

**SENATE***Wednesday, October 21, 1998*

The Senate met at 10.30 a.m.

**PRAYERS**[MR. PRESIDENT *in the Chair*]**PAPERS LAID**

1. Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the Accounts of the Post Office Savings Bank for the year ended December 31, 1988. [*The Minister of Finance (Sen. The Hon. Brian Kuei Tung)*]
2. Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the Accounts of the Post Office Savings Bank for the year ended December 31, 1989. [*Sen. The Hon. B. Kuei Tung*]
3. Financial Statements of the Trinidad and Tobago Solid Waste Management Company Limited for the year ended December 31, 1997. [*Sen. The Hon. B. Kuei Tung*]

**APPROPRIATION BILL (BUDGET)****[Second Day]***Order read for resuming adjourned debate on question* [October 20, 1998]:

That the Bill be now read a second time.

*Question again proposed.*

**Sen. Rev. Daniel Teelucksingh:** Good morning, Mr. President. First of all, I congratulate the hon. Minister of Finance on his presentation and his busy schedule thereafter, giving explanations, hither, thither and yonder. I congratulate particularly Sen. Prof. Marshall and Sen. Montano [*Desk thumping*] for some of the finest contributions we have had so far in the total debate; not only in this House, but in the other place.

The most fiercely contested issues of the budget are not specifically mentioned in the budget statement itself; but the budget statement did create some excitement. The question of the special registration fee for foreign used vehicles created the first serious criticism of the 1999 budgetary provisions, and these vigorous protests persist even now.

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The \$100 increase for the old age pensioners was warmly applauded. So what is next? Of course it was, as for the past 100 years, it was the Tobago question. These were the issues in the budget.

As for computers in every classroom, the first general response I heard from the man in the street was, "Who will watchman the computers?" [*Laughter*] It is most interesting in Trinidad and Tobago. It is not where the Government would get the money or whether we have qualified teachers, but who will watchman the computers, knowing our penchant for school vandalism.

Local issues nevertheless occupied our attention almost to the exclusion of that very serious matter raised in the budget, namely the global financial crisis and its probable impact on the Trinidad and Tobago economy. Well as usual the mood is, "Who cares what is happening in the Far East, Russia or Latin America?"

Mr. President, within the past weeks—and you know this well—several citizens were busy adjusting to the varying pressures of the Water and Sewerage Authority, while others were mopping up serious flooding all around. Many were trying to cope with red eye, dengue and that deadly bacteria which is attacking children, killing at least five of them.

We are being chased everywhere by pitbulls. Gruesome murders continue to baffle us, while some persons anxiously wonder about what is happening in the minds of the Privy Council. We are busy chasing escaped prisoners and wondering if we grow more marijuana than Jamaica. We are asking ourselves, "Why is it so easy for BWIA to air-lift narcotics to the North?"

It is very heartrending and very difficult to place the budget statement in an environment so hostile, so challenging and so demanding. The worst is happening in Indonesia, Thailand, Japan, South Korea, Malaysia, the Soviet Union, Canada, Venezuela and Mexico. I personally think, with this scenario in mind, that the budget is like a pompeii in pitbull country. [*Laughter*] The name of the game is survival.

The real test for the hon. Minister of Finance and the Government is not merely to say that this is a good budget, but to offer wise and prudent management and leadership in the ensuing year. Only time will prove the worthiness of this budget.

Up to a certain point, all was going well with the budget debate in the other place and of course at national level. Up to a point all was going well, with the

budget party hosted by the confident, smiling Minister of Finance, until two uninvited persons stormed his party, and from then on everything turned old mas. Those two uninvited persons were the short pants man and the \$4 million man. Mr. President, from then on there was a turn and a twist, a serious one, almost a right about turn in the budget debate. Who cared then about pensioners, computers, foreign used cars, NIS or exemption from tax returns?

Some were very busy checking out the *bona fides* of these two uninvited guests, that they missed the finale to the party. So much for press conferences! Well, at next year's budget party we will make sure that no one is absent.

Mr. President, I would spend some time to briefly examine some issues either directly or indirectly related to the budget. First of all, on the question of old age pension, I commend the Government for increasing it. I would bring to the attention of the hon. Minister of Finance again—because he knows this already—the plight of another set of senior citizens, some of whom gave the best of their years to the public service, and entrusted their retirement savings to deposits in the now defunct Southern Finance Company. They lost their savings in the disaster of the 1980s when several similar institutions went into receivership. Since 1984 there have been rescue operations for similar non-banking, financial institutions which subsequently folded up.

Of course, the present administration was more than generous in the controversial \$53 million Maritime bail-out of WINSURE. I most respectfully ask the Government to consider again those 120-odd clients whose claims have now been reduced to a mere \$3 million—it is about that now. I have noticed and have been informed that most of the depositors have died, but some of them are still alive and I think they should be considered very seriously in terms of assistance in this time of need.

I would touch on the foreign used cars very briefly. The industry went into a tailspin as we well know only a few hours after the budget was read. These have been considered to be very harsh budgetary measures. The present administration—and to a large extent the previous administration—allowed the foreign used vehicle industry to take root and flourish without proper regulations.

I think this is where the present administration made a mistake. They took so long to formulate these regulations and the used car dealers got Government's approval for their trade for several years. They were allowed by these administrations past and present. Customs duties, registration fees and so forth

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went into Government coffers. In that sense, they received the approval of these two previous governments, and it is definitely not wise to destroy this industry.

Therefore, we are asking the Government and the hon. Minister to again consider some of these very harsh measures, because the foreign used car industry was nurtured by the inefficiency and unreliability of the nation's public transport system.

I would now touch very briefly on health, because this has been a very serious matter for 1997/1998; the disputes with the doctors, the nurses and the Regional Health Authority have plagued us. Recently there have been a set of problems brought to the nation's attention at the St. James Cancer Unit. I have mentioned some of these diseases: red eye, dengue, the HIV virus, this deadly bacteria that has crept into classrooms.

I remember many years ago there were Public Health Inspectors. Where is the team of young people employed in the Ministry of Health who we see sporadically? From time to time they visit homes and communities with spray cans, monitoring public health. I think we should have grown up and you may say that this is not necessary, but there are—and we have to live with this—irresponsible citizens who cannot be left alone. We cannot entrust the nation's health in their irresponsible hands.

Health education seems to mean nothing to some people. They live in developed areas and they take their garbage bags and dump them on all the side streets and open lots. We still have middle class people doing that. We are asking about the community health officers, they are absolutely necessary as in the good old days. Almost once a month these community health officers would be around. It is time to enforce the law for those who wilfully disregard public health regulations. We have been very careless in this regard.

We also need an immediate enquiry into the persistent complaints of a lack of drugs and linens or substandard food at public health institutions. We are all asking in this country, how is it that supplies are insufficient or seem to disappear from hospitals on a regular particular basis? For years we have been asking this question.

**10.45 a.m.**

We are reviewing the work of the most ill managed and inefficient branch of the public service. I am talking about the Ministry of Health. It is ironical that

simple basic amenities cannot be provided for the few hospitals we have in spite of the massive subvention for health of \$806 million in 1998 and \$889.4 million in 1999.

I notice that there are people who have been protesting and pressuring the Government to add \$100 million for more health. I personally believe that with the track record of the Ministry of Health that if there is no radical change in the kind of spending and monitoring of spending, if the Ministry of Health is given \$1 billion I have a feeling the story would be the same thing. Something has to be wrong when \$889.4 million is given to the Ministry of Health and if you walk into a hospital you do not see bed sheets. Where have the bed sheets gone? I hear somebody from the Government side saying that they have gone with it. Who are “they”? Well, we all know that. How come things are disappearing from the hospital and the Government is just doling out to the Ministry of Health, and others are saying give us \$100 million more. Something has to be wrong. I wonder how much food sick people eat. Yet, the food seems to be insufficient and something is always running short.

I am very glad that the Minister of Finance, in talking about the Tobago question—I am moving to that now—raised the question of accountability. Just as he is asking about the way Tobago spends money, every ministry and every department should be made accountable before they release money to them, maybe on a quarterly basis. That is important. We have to get into spending in the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education and so forth, just as we are asking Tobago to do.

Mr. President, on the Tobago question: I saw the TV6 Town Meeting in Tobago. I was not there but I saw it on a tape that was shown to the nation. It was painfully apparent—this is how I saw it—that the contradictory postures of differing groups in Tobago indicate such a small island so badly divided among party lines. Our friends from Tobago always tell us that they do not talk about an island, they talk about a village. They live as a village and that makes it even more sad that a small village can be so badly divided. Those are the vibes I receive. It is the issue of that small constituency so sadly politically fragmented and that is a cause for serious concern in Tobago as well as Trinidad, and, of course, in the twin island state. Together we need to be concerned about this.

There has been a continuing dissatisfaction. It is one of the high points of the budget from Tobago *vis-à-vis* the relationship with the central government. There

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has been a perennial complaint of neglect and the hon. Minister is right. I quote from his budget speech:

“Over the years the people of Tobago have suffered unjustifiable neglect and insufficient management from central government.”

Tobago seems to be struggling. This is how we have been getting it over the years. I do not know what it was like 50 years ago or in the early stages of this 100-year relationship we have enjoyed, but Tobago seems to be struggling to free itself from a kind of bondage with Trinidad. This is how it is coming across.

One of the Tobago Councillors said in response to matters raised in the budget by the Minister of Finance that he is calling on all the groups in Tobago to join together and fight them. But fight who? And how long is this fight going on and for how long will this fight go on? He is a councillor in the Tobago House of Assembly calling together all groups to join together and fight them. Of course, it is Trinidad he is talking about.

Mr. President, is it really true that Tobago has been oppressed by Trinidad? The 1996 Tobago House of Assembly Act does not seem to have provided the comfort, trust and mutual confidence that are so urgently required after 100 years as a twin island entity. If Act No. 40 of 1996 fell short of full autonomy to Tobago, then before the new millennium dawns on us the sister isle should be allowed the kind of constitutional respectability and self empowerment that she rightly deserves and so patiently pleads for over the years.

The constant complaints of neglect is a source of great embarrassment that has haunted both these islands for decades. I think it is time that the Tobago seats in Parliament should not be prized merely as brokers for the political swivel chairs in the Twin Towers and ought not to be determinants of the kind of attention or inattention the island will receive from Central Government. I endorse the hope of the hon. Minister of Finance that we both search for mutually accepted solutions.

On another issue raised in the budget, the hon. Minister of Finance has indicated that there is a proposal to establish a system of compensatory justice for victims of crime and their dependents and that there is a new Criminal Injuries Compensation Bill in the making. I will add my own area of concern and need.

I observed a few days ago that some victims of recent pitbull attacks are planning to sue dog owners. It seems to be a very simple ordinary dog issue but everyday in the press for many weeks now it seems as though pitbulls have been

very very important in the minds of people in so many villages. I do believe that all victims should be compensated and that in the short-term—because the Criminal Injuries Compensation Bill is being prepared—Government should give all the people who have been victims the appropriate legal assistance in their quest for injuries compensation from dog owners.

While the legislation is being drafted—we do not know how long that will take—all pitbulls should be immediately banned from public places and owners should be advised accordingly. The police should be in charge of that now. We have waited too long.

Mr. President, I move to another matter. I am coming to a close. The surprising but very revealing point where the national budget debate changed its course is in the loud allegations of corruption featuring those two uninvited gate crashers to this budget party, the short pants man and the \$4 million man.

You ask me to ignore it but how could I? Here I have on the front page of a very popular newspaper: “PNM Minister in pay of US energy firm”. This has some bearing on the budget. It has some bearing.

**Mr. President:** Could the Senator give us the date.

**Sen. Rev. D. Teelucksingh:** The *Trinidad Guardian* of Thursday, October 15, 1998: “PNM Minister in pay of US energy firm”. This has to do with income and expenditure. This is a part of the 1999 budget. It is very important.

On Tuesday, October 13, 1998: “PM’s close friend linked to \$billion scam”. These two pages must be added to the budget. How could we as a nation ignore this? You are reviewing the nation’s economic performance. This is how I see it. I cannot see how the budget of the nation could only deal with taxes and how taxes are spent. It has to do with this. It is very important.

Mr. President, I am not a career politician but our career politicians seem to be well informed. A million people will be reading this. This is why I say the debate in the national budget took a right about turn. There is nothing here about the contributions of parliamentarians but it is about corruption. This is important; this is a part of our whole economic life.

Some of us here have been busy with other things. We have been told that we are part-time politicians but the full-time people seem to have information that we do not have. They seem to know something that the rank and file do not know and

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it is now leaking out. They seem to be well informed about areas of corruption so I want to ask a question with the man in the street. Is this corruption real or is it imaginary? This is important for me. How real is this corruption and how real are these stories? Are they imaginary, fabrication, lies and more lies? There are many people who are going to believe this anyhow because it is still running. Even in today's newspapers there is some reference to this.

Are these allegations true or blatantly scandalous? It is a very important question we have to ask. Are we nursing a culture of corruption? Is this a case, in the course of the debate, of the pot calling the kettle black? Is it true—I would like to know, not four years from hence, but maybe tomorrow—that a former Minister of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago was paid bribe money between 1991 and 1995 to the tune of TT \$4 million per year? Is that true? Why should it be here? Why should it be top news for the country? Mr. President, is it true that there was a corrupt deal? I am asking those who spoke about it; the career politicians. Is it true that there was a corrupt deal in power generation agreements recently? Is it true? The InnCogen business. How true is this?

The year is closing and for a long time we have been asking about the two shipments of rice that were worth about \$30 million. Does it mean that these stories are going to be mere stories? They are part of our economic history; a part of our management story of the finances of this nation. Who is responsible? We have to ask again and again. Thirty million dollars is a lot of money. That could build a hospital and more than a hospital; maintain two hospitals for the year. That is the total of the Tobago budget.

**11.00 a.m.**

Mr. President, we are talking about corruption. How does it come in? There is talk about spending; we have spent so much in a budget of \$X million. We ask ourselves how good we have been as managers, as stewards and keepers of the people's money. That is the very important question, but are we dishonest, are we corrupt, are we self-seeking to the extent where we allow the coffers of the Treasury to be plundered? Do we allow people to just spend and not ask questions?

Take the airport, Mr. President. The day is going to come when the story about that airport would be just like the racing complex. It will be just like the building of the Mt. Hope Medical Complex and the corruption there. Somehow or the other we saw something wrong several months ago, we appointed a



commission of enquiry, there were reports about this bad spending and so forth. The matter went into hibernation for a little while and people said I wonder what is happening. Then just before the enquiry gathers dust the same set of people come back again and have been in the contract business. It is a lot of money involved. This is people's money and if even we are operating on the principle of borrowing, we still have to pay and that is a very important question.

Mr. President, we really need to root out favouritism and cronyism and the whole business of rewards for political favours and all this kind of thing. We need to get rid of that in the awarding of contracts of every kind, in the signing of deals and all of these business agreements. We must come clean. It is extremely important in state enterprises and in every kind of dealing that we need to be transparent. The Government has to be very particular about monitoring public spending. So my very haunting question is, is corruption in Trinidad and Tobago such as we have been hearing about, very real or imaginary? Are we free from that kind of corruption or the corruption of that magnitude as referred to us in some of these cases between 1997 and 1998, and do we allow these to go into 1999 and carry them with us?

Mr. President, this kind of corruption or any kind of corruption, particularly corruption of this magnitude, can cripple our international credibility. You know that well and it can undermine the morality which is the cornerstone in public service or any kind of service, particularly of all of us leaders.

Mr. President, I just want to close by endorsing the comments made by Sen. Montano and Sen. Marshall. I am very happy and pleased about their observations concerning our almost total reliance on foreign investors. That is a good point they raised yesterday. It is something so many of us have been considering. You know what is happening and the direction we are going? It is as though we are placing the destiny of this nation in the hands of foreign investors. By the way, we are very happy that the foreign investors are here. That is a good bail out for us but we ought not to be fooled by that. All that glitters is not gold and this is exactly the kind of feeling we get about this glittering budget. Not so precious after all; we have to watch it.

Mr. President, the multinational corporations have a record all over the world. Sen. Montano read a little piece from a newspaper yesterday, saying that Amoco itself is planning some cutbacks here, but this is going to happen. It is not that they do not like Trinidad. They are here for a purpose and all the other foreign investors

who are here. But they have been pressurized by the apparent depression in the global economy and they are of the scenario where they really operate and their real business is, and if they pull out from here or cut back, it is not that they do not like our natural resources, particularly gas at this time, it is because they have been pressurized. I think we must be warned. We need to be very cautious about utter and total dependence and placing the fortunes of this country in the hands of foreign investors because they are really—I remember when I did history the word “privateers” was used for the sea dogs. There were different kinds of sea dogs in the Elizabethan period. One of them, like Sir Walter Raleigh, fell in the category of privateers. These privateers were also called soldiers of fortune, and foreign investors—as I was saying—we have them here, like we need Raleigh to come and use the Pitch Lake and say, “Ah, I have found something in Trinidad.”

The multinational corporations are privateers. They are soldiers and sailors of fortune, and we need to be aware of that. They come for what they can get. Is it Dr. Eric Williams who said they would suck us like a piece of orange and leave? We need to be mindful of that, very cautious too. So this should lead us to look inwardly. I am very glad that there are references in the budget in the direction of small business. Where in the last 10 years did we give the kind of tax holidays, the kind of tax concessions that we give to the multinational corporations? Show me where we gave comparable concessions to local manufacturers and small business people in this country.

Mr. President, the same can be said about our dependence on borrowing. Our utter dependence and putting our fortune and our whole lives in the hands of these saviours—the foreign investors. We do the same in borrowing. This Government as well as the last four regimes have almost pawned Trinidad and Tobago. Sen. Marshall dealt with that wonderfully, about the large slice of the budget that goes into servicing the debt. We need to look again, especially in these difficult times, at the way we spend. I read a few days ago that the President of Guyana asked the importers of her country to be very careful about importation. She advised them to avoid importing unnecessary items for their shops and stores. The whole question is of luxuries, unnecessary items. This is the kind of advice and direction that the Government should be giving to importers to avoid importing these luxury items that we hardly need, but we have people here who have the money and who would spend.

