

## SENATE

*Friday, December 22, 1995*

The Senate met at 10.01 a.m.

## PRAYERS

[MR. PRESIDENT *in the Chair*]

## LEAVE OF ABSENCE

**Mr. President:** Hon. Senators, I have granted leave of absence to Sen. Philip Hamel-Smith from today's sitting.

## DAME NITA BARROW

**(Death of)**

**The Minister of Public Administration and Information (Sen. The Hon. Wade Mark):** Mr. President, it is with a deep sense of profound sadness that we address this honourable Senate on the sudden and untimely passing of a distinguished and extraordinary Caribbean person, Her Excellency Dame Nita Barrow, Governor General of Barbados, who passed away a few days ago. Her passing brought to a close a very long and outstanding career in the service of the regional and international community.

Mr. President, Dame Nita began her service to humanity, initially in the field of nursing, with training in Barbados and Trinidad and Tobago. Her academic training included studies at Columbia University, the University of Toronto and Edinburgh University.

Her Excellency Dame Nita served as director of the Christian Medical Commission of the World Council of Churches, eventually assuming the presidency of the World YMCA.

Throughout her life, Dame Nita gave dedicated service to the people of the region and the international community, as well as many non-governmental organizations. She was a member of the eminent persons group which visited South Africa and assisted in bringing apartheid to an end. She also assisted the United Nations system in the field of environment and sustainable development. She represented her country as a permanent representative to the United Nations in New York with distinction. She was also honoured with a Caricom award—the second Caribbean person to be so honoured.

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At the culmination of her life, Dame Nita served as a head of state, never losing touch with the working and ordinary people of Barbados and the rest of the Caribbean. She was a frequent visitor to the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. Dame Nita was a very humble person in her life. She would remain forever in the minds of Caribbean people as an outstanding symbol, committed and dedicated to service.

On behalf of the Government and people of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, we wish to extend to her family and the Government and people of Barbados, heartfelt sympathy on her sudden and untimely passing.

May she rest in peace.

**Sen. Vernon Gilbert:** Mr. President, it is unfortunate that at such a point in time in the Caribbean we have lost one of our stalwart Caribbean women. We on the Opposition Benches support the sentiments expressed earlier and offer condolences to Dame Nita's family and friends throughout the Caribbean.

She has been a stalwart in promoting women's affairs. We hope that other women of the Caribbean recognize the contribution she has made and emulate her performance.

We on the Opposition Benches feel a deep loss and offer condolences to her family and people of Barbados.

**Sen. Prof. John Spence:** Mr. President, while it is a matter of sadness that we mourn the death of Dame Nita Barrow, I think we also ought to express joy for her life. Undoubtedly, here was a person who, through what she did throughout her career, added to the well-being of many persons.

It is sometimes the case that some of our citizens are recognized within the international level and not so much the local level. It is good, that in this case, not only did Dame Nita get the recognition at international and regional level, but that we in these islands also recognize the great service she gave to our countries.

I met Dame Nita, although I did not know her very well, but certainly, it is clear that she was a modest person, indicating that one can do great things and still preserve modesty. It is important that women have as a role model someone like Dame Nita because the more we can ensure that our women become involved in leadership, I am sure, the better will these countries be.

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**10.10 a.m.**

Dame Nita Barrow, was able to make a tremendous contribution not only in her profession as a nurse but later in more wider social attributes. And so, on behalf of the Independent Senators, I would like to convey our sympathy to her family and also to the people of Barbados.

Thank you.

**Mr. President:** Hon. Senators, I join with you in expressing condolences to the family, the Government and the people of Barbados on the sad and untimely passing of the Governor General, Dame Nita Barrow.

An appropriate letter of condolence would be forwarded to the family, Government and people of Barbados in due course.

**FINANCE (VARIATION OF APPROPRIATION) (1995) BILL**

Bill to vary the appropriation of the sum the issue of which was authorized by the Appropriation Act, 1994, brought from the House of Representatives [*The Minister of Finance*]; read the first time.

*Motion made*, That the next stage be taken at a later stage of the proceedings. [*Hon. B. Kuei Tung*].

*Question put and agreed to.*

**INSTITUTE OF MARINE AFFAIRS (AMDT.) BILL**

Bill to amend the Institute of Marine Affairs Act, Chap. 37:01, brought from the House of Representatives [*The Minister of Public Administration and Information*]; read the first time.

*Motion made*, That the next stage be taken at the next sitting of the Senate. [*Hon. W. Mark*].

