San Fernando East, which has never voted for any party except the PNM in the history of this country, it was the HDC that moved in record time to provide relocation for those persons in Pleasantville.

In Trou Macaque, in Laventille, when on a morning—an early morning—there was a fire there, in a constituency that has never voted for any party but the PNM, it is the HDC, under this administration, that moved in. And on that morning, the Prime Minister visited that fire site and the families there that were going through a lot of traumatic experiences on that morning, and it was this Government that moved within lightning speed, in an area that has never supported any other party.

Those persons—their houses, their housing units were destroyed by fire at 2.00 a.m. By the next night they had a roof over their heads provided by this Government. [*Desk thumping*] But you see, Mr. Speaker, he would forget that. He would not know that in Mon Repos, in the constituency of the Member for San Fernando East—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Jeffrey: Will you give way?

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: My friend, it is 6.47 in the morning.

Mr. Jeffrey: That is all right.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: I do not want people to put on their TV this hour of the morning and see your face. [*Desk thumping and Laughter*]

Mr. Speaker, the Opposition Leader—Member for La Brea, have mercy upon the viewing audience, man. The Opposition Leader went on and raised a couple issues, because he is on a particular path to argue to the population that you cannot trust this administration, and you have no faith in the administration and so on. His integrity is now being questioned; his credibility is now being questioned, but he points the finger opposite. But that is their modus operandi.

So he comes to the Parliament now and makes this case on trust, and what they are doing is seeking to criminalize the Government and anyone associated with this Government. Mr. Speaker, it is not surprising when you hear Members opposite and their agents—they have infiltrated some of the commentators in the newspapers and these columnists and so on now.

Hon. Member: Winford James.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Yes, somebody; this Winford James. [*Crosstalk*] Yes, Mr. Speaker, I think he has some diploma in education. He became a newspaper columnist some months ago and now speaks with authority. And they quote him and plagiarize him and quote him at length; somebody who has a diploma in education, posing as a political scientist. And, Mr. Speaker, they continue this—the criminalization—this attempt to criminalize.

But, you know, the UNC has financiers—that is their argument—but the PNM, in its history, they do not have financiers. So there are no financiers of the PNM. “They does sell toolum and cashew [*Laughter*] and roast nuts and sugar cake, and raise money for campaign.” They have no financiers; only the UNC. Only the UNC has financiers. And in this country today, they are carrying a diabolical argument to convince this population of wrongdoing, as if a citizen of this country, who is a businessman, who has any association with the United National Congress or its leadership is not deserving of the right to tender or to win a contract in this country. That is what they have been doing.

So they identify someone—a business—and they say the person did not get a contract yet, you know, but they might get it, and they begin this attack to undermine, to compromise a process, the tender process, to cast aspersions on the outcome and to demonize citizens of Trinidad and Tobago.

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[HON. DR. R. MOONILAL]

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The Member for Diego Martin Central, he said there is a hotel in Tobago, and the Ministry of Justice went there, and all the staff stayed at the hotel. What the hotel is, a place of ill repute? What it is; that the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago cannot go to Tobago and stay in a hotel of their choice, get a service and pay for it? They cannot even do that, because if you are associated there, it is bad, and they demonize people who are citizens of Trinidad and Tobago; their own fellow citizens.

So there are financiers at large, and they cannot get any contract. You are watching them. You have a spotlight on them. If they get a contract to pick up a dead dog on the Brian Lara Promenade, they say “No, no, no, that is a financier of the Government—corruption.” And look, they talk about corruption. They talk about corruption in the PNM. Nobody would believe they would talk about corruption—nobody. As if this country would forget the years of PNM rule, of friend and family.

You know, they speak about the gas stations and so on, Mr. Speaker. They talk about that. “But they talk about friend and family getting gas station, and they brought it into the debate, of course, as if we started to give out gas station last week.” All the time they were running on coal. Cars and so on, they were running on coal, and we started to pump gas last week. The NP and whatever agency, they are distributing gas stations since 1962. Governments come, Governments go, some people they get their gas station; there is a procedure—a process. Others get later; some get before; some get after.

So they come and they make this thing about friends and family, as if they forget that under the People’s National Movement stations were also given out. And who they were given out to? I am informed, I am advised, Mr. Speaker, that one Rajendra Baboolal approved and installed for a gas station, the son of the former President of the Senate.

Now, I am not saying that the person is not deserving. I am not saying that the person—but this person is related to a former chairman of the PNM, but they did not say anything then. They did not say anything. Again, I make no—I cast no aspersions on this person.

“Mr. Speaker, in my hand, in a document supplied to me, I see one name, Radica Saith—[*Crosstalk*—approved on January 01, 2007 for gas station.”

Hon. Member: And the aunt of a Senator.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Mr. Speaker, The aunt of a Senator, who behaves like a butler himself, approved on January 01, 2007, and one would want to know, this person what was the job of her husband at that time?

Hon. Member: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: And I wonder whether—first to begin, we are sure it was a Cabinet Minister—whether it was the Minister of Energy at the time, or Public Administration. Again, Radica Saith may qualify; went through a good procedure and process; deserving. “This lady probably know how to pump gas.” I cast no aspersions at all. Mrs. Radica Saith must be deserving of a gas station; maybe more, a Quick Shoppe; or a “quick shoppy” as some people say. But what I am saying is that those persons who talk today about nepotism and family and friend, they did not hear about this.