Mr. President, I want to close by saying that there is need for the Government in these difficult times, to scale down questionable, ill-advised and heavily financed

projects and speak to the nation. Tell them why and how and people will understand. It is necessary to do this. Avoid excessive borrowing, whether it be domestic or foreign. These are difficult times through which we are going and I think it would be a very good idea if we level with this population, not only once in a year but maybe once in a quarter, and let them know how the economy is behaving. Teach your people, talk to them, let them know what is happening on a regular basis. That is extremely important. Not once a year to bring a document like this and say this is the direction we are going, only to realize at the end of the term we have serious problems and have mismanaged the economy. When I say we, I do not mean the Government only; I mean all of us.

Once again, I want to congratulate the Government for its efforts. It is extremely difficult indeed. Your budget is like a pompek in pitbull territory. All the best. I thank you.

**The Minister of Works and Transport (Sen. The Hon. Sadiq Baksh):** Mr. President, I am happy to support the Bill before this honourable Senate and must express my most sincere congratulations to the hon. Minister of Finance for a budget which has so positively touched the lives of the people of this country at all levels in many ways.

**Sen. Mohammed:** Especially people in Central Trinidad.

**Sen. The Hon. S. Baksh:** The children, the youth, the student, the new home owners, the small entrepreneur, the agriculturist, the road user, the middle aged, the pensioners, the physically challenged, the workers of the Government's administration. This is a budget with a human face, a blue print for progress and a vision for the nation as we move Trinidad and Tobago forward.

For the Ministry of Works and Transport, one of the most significant measures in the legislative calendar in 1998 is Act No. 23 of 1998 which gave effect to the change to a new financial year from October 01 to September 30. This measure which makes a big difference in the planning and implementation process at the ministry, is intended to be a mechanism to enhance our ability to pursue projects more efficiently and to deliver them within time and cost limits. This is a step which we in the Ministry of Works and Transport welcome. As a major operator in the construction industry, the key benefit that is expected to arise from the change of the financial year is the opportunity to use our budgetary allocation in a manner that will permit the maximum use of the weather patterns with which our country has been blessed.

Mr. President, presentation of the annual budgetary provisions in October of any given year, facilitates planning and implementation activities by the technical officers of the ministry and allows them to maximize the use of the first quarter of the calendar year, a period when there is good weather for construction activities. This measure is principally about efficient time and resource management, for which we compliment the Minister of Finance.

Government's main objectives over the medium term are to accelerate the growth and development of the economy, facilitate the diversification of the country's productive base, and ensure an improvement in the standard of living for all our people. The broad-base policy goals over the period 1998—2000 are identified as follows:

- i. to promote strong economic growth;
- ii. to reduce unemployment;
- iii. contain the rate of inflation;
- iv. ensure equity within the society;
- v. to protect and preserve the environment;
- vi. to promote human resource development and people empowerment.

From these national objectives, a number of policy areas arise for implementation by the Ministry of Works and Transport and it is important that I now demonstrate how these areas impact upon our national objectives.

**11.15 a.m.**

Mr. President, in the area of road transport, the ministry would continue to advance the following three main policy areas:

- (a) Expansion, modernization and rehabilitation of the road infrastructure base to promote various means of economic activity and foster growth and development;
- (b) The rehabilitation of rural and agricultural access roads which are designed to support agricultural production, thereby contributing towards the economic growth and satisfying the equity imperatives of the national objectives.

Mr. President, we recognize our urban responsibilities but it would never be at the neglect of our rural necessities.

- (c) Improvement in the regulatory environment of the road transport sector which we would continue with a view to maintaining a sustainable environment; for example, the inspection of air quality and the disposal control mechanism; example, oil to preserve water quality and the physical environment consistent with the overall national objective to protect and preserve the environment.

I noted the remarks made by Sen. Prof. Kenny, and I assure him that efforts in terms of vehicle emissions would continue as we develop the type of standards that would be compatible with the vehicles which we now have on the roads of Trinidad and Tobago. Paying full cognizance to the age of our vehicles and the renewal process as we continue to move Trinidad and Tobago forward in terms of the recognition of the need for the preservation of our environment.

In the case of air transport, Government would provide adequate airport capacity and facilities to cater for expected growth in demand for air travel over the next 10 to 15 years. This would promote tourism and trade as well as directly impact on economic growth indices and enhanced employment generation. To this end, a new terminal building and ancillary facilities would be constructed at Piarco Airport, and improvement works would continue at Crown Point Airport.

Furthermore, private sector participation in the provision of air transport on the domestic air bridge as well as internationally, would be encouraged. The institutional aspects of the aviation sector would be enhanced through appropriate legislative changes and organizational restructuring.

With respect to sea transport, Government would seek to improve the safety and efficiency of shipping through upgrading of navigational aids, improved shipping legislation and changes in the regulatory system. In addition, every attempt would be made to ensure protection of the marine environment from vessel source pollution in Trinidad and Tobago. This measure is in keeping with the national objectives to protect and preserve the environment.

Inter island sea transport would be enhanced through private sector participation in the service. In addition, efforts would continue on the project to establish a port and ferry service from Toco to Scarborough. Mr. President, I am happy to report that after we invited prospective developers, four international and joint venture local companies have applied for the establishment of such a facility.

Improvements in port infrastructure at the Caricom wharf and the Government Shipping Service jetty, and the acquisition of equipment and machinery would enhance productivity and operational efficiency at the port of Port of Spain.

Mr. President, the emphasis on drainage for 1999 would be to improve drainage and irrigation infrastructure to support the agricultural thrust and in order to enhance production and satisfy the overall national, economic imperatives. In addition, measures would be instituted to protect commercial and residential properties with a view to meeting sanitation and equity requirements of the national objectives. Emphasis would be placed also on water conservation and the prevention of coastal erosion to protect and preserve the environment.

The public buildings programme and activities are integrally linked to the various imperatives enshrined in the overall national objectives as stated by the Minister of Public Administration. The programme assures that Government's real estate is maintained and improved. Additionally, we intend to institute by providing the necessary built environment, a programme that would enhance Government's building through the Public Sector Investment Programme and the regulatory function to ensure that a safe, adequate and secure environment continues to house government officers of Trinidad and Tobago.

Total funding for the Ministry of Works and Transport in fiscal 1998/1999 is in the order of \$748,872,310. This level of funding is made up as follows: Recurrent estimates 1998/1999, \$521,000,868; development programme estimated from the consolidated fund, \$155,000,884.; from the infrastructure development fund, \$47,120,000; projection from the road improvement tax, \$24 million, bringing it to a grand total of \$748,872,310.

A review of budgetary provision and revised expenditure for 1998 indicates a rate of implementation in excess of 75 per cent over the 9-month period in the fiscal 1998. This was accomplished notwithstanding the unusual, inclement weather pattern which we experienced during 1998.

During 1998, the following activities have been pursued by the highways division of the Ministry of Works and Transport. The achievements therefore revolved around the areas of construction, prequalification and designs.

Reconstruction of the Solomon Hochoy Highway between Couva and the Tarouba Link Road. This project is being financed mainly through grant and loan funding from the European Union to the tune of ECU \$50 million. The Government

of Trinidad and Tobago's contribution is expected to be at least ECU \$1.3 million. Approximately 25 kilometres of highway are expected to be constructed with this financing.

For the construction works on this project, a contract was executed with the Spanish joint venture firm of Comylsa-Lain. The official contract started in February of 1998, and this project has been allocated the sum of \$50 million. The works to be done on the north and south bound lanes include reconstruction of the asphaltic pavement up to asphaltic concrete base, repair to bridges, and replacement of damaged culverts. At present, 25 per cent implementation has been achieved. South bound traffic has been diverted onto the fast lane; there is a two-way operation on the north bound carriageway and the south bound lane has been closed since April 6.

Milling of existing pavement material on the south bound carriageway: The progress on this particular section of the roadway has been slow. We expect improvement in the management of the project and would seek to catch up with the implementation schedule.

Construction of bridges. The following are the construction efforts of the above programme: eight bridges were completed under two contracts at an expenditure of \$14.7 million during fiscal 1998:

B/25 Couva Main Road; B1/5, Cunapo Southern Main Road, B1/8, Western Main Road; B2/9, Guaracara/Tabaquite Road; B1/61, Southern Main Road Cap-de-ville; B1/64, Southern Main Road, Chatham; B1/71, Southern Main Road, Granville; and B2/9, Southern Main Road, Bonasse.

Mr. President, eight bridges were constructed during 1998. Substantial road works were completed under contracts 3 and 4 on the Western Main Road from Westmoorings to Macqueripe and completed with works being conducted during the night to ensure the reduction in inconvenience to commuters. On the north coast from Maraval Road to Maracas Bay was completed on time and within cost; on the Eastern Main Road from Valencia to Manzanilla completed on time and within cost. On the Siparia Road, the SS Erin Road from the Southern Main Road to Dumfries Road and the SS Erin Road from PowerGen Penal to Palo Seco, completed on time and within the budgetary allocations.

The Southern Main Road development project is jointly financed by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago and the Caribbean Development Bank. The

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Caribbean Development Bank's contribution to the financing for the project is US \$17.5 million and the Government of Trinidad and Tobago \$11 million. A contract was awarded to Seereeram Brothers on December 23, 1997 at a cost of \$150,617,085.85 VAT inclusive. This project commenced in January 1998 and is to be completed in January 2000. It consists of three major components: the dualling of the San Fernando Bye-Pass from Balisier Avenue to Cross Crossing Roundabout, the construction of the Cross Crossing interchange, and a connector road. As at September 30, 1998, the project is progressing smoothly and is expected to be completed by or before the schedule completion date of January 11, 2000. The overall estimated physical percentage completion as at this date is 35 per cent.

Section 1—work on San Fernando Bye-Pass and Balisier Avenue is 35 per cent completed as at September 1998. Significant achievement was recorded on the retaining wall adjacent to the National Housing Authority's flats. With respect to the Ciperio Road Bridge 1, a sub-component of this section pile driving for the control pier on the south abutment has been completed. Overall, the structure is 20 per cent completed.

The Ciperio River Bridge 2 is 37 per cent completed. Work on the retaining wall between bridges 1 and 2 is approximately 60 per cent completed. All that I have stated so far, Mr. President, is that we continue to ensure that we widen the road properly and have it in place as soon as possible.

**11.30 a.m.**

Section two, consisting of the Cross Crossing Interchange, has three sub-components, namely: the San Fernando Bye-Pass Overpass Bridge (Bridge No. 3), the South Trunk Overpass Bridge (Bridge No. 4) and four retaining walls. The Cross Crossing Interchange is quite easily the most complex grade separated structure ever undertaken in Trinidad and Tobago and, quite possibly, the English-speaking Caribbean. This facility will offer unrestricted flow to all traffic through the area known as Cross Crossing Roundabout, which has to contend at the present time with huge traffic pile ups at peak hours. The completed facility will certainly change the face and the skyline of San Fernando, and affording a much needed sense of comfort and well-being to the citizens of South Trinidad, offering significant travel time savings in the process.

Concerning section three, the connector road has two sub-components, namely: one bridge over the Petrotrin lines (Bridge No. 5), and road-works and



earthworks. Overall, section 3 is 28 per cent completed. The bridge over the Petrotrin lines is 36 per cent completed. Box culverts and earthworks have been completed, and river lining works are 40 per cent completed.

Rural Access Roads Rehabilitation and Bridge Reconstruction Programme is jointly funded by the Industrial Development Bank (IDB) and the Government of Trinidad and Tobago. The IDB's contribution is US \$31.5 million while the Government of Trinidad and Tobago's contribution is US \$20 million. This project commenced in 1993 and is expected to end in June 1999. To date, the achievements on this project are as follows:

Construction of eight agricultural access roads during Phase I of the programme with an average of 19.4 kilometres of roadways constructed during a period of one year, together with the construction of 10 bridges with an average construction period of 15—17 months. Monitoring of the works during the defect liability period in 1996 was finalized and completion certificates have been issued to contractors.

Phase II, construction of approximately 36 access roads amounting to 72.2 kilometres with an average construction period of 12 months, together with the construction of seven bridges with an average construction period of 15 months, with the exception of contract seven which had a duration of 24 months. Phase II was substantially completed. Monitoring of the works during the defect liability period in 1997/1998 was completed, and completion certificates have been issued to contractors.

Phase III, construction of an additional 43 kilometres of road together with the construction of nine bridges commenced on November 24, 1997. Phase III consists of 11 contracts, five bridge contracts and six road contracts. Most contracts would be substantially completed by December, 1998. During 1998, an expenditure of \$38.6 million was incurred up to September 30, 1998. Construction works on incomplete contracts will continue into the period 1998/1999 with the defects liability period into 1999 and the year 2000. Commencement of Phase III, extension contracts involving the construction of approximately 12 kilometres of roads and three small bridges will be undertaken as a result of cost savings from the overall programme.

Mr. President, Road Improvement Tax which was collected at the point of sale amounted to a little over \$48 million during 1998. The proceeds of this fund were distributed to the Tobago House of Assembly and the Ministry of Local

Government together with the Ministry of Works and Transport. The works executed by the Ministry utilizing this fund were as follows:

On Calcutta Road No. 2, earthworks around the newly constructed bridge which we all know was out of existence for over 20 years. The construction of drains, clearing and cleaning of rivers in the general area and strengthening and paving of one kilometre of roadway were undertaken. On the Uriah Butler Highway, Access Road reconstruction of roadway and drainage works were done for one kilometer of road. Similar works were undertaken on the Freeman Road, the Millington Road, the M2 Tasker Road from La Fortune to the South Trunk Road, and from Ciperio Road to Manahambre Road. Strengthening and paving of the Papourie Road for two kilometres, the Golconda Road and the Beetham Highway were executed in 1998 up to September 30.

On the heights of Aripo, repairs were undertaken on seven landslips and the roadway was widened to prevent further landslips. The total cost utilized for all of these projects under the road improvement fund during 1998 was \$12.8 million. It is expected that similar works will continue in 1999 on a number of our nation's roads, especially the orphan roads. As the name implies, these are roads which have suffered neglect due to the confusion over which agency is responsible for that particular road.

Designs and details of the achievement of the engineering component of the highways division are as follows:

The contract for the design of the Port of Spain East/West Corridor Transportation Project was awarded to the Canadian Joint Venture Firm, EDM—Consult, in 1997 in the sum of TT \$14.5 million. The project consists of the construction of an elevated diamond-partial cloverleaf interchange and approach ramps at the Uriah Butler/Churchill Roosevelt Highway intersection.

Concerning the widening of the Churchill Roosevelt Highway Intersection at El Socorro and the Port of Spain access improvement works; the consultants handed in their report in August 1996 and an interchange at these highways was one of the recommendations for easing the congestion into Port of Spain. Subsequently, the firm was contracted to undertake designs and recommendations proposed by the study included an interchange.

The detailed designs of one alternative, which was chosen from the initial four presented, have since been completed and presented to the Ministry of Works and

Transport for approval. Reservations were expressed with respect to this design concept. Arising from the consultative process whereby the designs were reviewed by the Ministry, six new options emerged. These are under consideration and it is expected that a decision on final design concepts will be made within one month. This will allow construction to commence next year.

Concerning designs for year two, designs of these projects were carried out four years ago. Approximately 127 kilometres of road and three bridges were left over from Phase I works. Experience gained in Phase I suggests that an extensive design review with significant design changes would be required for the roads. At least three additional bridges were to be designed for Phase II works. The Joint Venture Planning Associates Ltd/Stanley International Group Inc. Canada have been contracted to carry out design review and supervision for Phase II of the National Highways Programme Civil Works. A contract in the sum of \$563,638 and TT \$11,075,575 plus VAT was awarded. The consultants Lee Young and Partners were awarded a contract in the sum of \$600,000 to carry out design review on four bridges already designed and the design of an additional three bridges.

Concerning the year three programme, tenders were invited for design work for Phase III in May, 1998. Based on the evaluation of the technical proposals in June 1998, financial negotiations are ongoing with the first rank firm in anticipation of a contract award. When the design consultancy contract is awarded, design of approximately 230 kilometres of road to be rehabilitated and 40 bridges to be contracted will be pursued.

Mr. President, before I move on to deal with another aspect of the Ministry's operation, let me summarize the works undertaken on our roads by saying that works will continue apace on all major projects, namely the rehabilitation of the Solomon Hochoy Highway, the dualling of the San Fernando Bye-pass and the construction of the Cross Crossing Interchange, the finalization of design for the Uriah Butler/Churchill Roosevelt Highway Interchange and the rehabilitation of rural access roads.

A review of the air transportation sector for 1998 will highlight measures that have been introduced, and will continue to be implemented towards increasing the safety, efficiency and effectiveness of aviation services in Trinidad and Tobago. During 1998, significant achievements were recorded in two critical areas. Trinidad and Tobago attained Category 1 status from the Federal Aviation

Administration, thereby freeing BWIA and other local carriers to expand their operations to the United States and other destinations. In the area of safety oversight and air worthiness, some tangible steps were taken towards the development of an autonomous safety oversight and regulation capabilities.

In August of 1998, Cabinet approved the recommendations of a special committee appointed by the Minister of Works and Transport, namely:

1. The renewal of a contract for the provision of Flight Operations Inspector from August 1998 for one year, and establishment of a contract for a Flight Operations Inspector with the UK Civil Aviation Authority (UKCAA) for a period of nine months with an option to renew for a period as considered necessary at the time. This contract is to be solely for the provision of on-the-job training for local inspectors.
2. The improving of the one year termination clause of the existing contract with the UKCAA for air worthiness services. Such contract to be amended to omit any reference to exclusive use of the CAA, and to ensure that the service provided is advisory only.
3. The appointment by the Minister of Works and Transport of an implementation committee to develop and supervise the execution of an implementation programme to achieve autonomous safety oversight and regulation capabilities in the civil aviation division within a period of nine to 18 months. The commencement date of the exercise being the date on which the necessary local staff is recruited.
4. That in the interest of policy harmonization, the implementation committee work closely with the committee established by the Minister of Works and Transport to conduct a review of the organizational structure of the civil aviation division.
5. That quarterly reports on the progress of the exercise referred to are submitted for information and consideration of Cabinet.

The overarching programme in the area is to equip the aviation industry with the level of autonomy required to respond to the rapidly changing aviation environment. Towards the end, consultations were held with the civil aviation fraternity to ascertain the most appropriate operating environment to achieve this objective. In line with recommendations of the International Civil Aviation Organization, it was agreed that the Civil Aviation Division of the Ministry of

Works and Transport would be restructured into a civil aviation authority. This was approved by Cabinet and an implementation team is being established to pursue this objective.