*Question put and agreed to.*

**PAPERS LAID**

1. Report of the Auditor General on the accounts of the Trinidad and Tobago Export Credit Insurance Company Limited for the year ended December 31, 1994. [*The Minister of Public Administration and Information (Sen. The Hon. Wade Mark)*]

2. Report of the Auditor General on the accounts of the Board of Industrial Training of Trinidad and Tobago for the year ended December 31, 1993. [*Hon. W. Mark*]
3. Report of the Auditor General on the accounts of the Board of Industrial Training of Trinidad and Tobago for the year ended December 31, 1994. [*Hon. W. Mark*]
4. Report of the Auditor General on the accounts of the Non-Reimbursible Technical Co-operation agreement ATN/SF-3650-TT between the Government of Trinidad and Tobago and the Inter-American Development Bank for the year ended March 31, 1994. [*Hon. W. Mark*]
5. Report of the Auditor General on the accounts of the Non-Reimbursable Technical Co-operation agreement ATN/SF-3388-TT between Trinidad and Tobago and the Inter-American Development Bank for the year ended January 01 to August 31, 1995. [*Hon. W. Mark*]
6. Report of the Auditor General on the accounts of the Industrial Development Corporation for the year ended December, 31, 1984. [*Hon. W. Mark*]
7. Report of the Auditor General on the accounts of the Industrial Development Corporation for the year ended December 31, 1985. [*Hon. W. Mark*]
8. Report of the Auditor General on the accounts of the Industrial Development Corporation for the year ended December 31, 1986. [*Hon. W. Mark*]
9. The Thirty-Eight Report of the Salaries Review Commission of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Hon. W. Mark*]

**PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE  
(Appointment of)**

**The Minister of Public Administration and Information (Sen. The Hon. Wade Mark):** Mr. President, I beg to move,

*Whereas* it is provided by subsection (1) of section 119 of the Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago that there shall be a Public Accounts Committee, which shall consist of not less than six nor more than 10 members;

*Be it resolved:*

That this Senate appoint the following five members to serve, with an equal number from the House, on the Public Accounts Committee:

Sen. Philip Hamel-Smith

Sen. Selwyn John

Sen. Barbara Gray-Burke

Sen. Dr. Eric St. Cyr

Sen. Danny Montano

*Question put and agreed to.*

**PUBLIC ACCOUNTS (ENTERPRISES) COMMITTEE**

**(Appointment of)**

**The Minister of Public Administration and Information (Sen. The Hon. Wade Mark):** Mr. President, I beg to move,

*Whereas* it is provided by subsection 5 of section 119 of the Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago that there shall be a Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee, which shall consist of not less than six nor more than 10 members,

*Be it resolved:*

That this House appoint the following five members to serve with an equal number from the House on the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee:

Sen. Carol Cuffy-Dowlal

Sen. Nizam Baksh

Sen. Vimala Tota-Maharaj

Sen. Philip Marshall

Sen. Danny Montano

*Question put and agreed to.*

**FINANCE (VARIATION OF APPROPRIATION) (1995) BILL**

*Order for second reading read.*

**The Minister of Finance (Sen. The Hon. Brian Kuei-Tung):** Mr. President, I beg to move,

That a Bill to vary the appropriation of the sum the issue of which was authorized by the Appropriation Act, 1995 be now read a second time.

The matter before us this morning can best be described as being nothing more than an accounting or maybe a bookkeeping function, as it contains proposals to vary expenditure totalling \$45 million under Head 36, the Ministry of Housing and Settlements, a decrease in the amount of \$30 million; under Head 43 another decrease in the Ministry of Works and Transport of \$15 million. The two decreases together total \$45 million.

**10.20 a.m.**

Mr. President, the intent for this variation is really to ensure that programmes, which show signs of being successfully and satisfactorily implemented during the year, can continue by ensuring that sums which were denied them initially, and which cannot now be used by other heads, will now be transferred to those programmes.

Let me indicate that the reduction in allocation to the Ministry of Works and Transport falls under one heading, that is, the Road Rehabilitation Programme.

In the 1995 development programme, as much as \$25 million had been provided for an award of a contract for engineering works, mobilization and rehabilitation of roads under the Road Rehabilitation Programme. But at the end of November 30, only design work had been completed and tenders were invited for both rehabilitation and the supervision contracts. As it turned out, the actual tenders that were submitted for rehabilitation work proved to be much too high and could not have been accommodated within the 1995 allocation, therefore, no award could have been made and the tenders have been cancelled.

The Ministry of Planning and Development, together with the Ministry of Works and Transport, will now be pursuing an alternative implementation strategy and no expenditure has been anticipated under this Head in 1995 and that accounts for the reduction in their capital programme of a sum of \$15 million.

With respect to the Ministry of Housing and Settlements, the decrease of \$30 million has come about because of four projects which have proven to be a little slow in getting off the ground as well.

Under the shelter construction financing facility, which is a facility that provides loans to beneficiaries who had been allocated lots in Couva North, Harmony Hall and Bon Air, the delays in the processing of the applications for these loans have hindered the actual implementation of this project. Again, as at the end of November, 1995 out of approximately 1,800 applications which had been received, only 83 loans had been approved, this meant that the sums under this programme could not have been disbursed and will not be disbursed in 1995.

Under the Malick Phase I project, which is a project to provide infrastructure as part of the Squatter Regularization Programme, a contract was actually awarded in September last year with a completion date of March this year. The contract has progressed so slowly that only 14 per cent of the works had been completed by the end of last month. Steps are now being taken to have this particular contract terminated.