Francis Bertrand, former Mayor of Point Fortin; Mayor under which party? [*Crosstalk*] The Republicans? It is the PNM; the gas station. [*Crosstalk*] Other persons are well associated to the People’s National Movement. Mr. Speaker, they have reports at NP where persons were given gas stations directly approved by their Minister. There are other officials here related to the People’s National Movement. A former representative of the PNM, Geeta Rampersad—I think she was a failed candidate somewhere—in 2009, gas station, but today they come and they play holier than thou; who is friend, and who is family.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say every person, the names I called here, they are probably deserving of a gas station and they would have had a proper process and a procedure. so I cast no aspersions on the people. I wish them well with their gas stations But what I am saying is do not let members opposite come here to con the population with rowley.con, to con the population into this notion that the Government in power giving friends and family and so on, when I have read their record. They do not like it, but I have read it.

Mr. Speaker, the Opposition Leader spoke yesterday. It was a critical debate. This is a critical debate. That is why at seven o’clock the next morning we are here. It is a very important debate. On a Finance Bill, the Opposition Leader came yesterday and not one policy recommendation; not one programme; not one principle articulated. If today, this day, this afternoon, something happens, and this side over there, they have to form the Government at two o’clock this afternoon, this country, after three years, does not know one policy prescription from the People’s National Movement under the Member for Diego Martin West. What would they do?

Miss Hospedales: You do not know what you are talking about.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: They would be Ministers if they formed the Government, you know. The Member for—*[Interruption]* no, no, no, do not—I know it sounds—and I am sorry to do you that, Member, this hour of the morning. The Member for Arouca/Maloney could return as a Minister *[Interruption]*

Mr. Roberts: In what?

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal:—and then gave us a speech earlier this morning, and talked about grass 20 feet in the air; 20 feet grass. Mr. Speaker, 20 feet of grass somewhere by—of course, when I heard that I was concerned as Minister with responsibility for CEPEP, but we do not cut grass with a helicopter. *[Laughter]* “How a wacker reaching 20 feet in the air?” But that could be the Minister of something. What is their plan? What is their programme? Every time they come—the Member for La Brea; every time he comes, he finds a question: “When are you paving this roadway? When are you paving that? When are you giving this complex? When are you cleaning the pitch lake? When are you covering the manhole?” As if the PNM was never in power—never.

My friend from La Brea spent time in Government as Minister, and of all portfolios, he was Minister of Tertiary Education—

Hon. Member: And pick-up.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal:—and today, cannot explain why the PNM left La Brea in that state of neglect that it appears to be in. And the Member for Tabaquite already informed him of the work we are doing in that area.

Mr. Speaker, they also carried this argument right through the night about the economy and the economy doing bad and no sign of growth, and you cannot see anything happening in this country. Mr. Speaker, the only time you could see nothing happening in this country is if you live under your bed. If you live under your bed, you will see nothing happening in this country. No part of this country you can travel today and you would not see a road under construction, a play field, a pavilion; you would not see a bridge.

Mr. Speaker, they take the highway—many of them who talk here, they take the highway. They do not see housing development. In Chaguanas, they do not see the children’s hospital. The President of China was here. I think one of his most beautiful and memorable moments is when he went to Couva to see the construction of the children’s hospital.

The Member for Point Fortin has an affinity with foreign affairs, because she embraces foreign policy. [*Laughter*] In fact, I understand when Vice-President Biden landed here because we were in the airport—we were in the airport when Vice-President Biden landed here, and I noticed a few of these Secret Service officers, they were very intimidated. And when I looked in their hand, they had a picture which almost looks like her [*Laughter*] and I could not imagine why they would have a picture of the Member for Point Fortin.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Mr. Speaker, 36(5). This is all untrue.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: But you were not there. You did not see the picture. [*Crosstalk*]

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: It is untrue. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker: All right, okay, all right. Member, the Member feels offended by what you have said. I ask you to be very cautious, please.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Mr. Speaker, well let me deal with the comments she made about the visit, then; forgetting the security officers and whatever instructions they may have had when they landed in Trinidad. They were under instructions, because they kept looking around nervously. But in any event, the visit; the visit. That visit of Vice-President Biden and later the President from China, brought international acclaim to this country—historic visits.

Mr. Speaker, in our history of diplomacy and bilateral relations, these two gentlemen, visiting in one week, placed Trinidad and Tobago now at the centrepiece of Caribbean diplomacy. [*Desk thumping*] We have now replaced other territories in the Caribbean, which I will not name. It is not my business to do that. We have now replaced other territories as the political and diplomatic capital of the Caribbean; [*Desk thumping*] Trinidad and Tobago. And they may take that lightly, but it is a significant development for this country, and the visit of the Chinese President was also significant. As a result, Mr. Speaker, we intend to take advantage of some of the opportunities presented for infrastructure investment to begin with—for infrastructure development.

My friend from Point Fortin raised the issue of the SOFA, the agreement. And, Mr. Speaker, I must tell you—because, as you know, there are occasions when I am honoured to act as foreign affairs Minister as well, and when we were briefed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry, their technical personnel, many if not all, who worked with the Member for Point Fortin, when you had a—I think

you had a brief stint there—many who worked with you—we received our briefs, our notes from them, and they have placed in writing, officially, that the agreement that this Government signed on the visit of Vice-President Biden was a superior agreement to any other arrangements we had in place to deal with that matter of cooperation. [*Desk thumping*]

And I will not call the name of the ambassador in particular, who has enormous experience in this matter, indicated—[*Interruption*] that is the person. You know the name of course—that today Trinidad and Tobago is better off for signing that in terms of protecting the interests and rights of citizens of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] But the Member for Tunapuna who—this is really his daytime job—will speak more on this issue in the coming days.