**11.45 a.m.**

Significant initiatives have also been taken to effect the restructuring of the Air Transport Licensing Authority, as well as the implementation of such services as the aeronautical telecommunications network and the global navigation satellite system at an estimated cost of \$1.2 million and \$86,000 respectively, with a view to fostering increased efficiency and an enhanced aviation environment. Efforts in this regard will continue in 1999 with the flight process plan and aeronautical mobile service as well as the restructuring of the Aeronautical Fixed Communications System, Trinidad and Tobago.

Regionally the Minister of Works and Transport continued to be active in the Association of Caribbean States (ACS) as chairman of the special committee on transport. Particular focus has been centred on the fostering of increased intraregional air transport linkages and such air transport issues as functional co-operation among airlines. The efforts spearheaded by this committee are directly geared towards the development of the transportation linkages to foster tourism and trade in the ACS region. These efforts are expected to continue in 1999.

Equally during 1998, the standing bilateral services negotiation committee considered air services agreements with the following countries: The United Kingdom, Poland, the United States—in terms of our open skies policy—Brazil and Colombia. In respect of the domestic air bridge, the resumption of service by BWIA, though on a limited scale, has indeed made the route more competitive as carriers vie for market share, but this has significantly benefited travellers on the air bridge.

With regard to construction of a new terminal at Piarco and the redevelopment of Crown Point Airport, Tobago: In 1998, Cabinet agreed to the recommencement of this project and Nipdec was contracted to undertake project management services, which would result in the commissioning and bringing on stream of the terminal building and ancillary facilities. Additionally, the consultants have been contracted to undertake the construction management services which include designs and construction supervision. The sum of \$15 million had been allocated for this project in 1998.

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During the remainder of 1998 also, design and construction work is expected on other components, including the new road link from Trincity Central Road intersection routing in a south easterly direction to the new airport.

The other components of the project include the conversion of the existing terminal to a cargo terminal with possible office accommodation.

An institutional strengthening programme and international marketing of the project are two other critical components on which activities are expected to commence in 1998/1999.

To facilitate the financing of this project, the Airports Authority has raised the sum of \$200 million in the domestic capital market and it is anticipated that additional funding will be sourced from the international capital market during 1998.

With respect to Crown Point Airport, the consultants have been contracted to prepare a master plan for the development of the airport for the next 20 years. This plan is 100 per cent completed at a cost of US \$250,000. In fiscal 1998/1999 we can see further initiatives in the areas of safety oversight capabilities; autonomy in the area of civil aviation operations; initiatives at the Association of Caribbean States levelled to pursue functional co-operation among airlines; a study on sustainable transportation and increased harmonization in the regulatory environment; major construction works on the Piarco Airport Development Project, as well as an approach to the local and international financial markets for funding.

In this era of globalization and the aviation environment, which is providing the catalyst on many fronts for economic development, Trinidad and Tobago will not be left out. In an island nation as ours, this is even more the case as the Ministry of Works and Transport is seeking to ensure that Trinidad and Tobago keeps abreast and seeks to position itself as a forerunner in the aviation industry.

During 1998, the Infrastructure Development Department of the Ministry, in the performance of its duties, was responsible for refurbishing and supplying vehicles and equipment at a cost of approximately \$35,000 to divisions of the Ministry of Works and Transport. With specific emphasis on the Highways Division, these efforts will continue in 1999.

In addition, Tapania Quarry, which falls under the purview of the Infrastructure Development Department, supplied materials on a daily output of approximately

500 cubic metres and attracted revenues. For the first time since its existence, though small, we have started to use resources from the Ministry in a private sector approach and earned \$60,000 for the first nine months of 1998. In an effort to improve the overall operation efficiency of the Tapanan Quarry, various options are being explored, which include a private sector partnering arrangement.

Mr. President, we continue to seek opportunities for private sector initiative to improve the efficiency within the Ministry. One will find in 1999 continuation of trying to form authorities at different parts of the Ministry so as to make it cost effective and oriented in a business-like manner.

The Ministry, through its Environmental Unit, has supported a number of initiatives aimed at preserving the environment. These initiatives include: completion of landscape architectural drawing for Whitehall and Stollmeyer's Castle; the beautification of the St. Ann's area; completion of base drawing for the Calcutta Road Project; awarding a contract to organize a pedestrian walkway at the Cruise Ship Complex for tourists; the development of a master plan for TIDCO at the Toco Lighthouse Project; the development of a master plan for the Chaguaramas Development Authority for the Tembladora Park; completion of design drawings for the Caroni Cremation Site, which commenced in 1998; completion of a conceptual layout for visitor-information facilities at Brasso for the Brasso Seco project.

With regard to the monitoring of the environment, the following have been achieved: completion of a draft monitoring procedure manual and implementation of procedures to ensure that environmental specifications are monitored through the Ministry of Works and Transport; an environmental monitoring inspectorate has been assigned to the Southern Main Road Development Project; the Solomon Hochoy Highway Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Project; and the Rural Access Roads and Bridges Programme Phase III. Continuous monitoring is being done to ensure that all environmental specifications are met.

Mr. President, I am happy to report that the Ministry of Works and Transport is the first Government institution in the region to have established an Environmental Unit within the Ministry so as to overlook all our Ministry's projects to ensure that all the environmental concerns are taken into consideration as we seek to develop Trinidad and Tobago.

With regard to our comprehensive National Drainage Programme. This programme comprises two main components. Namely, the World Bank-funded

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Drainage Flood Control Programme, which is funded jointly by the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago and the World Bank; and the Design, Construction and Maintenance Programme, totally funded by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago. In 1998, two component programmes were funded in the sum of \$7 million and \$21.8 million respectively.

With regard to the World Bank-funded Drainage and Flood Control Programme under this component, the following is the status of the projects which were selected for implementation during 1998: the Caparo River short-term works; building of embankment upstream of La Clave Road—

**Mr. President:** The speaking time of the hon. Senator has expired.

*Motion made,* That the hon. Senator's speaking time be extended by 15 minutes. [*Sen. B. Kuei Tung*]

*Question put and agreed to.*

**Sen. The Hon. S. Baksh:** Mr. President, as Sen. Marshall said yesterday, Governments will be judged by their rate of implementation. All I have sought to do is to show Government's focus and achievements in terms of accomplishments, in terms of the implementation of the public sector funding programme. As we do so, I find it extremely difficult to compress into one hour the type of related activities. However, in doing so, I will seek to make the document available so that we will be able to identify those areas.

But suffice it to say, that in terms of our drainage programme, historically, the Central region of Trinidad and Tobago has continued to experience flooding for a long, long time. In doing so, we recognize that the programme of national drainage must be a two-pronged approach. One, educating our national community so as not to show total disregard for the environment, but at the same time, instituting measures that will ensure that we provide an integrated approach towards drainage. As such, we initiated the first phase of the Caparo Flood Relief Programme, with two phases to go to include retention reservoirs and work upstream of the Caparo area to initiate programmes to avoid illegal logging and activities like slash and burn, which contribute to flooding.

We will continue to pursue these objectives very aggressively and whereas it is believed within the Ministry that we could do more and we are prepared to do more, we will tackle some of the problems that have been swept aside for an extremely long time. As we pursue our national objectives in all areas of the



Ministry, we recognize the hardships that people go through because of flooding, not only in Central Trinidad, but throughout Trinidad and Tobago. During 1998, we have had an extremely harsh rainy season, but rainy season or not, we are prepared to take into consideration all that is necessary to make sure that we bring an end to flooding in Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. President, in the Transport Division of the Ministry of Works and Transport, the used car motor vehicle industry is important to the development of transport in Trinidad and Tobago. It is necessary, however, to consider the history of the matter at hand. The motor vehicle components, which today find themselves on the roads of Trinidad and Tobago, have been imported into the country to be used as spare parts. With increasing regularity, the Transport Division recognized that such parts were skilfully being used as cut-and-join vehicles, thereby evading Government's revenue machinery and compromising safety requirements.

**12.00 p.m.**

In 1996, the Government, in spite of objections by new vehicle dealers, decided to regularize the foreign used assembly business by monitoring a special process and a number of activities, including the introduction of a special registration fee of \$20,000 on vehicles below 1700 cc and \$30,000 on vehicles above 1700 cc. This was done in the interest of making vehicles more affordable to the poor man. At the same time, duties and motor vehicles taxes were reduced on new vehicles.

Since 1996, we have enjoyed a boom in the automotive industry, both in the new and used vehicle sector caused, no doubt, by Government's policies as well as depreciation of the Yen versus the US dollar. In the area of new vehicle registration, the market has jumped from 4,998 in 1995 to 7,589 in 1996, to 9,311 in 1997, and it is estimated to reach 12,000 in 1998.

Foreign used registrations have also experienced significant increases from 4,384 in 1997 to 8,000 in 1998. This means that in 1998 alone as a small island we experienced new registration of vehicles in the vicinity of 20,000. Already there are major complaints about traffic jams and congestion, and at this time we must institute measures in order to restrict the number of additional vehicles both new and used.

While foreign used vehicles are being imported, albeit knocked down, other used vehicles which are the result of new vehicles originally imported are also coming onto the market, and there is a situation where persons who purchased

new vehicles are seeing them depreciate in value much faster than they anticipated. For example, a \$350,000 vehicle originally purchased new, would now sell for around \$120,000 three years later. The vehicle would have attracted approximately \$165,000 in Government taxes when first licensed, as compared with a smaller sized used vehicle which would have attracted only \$30,000 registration fee. We can well understand the problem.

The same situation would apply to a \$200,000 new vehicle, which would have attracted approximately \$60,000 in Government taxes, as compared with a \$30,000 registration fee. Under the new regime, a 2,999 cc new vehicle will now attract over \$175,000 in taxes, as compared with a special registration fee of \$70,000; while a 1,999 cc vehicle would attract \$77,000, as compared with a registration fee of \$50,000 for a used vehicle. At the lower end of the market, below 1,600 cc, a new car would attract \$30,000 in taxes as compared with a new registration fee for a used vehicle of \$30,000.

Mr. President, at the Transport Division of the Ministry of Works and Transport, the problems have intensified with an increase in the registration of foreign used vehicles. Before I give an indication of the numerous problems involved, I would indicate that I am aware of some of the positive contributions of this relatively new industry.

Some of the positive contributions of the foreign used motor industry to the economy of Trinidad and Tobago are as follows: it has made motor vehicles available to a section of the population who would not have otherwise been able to have access to perceived new vehicles. While it is not new in the strictest sense, its local registration deems it new on the local market; it has served to provide a significant spin-off employment in assembly and repairs as it relates to the industry; and it has exposed the motor industry to a number of new technology available in respect to motor cars.

I nevertheless point out that the introduction of this new industry has dramatized the problems at the Transport Division in terms of weaknesses in the system and the information base which have resulted in numerous avenues of fraudulent activities.

With the regularization of the foreign used assembly business, a team comprising the Government officials from several Government agencies was

established to implement the necessary measures. The mandate of the committee included the following:

the importation of fully assembled used right hand drive motor vehicles be permitted by dealers for the retail trade with effect from January 1, 1998;

the registration and licensing system be introduced for all motor vehicle dealerships, spare parts outlets, service shops and garages on a phased basis from the first quarter;

the revision of the taxation structure of small vehicles, that is, 1400 cc or less, in order to increase their affordability;

imported used vehicles be not more than five years old at the time of importation and that they be structurally and mechanically sound and in generally good condition;

each vehicle must be accompanied by a certificate of cancellation of registration stamped by the transport authority in the country of origin, which provides the exact age and mileage of the vehicles, and both documents should bear engine, chassis and shell numbers of the vehicles.

Importers of new and used vehicles for the retail trade must be registered dealers who must be approved and registered by the Ministry of Trade and Industry after satisfying the following requirements:

that they be registered under the Companies Act (Trade);

have a permanent address and location approved by the Ministry of Trade and Industry;

be registered by the Board of Inland Revenue, Value Added Tax office and National Insurance Board;

provide adequate repair and service facilities;

all imported used vehicles be inspected at the point of entry, the inspection to focus on collaborating the engine chassis and shell numbers with the information provided on the import document;

a clearance certificate completed in triplicate and verifying the information on the vehicle to be issued by the Customs and Excise Division of the Ministry of Finance, with a copy of the certificate being issued to the importer for presentation at the time of registration, the other copies to form part of the

Customs and Excise Division and the Licensing Division of the Ministry of Works and Transport;

that the certified copy of ownership of the vehicle clearly state that it is imported to be a used vehicle;

in accordance with the Motor Vehicles and Road Traffic Act Chap. 48:50 private vehicles must be subjected to periodic inspection, this system to commence with the inspection of vehicles over 10 years old on a biannual basis, with all vehicles over five years old undergoing periodic inspection in the medium term;

that a licensing system to be administered by the Ministry of Trade and Industry be introduced for all new and used car dealerships;

all motor vehicles be required to pay an annual licence fee of \$10,000 and post a bond for \$500,000.

**Mr. President:** You have one more minute.

**Sen. The Hon. S. Baksh:** Mr. President, this Government since its assumption of office has adopted policies that have improved the quality of life of all the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago.

We in the Ministry of Works and Transport have been called upon to play a critical and pivotal role in the implementation of many of the visionary policies introduced over the past three years. We have responded to the challenge to improve and modernize infrastructure policies with a cohesive effort determined to ensure the success of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago. In this regard I am proud of the work done by the officers in the Ministry of Works and Transport.

Today, all over the country one sees evidence of our roads, highways, bridges, drainage facilities and Government buildings, but the task is not yet complete. There is much more to be done; more challenges to overcome, and we face them with confidence.

A great author once wrote, "one must wait until the evening to see how splendid the day has been". As we move along in this Government, it is not midday, but early morning yet, just breakfast. We are a long way from the evening of this Government, but already one can say, we have had a fine day. [*Desk thumping*]

**Hon. Senators:** Wind up Sen. Kuei Tung!

**Mr. President:** Are there any further contributions?

**Sen. Cynthia Alfred.** Mr. President, before I go into the main course of my discussion, I join my colleague, Sen. Jagmohan, in extending my sympathy to the people living in the areas affected by the flooding, such as the Siparia constituency, Oropouche, Fyzabad, Caroni, Chaguanas and any other area of Trinidad and Tobago. We understand the trauma that these people must be experiencing. Of course, if there is anything possible that the PNM can do, then we shall do so.

A budget statement as presented by any Government in any particular fiscal year is undoubtedly one of the most anticipated and widely and hotly debated documents in any democratic society. We on this side believe that not only the budget speech as presented by the Minister of Finance, but the Ministers themselves with responsibility for particular areas should make their presentation in a timely manner, so that we on this side would have the opportunity to debate their submissions as well.

Therefore, we feel it is time that this little game of cat and mouse is stopped; that is, who should be going next, who is speaking on which side. It is a waiting game. We do not think that is good enough. We feel that we need to have the submissions of the Ministers and parliamentary secretaries so that we can debate in a proper manner. [*Desk thumping*]

**12.15 p.m.**

Further to that, one would recall the fiasco that happened in another place, in the Lower House, and that was because of this same cat and mouse game. The country was at a loss to find out what happened, even though, of course, our side had to take some blame. At the same time the Ministers should have a greater sense of responsibility to the country so that they present their speeches when they should so that the country is not held to ransom.

Mr. President, I would like to discuss three main areas. First of all, I would like to talk about the disabled in Trinidad and Tobago. We feel that the people in this country—all of us—are not as concerned, tolerant and understanding of disabled persons as we ought to be. I make this point chiefly because someone who happens to be my sister who is disabled said to me one day—and, Mr. President, it went right through my system—a disabled person always has to depend on someone else. It is in that light that I would like to make this submission.

When we think about it a disabled person cannot just step out of a vehicle and step into a building; he or she must be assisted. Whatever the level of disability somebody has to be always there to offer some level of assistance. Those of us who are able find it easy to jump about, get in a car, get out and do the things that come so naturally. Therefore, we do not, perhaps, appreciate as much as we should what disabled people really go through.

We know that there is a disability assistance grant for people 40 years and over whose disability prevents them from working; but what about the others? What about those who are working? I would like to read something that was written by a disabled person. His name is Wren Gray and I quote from the *Tobago Star* of Wednesday, October 14, 1998 and he says:

“Who says life is fair?

Is there any solid evidence to suggest that life is fair?...

For instance, take this year’s budget, what’s in it for persons with disabilities?

A people's budget that leaves out its citizens with disabilities...

When someone with disabilities complains of the ‘unfairness’ of life, he has played by the rules, followed a prescribed course with the promise of a certain outcome but life has not delivered. Anguish and unhappiness can result as much from the frustration of the expectation of fairness as the reasons, which engender the notion of unfairness in the first place.”

That is a very telling statement.

I would like to make certain suggestions. For instance, in the town meeting that took place in Tobago about one week ago one person who was disabled got up and said the disabled do not need sympathy, they need empathy and action. Those words, empathy and action, are the words that disabled people recognize but those are not the words they are getting. Some of us feel that when we see a disabled person we must offer sympathy, or worse, pity. They do not want that. The important thing is that they are alive and they are able to do certain things for themselves.

We feel that there needs to be more facilities put in place; simple basic things. Over the years we have been talking about new buildings being made accessible to disabled people. How many new buildings passed by the Town and Country

Planning Division have facilities in place for disabled people? I contend that every building that has more than one floor should have either a lift or an escalator for disabled people because if they are disabled they will not be able to climb up the stairs or, perhaps, if they climb up they may not be able to climb down. These are some of the things we must put in place.

My sister also asked the question—she is an employer, not an employee—what happens to disabled persons at the end of time when they are 60 or 65? Do they have to continue to work for the rest of their lives? Up to this day self-employed people do not pay national insurance. Whereas they have to make provision for their employees, what happens to the self-employed person? Nothing. The most they might expect is a pension at the age of 65.

We do not believe this is good enough. We believe that some mechanism must be put in place for self-employed people to start paying national insurance and some special facility, not a hand-out but a recognition of the fact that there are persons who are disabled who are making a living for themselves so they do not have to depend on funds from the Treasury or wherever or social security. Some mechanism must be put in place so that they can access some sort of remuneration at the end of time.

Mr. President, I would like to suggest that some time in the near future there be a platform for serious discussion on the whole question of our disabled persons in Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] Let this Government show that it really cares about the disabled people and, by extension, let the national population also show that they care about disabled people by thinking a little more and being a little more tolerant of disabled persons.