As far as the project Edinburgh 500 is concerned, delays in the laying of mains have hindered the commencement of the construction of the Sewage Treatment Plant. The National Housing Authority anticipates the commencement of this construction during the first quarter of next year.

Finally, the fourth project is in Caroni Village. In April 1995, the Central Tenders Board awarded a contract for the implementation of infrastructure works, but it turned out that the contractor had not been able to satisfy the conditions which were precedent to the order being issued. The Attorney General's Department has since advised that the contract can be terminated and steps are now being taken to have this done. The Ministry of Housing and Settlements will seek to have a new contract issued in 1996.

Those are the reasons for the variation of \$15 million in the case of the Ministry of Works and Transport and \$30 million in the case of the Ministry of Housing and Settlements giving a total of \$45 million.

What we have attempted to do is to allocate this \$45 million to ministries which are able to deal with these sums under their programmes, so that the sums are being transferred for them to be able to pursue their own programmes. Two ministries will benefit from this increase. The Ministry of Education, to be given an increase of \$36 million—and this is to deal with the Skills Development

Programme that is being conducted under that Ministry. There are presently 300 part-time students and 250 full-time students enrolled in this programme which is designed to meet the shortage of skilled personnel at middle management level in industry, particularly in the energy sector. It is further expected that this programme will be increased to cater for as many as 600 full-time students and 1,200 part-time students in 1997.

There are 150 students being trained in mechanical engineering and 100 students in electrical and electronic engineering under this programme at the following venues:

Wrightson Road - Technical Trade School	60 students
Metal Industries Trade School:	
Basic Training	80 students
Advanced Training	30 students
Petrotrin Trade School	80 students

At this time, Mr. President, the programme is already way ahead of schedule and was able to accelerate in 1995 only because funding was obtained through credit facilities. The sum of \$10 million which was provided in the 1995 appropriation proved to be insufficient to meet the needs of this accelerated programme and this supplementary allocation of \$36 million, therefore, is required to meet outstanding payments and to keep this programme, which has proven to be so successful, going.

With respect to the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources, the sum of \$9 million is the amount of the increase which is being contemplated under this Bill. This programme is intended to provide additional funds under a global agricultural credit programme. It is intended that sums will be allocated in its entirety to the Agricultural Development Bank to further disburse loans to farmers.

At the beginning of 1995, the sum of \$18 million was provided in the estimates for the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources under this head, and the Agricultural Development Bank had been able to disburse 249 loans in the following sectors:

<b>Sector</b>	<b>No. of Loans</b>
Fishing	8
Horticulture	6



Livestock	5
Cocoa rehabilitation	5
Dairy farmers	25
Agro industries	25
Vegetable farming	50
Sugar cane cultivation	<u>125</u>
Total:	249

With this increase of \$9 million, it is envisaged that it will be utilized in the following areas:

<b>Sector</b>	<b>No. of Loans</b>
Fishing	5
Horticulture	5
Livestock	5
Agro industries	20
Vegetable farming	30
Sugar cane cultivation	60

It is intended therefore, that by this method we will be able to continue—

**Sen. Prof. Spence:** Before the Minister sits down—I think he is almost finished—could he perhaps amplify on two points?

With regard to the education transfer how much was debt, and how much is new commitment? And, perhaps for non-accountants, could he explain how one could make new commitments before the year has started? Similarly with the Agricultural Development Bank, are these loans going to be disbursed in the next week, or is it possible to commit the funds and use them next year?

**10.30 a.m.**

**Hon. B. Kuei Tung:** Mr. President, I am really not in a position to give the amount that was the debt and the amount that was for future disbursements, but one would recognize that these figures would have been given to me a little before the end of last month and, therefore, in the case of education—the Skills

Development Programme—as I indicated, most of the money had already been committed for the year in terms of the continuation of the Programme.

Let me indicate that this review which was started on June 30, 1995 suggested that the two programmes, in which there was a decrease, were really not going to be in a position to use those funds and, therefore, since early July—maybe the middle of the year—the Skills Development Programme and the Agricultural Development Bank were told to accelerate their programme. They were going to have that transferred. We are not attempting to make any future commitments now into 1996, but merely to regularize the disbursement requirements. Hon. Senators will understand that I am really not in a position to disburse unless I had come here and got the approval; and I seek to get this approval at this time.

Mr. President, to wind up I must indicate that it is necessary for us to have these funds transferred from the two Heads. To summarize, an increase in expenditure for the Ministry of Agriculture of \$9 million; an increase in expenditure for the Ministry of Education of \$36 million; and a decrease in the Ministry of Housing and Settlements of \$30 million; and a decrease in the Ministry of Works and Transport of \$15 million.

Mr. President, I now beg to move.