The Member for Laventille East/Morvant also spoke and, Mr. Speaker, again, very concerned; this member has so much information and data on national security: “which helicopter taking off”; what is the latitude and altitude of this helicopter; who are the pilots; the manifest; the passengers and so on. Now, this is a member who doh like to talk to the policemen, doh like to talk to police, make allegations but doh like to talk to the police.” She has all this knowledge of data and crime, and so on, and asked about the crime data.

This Government receives our statistics from the same source that the former Government received from, the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service. So when we indicate that there is a 36 per cent reduction in serious crime, the Member asked, “What is the source?” The source is the police, which provided information for the former administration. It is the same police. So you could believe it then but you cannot believe it now.

7.05 a.m.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: And they attack the police now.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: And they attack, Mr. Speaker—

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: The Member for Diego Martin West.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: They brought a Motion trying to remove this Government for undermining institutions and the week after, they attacked the police, the institution.

Hon. Member: And during the Motion.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: And during the Motion they attacked the police, then wanted to remove this Government for undermining institutions. That is the hypocrisy.

Mr. Roberts: There is a 10 per cent increase in slapping.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Led to the Deputy Commissioner being abused in a supermarket somewhere in the East because of inciting—

Mr. Roberts: Yeah.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: And they claim that they can get back in office. Mr. Speaker, at this hour in the morning viewers may want to know if this is still live—

Hon. Member: Yes.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal:—because, you know, this is our morning brew right here. [*Laughter*] And, Mr. Speaker, the argument that they raised, you know, they speak to the individuals, the personality, the DNA, undermining the police while accusing the Government of undermining institutions in Trinidad and Tobago. Mr. Speaker, they talk about crime and crime is rampant. We have made no secret of it. We are not satisfied with the murder rate, the homicide rate. We are not, although, we are seeing a decrease, but that decrease is not significant enough for us; it is not.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: It could be better.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Although it is going down, it is not significant. We are pleased with the decrease in serious crimes. That is where we are pleased with that. We want to do more there, but we are pleased, but not homicide, we are not. Much more effort we will extend on that issue. But you know they talk about crime today.

They forget the headlines which I have with me and I can read, during the period 2003—2010. I mean, this was a place where bomb going off in a dustbin in the capital. You had bomb there. People go into a drive-in cinema, they got robbed. Bandit robbed them in the drive-in while they were watching a movie. This is a place where in that period, that is when people started to make their gallery, their porch like a cell. Not now, that did not start now. People did not suddenly go yesterday or since the Partnership Government came and start buying iron for fabrication, by any fabricator opposite.

Mr. Speaker, under the former administration, you close up your gallery, you lock it up like a cell.

Mr. Samuel: It is not a gallery anymore.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: It is not a gallery anymore. That happened before and I have all the headlines and newspaper clips to remind them of the kidnapping—

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Collateral damage.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Collateral damage and murder and mayhem.

Hon. Member: Decrease in the increase.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: They come here and boast of a what, a decrease in the increase. We do not boast about decrease in the increase; when we tell you it has a decrease, it has a decrease. [*Desk thumping*] And we are still not happy with the homicide, but we are working very hard, every single day we work with the police and the protective forces to ensure that murder rate is dealt with.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: And some of this money here is for 300 new police cars.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: They are intent—because they indicated that they are not supporting this, they indicated that. They intend to vote against this Bill which will provide money for police vehicles. So you are saying no to police vehicles. So today, the Opposition PNM is telling Trinidad and Tobago no more new police vehicles for you. That is what they are voting against. Mr. Speaker, almost \$1.1 billion in the measure before us deal with the provision of wages—

Dr. Gopeesingh: Arrears.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Arrears.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Back pay that they never settled.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Back pay to put it that way, back pay that was never settled. When we came into office how many agreements, over 30—

Mr. Roberts: Sixty-six unsettled.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Sixty-six, they could not settle it. They did not have the skill, they did not have the political will—

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: It is the will.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal:—and they had contempt for the labour movement—

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Beat up a man outside the Parliament.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: They lift him up, outside by his drawers; well, by his pants and dragged him away.

Hon. Member: “Lock up.”

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Yes, Mr. Speaker—

Hon. Member: Abdullah.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: “dey drag him away outside”—

Mr. Roberts: He lucky he did not get a “gun butt”.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Mr. Speaker, in this country today, three years into office, not one courthouse has ruled that this Government has ill-treated citizens or violated their rights—[*Desk thumping*] not one court, not one judgment. Under their former administration every Monday morning, Ramlogan wins; every Monday morning.

Mr. Roberts: Privy Council.

Dr. Gopeesingh: We went to visit Kublalsingh.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Yeah, Mr. Speaker. As I said, \$1.1 billion to provide for wages, so I want to tell the Opposition Members this morning what they are voting against. They are voting against paying wages to employees in the Judiciary; they are voting against paying wages to employees in the Ministry of Food Production. Mr. Speaker, they are voting against paying police officers, almost 5,000 police officers. You are saying this morning you do not want to pay them their arrears, their back pay. You could not negotiate with them, but this morning the Members of the Opposition are telling the police officers that listen, we are not voting to give you money. So if for any reason a few Members of this side decide to go home early and they had the majority and we took a vote—

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: God forbid.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal:—5,000 police officers will not get their money, will not get their arrears and their back pay.