I got this example—and I was so cut up—of a young man who is paralyzed from his waist down who was coming to Trinidad but he could not afford to go by plane and he had to go on the boat. He has to get out of his wheelchair and literally crawl up the steps. One would think that other persons would wait until he got to the top of the steps; but no, they just walked over him. They could not get there fast enough. People in this country must be much more tolerant and aware of what is going on around us because those of us who are able can say, “there, but for the grace of God, go I”. Mr. President, let us pay some more attention to our disabled—our handicapped people.

I turn my attention now to the question of tourism. In his Budget Speech the Minister of Finance spoke about the tourism sector. He said:

“Mr. Speaker, another major area of focus for this Administration is the Tourism Sector.”

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The Minister went on to enumerate certain policies that they hope to put in place to improve the tourism sector. He says the first draft of the new Tourism Bill has been completed. I was a bit nervous when I saw that because I know that the Tourism Bill was on the Order Paper to be debated for quite some time. It has been put so far back now that, perhaps, it is because this new bill is coming out.

What I am nervous about is the treatment of the cost of bridging finance for tax purposes, fiscal incentives for the refurbishment and expansion of hotel projects, development of the incentives for integrated resort projects and vehicles for the tourist trade and so forth. I do not have a problem, in the main, with that. What I do have a problem with is that when the original Bill was about to be discussed I took time to go through it and when I did some math—I am not a mathematician—I realized that some of the companies, firms and people engaged in hotels—especially hotels—could be given tax breaks up to 18 years. I find that to be rather much because whereas it might happen in the tourism sector, and we are all anxious and want to see tourism improve, at the same time if we give so much to the hotel area of tourism, what about other areas? Therefore, this is an area of concern.

As I talk about it, some of these same tax breaks that are proposed to be given to the hotel industry could be given to disabled persons who are employers.

Then, Mr. President, it says here:

“Increased marketing of the destination, which is already bearing fruit with increased arrivals from the South American Market.”

Mr. President, on the one hand Trinidad and Tobago is getting more tourists. On the other hand there is a particular airline that has instituted a system which causes tourists or visitors, once they come to Trinidad and Tobago, to decide that they are not going to come back. The system is that as long as it has been proven that you are a visitor you have to pay \$175 more on the local fare between Trinidad and Tobago.

I met two very irate persons. One of them was an American, the other was Trinidad born but living in America. It made no difference that she explained she was from Trinidad. She has an American accent and she had to pay \$175 more. They said to me, “why us?” They said there were six other persons from another country who paid the \$300. I spoke to certain people in the airline business and they were very concerned because they said so many persons have vowed to tell



their friends not to come back to Trinidad and Tobago and they themselves would not be coming back.

I spoke to the Secretary for Tourism and he also was concerned but I do not think he was concerned to the level or saw the seriousness of this situation as much as, perhaps, he should have. I would like, if we are serious about tourism, to look at this aspect. You would notice I deliberately did not call the name of the airline. That information can be got from me afterwards. But we must look into this because we cannot have a double system; it just is not working.

I was also very much concerned about the question of the Premier Four Seasons Hotel and Resort Chain which is negotiating with Government for the development of an integrated tourism resort complex on 344 acres of land in Tobago. Mr. President the question is, where in Tobago? When is this expected to take place? Right now, there is a very large hotel being built in Tobago. Concerns are already being raised about certain factors, not least among them is water.

**12.30 p.m.**

If this new hotel comes on stream, the question is: Has the Tobago House of Assembly been involved in this exercise? If it is proposed that this hotel should go in the south west, are we going to sink the south west? Already, people in Lambeau, Lowlands, Canaan and Bon Accord cannot get water for perhaps more than twice a week. If the Government should put another hotel on the south west, think of what will happen with respect to water and the basic infrastructure that need to be put in place.

Sen. Prof. Julian Kenny mentioned raw sewage in Tobago and when I looked at the submissions of the Tobago House of Assembly in respect of tourism, I noted that for tourism they asked for something like \$33 million and they got \$3 million. Water—they asked for \$10 million, they got nothing; and infrastructural development, they asked for \$3 million and got none. How can we talk tourism in the one breath and, at the same time, not put in place the infrastructural requirements so that tourism would be effective?

We have to look very closely at this whole question of tourism. We know that many Tobagonians, in particular, are benefiting from tourism. More are going to benefit but we need to have the infrastructure in place and perhaps the Minister of Finance could explain, when I get to the Tobago issue, why no allocation has been

made in certain areas; but it is a wider issue than that and I will come to that in due course.

I would like to talk about the air bridge. This has been spoken about more than once—the air bridge between Trinidad and Tobago. There certainly needs to be more co-operation and co-ordination between the two major airlines, that is, the airlines which service the air bridge. Take last Monday, the flights were going fine up to a certain hour. One plane broke down and chaos started. People had to wait for six hours. Sen. Mohammed was one of those persons. Six and seven hours to get transportation. Well, the chaotic situation could be imagined.

Again, this question of the air bridge and whether it is one airline or two airlines, whether one particular airline should fly more frequently, or whatever it is, let there be dialogue between the relevant persons. Let there be dialogue between ATLA and the airlines, but let there be dialogue so that the alleviation of such a situation would come about.

Mr. President, I now turn my attention to Tobago. Tobago—small, beautiful, ever controversial, which in the early days changed hands 33 times. Poor Tobago. Tobago, that seems to find itself always in contention and conflict with its sister isle Trinidad. When will it all end? Or, more specifically, when will it all begin? That is, the beginning of a better life and a better way for Tobagonians, the people of Tobago and the people of Trinidad. We are one state and yet there is so much controversy with respect to Trinidad and Tobago that I do not know when this thing is going to end.

I start with the budget speech of the Minister of Finance. He said on page 16 of the budget statement—

**Hon. Senator:** Which document is that?

**Sen. C. Alfred:** The first document. Well, I will come to the second document in due course.

“Mr. Speaker, one of my responsibilities as Minister of Finance is to manage the finances of the country in a lawful way. I am guided by the Exchequer and Audit Act and the Constitution of Trinidad and Tobago.”

Very nobly said.

“These laws require me to disburse funds from the Consolidated Fund according to clear monitoring rules.

Among these rules is the requirement for adequate reporting concerning previous disbursement of funds to a Ministry.”

But, the next line says:

“The Tobago House of Assembly, Mr. Speaker, is not a Ministry.”

Very interesting, and therein lies the rub. What is it? The Tobago House of Assembly is not a Ministry; it is not a municipal corporation. What is it?

“However, nothing in the Tobago House of Assembly Act tells me that this Act invalidates the Constitution of Trinidad and Tobago and the Exchequer and Audit Act.”

We looked at the Exchequer and Audit Act and it lays out very clearly what any accounting department, ministry and statutory body should do. There is no problem with that.

“Therefore in pursuing my responsibility to the people of Trinidad and Tobago, early in the year...”

—presumably 1998—

“...I requested the responsible public servant to provide information with respect to:...”

—and he enumerated.

I ask the question: Who is this responsible public servant? Obviously, he has a position. He certainly will have a name but questions to the Executive Council of the Tobago House of Assembly elicited no information. No one could tell who this responsible public servant was or is.

The Minister went on to say that he needed information about:

“The previous allocations from the Consolidated Fund into the Tobago House of Assembly Fund;

How these funds were used; and

Whether it was consistent with the estimates of expenditure as approved by Parliament.”

One would note that in the Tobago House of Assembly Act, as well as in the Constitution, provision is made for the Assembly to receive funds and to disburse

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these funds in a prescribed manner. The question was asked whether the Assembly met the requirements. So, of course I asked the Assembly. The question of accountability came up and the Chief Secretary of the Tobago House of Assembly stated categorically, "There are documents to prove it", that they conformed with the letter of the law of the requirement. He said, "In April of 1998, the Tobago House of Assembly had its meeting, where it discussed the Estimates of Expenditure and submitted a copy to the Cabinet."

Now, according to the Exchequer and Audit Ordinance, this is supposed to be presented to Parliament but the Minister of Finance is saying that the Assembly did not meet these requirements. When we got down to the basics of the matter, it was discovered that the Ministry of Finance is supposed to disburse the funds every quarter, *en bloc*. It says in section 47 of the Tobago House of Assembly Act that Parliament determines the allocation to the Assembly. The responsibility of the Minister of Finance is to release the funds to the Tobago House of Assembly *en bloc*.

It is now the responsibility of the Assembly to manage these funds and to report on the basic section 141 of the Constitution and so many sections of the Tobago House of Assembly Act. Section 46 says that the funds given to the Assembly are public funds and they are subject to audit like any other—well, I cannot say ministry—ministry, department, statutory board or municipal council. They are subject to audit.

As a matter of fact, in Tobago there has been established over the years an internal audit section but, more than that, there is an external audit section. This section is obviously under the control of the Comptroller of Accounts. This section can and does go into any department of the Assembly at any time, without previous warning and does its audit checks. Therefore, what is the problem about this whole thing of accounting?

Very significantly, the representative for Tobago West, Pamela Nicholson, made the point which was echoed by at least one other person and that is, that at the time of a budget, when a budget is read, is not the time to say that the Assembly has not been working in accordance with the rules and, therefore, it will get no money. The Assembly is not a child to be chastised and to be chastised at an inappropriate time. The Assembly is a legal entity. The Assembly did what it had to do, even if the Minister of Finance had a problem with the Assembly, budget time is not the time to say so. This document tells me what the Minister of Finance talks

about is management accounting which is what is done to determine if the funds are effectively managed and so forth.

Listen to this:

“In all of this, reports are in fact submitted to the Minister of Finance to indicate, in a summary fashion—”

**Mr. President:** From what are you quoting?

**Sen. C. Alfred:** I am quoting from a document entitled “*Budget Notes 1998/1999—Accountability Issue*” which was given to me by the Executive Council of the Tobago House of Assembly. It was prepared by a public servant. They have no cause to say anything but the truth because this can always be challenged afterwards.

It says:

“In all of this, reports are in fact submitted to the Minister of Finance to indicate, in a summary fashion how the funds are distributed to Divisions.”

**12.45 p.m.**

It says:

“Where the quarrel ensues, is the level of detail. The Ministry wants the detail for each sub-item of each Division. There are two fundamental objections to this:”

I am sure the Minister of Finance is not aware of dialogue that took place between the Assembly and the Ministry of Finance in 1997.

“1. Inherent in this is the non-recognition of the autonomy given to Tobago by Act No. 40 of 1996.”

That is, Tobago has been given certain responsibility.

Mr. President, we get the distinct impression that the Ministry of Finance, indeed, the Government, is bent on eroding, on taking away, on frustrating the responsibilities of the Tobago House of Assembly.

It says:

“The micro-management of the divisions of the Assembly from an agency extraneous to the Assembly.”

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They want to manage the Assembly from outside. Even before the passage of Act No. 40 of 1996, staff had successfully argued with the Budget Division, Ministry of Finance that this level of detail was not necessary and was a wasteful, ineffective requirement of the Ministry.

**Hon. Senators:** That is the law.

**Sen. C. Alfred:** It might be the law but there was dialogue. The practice was discontinued in June 1996. This continued throughout 1997 and was only requested in 1998.

Mr. President, the thought here was that 1996—this is politics now—was an election year so this was agreed to. “It is okay”, says the Ministry of Finance, “you go right ahead, submit *en bloc*, we are not going to bother.” In 1997 the Assembly did just that. They continued to submit, they did not submit in detail because the Budget Division of the Ministry of Finance agreed that it was not necessary. What the Assembly did, Mr. President, was to submit the requirements *en bloc*, and that apparently is what the ministry and the Minister of Finance has a problem with.

As Miss Nicholson said, this was condoned in 1997. If any intervention should have been made it should have been made in 1997, but in 1997 the Tobago House of Assembly got a fair amount of funds. In 1997 there was no query, but in 1998 all of a sudden this UNC Government says, “But my goodness, what is taking place in Tobago? We cannot afford for Tobagonians to be running their own affairs. They are not able. After all, they are the poor child. They are the little sister of the relationship.” So what happened, Mr. President? Two persons made reference to this whole issue of Tobago and the two seats that were given to the UNC Government.

Let me tell you something, Mr. President. Somebody said there is no loyalty in politics. There is no gratitude—that is the word—in politics. I will explain. Alphonso Philbert Theophilus James, our first parliamentarian, said ingratitude is worse than obeah. So, Mr. President, the Tobago people keep saying, “But we put this Government in power.” What Tobagonians have to recognize, as Mr. Craig said in an article he wrote in the Tobago news, is that was two and a half years ago. The UNC obviously feels now, that it has fulfilled its obligations to Tobago in respect of the two seats. So, therefore, Tobagonians should not keep on deluding themselves; that, in fact, they gave the UNC Government something. They gave, they got two Senators. Maybe that was part of the agreement. I do not know the

full terms, but they gave and now the situation has come to the stage where the UNC is saying, “We do not need Tobago anymore and, therefore, we have to put certain things in place to keep them in place.

**Hon. Senators:** Who said so? Nonsense!

**Sen. Shabazz:** We want to hear Sen. Moore and Sen. Williams. They cannot talk.

**Sen. C. Alfred:** Mr. President, there is a very interesting article in the *Sunday Guardian* of October 18. This is by Mr. Reginald Dumas, former Permanent Secretary. It says:

“Towards a new Tobago dawn”.

He said he is quoting the Attorney General:

“But Mr. Maharaj makes it clear that this responsibility is subject to overall Cabinet authority as set out in section 75(1) of the Constitution, and he went even further.”

Mr. President, when others and I, myself, spoke last time—and there are about 10 persons’ articles in Tobago that I will not bother to read who have said the same thing. Here you have a Tobago House of Assembly Act which is flawed. As Trevor Craig said, it is fatally flawed. Why do we say it is flawed? Every time the Assembly makes reference to the Act to strengthen a point, somebody from the Central Government says, “But the Constitution negates that. The Constitution says X or Y. So are we going to continue in this masquerade, Mr. President?

Mr. Maharaj continues:

“All the matters in the Fifth Schedule would be matters of national policy. If there should be an agricultural policy in Tobago, it would fit into the national policy for agriculture in Trinidad and Tobago.”

Mr. President, the Fifth Schedule states categorically, “The Tobago House of Assembly shall be responsible for”, and it listed. The Sixth Schedule says, “The Tobago House of Assembly will not be responsible for”. The Seventh Schedule says, “If given certain responsibilities, the Tobago House of Assembly shall act as an agent”, or words to that effect, “for the Government.” But the Fifth Schedule is very clear and, therefore, it is making nonsense, or rather, this Government is making nonsense of this Act.

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Mr. Dumas went on to say:

“But I wonder what the Prime Minister meant when he dismissively asked last month in Tobago whether the Chief Secretary's frequent complaints of unfair treatment of Tobago by Trinidad were not ‘part of the politics of Tobago?’”

The Prime Minister, of course, makes statements like these. Half of the time, having made them, it is his Ministers who have to extricate him from statements like these. But he made the statement whether, in fact, it is not part of the politics of Tobago. What is the politics of Tobago? Mr. President, I will tell you what the politics of Tobago is. The politics of Tobago is looking for and demanding fair treatment. That is all.

The point I want to re-emphasize is where Mr. Dumas made reference to Niccolò Machiavelli. He wrote a book called *The Prince*. He lived in the 15th and 16th Centuries and he was Italian. He was in politics for a while. He based his submission on this particular prince, and what he was saying here is:

“A sagacious prince then cannot and should not fulfil his pledges when their observance is contrary to his interest and when the causes that induce him to pledge his faith no longer exist.”

And that epitomizes the situation between the UNC Government and the Tobago House of Assembly. [*Desk thumping*] The cause is no longer there and, therefore, this is what is happening.

**Sen. Tota-Maharaj:** That is pernicious propaganda.

**Sen. C. Alfred:** Mr. Dumas went on to make certain recommendations. Mr. President, I shall also make some recommendations because I believe everybody in the country is getting rather weary of the situation that exists between Trinidad and Tobago. How long are we going to continue? I do not want to come here every year in a budget speech and just talk about what is not happening in Tobago. I want to be able to come at least once to commend the Government on something positive, and albeit about Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

**Sen. Shabazz:** PNM will give you that chance.

**Sen. C. Alfred:** I mention something else, Mr. President. The Minister of Finance was talking about the Tobago House of Assembly not accounting, but here it is, according to regulation—I think it was 45—the Tobago House of Assembly was supposed to make financial regulations. That is one of the issues for



which Miss Pamela Nicholson resigned. Make financial regulations and submit them to the Cabinet and then to be taken to Parliament.

Two years ago the Assembly conformed to the law. Say whatever you might like about the Chief Secretary. We are not on the same political side. He is an NAR, I am a very proud PNM. [*Desk thumping*] However, the man does his home work. He will not find himself in an invidious position and he has not. He submitted his regulations two years ago and up to now those have not been brought to Parliament. One presumes, therefore, that they have not even been looked at by the Cabinet. If, indeed, Cabinet has a problem with the regulations, have dialogue. Dialogue is the key to this whole issue of Trinidad and Tobago.

**Mr. President:** The speaking time of the hon. Senator has expired.

*Motion made,* That the hon. Senator's speaking time be extended by 15 minutes. [*Sen. N. Mohammed*]

*Question put and agreed to.*

**Mr. President:** Having regard to the time, however, we shall break for lunch and resume at 2.00 p.m. The sitting is now suspended until 2.00 p.m.

**12.58 p.m.:** *Sitting suspended.*

**2.01 p.m.:** *Sitting resumed.*

**Sen. C. Alfred:** Mr. President, in concluding my remarks, let me make reference to a statement made by the hon. Minister of Planning and Development in his contribution yesterday. He said, and I quote:

“Mr. President, I am taking part in this debate against the background that perhaps the large majority of Trinidadians and Tobagonians are not overly concerned about serious economic issues.”

The Minister is underrating the people of Trinidad and Tobago. The people of Trinidad and Tobago do take matters very seriously. They have read a lot, they are reading a lot, they are looking at television and they are making their views very vocal. One example is when TV6 went around with Town Meetings. It was very instructive and enlightening to hear the submissions that were made by the various people.

So often it has been said, and just as often disputed, that the PNM has done nothing for this country. I want everyone to know that it is because of the

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education programmes—I am not necessarily speaking about schools alone—by the PNM that the national community is so vocal on matters that concern them. I thought I would make the point, Mr. President.