*Question proposed.*

**Sen. Danny Montano:** Mr. President, I take this opportunity to wish you and all the Members of this House, the very best wishes for the season and for the coming year. Also, Mr. President, on behalf of my colleagues in the Opposition, we would like to convey to the hon. Prime Minister our special good wishes. We are very happy to see him back at work in his office; and we wish him the very best of happiness and good health for the season and for the coming year. I would also like to convey to the President of the Republic and his family the best wishes for the season and for the coming New Year.

Mr. President, we on this side understand and appreciate the need for re-allocations in the budgetary process, but we do have some concerns about the transfer of funds from the Shelter Construction Financing Facility from the Ministry of Housing and Settlements to the other ministries.

Our first concern in this regard is that the funds being allocated are specific in nature and are the subject of an agreement between the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago and the Inter-American Development Bank regarding the National

Settlements Programme. We are asking if this action of re-allocation is proper and legal; whether it was done within the spirit and letter of the agreement with the IADB; and whether the IADB was, in fact, consulted about the transfer.

Mr. President, our understanding in view of the contract indicates that there are other options within the contract itself for re-allocation within other programmes and sub-programmes, including squatter regularization and the construction of community facilities.

The other concern that we have with regard to this is in the light of what is, in effect, a cutback in the Ministry of Housing and Settlements. We are especially concerned about comments that have been made that there is no need for a Ministry of Housing and Settlements and that Government should not be involved in the construction of housing for low-income groups, and that people should, probably, be given land—which has been said in another place—at no cost.

Mr. President, right-thinking persons in our society would have cause for concern with that. We already know that we have a significant squatter problem and that kind of statement we consider to be somewhat reckless, and would tend to cause persons at a certain level of the society to assume that it was Government's duty to hand out free parcels of land. We have great difficulty with that, and in the absence of a formal structured policy with respect to housing, when utterances are being made that there should be no Ministry of Housing and Settlements, but nevertheless we have a Minister of Housing and Settlements, we are somewhat at a loss to understand exactly what is the objective.

Mr. President, the former administration recognized that the provision of land itself does not address the housing needs of low-income persons in our society, and we had addressed that policy. There was a strategy in place that was designed to encourage the building of, at least, 5,000 units per year. There is a report that has been promulgated by the Government which suggests that between 1995 and 2005, at least, 115,000 housing units are going to be required. In that report it states clearly that, at least 50,000 units are going to require significant levels of government intervention and subsidy. All this, Mr. President, without a Ministry of Housing and Settlements—and with an apparent vacancy of policy that Government should not be constructing any houses at all.

By contrast, Mr. President, the former administration was actively engaged in the construction of housing units. The administration prior to the PNM administration in the years 1986—1991, constructed not one single dwelling

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house. The PNM administration began an active programme to develop lands to provide the infrastructure and to begin construction of units at the low-income level. Furthermore, there was an active strategy to encourage the private sector to develop housing units to meet the housing needs of other sectors of the society; and in that regard all new housing units constructed after August 31, 1994 would no longer be subject to the Rent Restriction Act. Furthermore, the rent for all new housing units built before the end of 1995 would be income tax free, and the profits on the sale would be tax free to the year 2000.

Mr. President, what we now face is an absence of policy; a removal of allocations; and statements in another place about regularization of squatting and the reduction of the cost in the regularization of squatting from \$17,000 per unit to \$10,000 per unit; and this is to be achieved by providing graded, unpaved roads; earthen drains and community toilets.

We on this side have some difficulty with that. We do not accept that there should be different standards. The standard which we adopted was that the national resources should be used as equitably as possible for the benefit of all. What, then, is the policy of this Government? Is it not to have a Ministry of Housing and Settlements, and not to construct a single house and, in effect, to create a nation of slums? Mr. President, we would be grateful for a lucid, articulate policy, and if they have none, then we suggest that they adopt the PNM policy.

Thank you.

**10.40 a.m.**

#### **SENATOR'S APPOINTMENT**

**Mr. President:** I have just received a communication from His Excellency the President as follows:

"22nd December, 1995

Madam,

I wish to inform you that, in exercise of the power vested in him by section 44 of the Constitution, His Excellency the President has appointed Miss Carol Merritt to be temporarily a Senator with effect from 22nd December, 1995 and continuing during the absence from Trinidad and Tobago of Senator Philip Hamel-Smith.

*Senator's Appointment*

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Miss Merritt's Instrument of Appointment is forwarded herewith together with a copy for your records.

Yours sincerely,  
Gloria Nurse (Miss)  
Secretary to his Excellency  
the President.

Miss D. Dolly,  
Acting Clerk of the Senate,  
Parliament,  
Red House,  
St. Vincent Street,  
Port of Spain."

#### OATH OF ALLEGIANCE

*Sen. Carol Merritt took and subscribed the Oath of Allegiance as required by law.*

#### FINANCE (VARIATION OF APPROPRIATION) (1995) BILL

**Sen. Dr. Eric St. Cyr:** Mr. President, let me begin by congratulating you on your appointment to this very high office and to express my confidence from my knowledge of your past and present, that you will exercise your duties at the highest standards possible.