Mr. Roberts: Shame.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: So we had to stay here to ensure that we have the numbers. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Roberts: While the Member for Diego Martin West could run.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Because they took a position that they are not supporting the wages and arrears for police officers. They took a position that they are not supporting the wages and arrears for the Ministry of Works and Infrastructure where the daily-paid workers, where workers at the lower rung will have a little back pay to collect because of their concluded negotiations. The Opposition is saying we do not support you.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Local government.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: In local government we do not support you, Mr. Speaker, they do not support the workers. Ministry of Education, the teachers and all other related occupations there, Ministry of Education, \$314 million. They took a decision that they could not settle the negotiation with the teachers; we did but we are not paying you. We are not approving the money, you cannot get it. So teachers listening this morning, teachers must know that if we did not have this majority if some colleagues on my side had to leave in the night or they could not make it, that depending on the PNM, teachers will not get their moneys.

Dr. Gopeesingh: But we would always make it.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: But we could not depend on them, that is why we are here.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: And the workers could not have it.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: And the workers, the teachers, the police, the public officers, the civil servants, local government, this morning we are going to take an action to give you your pay, your arrears which they could not provide for you.

Mr. Speaker, they could not, they did not negotiate, they did not settle and if they had their way they would not vote for this.

Mr. Roberts: How sad.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: And they would not vote for the teachers to get their “lil” money, their back pay. They could not vote for the police to get their money so that they could pay off some of their debts, so they could invest in something. This is the type of Opposition we have before us—irresponsible. You know, they also made a hue and cry, so to speak, about loans and this Government borrowing and the deficit going up, percentage of GDP and so on. With not one economist opposite, all of them pretend to be economists, “eh”. In fact, opposite we have an outbreak of economists.

Mr. Speaker, I have in my hand a document from the UDeCOTT, financial analysis and it is from the UDeCOTT. Between the period—it is very instructive, Mr. Speaker—2005 to 2010, in five years alone, in just five years alone, through UDeCOTT, you will be amazed to know that through UDeCOTT alone, in the period 2005 to 2010—that is five years, “eh”, do you know in five years they chalked up in terms of loans, a debt to almost \$8 billion; \$8 billion in debt by one state enterprise in five years under the former administration; \$8 billion.

And today, they come and quarrel, you all borrowing money, you borrowing money and running up the debt, \$8 billion and I could just give you one or two, Mr. Speaker: \$720 million for the Administrative Complex in San Fernando. Hear this one, loan amount, \$500 million, half a billion. Brian Lara Project; the Ministry of Education project another \$558 million, half a billion. More than half a billion for the waterfront; a billion for the campus. And I tell you this, I share this information because they borrowed money when the price of oil and gas was high. When they had the resources they borrowed. And today, they argue with us for borrowing when we do not have the resources.

So, we do not have the prices as they were before and they went and borrow, Mr. Speaker, \$8 billion in five years by one company. When we do not have the prices and borrow, they quarrel. But you do not know what they want, because first they quarrel that we are borrowing too much and the debt going up. When we fund the highway to Point Fortin from the Treasury, they quarrel that we should have borrowed to fund that. That is the problem. You do not understand what they are saying because they have no policy position, absolutely no policy position, absolutely none.

My friend from Diego Martin Central, what can I say about him? Mr. Speaker, it might be nothing—

Dr. Rambachan: He is a good fella.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal:—but I like the one, you know, they said in another place—I think the Minister of Health made the point—that Members of the Government have given \$1 million, is it, so far?

Hon. Member: One point two.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Members of the Government have given \$1.2 million to the Children's Life Fund, of which I think 18 lives have been saved.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: More.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Maybe more. [*Desk thumping*] Eighteen children are alive today because of this administration. Eighteen children are alive today because of the Member for Siparia. On that alone we should be re-elected, Mr. Speaker. [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Member: Yeah.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: On that alone we should be re-elected. But when they ask the Members opposite why did you not pay a dollar so your name could come

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on the paper, put in one red dollar, they have none, they are not helping. But the Member for Diego Martin Central, I mean, he gave us a doosra this morning. He say listen, we did not give you any money, but we contributed intellectual capital. [*Laughter*] I mean, he debate the Bill, yeah he debate the Bill. So the 18 children are alive today because of your intellectual capital.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: But they are giving 8 per cent to Balisier House, remember that.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: But you gave Balisier House 8 per cent for your party.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Plus the intellectual capital.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Well, I do not know what intellectual capital you give there, given the decisions you take. [*Crosstalk*]

Dr. Gopeesingh: [*Inaudible*]

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: No, they are intellectually bankrupt there. But, Mr. Speaker, they gave 8 per cent to Balisier House, but cannot give a dollar to the Children's Life Fund.

Dr. Browne: You all thanked us.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: We thanked you for what? Members opposite— [*Crosstalk*] Yeah, Mr. Speaker, and when my friend the future leader of the PNM from Diego Martin Central speaks, he was proud of his balisier tie which his own leader does not wear. His leader does not wear that tie, but today you know, he came and he was so proud to tell us about the tie he is wearing. But he was sending that message not to us you know, he was not talking to us, [*Crosstalk*] he was talking to somebody else by raising the issue of the proud balisier tie.

Mr. Speaker, the Leader, Member for Diego Martin West raised the issue of the aluminium smelter. We all know what happened. We came into Government in 2010, the smelter, there was a public outcry, it was part of the campaign. We took the view that we want to save lives, we want to save lives, that was our view. Maybe we were wrong, they would have gone through, they would have continued maybe and incur debt. We save lives. The Opposition Leader wants to know what are the consequences of that and so on.

Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity to go to China. I met with high officials of the Export/Import Bank and I must confess to you, Mr. Speaker, when we met them they were concerned that there was a different approach, policy approach. They were concerned because they had money tied up. Mr. Speaker, when we met

with our counterparts in China, when we assured them that we will continue to do business with them and we had earmarked the children's hospital, they said thank you very much because they wanted to continue doing business with us. And this is how we secured a concessional loan for the children's hospital, because resources would have gone to aluminium smelter, resources then went to the children's hospital.

So, we save lives. We are in the business of saving lives. So that the Chinese Government was never upset; there are no dire consequences. There are a couple negotiations taking place even now, and in that there may be opportunities for further investment from the Government of China. We are convinced. But there is no diabolical outcome.

7.20 a.m.

Mr. Speaker, if they were so upset and had all types of dire consequences, do you think the President of China will come here and make a gracious offer of \$50-million grants and so on, and offer the region US \$3 billion—if they were so upset, Mr. Speaker? But, you see, the Members opposite want to make confusion. That is what they—they are in the business, purveyors of “kuchoor” and confusion, and want to tell the country, “Do not trust this Government; you cannot trust them.” Mr. Speaker, you cannot believe them.

Mr. Speaker, they talk so much on procurement. What did they do for all the years they were there?

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Nothing.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Nothing, Mr. Speaker. They were running the country—how long?—30-something years; 40 years, maybe—

Dr. Gopeesingh: Forty-one years.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Forty-one years, running the country; did nothing about procurement—nothing! We came into power, Mr. Speaker, conveyed the Prime Minister—delivered on an early promise to lay the documents in Parliament within one month of the convening of Parliament in 2010 to get the documents on the table to deal with procurement. When we went to the joint select committee, they boycott that too and then complain, “They taking too long”.

So they boycott and then complain, “They taking too long”. That is the hypocrisy. And today they come: “What about procurement? What about party

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financing reform?” What about what you did? What did you do? You did nothing when you were there for 10 years in the first decade of this century, and then come today to talk about that, Mr. Speaker. And we intend to bring the procurement legislation, Mr. Speaker, that the distinguished Minister of Planning and Sustainable Development is leading, and that, Mr. Speaker, they have done enormous work—and we expect within a few months to have that before us in the Parliament.

Mr. Speaker, the Member for Couva South—I think it was the Member for Couva South—pointed out the hypocrisy here. They complain, Mr. Speaker, that we are bringing Finance Bills three months before the end of the fiscal year and so on, and, “Why do we bring this and we did not check before; we had a budget; you did not check; you did not know what you want”, and so on.

Mr. Speaker, the Member for Couva South pointed out, in one year they brought two Finance Bills—not one, but two—and every year, Mr. Speaker, it was the norm. The practice is that you would do some variations depending on your spending. Depending on your expenditure patterns you would want to do a variation and supplementation when you are either mid or a bit after mid-financial year and, Mr. Speaker, this is provided for in the Constitution. The Member for Couva South took a lot of pain to go through all the years and show them how every year they brought Finance Bills, and in one year two Finance Bills came, and they complain now, Mr. Speaker. They complain now.

So, Mr. Speaker, I really did not want this opportunity this morning to pass without intervening. I know, Mr. Speaker, I must have about 60 minutes again available to me and I may not choose to use the 60 minutes available at this time because I know the Minister of Finance and the Economy would want to take his time to wind up this debate and he would have several key issues to address, and we do not want to deny him his time as well but, Mr. Speaker, I come back to the issue in the end which I raised in the beginning, that the Member for Diego Martin West, had he been around—

Hon. Member: He absconded.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: He aborted; absconded—

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: TR.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Did a TR on us—

Hon. Member: Talk and run.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal:—a talk and run.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Back door.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Hit the back door. Mr. Speaker, had the Member been around, I wanted to confront him and ask him the question: Did he, on the 15th of May, 2013, meet at the home of a high-ranking official of the Integrity Commission, and what was the purpose of that meeting? Mr. Speaker, what was the purpose of that meeting on May 15—on or about May 15, because I do not want him to say it was 16th or 17th or 14th or 13th. On or about May 15, what was the purpose of meeting at the home of a high-ranking member of the Integrity Commission, and then later, Mr. Speaker, declare that he did not have information on certain matters?

Mr. Speaker, that is a very dangerous thing when an Opposition Leader would trek to the private residence of persons who hold high office in independent—in fiercely independent, Mr. Speaker, in fiercely independent institutions—whether or not it is proper to be fraternizing in that way, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

Question put and agreed to.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker—

Dr. Browne: Mr. Speaker, Standing Order 36(5). If the Member wants to bring a substantive Motion on the movements of the Member for Diego Martin West, he should do so. Which private house he visited, that is not relevant in this debate.

Mr. Speaker: No, he is asking a question. I do not think he is imputing improper motives. Continue, hon. Member. [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Mr. Speaker, my friend, the Member for Diego Martin Central, clearly has some effects of sleep deprivation. [*Laughter*] I am simply asking a question to the Opposition Leader, whether or not, on or about May 15, he visited the private residence of a high-ranking official of the Integrity Commission, and whether or not that undermined his credibility on other matters in the national community. That is all I ask. I cast no aspersions on the hon. Opposition Leader. I asked a question. He is not here to answer. So, Mr. Speaker, that is all I say. I do not want to go further with that because I know there is a box drain to cross there, and I am not going to cross and get into any area—

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Speaker, please. Thank you very much—

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: “You now wake up and come back?”

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Speaker, as far as I know, on the 15th of May there was only one Commissioner in the Integrity Commission—only one. The term of office of the other Commissioners had expired. So is the Member referring to the Chairman of the Integrity Commission?