I also want to include that it is because the people in this country take their economy so seriously that we have had so many submissions from so many people. We have had resignations by Mrs. Debroah Moore-Miggins and Miss Pamela Nicholson, the Member for Tobago West, on matters of principle, things that were of concern to them. If they were not really concerned, Mr. President, they would have probably said, “it does not matter” and they would have remained where they were. That is something that this Government and this country have to take into consideration. We are a listening people, we are a reading people, we make informed decisions and when we do, we make them known. That is a lesson to all of us, especially those in Government, because when one underrates the literacy of one’s people then one is opening oneself to trouble.

I must mention this question about the dispute resolution provisions. I think in the whole warfare between the Minister of Finance and the Tobago House of Assembly that they have gone a little mad. Here it is we are talking about two islands, one country and we are hearing talk about dispute resolution committee and about going to court. Mr. President, there are provisions in the Tobago House of Assembly Act for a dispute resolution committee and going to court, if need be, but surely, there must be some medium where both sides could get together to work out the problems and stop talking this nonsense about going to court. We are too small to have such divisive politics among us. The time has come for true sense to prevail and for these things to be worked out.

Mr. President, I take further issue with the Development Fund. A new section was put into the Ministry of Planning and Development’s rules and regulations under the PSIP. It was called the Infrastructure Development Fund. From my understanding \$500,000 million were removed from the Consolidated Fund and put into this special fund. What was the rationale for this? One would have thought that we had enough problems in the country without creating further problems by introducing this new section.

What the Infrastructure Development Fund is all about, is that certain funds for development are put into this fund, but what has happened, Mr. President, it was not until March, 1998, that the rules for this fund came into being. It was not until July, 1998, that the Tobago House of Assembly understood how it had to operate

these funds. The upshot of it, Mr. President, is that it was not until August—so when the Minister of Finance complained that it was only in August that he got what he was asking for—after the Assembly was advised how to operate this new fund, that it was able to send and ask for releases. Of course, to date, \$44.3 million has been deposited in that fund out of the \$80 million and not one cent of that fund has been accessed.

Why create more complications? Why was it so difficult to leave the money under the Consolidated Fund or, at least, if one is going to shift money from one area to the next, the regulations should have first been put in place. Do not go halfway through the year, take moneys, put them into a new fund, then make rules and regulations, and then advise the relevant authorities how to use these funds. All these are frustrating the works of the Tobago House of Assembly and Ministries.

Mr. President, Sen. Rev. Teelucksingh asked a question: What was Tobago like about 50 years ago? Mr. Reginald Dumas mentioned it in his article, the one from which I quoted on Machiavelli that perhaps the most basic problem of all is that people in Tobago and Trinidad do not understand each other. The culture is somewhat different and that I believe is the underlying factor in this whole relationship between Trinidad and Tobago. There needs to be greater understanding of who we are, what we are, and where we are going, because when we look at it, Mr. President, we are all one people. There are people from Tobago living in Trinidad and people from Trinidad living in Tobago. We have to come to some common understanding of who we are, and to recognize that we are one people.

### **2.10 p.m.**

As the Senator said when he spoke about Tobago, what kind of people, what happened in 1948 with respect to politics. Politics has always been a strong talking point in Tobago and has always been like that since I was a child.

During election time people would be very vocal. After election everybody gets back. For instance, I am talking here now on behalf of the people of Tobago, but I would not be so naive as to believe that the NAR in Tobago or for that matter, the NAR-controlled assembly will thank me in the year 2000 for what I am saying here today. They may thank me now, but at that time it will be politics, and that will be the order of the day.

Mr. President, perhaps, the people of Tobago, now that they have a sort of breathing space, should look again at their options—I am directing this to the people of Tobago. They have time to assess the political situation in Tobago and they must ask themselves where are they going and make informed choices.

I noted at the Town Meeting members of the Executive Council of the Assembly were present, and they articulated certain views, but I am of the impression that—I should not tell them this because it is politics—there is need for them to inform the Tobago public more about what is going on. In fact, the people of Tobago who were there complained—and they were very vociferous in their denial that they are not being brought up to date on what is going on. The executive council must be much more forthcoming with the people of Tobago. They want to know what is going on because it is to their interest.

Mr. President, what has got me really worried is what I read in the last paragraph in the Minister's presentation on Tobago when he said:

“Therefore, in this new fiscal year I will be working with the Tobago House of Assembly to make this a reality within the context of achieving the common good of all citizens of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Speaker, I plan to meet with the Tobago House of Assembly to discuss the probability of allowing the Tobago House of Assembly to access grants and or loans for development purposes from external sources.”

I am scared about this. I am sceptical. Here is a Government that refuses on certain grounds to give to the Tobago House of Assembly certain funds that are legitimately theirs, having done what they are supposed to do and then says, “I am not going to give you that but I will discuss with you so that you could go and access loans”. The Tobago House of Assembly does not have to ask the Government to access grants. That is part of the Act but it has to go to the government in terms of loans. If the Government of this country, through the Ministry of Finance, is not going to give them local funds, are they going to help them to get funds from outside? I hope the Minister of Finance explains this. He was very conciliatory in the presentation he made yesterday. We got the impression he is willing to work with Tobago, but I hope this is not something to side-track the Assembly so that in the end they will not assist them to obtain funds from outside and then they do not give them any funds from the Consolidated Fund and Tobago has nothing. I hope that is not going to be the case.

Finally, I reiterate, there is a time for fighting and a time for dialogue. I think the time has reached for the Tobago House of Assembly and the Central Government to get together. As one person said, there will be no true lasting peace between the two islands until there is dialogue. Let us not be afraid to bring to the fore what is causing the contention and like adults, discuss them and once and for all lay them to rest. We in Tobago want the best for Tobago. I am sure the people of Trinidad—I do not want to make the distinction—want the best for Trinidad and for Tobago. We all want the best for one another because we are all one people and, therefore, now is the time, if it did not happen before, when we should all get together and revisit Act 40 of 1996, look at all the options but in the final analysis, come out for what is best for Tobago and what is best for Trinidad and Tobago. I thank you.

**Sen. Diana Mahabir-Wyatt:** Mr. President, before I begin commenting on the budget itself, I would just like to say that I agreed very much with what Sen. Philip Marshall said yesterday, and which I think several of us have done over the last few years, which is to ask if we could not alter the procedure with which the budget is presented at least insofar as having each Ministry present us with a written report along with the budget documents so that we could—just a report on what was done last year, what is intended to be done in the year coming, especially insofar as the development programmes are concerned, so that we would have done our homework when we come here, and that we do not have to go through Minister after Minister giving the impression that they have to give a report which is going to be debated. It would make the budget debate shorter, and it would make it more relevant to what people are doing. Just as in managing a business, it would provide each Ministry every year with a report to look back over the years of what has been accomplished. It will be very useful.

**Sen. Mark:** On a point of clarification: Are you asking, for instance, for a report from each Ministry for the previous year as well as for the coming two years?

**Sen. D. Mahabir-Wyatt:** One year. Every year Ministers come and say, “this is what we have accomplished last year and what we want to do.” That takes up an hour’s time. It has been suggested over and over—and yesterday Sen. Marshall referred to it again—that it would save a lot of time for all of us if we could get this in a written form, so that we could take a look. Not every one of us wants to comment on every single issue because that would take forever, but there are certain issues especially insofar as the infrastructure development is concerned that ministries have targeted.

Sen. Marshall made specific reference to a couple of these; the prisons, which it takes about five years to get through; what you intend to do; what has been accomplished and special goals so that each year one can see the progress. It is a far more efficient process of getting through what is really like an annual report/strategic planning kind of thing. It will help those of us who participate in the budget debate to get our thoughts organized in advance.

Mr. President, let me begin by thanking the Government, through the hon. Minister of Finance, for aspects of the budget, particularly the increase in the old-age pension and the relief on medicines and medical equipment. I am really very pleased about this and I know the Minister has been nagged for a long time by various interest groups. They are all very happy.

There are other issues in the budget which nobody has yet put forward and on which I would like to comment. There is a lot to be grateful for when it comes to assistance to the social sector. For example, as I went through the budget documents, I noticed there was an increase in the allocation to various aspects of the work that Servol does along with the Government Ministries. I know this is not a place to discuss accounts, arithmetic and mathematics but, we have to talk about allocations in a budget because they reflect Government's policy.

One of Government's stated policies has been, over the last three years, its intention to work alongside NGOs in order to get done some of the work in the social sector. Not to copy the work, and to do it all over again, but to work alongside with structural support.

**2.20 p.m.**

This is an example of Government putting its money where its mouth is. There is also an increase to non-governmental organizations of over \$9 million. This represents something like 130 per cent allocated to the institutional strengthening of existing non-governmental organizations which work to alleviate all the various problems in society. This is making Government's support for what is being done by the non-governmental sector tangible in a very practical and positive way. I want to make a point of this, because I think it is something extremely good that the Government has done.

Mr. President, I am sorry that Sen. Jagmohan is not here because yesterday he asked about the religious grant. The religious grant has not only been included in the budget, but it has been increased by almost 130 per cent. The heading was just

moved from where it was before to another ministry, this is why the Senator could not find it. I think that the help for poor families in regard to housing is also going to make a huge difference, especially to single parents. I commend the Ministry of Social Development and the Ministry of Finance for including this kind of help. This is the sort of help we are hoping to find, whereby Government's policy is actually reflected by the figures that appear in the budget.

Unfortunately, not all Government's stated policies got that kind of support. I understand that in some cases this takes some time, but under this same ministry, where a 130 per cent increase was given to strengthen the non-governmental organizations, the recently established Civic Council on Social Equity for the Alleviation of Poverty was not allocated a single penny. It is very difficult to set up a body to do something as serious as trying to work on programmes to alleviate poverty and not allocate any funds to support it. This could have been because no funds were requested—I can see the Minister of Finance looking a bit puzzled; perhaps, the proposals were not put through in time as it is a fairly new organization. The fact that one cannot see any allocation outside its staff, may, in fact, be because a couple of the staff allocated come out of the rest of the staff in that ministry and are used for something else as well. So, that one is lagging behind.

Mr. President, there is another instance in that—I had mentioned this several times two or three years ago—we passed an Act which provides for counting the value of unremunerated work. It requires the Government to value work which is done by people in the community, either on a voluntary basis or some other basis, which is not paid for in terms of cash. This value was to be used in compiling annual statistics, and there was a reason for this, which gets more and more urgent every year. As unemployment rises, and as more and more responsibility is put on the non-governmental organizations and community-based organizations to do this social work that needs to be done—the social safety net for which Government has very kindly increased the allocation this year—if you do not put a value in national statistics on the unremunerated work that is done by men and women in the voluntary sector, you cannot get matching grants from international bodies or even some national bodies, such as the Self-Help Commission.

The Act itself states that this is to be done within three years. However, the three years have passed and all I can find out is that there is a small group in the Ministry of Gender Affairs that meets from time to time to talk about it. I understand it is not in the Central Statistical Office, where it belongs, but in the

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Ministry of Gender Affairs where, for some reason, it has been shunted off to. They are hoping to get some kind of funding from a foreign government to deal with it as though it is supposed to be an on/off affair which is done and forgotten about instead of being a part of an ongoing structure. As long as we have to do social work and need the support of the non-governmental sector in doing social work, we are going to need this. If there is no allocation in the budget, nothing would be done and talks go on.

As I said, Mr. President, you cannot ask people to work for the good of social development and not provide them with the resources for doing so. While I am very pleased about those areas in the budget that have shown support for this, I am very upset—and in some cases very, very upset, and in some cases somewhat bitter—about some of the things that this budget does not do. I confine my remarks to two aspects of social development, as those policies are reflected in the budget. One of these has to do with the absolutely appalling increase in domestic violence against women in this country.

Mr. President, one of the things we spoke about at lunch is the perception that people have in Trinidad and Tobago of the existence of corruption in society, and how this is influencing behaviour right through the society. It is these two areas I want to focus on. Let me just start with the second one.

Over the course of this budget debate in this Senate so far, we have heard a number of allegations made, or comments made, about the perception of corruption. Corruption has been mentioned with respect to the police service, the licensing office, customs and so forth. We know that there has never been a society, since Genghis Khan, or before that, the courts of the ancient Japanese emperors, in which there was not a grand vizier somewhere involved in fiddling details behind people's back. In those days it was kept to a very small group of people. Now, we have the media continually on the lookout for corruption or allegations of corruption.

I was very impressed when I read in the newspapers where Archbishop Monica Radoo spoke out against the way the budget debate was conducted in the other place. She was quite scathing, actually, about the way in which the Prime Minister and Leader of the Opposition, and their respective cohorts, used words as weapons. She said that words have power, and I think that is what is important. Words do have power. Preceptions have power and they shape the way the society goes.



We have a serious problem in this country when it comes to violent crime, but it does not happen in isolation. It encompasses many other things in the society. Let me just take one of Sen. Daly's favourite examples which he is always bringing up—he cannot talk at the moment—which has to do with the award of the airport's contract. This is something which has exercised attention in the media and the society for—what was it Sen. Marshall said “ if we applied the *Pratt and Morgan* case to the building of the prisons and to the building of the airport we would have had a stay of execution by now?”

Mr. President, over the last number of months, the Prime Minister, in public—I believe the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Works and Transport also—have stated their indifference to the various questions raised by the press, or allegations made by people, about political favouritism, cronyism and so forth—I forgot all the other words that were being used—when it came to the award of that contract, and members of the press have been under considerable pressure about lies, half truths and innuendoes. Sen. Daly has raised this point on a number of occasions. It has been shrugged off by various members of the Cabinet on the grounds that this matter was handled by Nipdec; that it was a Nipdec affair. “It was a Nipdec affair so do not bother me about it.”

### **2.30 p.m.**

When pressed, it seems that the NIPDEC Tenders Committee admits that it were only given 3 subcontracts to put out to tender. In fact, when it came to the award of the construction of the airport itself, NIPDEC was given a Cabinet directive to award that contract to the NYC Consortium. I know I am not allowed to make allegations like that without evidence in this Senate, and I do have here, a Cabinet Note recommending that this be done, and a copy of Cabinet Minute No. 1727 of July 2, in which that directive was given.

It was NIPDEC that did award the contract, just as the worthy gentleman said, but it is taking considerable liberty with the truth to state or to imply that because somebody else carried out the contract, Cabinet had no part in deciding who was going to get it. Obviously, whoever are on the Tenders Committee thought they could live with this. My concern is what instances like this do to the values and standards in a country. We are a very small country and, sooner or later, anybody who is interested in any particular thing is going to find out all the gory details about what happened, and how it went on and so forth; virtually everything they want to. They may not want to prove it in a court of law, but the country is not a

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court of law. The country is a living, breathing society. What happens in courts of law does not necessarily affect the entire society.

When words are used, as Archbishop Randoo was saying, to deceive people and evade the truth like President Clinton did in claiming he did not have sexual intercourse with Monica Lewinsky because he hid behind a legal definition of what sexual intercourse is, the results are a devaluation of the office of the presidency of the United States. The perception in this country is, if we have senior Cabinet members who deny responsibility of a Cabinet directive because somebody else carried it out, we start to wonder if maybe somebody like Ken Starr was not a necessary evil after all. He is boring, but maybe it was a necessary evil. I am not talking about whether the NYC Consortium was the best organization or not to carry it out. I am not a builder; I do not know about those things—maybe it was. It is not up to me to decide. It should have been up to the people who are there to decide these kinds of things, which would have been the Tenders Committee, and they did not get the chance to do it. That kind of thing percolates down through society so people feel that they can get away with this or that, or not look at this because we can hide behind words. Mr. President, I do not think we can hide behind words anymore, because one of the things that is happening in society is that we are becoming an increasingly violent one. Crimes involving domestic violence increase every day.

Mr. President, I brought this file. In it are copies of press reports of crimes of domestic violence that have occurred in Trinidad and Tobago this year alone. It was so heavy I had trouble carrying my briefcase upstairs. That is just this year. I do not think I need to emphasize to anybody in this Senate who has seen pictures in the paper of a woman burning to death or the charred remains of her body, or pick up the paper virtually every day and a child is being raped, another woman is being stabbed 15, 20, 30 times, to say that the incidence of domestic violence in Trinidad and Tobago is totally out of hand.

It is estimated that we lose more people to domestic violence every year than we do to lung cancer. While I am sure that the \$60,000 per year figure quoted yesterday for treating a patient in lung cancer is true, I think it is far higher for treating the problem of domestic violence. It is the cost of police; it is the cost of courts; it is the cost of hospitals; it is the cost of lost opportunities; women who cannot go to work; teachers who cannot teach, because they are victims of domestic violence.

Every time a child sees his parent being beaten and battered it affects that child so the child cannot study properly. Those children who have seen their mothers being beaten do not do well at school. Endless studies have been done on this and it is not a supposition; this is a fact. This means that every time somebody commits wife abuse, what they are also doing is sentencing their sons—because they do not seem to care about daughters—to lower academic marks and, therefore, eventually to a poorer education and poorer future in terms of employment. They are also so condemning their daughters.

The Minister of Social Development, this year in his speech of which I have a copy, in talking about families under stress from violence, pointed out that within a period of only six months last year there were 1,700 reports of spouse abuse and 1,618 reports of familial abuse. This would include things like abuse of children by either parent or other family members, abuse of the elderly, that kind of thing. That works out to be about 22 a day or just about one an hour, since as the ministry itself pointed out, it is true around the world, only something like 10—15 per cent of domestic violence cases are ever reported to the police. We get women coming in to the shelter for domestic violence in Trinidad who said they have never made a report to the police. A lot of them do not even know they have a right to make a report. They do not know that beating women, when you are married to them, is a crime.

The actual incidence in Trinidad and Tobago, of domestic violence, is probably one incident every 10 or 20 minutes. We have gotten to the stage, where it is not safe for a woman to walk anywhere in this country alone at night; it is not safe for a woman to drive to the airport or anywhere else for that matter. Women in this country take a risk just getting into a taxi or doing the most mundane human things. That is just outdoors. Indoors is more dangerous to women because for every attack that happens outdoors, 10 happen within the home, and nobody cares. For two, three, four, five years we have been arguing about this and nobody cares. The Ministry of National Security is not interested in domestic violence. I am convinced of it. They make statements from time to time but their inaction speaks louder than words. They would not even expose themselves to the thinking in the international community on this. I have asked to have people from the ministry, the Minister, the Commissioner of Police, attend international conferences dealing with domestic violence; the reply is that we do not have the money. It is not that important.