I take the opportunity also to express to fellow Senators the warm greetings of the season and hope that we all come through this time soberly and to come into the new year prepared for good hard work.

I must also convey to the hon. Prime Minister my good wishes for a speedy recovery and for long life in this very important office to which he has been elected.

I wish to make just a few brief remarks on the Bill before us. It looks such an innocent Bill, \$45 million one way, rounded, \$45 million the other way, rounded, and I am sure that there is no problem whatsoever with the arithmetic. My

concern, Sir, would be what the policy implications behind the changes might be suggesting.

From my casual reading of the information, all the virements relate to infrastructure, roads, housing and training. There are, in any nation, things which individuals can do for themselves. My personal view is that they should be left to do those things for themselves. There are other things which individuals cannot do for themselves—infrastructure-type things—and those are the things where I think Government must focus attention, resources and energy.

So that what we see here is, in my view, a shift from one set of infrastructure projects to another. Increasingly, we are going to have that big debate on housing. We have had it up and down over the last ten years or so. The big issue, really, is whether one approach can deliver shelter to everyone needing housing in their lifetime, or whether, with the resources available, we would deliver high quality shelter to a few of those deserving housing. I do not know whether that debate will ever be resolved by contesting words and arguments. I would prefer to see the marketplace solve that problem. In that respect, I would go for a larger number of housing units for everyone, even though the price to pay would be at the level of the quality. That would be my position.

The comment I want to make, however, relates to the training. Where there is large structural unemployment in a society, the key issue is really to upgrade the skills of the people unemployed so that they can get into productive employment, production of marketable goods. So that I am fully supportive of the thrust to upgrade and modernize skills and develop proper work attitudes and a disposition to a positive lifestyle among the younger members of the nation.

What worries me, however, is that one year ago we seemed to have allocated just \$10 million in that direction, and now this is an increase of \$36 million. Therefore, this is not a marginal increase, but an almost four-fold increase in the allocation. Certainly, this would suggest that there must have been a policy shift somewhere within the year. If it is so, I wish the hon. Minister would tell us that and probably start rationalizing the nature of the policy shift.

I have heard in the debate also, reference to IDB funding. My understanding is that the IDB has an interest both in financing of the housing sector and in the

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financing of training and retraining. So that perhaps there too, on both sides of the fence, we need some policy ratification.

I would have probably held off speaking for the new year, but thought I should break the ice this year by making these brief remarks. I now end by once more wishing one and all the best for the season.

Thank you, Mr. President.

**10.50 a.m.**

**Sen. Carol Cuffy-Dowlat:** Mr. President, as I rise in support of this Bill, I must take the opportunity, coming after the line of distinguished persons who have spoken, to congratulate you on your ascension to the high office of President of the Senate.

I must also take this opportunity on behalf of all of us here, and especially the women of Trinidad and Tobago, to wish you season's greetings and convey to you and your family, the best for 1996.

Mr. President, in supporting this Bill, I do so with grief in my heart and tears in my eyes for the many homeless men, women and children who are today unable to enjoy this season of good will and cheer, since the PNM Government did not see it fit and proper to spend money allocated to the Ministry of Housing and Settlements on the provision of shelter for the poor and dispossessed of this society.

The Sou Sou Land concept for the provision of land for the landless at affordable prices was fully ventilated. This concept was not only about providing land, it was about partnership development with the people in the building of a community that the people would fully understand and appreciate. It is not only about high-rise expensive apartments to be given away. It is about people's involvement in their future.

Mr. President, this concept would have brought joy to many hearts today, but with the coming into office of the PNM in 1991, this vision for a better tomorrow, and the provision of shelter for our children, was abandoned and replaced by hopelessness and helplessness.

The PNM Government lacked the foresight and wisdom to appreciate that if the money that was allocated to the Ministry of Housing and Settlements was used by that ministry using the Sou Sou Land concept, then today, we would not have

had money left over from that most important ministry available for re-allocation to other important ministries.

Mr. President, we on this side do appreciate that the Almighty did not necessarily bless us all equally, hence, foresight, logic, understanding and most importantly, caring for those less fortunate than us is not a gift that we all have. The building of expensive shelters to give away is not our understanding of the provision of shelter and housing for our people.

Today, the people of Trinidad and Tobago must pay for the indiscretions of the People's National Movement. Thank God that the wisdom of the citizenry prevailed and today we are sitting here while they are sitting on the other side.

Mr. President, this is a season of goodwill and cheer, hence I would, in the spirit of the season, be brief on this occasion and wholly support the Bill before this honourable Senate.

Thank you, Mr. President.

**Sen. Prof. John Spence:** Mr. President, I would just like to make a few very brief comments. Before going into that part of it, I would just like to respond to one of the points made by Sen. Cuffy-Dowlat about the Sou Sou Land concept.

I was going to meetings when this concept was first being developed and it seemed to me that it did have a certain merit, but, I would invite her to drive past some of these agricultural lands that were originally allocated to Sou Sou Land housing, and tell me whether at this stage she still considers that the concept worked.