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Mr. Speaker, did the Opposition meet a high-ranking official?

Mr. Imbert: There is only one.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: I have not named anyone. [*Crosstalk*] And the Member would answer in due course. [*Crosstalk*] The Member would answer in due course. I said a high-ranking official.

Mr. Imbert: There is only one.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Mr. Speaker, let me not detain the House further, but to indicate our support for this measure, to indicate, Mr. Speaker, that this Government continues to account to the population of Trinidad and Tobago and, in due course, we will account, Mr. Speaker, in terms of our expenditure policy and pattern, given the measure before us.

I thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

The Minister of Finance and the Economy (Sen. The Hon. Larry Howai): Mr. Speaker, I rise to bring the debate on this measure in the House to a close, and given the eloquence of my colleague from Oropouche East I probably only need to say that, “I beg to move”. But they asked a number of things that I still need to address.

I want to, of course, again confirm for the *Hansard* that the answers, as requested, were provided although time was a little bit against us, both in terms of original answers to questions that had been raised which were circulated on Tuesday evening, and additional responses which were circulated today. Further answers were provided during the debate and these answers, you know, would have addressed most of the questions.

Between the answers, as well as the two documents which were circulated, I think most of the questions would have been answered, but there are a few issues that were raised that we tried to get some answers for. Some of them I was not able to get everything, for example, the Member for Diego Martin Central had raised the question of the warehouse upgrade programme a few moments ago. We have not been able to get all of the explanations, but my understanding is that the

warehouse upgrade programme—the reference to the US State Department approval was in respect of donation of some CKD kits for construction. But I need to confirm that arrangement.

It was not clearly stated like that in the document that we have here and, similarly, for the vehicles. It seems as if—and I have not been able to confirm, but it seems as if there may have been—it should have referred to more than one vehicle as opposed to a vehicle. It should have been lease of vehicles. But I need to get confirmation on those things. So there are some areas.

Also, the question of the breakdown of cost regarding the consultations for the Constitution, the estimated cost—this is the original budget—was \$20 million. The actual cost incurred to date is \$7 million. The actual payments made on the cost incurred were \$4 million. There is still \$3 million—\$3.117 million to be paid and the intention is to extend the number of consultations beyond this point.

There were some questions raised with respect to the teachers, and I think there may have been—if I understand the question correctly—perhaps a misunderstanding as to whether some of the teachers may have been trained abroad. I got some additional explanations which I will read out which, perhaps, might help to clarify the matter a little bit more. It says that:

These scholarships are for primary school teachers...

We had simply said, I think, it is 896 teachers on scholarship without saying more, but this would probably expand it a little bit, which is to say that:

These scholarships are for primary school teachers and it is aimed at having qualified teachers in every classroom in Trinidad and Tobago by 2015. These scholarships are for a duration of four years at the University of Trinidad and Tobago—and it is not overseas.—

There are 896 teachers to be paid under this scholarship programme. The increase of \$5 million is required to meet the expenses associated with the payment of increments and arrears of salary to teachers under this scholarship programme. Teachers who have achieved a grade point average of 2 and over are paid increment at the end of each academic year. The Government has negotiated a new agreement with TTUTA for the bargaining period, 2009—2012. Teachers on scholarship must therefore be paid the new salaries, increased increments, as well as arrears of salary for the period. This increased cost was not considered in the preparation of the original expenditure under this scholarship programme.

So those were the explanations that—remaining explanations—as I can recall, that came out of the issue— *[Interruption]*

Mr. Imbert: What? What about all the questions we asked—the helicopters?

Sen. The Hon. L. Howai: No, no, I am coming to those. Some of those were answered already, yeah. I do not have the answer on that one. I did not check that particular one, so we will deal with it in the Upper House and, presumably, it will get into the *Hansard* via that route.

The funding of the deficit, of course, it will have to be done by way of additional borrowing. We have not made any projection for increased borrowings because, as I said, our expectation is that we probably, as happened last year, will come in below the original budget deficit that we had originally projected, given where we are, as at mid-year with respect to the overall level of expenditure.

The CIF, I am not sure if there is a misunderstanding about the CIF because the bonds that individuals held, which is the exchange for the STIP, the Short Term Investment Products, those bonds would have been 20-year bonds, and what we did is, we took the 11 to 20-year bonds, the ones that were maturing in 11 to 20 years, and allowed the conversions of those against the CIF. Now, if you held those, the average return on those bonds, if you discounted them to the present day, would have been somewhere between 40 and 50 cents—*[Interruption]* So that is what you would have gotten.

7.35 a.m.

But once you convert them, it means that they were converted on a dollar for dollar basis. So that is what the former Minister was referring to, about the dollar for dollar arrangement. So when they were converted to that, you would have then gotten STIP at a dollar for dollar conversion rate. Those have come down in value to \$21 instead of the original \$25, but if you were to sell it at \$21, you would be getting \$21 and \$25 as opposed to about 40 per cent of \$25. So, therefore, you are in a sense in a better position.

Dr. Gopeesingh: That is about 80 cents to the dollar?

Sen. The Hon. L. Howai: Yes, so you are getting about more than 80 cents on the dollar. So those are some issues. The public procurement issue has been dealt with, and the Auditor General's Report, we have done a release on that because a significant number of the issues raised only came up because of the fact that the answers coming in from the Ministries did not get in on time to meet the

deadline that the Auditor General had established and, therefore, the Auditor General would have published her report prior to those answers coming in.