The community police in this country who have made a big difference in terms of domestic violence are not being taken seriously in the police hierarchy. Crimes against property and crimes involving drugs or other kinds of violence or money are being taken very seriously these days. But crimes against women—it is only women after all—nobody cares. For a lot of women in this country, just because they are women, it is like living in a concentration camp. You never know when the beatings are going to come; you never know when the burnings are going to come; you never know when the violence is going to come; and you never know when death is going to come. If you do not believe me, just pick this up and go through it and see how—from the age of 18 months to whatever age you want to find out—and what women go through in this country.

When I say that nobody cares, it is because I have gone through the budget. The domestic violence unit, for example, the Ministry of Gender Affairs, has a grand total of 13 persons in it. Nine of those are hired to answer the phone so that women can call in and talk to somebody about what is happening to them. The other four are professional staff; they gather statistics. They try to keep up with the endless requests of “come and talk to us”, talking to school children and that kind of thing.

The 22 drop-in centres that have had so much publicity, I have discovered are open only eight hours a week, and they are staffed by counsellors who are paid \$1,000 a month. That is all the money that has been allocated to this programme. How many billions of dollars did we start off with? Fourteen? Just take a look at how much is reflected in this document in relation to trying to do anything about the problem of domestic violence of women and children, little boys as well as little girls, who are the subjects of all these reports. I am convinced that nobody cares because the beatings go on, the burnings go on, one every 10 minutes. While I have been talking, there have been about three.

Women who do come to shelters talk to us about lives of such bleakness, it is a wonder that any of them remain sane, especially women who are in rural areas who are not allowed to come out of the house. Very often they live, not on a road, maybe two miles away from the nearest road. They are kept under such enormous control, they do not even try to escape. After a while—it is like dumb animals—they just cower and let the beatings go on, unless a relative or friend comes and takes them out of that situation. The relatives and friends only know about it if they happen to listen to something on the radio. Women like that do not watch television because they do not have television. They do not read about it in the

newspapers because they do not have newspapers. They do not see this debate on television because there is no access for them to do it. Once in a while, if they are lucky, they might hear something on radio and they will hear there is a drop-in centre or a shelter somewhere nearby.

I talked to a woman this morning who came for the conference of the International Association of Accounting Technicians. She happened to be there and I happened to be speaking at this conference. She said that in a town in England of 300,000 people, there are five shelters for battered women. In Trinidad and Tobago which has 1.3 million people, we do not have five shelters for battered women, which just gives you an idea of how secretly, on an official level, all this is being kept. We need funding for radio messages to go over radio stations every hour—one on every other station. How often have you ever heard a message on the radio, Mr. President, talking about domestic violence or that there is redress for it? Apart from Radio 97, nobody even mentions it.

We need community police because they do make a difference. We need them to be on a 24-7 basis. We need them in police stations throughout the country 7 days a week, 24 hours a day. At the moment they are not there on weekends, and guess when most batterings take place. You got it. There should be an overnight shelter at every police station just so people can go if the violence gets bad, to stay for a few hours until they can find a place of safety to which to go. We need domestic violence procedure manuals at every single police branch in the country, because unless the community police happen to be there we are still getting reports of women going to report incidents of violence and the reports are not recorded. We need mobile family counselling vans to go around the country so that people in remote rural areas who really need it can get counselling.

Mr. President, we need programmes starting at every Government ministry in this country, including the police and the regiment and all other ministries which are top/down programmes, official policy condemning domestic violence and spousal battering; not condoning it. Ministers of Government who batter their wives or their spouses should be removed from their positions, not coddled, as happens now. Stop the pretence that nobody knows who they are; everybody in the country knows who they are. Everybody in Trinidad, sooner or later, who is in his community knows what goes on in that community. We need more money to be budgeted and spent to do something to save the lives of women and children.

One of the things which we are squandering ourselves on is education, because it does not matter how much money goes into technical education, computers, and stopping the two shift system in secondary schools, if children are witness to violence every day of their lives, they cannot learn. Therefore, we are not going to get into that technological side. We are not going to be a total quality workforce, because we are not taking care of some of the problems right at source.

Boy children are particularly affected by this. They see the violence around them, they see it condoned, they see no police or official action, they lose respect for authority because their mother appeals to authority and nothing happens. Then they start losing respect for authority because they have been shown that it is not effective. Are we surprised that boys are dropping out of schools at enormous rates? Are we surprised at the level of violent crimes that boys are getting into? Are we all hypocrites, or are we just binding ourselves in a state of denial?

What happened to the amendments of the Domestic Violence Act? What about funding for Employee Assistance Programmes (EAP) for police and Defence Force personnel? The Trinidad and Tobago Coalition Against Domestic Violence actually raised funds from the public to provide the beginnings of counselling for those members of sections of the police force who are under so much stress and so much pressure that they become stressed out to the point where we have witnessed a case this year where two policemen on the beat, shot and killed a mentally disturbed woman just yards away from a police station. We did not hear anything more about this. We do not even know if it was subject to a disciplinary enquiry. There does not seem to be any official notice being taken, because it does not matter; it does not matter on any level of the society. Women are just being killed. People read these things in the papers, the press makes money off it because they are very sensational.

Violence is fermented in a society. Maybe reports increase the violence. Certainly when we have a situation where we have, for political reasons, a campaign going on to encourage people to support hanging, which is institutional violence and assists in brutalizing the masses so that somebody can go to a public meeting holding another man by a rope, this brutalizes the society. It brutalizes all of us. It brutalizes the people who read, the people who take the pictures and the people who do it. It is reflected in what we do.

Police arrest women who abandon their infants and do absolutely nothing to the men who have fathered these children, which as far as I am concerned,

constitutes judicial condonation of child neglect by men. These children were not the result of virgin births. Is there any attempt to find the men who father these children? No, it is the women who get it. For 20 years we have been asking for the implementation of the Garnishee Order automatically to be applied on men's salaries so men who abandon children will have their salaries garnisheed right from source. Does it happen? No. As a result poor women have to go back to the Magistrate's Court time after time to get their maintenance orders, and nobody cares. What is the answer? Start another hotline so women can complain but do not do anything to change the system. There is nothing in this budget to move towards that. Legal aid is still being refused in this country to women with domestic violence cases.

Mr. President, the philosopher, Heller Rent, talked about the banality of evil, about how boring and banal it was. There are times I think when I go through the papers, that we are living out the banality of evil because it has become such a fact of everyday life that nobody seems to care. The people who suffer the most are women and children, especially poor women and children. There is nothing—while there are aspects of this budget and I am grateful for them—that assists for the social safety net. I think we are missing out a whole area of vast needs when it comes to how we treat people because we become brutally indifferent on official levels to it—to the lives of people. It is in every ministry.

I am not going to go into details because my time is almost up. We have had an incident in this last week which, thanks to Sen. Cuffy-Dowlath, has now been sorted out in the Ministry of Housing and Settlements. I do not want to go into it but, again, it has to do with a contractor who cheated two poor persons because they were two poor women and they had no redress. They do not have voice. Poor women in this country do not have voice. They cannot take legal action. They do not have money to take legal action and besides, one knows how much it costs to take legal action in this country. They were just fortunate enough to be able to get support because I happen to know and happened to ask for some help from Sen. Cuffy-Dowlath. It looks like that matter has now been sorted out, but how many people can do this?

**2.50 p.m.**

Sen. Wade Mark yesterday talked about the need for the restructuring of the civil service and how wonderful it was all getting; about civil service reform and new mechanisms to deal with discipline, honesty, integrity and transparency. I am

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all for those things and I am all against civil service bashing, but I was struck by what Sen. Marshall said when he talked about Singapore because Singapore and Mauritius have been role models for countries our size for a long time. One of the things he said was that Singapore, in developing its model, did not just put money into education, although it did put money into education. All of its development models were done on the basis of social equity and it started off with the concept of integrity, trust and leadership in the country. That is the way they got people to buy into the social vision of what they wanted to have in Singapore.

If we are going to buy into the vision that is being put in front of us, of a total quality nation, of a total quality workforce, of a total quality people, we have to buy into a vision and the people of this country do not buy into a vision that easily.

There were eight workshops done recently—and I really am finishing—by the Management Change Unit of the Ministry of Community Development throughout the country, asking people all over Trinidad and Tobago: What do you want? What do you recommend? What programmes do you recommend that we put in to alleviate poverty and to determine what were their needs?

Mr. President, do you know what they wanted most? It was not unemployment relief. That was not even there—they said that was manipulative. It was not jobs—yes, that was there, but it was the seventh or eighth down the list. Right on top of the list was "a return to traditional and family values, to be living in a country again where people respected each other"—and this is quote/unquote, they are not my words—"regardless of their race, regardless of their religion, where we can live together as communities safely and supporting each other again". This is what people in this country want more than anything. This is the common vision.

Third on the list was respected and trusted leadership. People are looking for integrity; they are looking for values; they are looking for the shared vision of how we should go forward and we can be this total quality nation, but we cannot unless we fulfill the needs that people have and we are very, very much behind the ordinary people of this country if we think that giving people money is giving them what they want to alleviate poverty. They see spiritual poverty as being far more important than monetary poverty.

This is why, if I get a little over the top sometimes about the question of domestic violence, it is because of the spiritual poverty that results, not only during the brutalization of the society that is taking place around. I care very, very much for the society. I care very much for where my children and my—17 at the



moment—grandchildren, are going to be living and I do not want it to be a brutal society. I do not want it to be a society with no spiritual values and I do want it to be a total quality nation.

Mr. President, I am hoping that we would start to see a reflection in the budget by next year of something to show a commitment to really doing something about domestic violence.

Thank you, Mr. President.

**Sen. Kenneth Ayoung Chee:** Mr. President, I will confine my address to one matter in the 1999 budget in the interest of time and that is the proposal regarding the Enterprise Development Support Programme which is intended to foster the spirit of entrepreneurship and enterprise development, as well as provide funding, subsidized interest rates, and advisory and counselling services.

I think it is a most timely programme, given our circumstances and, in a sense perhaps, somewhat very late—no fault of the present Government—but it would be seen from some data I would mention later, how late it is.

I therefore wish to acknowledge the Minister of Finance for taking this rather important step in an area which has the potential for generating employment and creating wealth. I mentioned earlier on that we are somewhat late in this formal programme in Trinidad and Tobago. Many of us who are involved in small business programmes and training and helping are aware that formal small business programmes have been around for a long time in many countries and as far back as 25 years ago, in the 1970s, there was a very successful small business programme in Texas which has a lot to show for it.

There are and have been similar programmes in different regions of India, in South East Asia, which had to do with the fostering of the entrepreneurial spirit support system and they, too, have a lot to show for it. So, it is my hope that we, too, in Trinidad and Tobago, at the end of the day, will have something to show for it.

It has been roughly estimated, or maybe I should just refer to what has been provided in the budget—it would seem that in addition to the 4,000 people, whom I presume are micro-business people, that would share in the funding of \$30 million there are probably another 1,000 or 2,000 who would share in the higher end of the \$150 million which is being provided to institutions for funding. That, of course, is still a considerable amount but a rough estimate suggests that there are

25,000 to 50,000 persons who could be considered good prospects for entrepreneurial help and assistance if they were so interested.

I want to make a very important point about this programme and what to expect. If I am guided by the studies done abroad on these small business enterprises, within three years of the start-up of the operation, a minimum of four out of 10 of these enterprises within a three-year period are either in a distress mode or a survival situation. It is a matter of definition; they have not failed because they are still around, and the success rate is somewhere one out of five; two out of five at best.

It is not going to be an easy programme from which to achieve the stated objective of the Minister, because the objective of the Minister is a noble one, I must say, which is to increase the number of successfully-owned and managed enterprises, and from the statistics I have given, it is just not going to be that easy to achieve. Therefore, this programme calls for much support from many people; it calls for a very focussed kind of programme, well structured, well executed and well delivered. That is really the Minister's challenge in the light of the statistics, to bring about some increase in the statistical rate for those who are successful in these newly formed businesses.

Recognizing this daunting task, I see the Minister was wise enough to say he would encourage the participation of banks, credit unions and financial institutions. For someone who has had some training in this area of small business advisory services and who has attended many international symposia, I consider this particular idea of the participation of the banks, to be a very critical success factor in the whole mix of the support system and, indeed, it is very strategic as far as I am concerned. There is a special reason for that which I would mention later.

I would probably go further and suggest that the Minister should encourage and, if possible, nudge an elbow at each bank to open a second window of opportunity for small business to assist in the creation and formation of new businesses by providing funding at concessionary rates and, because of their network, they should be in a position to provide some level of advisory services in the rural as well as in the urban areas. I think that is a point very worthy of consideration.

I think the banks could set aside "X" dollars initially at concessionary rates, or a certain percentage of the capital for a certain period of time and, as is known, the banks may be looking for some *quid pro quo*—they may want some concessions

for write-offs. Well, that could be worked out, but I think the whole idea is to create enough critical mass to get this whole enterprise formation and development, and the entrepreneurial spirit to a level where there can be a lift off. For too long, we have just been on the ground. We have not really been able, in Trinidad and Tobago, to lift off. I hope, together with that second window from the banks, together with what the Government plans to do, there will be enough critical mass to take us forward in the area of small business development and formation.

I have a number of concerns for the proposed enterprise support programme. Firstly, I have a concern about the selection and approval process in the micro-business, if from the numbers and arithmetic there are likely to be 4,000 young people, or those in the age group 18—35 who are likely to take advantage of an average loan of \$8,000. Once there is that kind of loan frenzy, I think there is much room for mischief and the administrators of the programme must be very, very careful that the money does not get frittered away, that the three-year syndrome does not kick in and after three years, these people would not be around. I think that is one of my concerns and, of course, the question of who determines who gets what and how much. I suppose all those things have to be worked out in due course.

The other concern I have, if we are really to grow these new business formations is the lack of decanting centres; a home as exists elsewhere in other regions of the world—a home for these small business people to get a quick start to launch a business, where they could be supervised and where, physically, there could be some networking among the people engaged in small business in the particular location.

My other concern is the diversion of funds where the funds are not used for the purpose for which they have been loaned to the prospective entrepreneur. That, too, would lead to frittering away of the funds and, at the end of the period, much would not be seen for it. There are all the other problems which, sometimes, depending on how they are looked at, can be tantamount to funding patently, very bad projects, either through negligence, through lack of care and lack of competence. More importantly, the inadequate monitoring which is likely to take place and, perhaps, the insufficient availability of advisory services for these newly formed businesses.

**3.05 p.m.**

I would like to recommend for the Minister's consideration, the establishment of regional resource centres. This is nothing new, they exist in other countries where there are very strong enterprise development programmes. These regional resources should be properly staffed to provide training and counselling for these newly established businesses, where these owners could access advice, where they could get involved in problem-solving sessions and, more importantly, where they could do some networking among their own group and with their own fellow entrepreneurs. Mr. President, big business networking is very important. It is equally important for small business that there should be some networking and team-working. I think that is a critical point for the success of the small business sector.

I want to make the point about the banks being involved in that second window of opportunity. I think one would want to get people to migrate from micro enterprises into small enterprises. If they do not get out of that micro enterprise situation, in a way, they would always be in a subsistence level or in a distress mode. So maybe with more resources from the banks to pay attention to certain managerial and business problems—if they were to create a second window of opportunity—chances are one is going to add to the pool of successful business people, who would probably be directed in those business activities that, perhaps, are desired by the country, from a macro economic point of view.

Mr. President, once more I wish to acknowledge the Minister of Finance for including this programme in the 1999 budget. In closing, I look forward, not to the statistics, but to the stories of successful business people.

I thank you, Mr. President.

**The Minister of National Security (Sen. Brig. The Hon. Joseph Theodore):** Mr. President, I join my colleagues in extending congratulations to the hon. Minister of Finance on his people's budget which addressed, in particular, the needs of our senior citizens, in the form of an increased pension by lowering the cost of pharmaceuticals, and through the removal of customs duty and VAT on items such as hearing aids, crutches and artificial limbs.

During 1998, the Ministry of National Security embarked on a number of programmes and projects aimed at attaining the goal of safety and security for all law-abiding citizens. To a large extent we have been able to achieve this goal. We

have had successes in the areas of increased manpower and training, computerization, anti-crime initiatives, greater mobility in construction, and improvement works.

We intend to re-double our efforts during the current fiscal year to ensure an even greater degree of success. As indicated by the hon. Minister of Finance, the Government views the maintenance of a law-abiding, orderly society as critical to the success of our policy objectives. In the 1998 budget a sum of \$963 million was allocated to this ministry. The allocation for the current fiscal year is \$1,107 million, an increase of 15 per cent over the 1998 allocation.

Under the *Public Sector Investment Programme*, in 1998, we were allocated \$58.9 million and the allocation for this year is \$44.1 million, a reduction of approximately 25 per cent. The Ministry of National Security was allocated \$707.9 million under personnel expenditure for the fiscal year 1998, and revised estimates for the period January to September, was \$540 million. The failure of the Ministry to utilize the remaining \$167.9 million of that vote was due, in large part, to the change of the fiscal year.

The change in the fiscal year also affected, negatively, the performance of the ministry under the PSIP. Out of an allocation of \$58.9 million, the sum of \$26.4 million was spent. However, the projects on which the funds were spent in 1998, are now fully on stream and would be accelerated during the current fiscal year.

For the current fiscal year, personnel expenditure is \$819.5 million or an increase of \$192.6 million over the actual expenditure for 1998. This additional allocation will be used to finance, principally, recruit intakes in the police service, prison service, immigration division, the defence force and the fire service. In addition, provision has also been made for increased salaries and allowances, as well as outstanding arrears to defence force personnel. The outstanding arrears of which I speak come up to \$26.6 million and provision has been made in these 1998/1999 estimates to meet these arrears. Steps are being taken to effect payment before the end of this year.

The Trinidad and Tobago Defence Force is in the process of preparing bonds for issue. The projection is that the bonds would be completed by the end of November, 1998, and thereafter these would be issued to members of the defence force.

Looking at the PSIP and the fact that the majority of the current expenditure is going towards increased salaries and paying arrears, one realizes that we are faced with the task of managing the funds we have been allocated. To do so, it is our intention to engage in maintaining the equipment, plant and machinery that we have acquired over the last two years, not running the vehicles into the ground and parking them under the Samaan tree in the barracks and looking to buy new ones. We are going to maintain the vehicles that we have.

Right now the servicing programme has worked. One would observe that virtually all the vehicles that were leased in 1996 are on the road and in running condition. These leases come to an end in June next year. This means that we would have completed a three-year cycle with these 100 vehicles that comprised 79 jeeps and 31 cars. These vehicles, as I have said before in this Senate, would then be purchased by Government at the cost of \$1 a piece.