Mr. President, I suppose one of the problems we have to address with the Bill is the very large sums of money involved. If the sums were small, one could just regard it as an accounting procedure and in any large budget, clearly there are adjustments to be made, and I am sure we would be doing it again early next year.

As Sen. St. Cyr has pointed out, the large sums involved clearly indicate a shift in policy, and I suppose there are two points that concern me in this regard. Firstly, in response to the question I raised, the hon. Minister indicated that some of these policy shifts must have taken place six months ago—in the case of the acceleration of the training programme. Whether one is in support of that or not, I think the question arises as to if a government—not this Government, but the previous government—gives the go-ahead to expand a programme which would involve additional expenditure of millions of dollars with the hope of somehow



finding it later on from some other vote, that seems to me, to be an issue if that is the way it occurred; and that is the impression I got from what he said.

In the longer term, I think the concern which Sen. St. Cyr has voiced is one that I share, which is: Does one make a policy-shift of that nature without discussions in advance? If in some way the money that was shifted from the Ministry of Housing and Settlements could be held so that the decision could be made after we have had the budget debate—which is always an opportunity for policy discussions—it seems to me that one would have been much happier about the change, because one is being asked to agree to a substantial shift in policy without a substantial presentation of the reasons for that shift.

So, I hope the Minister of Finance, in his winding up, would expand upon the policy changes that have been clearly accepted which would involve this substantial reduction in expenditure in one area. We understand why it has been shifted to another, and I think we would all support an acceleration in the training. It is a pity that we could not determine what part of that additional funding for the training programme is to meet debts already incurred and how much of it is somehow to be committed in advance. This would allow us to judge in a better way whether the finances are being properly managed.

Thank you very much, Mr. President.

#### **11.00 a.m**

**Sen. Prof. Kenneth Ramchand:** Mr. President, I did not want to speak today, but since I am attracted to the Sou Sou Land concept, I will reply very briefly on behalf of Sen. Cuffy-Dowlat to Sen. Prof. Spence. With all due respect, he must know, as an intellectual, that the failure in the application of a concept is not necessarily a failure of the concept itself. [*Desk thumping*]

**Sen. Diana Mahabir-Wyatt:** Mr. President, I would not keep this honourable Senate very long. The comments that I wish to make are in relation to the whole question of housing. While the hon. Minister has not specifically indicated why these housing projects were not completed, I wonder if he could address that in his winding-up remarks.

There is one other area on which I would be grateful for some elucidation, and while I realize that the arithmetic, as Sen. Prof. St. Cyr pointed out does add up, I know that accountants always manage to balance the books somehow.

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Could the hon. Minister address the commitments there are in relation to the Inter-American Development Bank on allocation of funds? I am asking this because I realize that the hon. Minister is at the moment in the process of drawing up the 1996 budget and I just did not want to let this opportunity go by without mentioning, specifically in relation to housing, that while the Inter-American Development Bank, as an organization, has rather considerable interest in the provision of shelter, there has been particular interest over the last year from international organizations, generally, in providing shelter for women and children.

During the last five or six years, every time there is a budget debate I keep requesting that when money is allocated for housing that as a matter of policy, where public housing is going to be allocated to families, that it be put in the name of the mother rather than in the name of both parents. This is simply because there are so many instances, particularly at this time of the year—and I hate to say this—but there were at least three or four cases during the last couple of days of women and their children who have been thrown out of their homes by the husband or male partner who decided to replace the female partner with a new partner just before Christmas and the mother and children end up on the streets.

Over and over again, I keep asking that when we are dealing with housing—and I am hoping that this would find its way into the next budget figures, partly as I know the Inter-American Development Bank is concerned about shelter for children, and that this will be part of the policy directives particularly because of the drop in the allocations for shelter construction which is affecting small children and, therefore, the development of the country generally.

Thank you, Mr. President.

**The Minister of Public Administration and Information (Sen. The Hon. Wade Mark):** Mr. President, first of all, we on this side have always committed ourselves to providing information to the honourable Senate.

I recall, distinctly, whilst we were on the other side, that we argued very vehemently on the issue of adequate information. Because of the circumstances that forced the Government to bring this particular piece of legislation to the Senate, since it required passage by the end of this month, we wish to, at least, indicate that the Minister of Finance, who will be winding up very shortly, and the Government, would do everything in their power to ensure that in future when these matters come before the Senate, that Senators will be provided with

additional information. It is something that we have always argued about. We want to ensure that we do everything so that when we come to this honourable House to deal with these matters we would be able to provide hon. Senators with additional information.

This Government of national unity is committed to a policy of openness and transparency and we would like to ensure that there is adequate information so that hon. Senators can make a proper intervention and a proper contribution.

With these few words, I take my seat.