A number of the issues raised related to the fact that during the course of the year, towards the end of June of last year, a number of Ministries were reshuffled and a number of transfers took place and, as a consequence of that, there were a number of issues which arose, which related to the fact that budgets had to be transferred and, in effect, some of the transfers would not have occurred on time to show the facts that there was a higher expenditure simply because an entire department was moved to a new Ministry.

Particularly—I think there was a particular issue raised by the Member for Port of Spain South with respect to the Office of the Prime Minister and, again, that had to do with the fact that the Ministry of Information and the Ministry of National Diversity and Social Integration, there were transfers out into those particular Ministries, and the accounting transfers and the accounting for those transfers did not happen on time. Therefore, there was the effect of seeming as if there were expenditures in other areas which were more than should have occurred—and in the Prime Minister’s office—considerably less than should have occurred. But that is simply because of those transfers.

So some of these things, Mr. Speaker, we have dealt with. It has been a long night, and I do not think that there is need for us to go into too much of detail on all the other issues. I think that the Member for Couva South had broken out the details of that between the NIS, the overtime, the COLA—and there was something else—as well as the salaries which made up that. *[Interruption]*

Mr. Roberts: *[Inaudible]*

Hon. Member: “Yuh wasn’t here.”

Sen. The Hon. L. Howai: For the first and second, yes. So those were broken out and answered during the course of the—

Hon. Member: So I will check the *Hansard*.

Sen. The Hon. L. Howai: Yes, so you can check the *Hansard*. You will see it there. Yes, you can. It is there. *[Interruption]* Yes, I have to say—

But, Mr. Speaker, I want to say that in the end, again, I would like to confirm that the fiscal position of the country remains strong. The ratings have been reaffirmed. The IMF has indicated to us, again, their confidence in the economy of Trinidad and Tobago. Growth has started to return to the economy. We have shown three consecutive quarters of growth, and that growth has actually become much more robust during the last quarter.

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During the first half of this year, the flash estimates from the Central Bank suggest that growth for the first half could be up to 2 per cent. So there is a very significant movement upward in the economy. All of the sectors of the economy have started to show positive growth including the agricultural sector. So there has been a significant upward movement. Inflation is down, unemployment remains well controlled, foreign exchange reserves and the Heritage and Stabilisation Fund remain robust and strong. In fact, if you convert those two together, we have over \$90 billion in savings in Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

So, Mr. Speaker, there are a lot of positives for our economy, there is a lot that is happening that is good. We are heading in the right direction, and I think that the support for these initiatives will help us to address the significant arrears of back pay that need to be settled. In fact, the number is a little bit higher than had been—my colleague, the Member for Oropouche East, had mentioned a billion dollars which is really the personnel expenditure but, in addition, there are about a little over \$700 million in transfers to state enterprises which will also be used to pay arrears in several of the state enterprises, the RHAs and so on, which would bring the figure up to just under \$1.8 billion in total, of this \$2.8 billion, which we are asking as an increase for this year, a further supplementary appropriation to the accounts.

So, Mr. Speaker, we look forward to the support of all Members of the House in this matter, and I beg to move. [*Desk thumping*]

Question put.

The House divided: Ayes 18 Noes 7

AYES

Moonilal, Hon. Dr. R.

Persad-Bissessar SC, Hon. K.

McLeod, Hon. E.

Ramadharr, Hon. P.

Gopeesingh, Hon. Dr. T.

Peters, Hon. W.

Rambachan, Hon. Dr. S.

Seepersad-Bachan, Hon. C.

Roberts, Hon. A.

Cadiz, Hon. S.
 Baker, Hon. Dr. D.
 De Coteau, Hon. C.
 Khan, Hon. Dr. F.
 Indarsingh, Hon. R.
 Samuel, Hon. R.
 Ramdial, Hon. R.
 Alleyne-Toppin, Hon. V.
 Partap, C.
 NOES
 Mc Donald, Miss M.
 Hypolite, N.
 Imbert, C.
 Jeffrey, F.
 Browne, Dr. A.
 Hospedales, Miss A.
 Gopee-Scoon, Mrs. P.

Question agreed to.

Resolved:

That this House adopt the Second Report (2012/2013) Session of the Finance Committee of the House of Representatives of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on proposals for the Supplementation of the 2013 Appropriation.

FINANCE (SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION)

(FINANCIAL YEAR 2013) BILL, 2013

The Minister of Finance and the Economy (Sen. The Hon. Larry Howai):
 Mr. Speaker, I beg to move:

That a Bill to provide the Supplementary Appropriation for the service of Trinidad and Tobago for the financial year ending 30th September, 2013 of the sum of the issue of which was authorized by the Appropriation (Financial Year 2013) Act, 2012, be now read a second time.

Question proposed.

7.45 a.m.

Mr. Colm Imbert (*Diego Martin North/East*): Thank you very much. I think we could go at it again for another 24 hours. [*Crosstalk*] But, Mr. Speaker, I would simply ask the Minister to explain why he has come to this Parliament and asked for an increased allocation of almost \$3 billion, when in the same breath he is telling us that the money will not be required because there would be savings and cutbacks in expenditure. So we are going to end this fiscal year with an approved allocation which will not be utilized because the deficit is allegedly going to be less than anticipated. So this entire exercise, in my opinion, has been a complete waste of time since the money that is being appropriated will not be spent. Could the Minister please explain what is going on?

Mr. Speaker: Any other Member? If not, I call on the hon. Minister of Finance and the Economy. You can now speak. [*Desk thumping*]

The Minister of Finance and the Economy (Sen. The Hon. Larry Howai): Mr. Speaker, what we have done is appropriated additional funding which will ensure that we will not require to do any of the additional virements that will be required—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Imbert: You are not going to spend it.