We can roll over this project because what happens with the lease, while it may be more expensive than purchasing, it is cheaper in the long run because one has less down time. There is comprehensive cover on the vehicles and there is a servicing schedule that is maintained throughout the year.

My ministry will be placing great emphasis on maintenance of our buildings, vehicles and equipment during this current fiscal year. This will be done through the use of in-house skilled labour. In this way we will achieve much more, since the funds will only be utilized for purchasing materials.

**3.15 p.m.**

When I say in-house, I am really referring to the artisan core in the police service and the artisan corps in the fire service. Their problem has been like certain other agencies, a lack of attention or funds, and they have not really been fully utilized in repairing properties that are used by the police.

If one recalls, more recently, when there was the matter of the Central Police Station on Wrightson Road creating a problem because of rotting floor boards, Commissioner of Police, Mr. Hilton Guy found another building and announced that the artisan corps, not only would repair the building for the police to move into, but in turn would repair the building that they had been using. The problem is that these people have not been used—they are there, they are skilled people but mainly members of the Special Reserve Police, and because they were recruited for their skills, they are not full time police officers, but they are there to perform functions in the interest of the police service. We are going to start using these people.

Mr. President, we will see in the budget speech under, fire and police, virtually most of the larger divisions have all been allocated \$1 million or \$1.1 million for maintenance.

Before I proceed, I would just like to identify the various divisions of the Ministry of National Security. Under general administration, there is: the Joint Service Staff College and the Cadet Force; the Defence Force made up of the Regiment and the Coast Guard; the Police Service, the Fire Service, the Prison Service, the Immigration Division, the National Emergency Management Agency, the Trinidad and Tobago Forensic Science Centre, Strategic Services Agency. The other agencies are the Police Complaints Authority and the Civilian Conservation Corps.

I now propose to say a few words about the major divisions in the Ministry. I shall begin with the police service.

Mr. President, during the fiscal year 1998, the police service continued to upgrade its infrastructure on communications. Emphasis was also placed on training its personnel.

In the current fiscal year, there will be the continuation in the improvement of the infrastructure. Attention will also be focussed on training and maintenance of police stations and vehicles.

In 1998, 500 new recruits graduated into the ranks of the service. One batch in February and another in September. In the fiscal year 1998/1999 provision has been made for a batch of 250 recruits.

Mr. President, although I am giving these numbers, having recruited 500 in 1998 has still not brought the police service up to its required strength, and I trust Senators will appreciate that the police have been working below the sanctioned strength although they have been demanding an increase in strength. According to Sen. Marshall, there will be a delay between a decision to increase the size of the police service and recruiting the appropriate people to fill those vacancies. There is limited accommodation and limited infrastructure.

At the present time, the Ministry is engaged in assessing the strength of the police service in the context of the following factors:

1. the introduction of new units to implement certain special plans to address the needs of the public. For example, the community policing unit and the E999 Rapid Response Unit.

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2. Reconstruction of new police stations and police posts, and the upgrading of a number of others which would require increased levels of staffing.
3. The rate of manpower loss in the police service through attrition and,
4. Not only the anticipated, but the growth in Trinidad and Tobago of the youth population among whom there has been an increasing trend of delinquency and violent crimes.

In this exercise, the Ministry is also taking account of the service of Special Reserve Police Officers and the extent to which some of these officers are working on a full-time basis. At the same time, the Ministry is also seeking to regularize the terms and conditions under which these Special Reserve Police Officers perform their duties. In this regard, a note will be submitted shortly for reconsideration by Cabinet and thereafter, appropriate legislation will be drafted.

Mr. President, I take this opportunity to explain that the Special Reserve Police were really a group of temporary officers who were drawn from among the working public. Most of these people may either have wanted to serve in the police service and moved on into other fields, but they were allowed to serve, perhaps, during their vacation outside their working hours and on weekends.

Theirs is a four-hour roster where they fill in, to allow the regular police to get time off or to supplement the numbers depending on the activities being conducted.

It appears that over the past 15 years or so, the number of SRPs has grown and not only has it grown, but we have found that there are about 1,500 SRPs presently employed with the police service and maybe, about 10 per cent of those working full time. It has become so ingrained in the police service that there is a class of SRPs called 'whole-time temporary' which is a contradiction in itself.

Mr. President, that is where the problem lies, in that the regulations do not cater for them doing anything else but part-time duty, but they are engaged in full-time duty alongside their regular counterparts, and they see their regular counterparts taking sick leave, annual vacation leave and when they retire they get a pension. Now that these people have been there so long they are asking questions.



Initially, when I joined the Ministry we sought to have the SRPs reverted to their sort of official duties as part-timers. But, again, it was found to be a problem. It seems as though there was some reluctance to increase the size of the police service so this was the way around it. Instead of asking for more people, the paper showed an establishment of just 4,000 police officers, but the number of SRPs grew over time. We are looking at these figures, and it would mean instead of keeping the SRPs on full-time duty, there is the problem that most of the SRPs feel that since they are on full-time duty, they should be absorbed and become full-time officers, but there is the problem of the entry requirements. They must have, at least, three O'levels, pass the entry exam, the interview and the medical test.

At present, we have identified those SRPs who are qualified to enter and we will deal with them, but basically the regulations are going to take care of catering for their regularization, and that is why we use that term. Some of the SRPs interpreted regularization to mean joining the regular police. That was really not the intention.

**Sen. Alfred:** Thank you very much, Mr. President. Is any consideration being given to providing some sort of pension to SRPs who worked for years, like in the night, and have retired?

**Sen. Brig. The Hon. J. Theodore:** Mr. President, there are regulations which cater for SRPs who worked seven years and more on a full-time basis to be given an *ex gratia* payment based on their service. Part-timers get nothing. The part-timers get extra employment to supplement what would have been their normal income. What has happened over the years is that this part-time job has become their income. People have bought houses, people have made payments.

To say to the SRPs we want to change what they are doing presently would be very difficult because it would change their whole life pattern. The regulations have been seen by the police association. We have discussed it with the Adjutant, the person in charge of the SRPs, the Commissioner of Police, as well as the drafting people in the Office of the Attorney General. So, we have been looking at it—and what will come out—and these regulations are not only regulations which cater for part-time people, but provisions for part-time people who are required to work whole time. This is where the problem lies. This is what we are looking at and have been looking at for over a year. Whenever we felt we had a solution, we realized we were affecting something or somebody else.

**3.25 p.m.**

Mr. President, during 1998, training opportunities were provided for all levels of police officers; 29 police officers received training abroad and over 300 officers received training locally. Training abroad included intelligence gathering, strategic intelligence analysis, basic firearms and explosives, identification training, training sessions on illicit substances and prosecution of drug offenders. This training was done by 11 inspectors and three sergeants who are the police prosecutors in the courts. Through local training programmes, officers received refresher courses in the proper manner of stripping and handling firearms, and courses were also conducted in specific areas such as court prosecution, fraud investigation and performance management.

A programme of professional development training was also undertaken by the Joint Services Staff College catering to the needs of the middle management level of the protective services with special emphasis being placed on the police service. Although the Joint Services Staff College take in students on a proportionate basis, we found that the need was greater in the police service and this is why the emphasis was on more police receiving the training than firemen and officers within the prison service.

The police service has also been conducting a computer literacy programme to ensure that all officers become computer literate and they own their computers. They have a training room and they conduct their own courses. In 1998/1999, professional development training will continue as well as courses aimed at boosting the competency of police officers in modern crime detection and management techniques.

Mr. President, the Joint Services Staff College will re-introduce the associate degree in security management and police officers will be encouraged to enlist. Between 25 to 30 police officers will benefit from this course.

Maintenance of Buildings: Mr. President, as I mentioned earlier, we are going to use our own resources to upkeep the buildings occupied by the police. The allocation for maintenance is \$1.1 million for the year and the maintenance of buildings housing the various divisions of the Ministry of National Security, in particular, police buildings, has been a source of concern which we are going to address.

For the current fiscal year we will institute a maintenance programme beginning with selected buildings in the police service and the fire service and

thereafter it will be extended to all buildings under the ministry. To put this programme into effect the Ministry's Project Manager, who is a qualified engineer, would lead a team of field personnel drawn from the artisan corps and elsewhere to begin detailed inspections of selected buildings. Again, we found this was a problem because it was only when something went wrong or stopped working that anybody heard about it. This way, we would check on the buildings on a regular basis and really engage in a programme of preventative maintenance.

**Maintenance of Vehicles:** Mr. President, similarly, the vehicles maintenance arrangement which was negotiated with NIPDEC to ensure that new vehicles were kept in a roadworthy condition had been working satisfactorily. When this comes to an end, it will be the responsibility of the police to maintain their own vehicles.

We also introduced a programme where the repair of police vehicles was done by private garages which were pre-qualified. We found that this has not worked out particularly well because the cost of repairs was quite excessive so we are going to, perhaps, make demands on the police to do their own in-house repairs. We intend to review this arrangement during the current fiscal year to ensure that more police vehicles are brought into service and are available to respond to reports from the general public in a timely fashion. A provision of \$1 million has been made to cater for the maintenance of vehicles.

**Construction, Reconstruction and Refurbishment:** In 1998 an allocation of \$13.3 million was provided for the implementation of several projects in the police service, including the construction and refurbishment of a number of police stations throughout the country, and the purchase and refurbishment of police vehicles. As of September 30, the sum of \$6.2 million was utilized. During this same period the following projects were implemented: the El Socorro/Barataria Police Station was completed at a total cost of \$4.8 million and was commissioned in July; preliminary designs were prepared for the Roxborough Police Station; and police stations at Freeport, Mon Repos and Gran Couva were completed at a total cost of \$6.4 million. They will be commissioned shortly.

Construction of the Cunupia and Rio Claro Police Stations continue and I expect them to be completed in the current fiscal year. The cost of these stations is estimated at \$2.8 million and \$3.1 million respectively. Construction continues on the Narcotics Unit and Fraud Squad building at the site of the old Mirror Building on Richmond Street.

Phase I refurbishment of the San Fernando Police Station was completed in August at a cost of \$3.9 million and police posts were constructed at Malabar and Moruga in keeping with Government's policy to maintain a police presence in high-risk areas. The post at Moruga is completed, but the one at Malabar is expected to be finished by the end of this month. The total cost for both posts is \$1.7 million. More recently, a police mobile unit has been installed on Upper Piccadilly Street because of the complaints received from members of the neighbourhood about the area being used by bandits as hiding places and shortcuts to get away from the police.

Mr. President, with respect to the old police headquarters building, the intention has always been to restore it as the police headquarters. Somewhere along the line people got the impression that having built the police administration building it became police headquarters. That building was planned long before the police headquarters was destroyed. I am glad to say that the old police headquarters will be reconstructed as far as possible with its original exterior.

**Sen. Jagmohan:** Mr. President, this seems an appropriate time for me to kindly ask the Minister for some important information. In San Fernando there is a new police headquarters—a very beautiful piece of architecture—and what is now regarded as the San Fernando Police Station is on rented premises but the old building is being refurbished. We are wondering what would happen when the building in front on the Promenade is finished. Will it be used as the San Fernando Police Station?

**Sen. Brig. The Hon. J. Theodore:** Mr. President, that is a useful question. Duplicating the facilities in Port of Spain is what happened in San Fernando. In Port of Spain there is a police headquarters and a police administration building. We built one in Sangre Grande and, in San Fernando, what was the police station will continue to be the police station when it is refurbished. The other building that is adjacent to it is the San Fernando Police Administrative Block, which is doubling up as a police station now. The refurbishing is being done in such a way so as to preserve the original architectural design which is what we have in mind for the old police headquarters.

**Sen. Mohammed:** Will you continue renting?

**3.35 p.m.**

Again, it has to do with the whole development in San Fernando, and the Promenade. The fire station has to be moved and there is quite a lot going on. So

the external walls of the old police station will be retained and the interior will be completely reconstructed with modern facilities. All the original office units will be rebuilt and this building is expected to be completed in two years' time. All designs and planning have been completed and a contractor has already been chosen. Construction is expected to start as soon as the contract documents are executed.

Computerization. Mr. President, significant advances have also been made in respect of the police service computerization project. At this time, the installation of a Wide Area Network communication system has been completed, covering seven divisional headquarters and a general occurrence and incident report module has been installed. As a result of the introduction of computer technology, the police service now has faster and more accurate access to information regarding criminal records, warrants, personal records, firearms and data regarding motor vehicle accidents and car thefts. In the current budget there is a provision of \$2.2 million to continue the computerization exercise. This sum will be utilized to acquire the appropriate software packages which will facilitate information gathering and analysis. The sum also caters for the purchase of special cabinets to house the computers.

Mr. President, the computerization process would also provide a number of additional advantages, among which is the ability to furnish statistics in any form in all aspects of crime; facilitate the quick, accurate breakdown of statistics by type, area, time of day, age of offender, relationship between victim and offender, and so forth.

Having said that, I refer to a point made by Sen. Mahabir-Wyatt concerning domestic violence and the crimes that are being committed. With this format, we will be able to analyze the crimes, because simply seeing in the newspaper that somebody has been murdered does not really tell you—in the reports that I get which are simply numbers—the relationship; whether the person who was raped was a godchild or stepchild, or whether the person who was murdered was a wife, girlfriend or neighbour. We are now moving on to better analyze and classify types of crimes that are being committed. We were concentrating on areas, but as Sen. Mahabir-Wyatt says, the type of crime is changing while the violence is constant. There is more domestic violence and there is more crime being committed against children and relatives, generally. So in order to deal with that, we are making sure that the records are up-to-date. This provision also provides management with information which would facilitate decision making on matters such as where to site new police stations and where police stations require additional power.

Anti-crime initiative: In addition to the E999 Rapid Response system, the fight against crime and lawlessness was advanced with the implementation of anti-crime initiatives such as Operation LEAP and Community Policing. Since December 1997, the Government endorsed a comprehensive law enforcement action plan which mobilized all the personnel and resources of the police and defence force and other national security agencies in a coalition against the criminal elements of our society. LEAP continues to enjoy a great deal of success and is serving as a deterrent to crime. Our feedback indicates that these exercises have generally found favour with members of the public.

Mr. President, I want to speak a bit about community policing. Basically, we are engaged in a deepening and widening of the Community Policing Programme which was launched in November 1996. As a result, the community police officers have been actively involved in communities throughout Trinidad and Tobago. They conduct patrols, investigate reports of domestic violence, family disputes, juvenile delinquency, child abuse and neighbourhood disputes. They mediate, conduct counselling sessions for disputing parties, deliver lectures on crime prevention and other relevant topics to schools and other community organizations.

Again, Mr. President, the deadline or the anticipated completion or development of any programme is taken in Trinidad and Tobago in—what shall I say—a manner where everything needs to get done right away. They want instant results. The problem with the community police is that one started this conversion using police from within the police service. It is not a group of 1,000 or 2,000 people who we trained and brought into the police station. So there is a time for this change to take place. I certainly would like, one day, to see all police functioning as community police. We do not see the community police as being any particular section because, again, as Sen. Mahabir-Wyatt mentioned, if that particular community police officer is not in the station, the other officers there do not feel that they should take up the case and the matter is deferred. So the first phase is that all police stations will have elements of the community policing and the training will expand, using some of the very police themselves and the instructors we have, to spread the community policing culture in the police service. It is going to take some time.

Mr. President, another objective of the community policing is to increase the establishment of neighbourhood watch groups in Trinidad and Tobago. There are at present, 99 such watch groups which are concentrated mainly in Central Trinidad. To assist the community police to perform the range of duties they are

called upon to do, training has been undertaken in mediation, conciliation and counselling methods. Again, the police rely on the professional counsellors. They can take a matter to a point, after which they should refer it to the professionals. They are not suggesting they have the answers to everything.

The community policing programme is now entering a new phase. Now that the entire country is sensitized to the philosophy of community policing, the next stage in the creation of structures and systems within the communities is to plan and implement strategies for solving problems in the communities. Emphasis is now being placed on the establishment of regional councils in each of the nine police divisions. There are eight in Trinidad and one in Tobago. These councils will be made up of prominent members of the community. For example, religious leaders, teachers, representatives at community councils and other social groups, who will sit together and plan strategies to prevent crime in the community and to either get advice from or to give advice to the police. In fact, instruments of appointment have been handed to representatives of each regional council by the Prime Minister during his recent visits to police youth clubs in the various police divisions.

The Community Policing Unit has also set itself the task of finding ways to nurture and develop the full potential of the young people of our nation and to steer them away from illegal activities. Again, Mr. President, it is not the desire of the police to do this in isolation or independently, but the idea is to work with the other youth groups and non-governmental organizations and other organizations that are interested in curbing crime and having a demand reduction, so the police will become part of this network to be preventors of crime rather than allowing a situation to develop where they have to turn around, arrest somebody and investigate a situation.

The community police officers have been pursuing plans to establish police youth clubs in all 80 police station districts throughout Trinidad and Tobago. There are 45 police youth clubs existing at present, with a membership of approximately 1,400 young people and children and young people between the ages of 5—25. As part of its continued effort to reach the young people in our communities and to make a difference in their lives, the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service recently hosted the 27th Annual Training Conference of the International Association of Police Community Relations Officers. The theme of this conference was “Embracing the Youth Through Community Policing”, a theme carefully selected to bring to the forefront the more critical issues to be

considered when promoting positive youth development. The conference was very successful and the police service must be congratulated for this initiative. It is the first time ever that such a conference has been held in the Caribbean.

**Praedial Larceny Units:** Despite what we hear, it seems as though a number of persons who complain of praedial larceny, either do not tell the police or complain only when someone asks them about it. Another initiative of the police service to deal with crime in the country is the establishment of Praedial Larceny Units. These units address the concerns and problems faced by farmers, gardeners, land owners and livestock producers, with respect to larceny of their products. These units have been set up in the following police divisions from February, 1998: South Western, Central, Southern, Northern, Eastern and Tobago. Officers in these units regularly patrol areas which are at the mercy of thieves. It should be noted that these units work in close collaboration with officers of the Ministry of Agriculture Land and Marine Resources.