**The Minister of Finance (Sen. The Hon. Brian Kuei Tung):** Mr. President, let me begin by addressing the question of a policyshift. I do not think that it is necessarily a matter of policyshift when funds are being moved from one particular project to another. I say that because a policy is exactly what the name implies. It is something that indicates a priority position and, therefore, the fact that a particular project which is in conformity with one's policy is not progressing at the rate at which one would have hoped or planned, does not mean that one should leave it and keep the funds under which it has been reserved for that particular project.

Mr. President, these projects that we are talking about are capital advancement and would normally come under the purview of and are monitored by the Ministry of Planning and Development

In the course of its review, during the middle of this year, it was determined that the areas where I am requesting decreases, the Ministry of Housing and Settlements and the Ministry of Works and Transport, under reasonable circumstances, would not have been able to use these funds which have been allocated to them. Therefore, it was clearly evident by the way they were implementing these projects so slowly that they were not going to be able to access them.

For the sake of argument, I did mention that in the Ministry of Housing and Settlements, that in a particular project the contract had to be determined. It meant, therefore, that no funds under that contract would have been needed in 1995.

In the case of Caroni Village where the Central Tenders Board awarded a contract for the infrastructure works, the contractor had not been able to satisfy conditions which had been set prior to the award of a firm order. Having not been

able to satisfy those conditions, it was felt that a set of new contractual arrangements would have to be made that meant going back to the Central Tenders Board, rephrasing the terms of the request for proposal. It meant, therefore, the sum that was allocated for that particular project could not have been used in 1995.

Most of these capital and development projects normally span several years. If it was anticipated that a project would have taken three years beginning in the middle of 1994, one would have had sums allocated for it in 1994, 1995 and 1996. That is the way the project would have been planned.

If, during the course of the year, it is found that projects are not progressing, it is just wise and prudent financial cash management for us to take funds from such projects that are lagging and put them where the projects are going to be much further advanced than if one had allowed them, without the cash, to just come to a sudden end during the course of that year.

The intent is to give an impetus, as it were, to the projects that are moving faster, because one would have already anticipated one would need funds for that project next year, in any case. In the case of the ministries that receive new allocations it is anticipated that we will obtain certain funds for on-lending in the Agricultural Development Bank through the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources. The fact that we are now asking this honourable Senate to bring the funds forward for them means that somewhere along the line they will get less funds next year because they are ahead in the particular project for which they need finance. That is how one manages one's cash financing, by making sure that funds do not remain idle; by allocating funds from those projects that are slipping behind, and allocating them to projects that are in an advanced stage and can be accelerated.

#### **11.10 a.m.**

It means, therefore, that less funds will be needed in future for those projects that have been accelerated, and additional funds will now have to be found for the projects that have slipped. That, basically, is the approach of the Ministry of Finance in ensuring that projects continue from year to year. It is not a question of policyshift, it is a question of how you use your funds more effectively.

**Sen. Gilbert:** I would like to find out if bureaucracy in the system is a problem in terms of awarding contracts? Also, I am concerned about such a significant sum of money being transferred to a ministry. Thirty-six million dollars is really a lot of money, and one would need to have a policy about such an allocation, especially around this time of year. I am really wondering if there is a plan to spend \$36 million and whether there are arrangements in your new budget regarding other allocations.

**Hon. B. Kuei Tung:** Mr. President, I would not necessarily want to make a comment with respect to bureaucracy. Bureaucracy has had its day in many sessions before, but I do recognize that many ministries need to be strengthened in terms of their ability to implement capital projects. It is something that has been faced by the previous administration and something with which we are jostling, certainly with a degree of urgency.

It is not only a question of bureaucracy. It is sometimes that the skills needed to implement these projects are not readily available within the public service, and the public service has to go out to acquire these skills to ensure the implementation of the projects. These are not recurrent expenditure; these are capital projects and capital projects generally require skills which do not normally reside in the public service.

One can think of the example I gave. The fact that one awards a tender in October, 1994, and finds that by April, 1995, the firm to whom the contract has been awarded is unable to satisfy certain conditions, is really no fault of the public service. So I will not say that it is normally only because of bureaucracy, although there is an element of bureaucracy involved in the management and implementation of any project.

I accept further that the sum of \$36 million seems to be huge, but again I have indicated that in June of this year, we gave the word to the Agricultural Development Bank that they can continue processing applications for loans in certain sectors. What it means is that this sum, once it has been made available to the Agricultural Development Bank, allows it the opportunity to have the funds to start the actual disbursements.

One final word with respect to a contract with the IDB, or any other multilateral lending institution. The normal procedure for these loans is that the Government is required to manage its cash and find ways to get the money out and then is reimbursed on the actual disbursements that are made by the

Government. So, in the case of housing, if we had disbursed this \$30 million in pursuance of this contract, then we would ultimately have been reimbursed \$30 million. It is not that the Government intends to renege, vary or alter the terms and conditions of any loan that has been negotiated with these international agencies. Far from it, it is merely a funding mechanism where, through prudent cash management, we are able to move funds from one heading to another to ensure continuation of these projects.