Sen. The Hon. L. Howai:—during the course of this year. All of that money will be spent in the areas which we have identified. [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. Member: Quiet.

Sen. The Hon. L. Howai: What we will seek to do is try to find other areas within which we will be able to—[*Crosstalk*]

Hon. Member: “Cool yuh self.”

Sen. The Hon. L. Howai:—suppress expenditure. [*Crosstalk*] Mr. Speaker—

Hon. Member: “Slow yuh roll, boy.”

Sen. The Hon. L. Howai:—I beg to move. Yeah.

Mr. Speaker: Member for Diego Martin North/East, please, please, please. [*Crosstalk*] Yes. No. Please.

Mr. Imbert: She started it.

Mr. Speaker: Please, please, please. [*Crosstalk*] There is no “she” here; the Member.

Mr. Imbert: The Member started it.

Mr. Speaker: Yes. Well could you cool it. [*Crosstalk*] All right, you have moved.

Sen. The Hon. L. Howai: Yes.

Mr. Speaker: Right. Good. I am on my legs, can I have your silence, please. [*Crosstalk*] All right. Member for Diego Martin North/East, could we have silence here. Hon. Members, I shall now put the question to the House.

Question put.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: The third reading.

Mr. Speaker: Oh. Yes. Yes. Yes. Upon the third reading. Boy, long time. [*Crosstalk*]

Question agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a second time.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance and the Economy.

Sen. The Hon. L. Howai: In accordance with Standing Order 70(1), I now beg to move that the Bill be now read a third time and passed.

Question put: That the Bill be read the third time.

The House divided: Ayes 18 Noes 7

AYES

Moonilal, Hon. Dr. R.

Persad-Bissessar SC, Hon. K.

Mc Leod, Hon. E.

Ramadhar, Hon. P.

Gopeesingh, Hon. Dr. T.

Peters, Hon. W.

Rambachan, Hon. Dr. S.

Seepersad-Bachan, Hon. C.

Roberts, Hon. A.

Cadiz, Hon. S.

Baker, Hon. Dr. D.

De Coteau, Hon. C.

Khan, Hon. Dr. F.

Indarsingh, Hon. R.

Samuel, Hon. R.

Ramdial, Hon. R.

Alleyne-Toppin, Hon. V.

Partap, C.

NOES

Mc Donald, Miss M.

Hypolite, N.

Imbert, C.

Jeffrey, F.

Browne, Dr. A.

Hospedales, Miss A.

Gopee-Scoon, Mrs. P.

Assent indicated.

Bill accordingly read the third time and passed.

STATEMENT BY MINISTER

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, I have been advised that the hon. Prime Minister has a statement to make to this honourable House at this time. I will therefore, have to revert to the Order Paper under the item “Statements by Ministers”. Do I have the approval of the House?

Assent indicated.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Prime Minister.

Chaguanas West By-election

The Prime Minister (Hon. Kamla Persad-Bissessar SC): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, I do believe that Members have been in this Chamber for about 18 hours—almost 18 hours—it is now 7.55 a.m. on Thursday morning. But I thank you for the opportunity to make a very important statement to this honourable Chamber at this time in the morning.

You recall, Mr. Speaker, and many would recall, that during our conversations in 2010 in our campaign at that general election time that we made some promises and pledges to the people of Trinidad and Tobago. We promised that we would hold elections within the constitutional framework in due time for holding elections.

You recall also, Mr. Speaker, that we disclosed our displeasure at the fact that elections had been postponed on three occasions by those on the other side when they were in Government, not in keeping with the then law, that the law in fact had to be changed in order to accommodate changing election times three times.

So, Mr. Speaker, I took the opportunity recently to consult with the leaders of the Muslim community: the President General of the ASJA, the President General of the TML, the President General Islamic Missionary Guild, the President General of the Tackveeyatul Islamic Association; the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community of Trinidad and Tobago, the Ahmadiyya Anjuman Ishaat-e-Islam Darul Uloom, the San Fernando Jamaat Association, the Tackaful Society of Trinidad and Tobago and Haji Jamsheed Khan from the Muslim Credit Union. And these persons, Mr. Speaker, Haji Yacoob Ali, Dr. Naaser Mustapha, Haji Imtiaz Mohammed, Haji Imran Hoosaney, Maulana Ibrahim Bin Yacoob, Maulana Iqbal Hydal, Maulana Abdus Salaam, Maulana Saddique Ahmad Nasir, Haji Imtiaz Ali, and as I have said before, Haji Jamsheed Khan.

In those consultations, I sought their guidance as to what would be the opinion, as leaders of the Islamic community, with respect to the convening or the holding or issuing an election writ for the by-election in Chaguanas, and taking their counsel as part of my guidance.

I wish to declare today that Monday, July 29, 2013 shall be the day on which the Chaguanas West by-election would be held. I thank you very much.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Leader of the House.

Adjournment

Thursday, June 13, 2013

ADJOURNMENT

The Minister of Housing, Land and Marine Affairs (Hon. Dr. Roodal Moonilal): Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this House do now adjourn to Monday June 17, 2013 at 1.30 p.m. and serve notice on Members of the House that it is the intention of the Government to debate Bill No. 7 on the Order Paper by the Attorney General. I beg to move.

Miss Mc Donald: Monday coming, I told you.

Mr. Speaker: Can I have your attention Member for Port of Spain South? Can I have your attention?

Question put and agreed to.

House adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 8.00 a.m.