Mr. President, I hope that I have been able to explain the way in which the ministry operates and manages its cash resources to ensure that the delivery of services to the people of Trinidad and Tobago continue in as smooth and normal a manner as possible. There will be too many hits and jerks if projects keep slowing and if funds remain idle. It is merely good cash management. I therefore wish to recommend this Bill to this honourable House.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Bill accordingly read a second time.*

**The Minister of Finance (Sen. The Hon. Brian Kuei Tung):** Mr. President, in view of the fact that this is a money bill and in accordance with Standing Order No. 63, I beg to move that the Senate do not resolve itself into committee and that the Finance (Variation of Appropriation) Bill, 1995 be now read the third time.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Bill read the third time and passed.*

#### ADJOURNMENT

**The Minister of Public Administration and Information (Sen. The Hon. Wade Mark):** Mr. President, before moving the adjournment of the Senate to a date to be fixed, I wish to take this opportunity on behalf of all Members of the Government and on my own behalf to wish you, your family and indeed all Members of the Senate, a very happy, peaceful and holy Christmas.

In addition, I feel I can speak for all Members of the Senate when I say to the Clerk of the Senate and all other officers of Parliament, a sincere thank you for the kind assistance in getting us settled into what, for most Members, is a new experience.

I wish Parliament staff warmest season's greetings and, Mr. President, I hope that we all have a productive, healthy and positive 1996.

**Sen. Vernon Gilbert:** Mr. President, on behalf of the Opposition, I thank you and convey my best wishes for Christmas to you and your family. You have conveyed much patience and have taught many of us from your experiences.

I wish the Senators on the Government side a happy Christmas and a bright and prosperous New Year. I also would like to say how enthused I was on Tuesday when I heard Sen. Mark say that Senators in the Opposition may be suffering from shock. I want to make the point that this is a learning experience for us. We have had good times during the last two weeks and we are not suffering from shock; I think we are suffering from newness. I believe that we have learnt much in that debate.

**11.20 a.m.**

I thank the Independent Senators, I think they were great. They have been taking some time with us, giving us guidance, and one can see the experience has worked. But the particular point I saw in that question of “shock”, was really an opportunity to hear people talk about consensus government or consensus in total, and I really appreciated the contributions by the Independent Senators. I think one of the things we have to appreciate around this time is not only having a good time but also consensus.

I wish Members of this House a happy Christmas and a bright and prosperous New Year. Since I have not had a chance to say much, I also want to make the point, Mr. President, about the concern for the impoverished, our youths and other persons who really deserve particular attention around this time. We make merry and we tend to forget that there are persons in the society whom we can help. I think this is another opportunity for us to find some time around Christmas, especially, and the New Year—surely I intend to make use of my time, thinking not only about myself, my relatives and even ourselves in the Senate here, but such persons who really deserve our particular attention.

On behalf of the Opposition and political leader of the PNM, it is our hope that our beloved Prime Minister, would take the time to relax—obviously he would not be able to partake in the strong drinks—with his family and to find the time to reduce his stress; such sentiments are conveyed to our dear Prime Minister to make good use of the few days ahead.

Once more, we look forward with all enthusiasm to the direction from our beloved President in 1996. Of course I cannot forget the Clerk of the Senate and

*Adjournment*

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the parliamentary staff, security forces, the Government Broadcasting Unit, the press and the public who take particular interest in the proceedings.

With those few words, Mr. President, I wish everyone a bright and prosperous New Year.

**Sen. Prof. John Spence:** Mr. President, may I, on behalf of the Independent Senators, wish all Senators a happy Christmas and a prosperous New Year.

May I also take this opportunity to give thanks and best wishes to the support staff of the Senate. There is no doubt that we could not function in the way we do, were it not for the dedication of that staff.

May I also ask that best wishes be conveyed to the former President, Mr. Carter, certainly on behalf of those of us who have been here before, including Sen. Carol Merritt, who guided us for some years.

May we all have a joyous, but sober Christmas and prosperous New Year.

Thank you, very much.

**Mr. President:** Hon. Senators, thank you very kindly for the good wishes to me and my family. I, in return, wish that you and your families would likewise enjoy a very blessed and holy Christmas as you prepare for a very productive and exciting 1996.

As the holy season descends upon us, to all persons concerned with the effective functioning of this august Chamber, particularly, the Acting Clerk and parliamentary staff, may I, on my own behalf, and hon. Senators, wish you a very joyous Christmas and a very hard-working and again, productive New Year.

I am sure that hon. Senators would also wish me to extend to my immediate predecessor in office and his family, as well as those other Senators who served during the course of 1995, season's greetings and felicitations.

May I also take this opportunity to wish hon. Members in the other place and particularly, our Prime Minister—whose health as you know, gave cause for a few very trying days—a very holy Christmas and a bright and prosperous New Year.

Finally, I pray that Almighty God, the giver of all good things, bless you all with his peace, joy and love this holy season and always.

Thank you.

*Question put and agreed to.*



*Adjournment*

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*Senate adjourned accordingly.*

*Adjourned at 11.26 a.m*