Mr. President, I wish to say a bit on the Employee Assistance Programme, again a matter raised by Sen. Mahabir-Wyatt. There is a proposal for the introduction of an Employee Assistance Programme in the police service, and this has been receiving attention. There is general agreement that law enforcement work is stressful and the policing profession is very high on the list of the most stressful professions in the world. Research has shown that the sources of stress are numerous and can lie within or outside the work environment. Factors such as poor working condition, interpersonal conflicts and career stagnation can create stress within the organization, while sources of stress outside the organization may include family problems, marital problems and financial troubles. The very nature of the job may be the source of the stress for some officers.

Mr. President, in fact, in our own context, we have found that factors which contribute to stress among police officers include:

- i. demands of the job, including the high risk factor;
- ii. long working hours;
- iii. poor working conditions;
- iv. lack of physical resources and amenities;
- v. criteria for promotions; and
- vi. poor working relationships.



In cognizance of these factors which contribute to a stressful environment, my ministry has been and will continue to undertake a number of measures which will improve the physical conditions under which the officers work as well as enhance the capability of the officers, to improve the management structure of the organization. Some of the measures taken are:

- i. increase manpower and equipment;
- ii. establishment of a human resource management unit;
- iii. construction, reconstruction and refurbishment of police stations and police posts;
- iv. increased opportunities for training and retraining;
- v. introduction of a new, improved performance appraisal management system; and
- vi. computerization.

Any employee assistance programme to be introduced would be designed to cater to the specific needs of the Ministry of National Security.

I move on to the Defence Force. As I said, the Defence Force comprises the Coast Guard and the Regiment, and has a particular role in dealing with illegal drug trafficking. The Coast Guard is the organization that will be the key one in preventing drugs from entering our country. In my last budget contribution, hon. Senators may recall that I indicated that my ministry was in the process of implementing a programme of refurbishment and replacement of Coast Guard vessels, to improve the unit's maritime surveillance capability.

I am pleased to inform that work on seven patrol launches has been virtually completed. Two of the vessels are at present undergoing sea trials—these are two 65-footers—while the other four 55-footers are nearing completion and test runs will commence for two on October 26 and for the remaining two on November 9. Repairs to the larger vessel, which is CG6, the TTS Cascadura, is expected to be completed by December 1998. Under the Public Sector Investment Programme, \$2 million has been allocated to complete this project.

It should also be noted that the construction of the Coast Guard administration building at Staubles Bay is scheduled for completion in December 1998. They are really two buildings actually, and they cater for, among other things, a dormitory, accommodation for both male and female officers, engineering workshop, and the

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other building is for the offices and stores. In addition, a contract for the purchase and installation of equipment at Morne St. Catherine has been awarded. On commissioning, the equipment will upgrade the communications infrastructure of the Coast Guard.

As part of the ongoing programme of co-operation between the government of the United States of America and the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, the United States government has offered 2-82 foot cutters and three Defence Force technical experts have already visited the United States of America and inspected the vessels. They were found to be in good condition and suitable for our needs. Government is now going through the formality to effect the transfer of the vessels. I am advised that they will be available for delivery in December of this year. We will be flying two 10-man crews up to the West Coast of the United States. The vessels will be taken down to Long Beach, California, where they will be sailed to Port of Spain.

At the same time, my ministry is examining the options to refit the *CG5*, the *TTS Barracuda*. Within the next two months after we have examined the technical reports from various firms, a decision will be taken on the future of that vessel. I wish to emphasize that having invested large sums in refurbishing these vessels, a proper maintenance schedule will be put into place to ensure that they perform at optimum level and that they have a life of at least five years.

Mr. President, the sum of \$1 million has been allocated under the Public Sector Investment Programme to complete improvement works at the Coast Guard air wing at Piarco, to accommodate four aircraft which are being donated by the United States. The four aircraft consist of two Fairchild C-26 and two PA-31 Piper Navajoes. These aircraft will be employed in counternarcotic surveillance programmes and will be equipped with radar and other equipment which will facilitate easy identification and communication between the aircraft and Coast Guard bases and vessels. The receipt of these aircraft will make a significant impact on the Government's fight against crime.

**Mr. President:** The speaking time of the hon. Senator has expired.

*Motion made,* That the speaking time of the hon. Senator be extended by 15 minutes. [*Hon. W. Mark*]

*Question put and agreed to.*

**Sen. Brig. The Hon. J. Theodore:** Mr. President, I thank you and the hon. Senators. As I said, the Coast Guard will be on the cutting edge of this fight against drugs and the receipt of these two aircraft will make a significant impact on our patrolling and identification of vessels that are not permitted in our waters. So far four pilots and four technicians of the Coast Guard air wing have already received training in the United States in the operation and maintenance of these aircraft. The contracts have already been signed. My information is that the C-26s will be ready for delivery in November and the two Piper Navajoes are standing by in Miami for collection.

**3.55 p.m.**

My ministry is also taking steps to restructure the air wing which would involve, among other things, additional manpower as well as upgrading the skills of the personnel.

Mr. President, the major focus of the regiment in 1998 was providing the necessary support for the police service in particular, with respect to the LEAP exercises. In fiscal 1998/1999, this function would be continued in addition to which the regiment would concentrate to a large extent on developing its engineering corps. The main functions of the corps would be to construct simple, single and two-storey structures; conduct limited earth-moving activities; construct fourth-class roads to establish lines of communication in rural areas; assist in water delivery to remote areas in the local community; assist in environmental restoration projects; assist in developing projects to reduce flood damage; conduct repairs to plumbing and electrical systems in dwelling units; perform simple quarrying demolition operations and construct simple single-span bridges.

When fully established, the corps would consist of 6 officers and 200 other ranks, it would be located at Camp Cumuto which was the home of the Secondary Roads Company and where there is already both mobile and fixed equipment to facilitate the operation of the corps. Three of the officers have already received training as combat engineers and of the intake of recruits who are in training now that passed out on November 14, the majority of them are trades persons who would be able to add some quality to the corps.

Other projects for 1998/1999 include the design and construction of a sewerage treatment plant at Teteron Bay at \$1.9 million; upgrade of facilities at Camp Cumuto and electrical works at Teteron Barracks, \$0.2 million and \$0.35 million respectively; purchase of vehicle and equipment for the regiment, \$0.75

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million; upgrade of facilities at Camp Omega for which the sum of \$0.15 million has been allocated. Training of the military would continue in the area of command and staff courses, and defence management and US Army engineering courses.

I would like to talk a bit on the Civilian Conservation Corps. Mr. President, the emphasis on youth is very important to the Ministry of National Security and we are committed to making sure that organizations such as the Cadet Corps and the Civilian Conservation Corps function effectively and are able to raise the self-esteem of the young persons who attend their classes and would be in a position to offer training which would make them employable and in a position to take their place in the society.

The Civilian Conservation Corps is a unit of the Defence Force which was established in 1993. Since its inception, no less than 25,000 young persons have benefited from the programme and the entire country has benefited from their environmental effort which includes reforestation; establishment and improvement of recreational parks; beach beautification projects; restoration of historical sites, and establishment of nature trails. The programme structure which has evolved overtime, is designed to meet the needs of the target market of young persons between the ages of 18 and 25.

A particular success has been the induction programme which exposes trainees to an abundance of life skills. Training information includes self-esteem and job orientation, while conservation remains a major activity of the Civilian Conservation Corps' programme. Greater efforts are being made to develop trade skills such as plumbing, masonry, food preparation and agriculture production. The corps has been allocated the sum of \$15 million to implement its programme during the 1998/1999 fiscal year.

I would say a few words about the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) because they are very involved today in the flooding. They were also involved in the hurricane relief for St. Kitts and Antigua/Barbuda. During fiscal 1998, the National Emergency Management Agency which is tasked with facilitating the preparation of response and recovery plans for the country, and the hazard mitigation programme, undertook the following activities: Analysis of sectoral vulnerability and risks, and development of a technical manual for retrofitting residential and public buildings to resist natural hazards. In Tobago, we rebuilt homes which were damaged, we were able to give advice from the engineers at the University of the West Indies and pay for the materials which were required under the emergency programme for the rebuilding of these homes.

NEMA co-ordinates all activities related to emergency preparedness, response and recovery. The agency is not only responsible for the co-ordination of local activities, but works closely with the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Response Agency (CDERA) in rendering disaster emergency assistance at the regional level. It is significant to note that NEMA is designated as the subregional Disaster Emergency Response Operational Unit for Grenada and Guyana. It has been allocated the sum of \$984,800 to undertake its work programme for 1998/1999.

Among the activities scheduled to be implemented are the enactment of legislation governing disaster management in Trinidad and Tobago, strengthening disaster management skills at the local government level, and classification of roles of all agencies involved in the national disaster management mechanism. I would make one point on the second item of strengthening disaster management skills at the local government level, that is what they do. They do not do it for you, they work at the council level and each region has its trained specialist and they are the first response. They are the ones who react. What NEMA does is co-ordinate and deal with the entire country and would provide resources or get other agencies to become involved.

Many people think that NEMA would turn up with several truck loads of supplies and people and clean up. NEMA consists of about five persons: a co-ordinator, a couple assistant co-ordinators, maybe a clerk and a secretary. They work all year around holding workshops, seminars, giving lectures, putting out brochures and pamphlets and so forth to assist people in dealing with disaster mitigations. It is really a disaster preparedness agency, more than a disaster response agency. They have been seen in Trinidad and Tobago as a response organization. They are there to show people how to deal with the hurricane situation.

I would close by saying a few words on Tobago. My ministry has also been paying close attention to Tobago and would ensure that all appropriate facilities and amenities are provided there. Over the years, criminal activity in Tobago has been on the increase, as a consequence, the Commissioner of Police has been meeting periodically with representatives from the Tobago House of Assembly and other significant stakeholders in Tobago to discuss measures to address the situation. In particular, the spate of tourist-related crime prompted many initiatives as follows: the Assistant Commissioner of Police now has overall responsibility for police matters in Tobago; a special task force was established by the police service to deal with the situation and the group has been successfully carrying out on-going exercises against law breakers.

*Appropriation Bill*  
[HON. J. THEODORE]

*Wednesday, October 21, 1998*

The Narcotics Unit in Tobago has also been upgraded and the number of officers assigned to Tobago has been increased and plans are in train to upgrade the Community Policing Unit by the recruitment of special reserve police officers trained as motorcyclists to perform patrol on beaches, residential areas, and in high crime areas. It is also intended that police officers attached to Tobago be targeted for special training in the context of the high probability of their having to relate to tourists. In this regard, eight officers attended a Crime Awareness Programme which was organized by TIDCO last August and further to that, on the initiative of the United States Ambassador to Trinidad and Tobago, there are plans in train to host another training programme aimed at sensitizing police officers and other persons such as immigration officers, customs officers and hoteliers to methods of preventing and detecting crime against tourists.

On the prison facility, and we are still in Tobago, in May of 1998, Cabinet took a decision that NIPDEC would conduct a feasibility study and survey to determine whether and what kind of prison facility should be established in Tobago. The survey was to take account of, but not necessarily be limited to, location and acreage of lands, size and composition of prison population, kind of facility, whether minimum, medium, or maximum security or some combination of all three, the capacity of the facility, cost, financing proposals, staffing and training needs, cost of outfitting the facility, and estimated annual operational and maintenance cost. So as far as Tobago goes, we are aware of the problem with prisoners having to be housed at the prison in Trinidad.

I think I am at the end of my time, but I would like to mention the Trinidad Maximum Security Prison because sometime ago Sen. Shabazz, in one of his contributions mentioned that it might not be a good idea to open the prison because everybody would run out and we would have nobody to secure. I took note of that and again, only yesterday Sen. Philip Marshall, when enquiring about the projects at Piarco Airport, and the prison, suggested that we were having difficulty in executing the project. I am pleased to say that the transfer of prisoners to Golden Grove started on September 1, 1998 and notwithstanding *Pratt and Morgan* we were able to execute the project. So that being the case the prison is being occupied. I do not have the numbers handy, but there are 400 prison officers who have been trained and the prison officer training is continuing and we anticipate that by June next year, the prison would be fully functional with its full number of officers and prisoners which the prison could accommodate.

The infirmary and the workshop which have not yet been opened is simply awaiting the purchase of the equipment to put into the workshop. So basically the maximum security prison can hold 2,100 persons; there are 154 inmates now and 350 persons have already been transferred from the other prisons. There are 480 officers who have been trained and the total complement of officers is 800.

**Sen. Daly:** How many prisoners are there per cell?

**Sen. Brig. The Hon. J. Theodore:** There are three prisoners per cell, and there is a double and a single bunk and there are toilet and showering facilities within the cell.

**4.10 p.m.**

Mr. President, in concluding, I would like to emphasize that the Ministry of National Security is not simply about arrests, and we certainly do not advocate that building more prisons is the answer. The one in Tobago would be the exception, because it is a matter of convenience for the relatives and the matter of transporting people back and forth. We have joined with the Ministry of Social Development, the Ministry of Education and the NGOs to deal with a reduction in crime and more particularly, to address the problems that our young people are having and maybe contribute to a better style of life for them so that they could truly grow up in a society of which we can all be proud.

Thank you very much.

**Sen. Dr. Eric St. Cyr:** Mr. President, I want to begin by offering my congratulations to the Minister of Finance on the presentation of his fourth budget. Let me say that yet again, Sir, I know this good Minister to be a very competent professional and a very efficient Minister. I would like to compliment him on the technical expertise that he brings to bear on the nation's financial affairs. Where we would like to come in by way of comment and constructive criticism is probably best illustrated in this way: while the Minister is an expert at driving the vehicle, we have to help him find the road. *[Laughter]* In saying that, let me not suggest by any means that any one of us here knows the road, but together, bringing our collective wisdom and a historical perspective, and I dare say, since we are going in directions that no one probably has gone before, we need the guidance of a theory to go into the unknown.

I want to begin by joining with Sen. Montano and ask the Minister to deal with the queries which Sen. Montano made and which have been made elsewhere

pertaining to the numbers. The reason I am doing this is not that I am questioning the accuracy of the numbers. I have had some close connection with the Ministry of Finance. I know the competence and the integrity of the staff there, and I know that the integrity of the budgeting process is well grounded, but I am asking for the responses to the queries on the numbers because we need to build as leaders on all sides, a consensus. In other words, if some people are not confident in the numbers and speak publicly, that could destroy the general sense in the nation as to the integrity of the budget. I think it is important that we get some good responses clarifying those queries on the numbers.

I, myself, was concerned about the new item, customs user fees, and I would like to add one other. I see that the Central Bank profits from financial institutions which was forecasted to provide profits of \$5 million has been revised to \$72.8 million in fiscal 1998/1999. When we see large jumps like that, it is important that we have an explanation just to inform and reassure us as to precisely what is happening.

At any rate, Mr. President, I do think that one of the fundamentals of the Westminster system, through whose traditions our system largely derives, is the tradition that the Executive is responsible to the Legislature. When questions are asked here, one is not asking a favour. One is really saying they are responsible to us and they must respond accurately, fairly and openly, because this is the system that we have. My point there is that I join with Sen. Montano to ask whether we can get clarification on the various numbers which have been asked for both here and in another place.

I want to comment on a few individual matters, and the first is the move towards making available throughout the society access to computers. I was looking over something that I had dealt with in 1982 when I saw that I had raised that matter back in 1982. I am very heartened that we are moving in the direction both of making hardware and software more accessible because of the removal of various duties, and also what I understand to be the accurate way that the Minister has put it, the equivalent of, at least, one computer per classroom in every school. I think this is very important that the young people of the nation, of whatever income and social background, would have access at a young and early age to this modern piece of technology. I want to compliment the Minister for going in that direction. In saying so, however, I do want to sound a warning that we must not give the impression that every person will be able to earn their living by becoming a computer wizard—Bill Gates all over the place. This is modern technology and



we do have to move into the modern world, so I want to compliment the Minister on that measure.

The second matter I want to comment briefly on is the measures brought in to deal with foreign-used vehicles. The Minister of Works and Transport provided some very hard data, and those of us with our eyes open were beginning to sense that our roads were becoming as crowded as they were in 1982. I feel that 20,000 additional vehicles on the road per year is really a matter of which we must sit up and take note. I do fully understand that it made sense three or so years ago to use this device which enabled vehicles to be accessed at a lower cost to the nation in foreign exchange and lower cost to individuals in TT currency, but I do fully support the Minister in this move, and I note in particular that in his original budget statement he did give his central reason, namely that he is beginning to dampen the demand for consumer durables.

It is a feature of this society that the desire to own a motor vehicle seems to be the thing to which every person aspires and there is nothing wrong with that, but we have to look at the full impact of such a matter and also to make sure that those who use our roads do pay for their use. Incidentally, the use of a motor vehicle cannot be effected except there was a proper road system and compared with the cost of a vehicle, the provision of roads for these vehicles to use is enormous compared with that. The comment I heard by the Minister, made elsewhere, that there might be some minor modification at the lower end, I believe is interesting, but somehow, I think when one is bringing a measure in, one carefully thinks the thing through. One puts it in place and one should really properly hold it there, once one has thought it through very carefully.

The third general comment I want to make pertains to pensions, savings and the national insurance scheme. I understand what the Minister is doing. He warned last year that we had to bring the nation to a position where more of us were making provision for our own retirement, and I think this is good. I think he is also telling us that we need to save more, and that is good. I do have some little concern about the specifics of the measure. I did some very rough calculations and if my arithmetic would help, it seemed to me that if at the upper end we were taking approximately \$16 dollars per week from each employee for four weeks per month, twelve months per year, and the employer was contributing twice as much as the employee, if we were to assume that there were 300,000 employees, that gave me a total additional intake of just about \$700 million.

**4.25 p.m.**

If we increased at the upper end the NIS payment by about \$700 a month, and took that by 38,000 pensioners, we were giving out just a little over \$300 million. So, I thought that we were taking in or forcing about \$400 million of additional savings, which quite frankly, I think the nation can afford. But, the concern I had was: who will ultimately bear this increment in saving? The employee will pay the additional—I think it turns out to be about—\$2,300 per year. The question is: Would the employer pay his additional portion per employee? In which case, profits would go down. The estimate I made there roughly was that it would take a bite of about \$450 million into profits. Would they bear that? Or would they seek to pass that on to the consumer? In which case there could be a measure of inflation. Or, as Sen. Jagmohan suggested yesterday, people might reduce levels of employment. But it seems to me that these are areas of fine-tuning. I am heartened by the statement the Minister made that all of this is subject to proper actuarial review and this is not due to take effect, as I understood it, before February 1 next year, which does not give a great deal of time, but these are comments which I think should be borne in mind as we look at that measure.

The issue of savings in this country historically, has not only been the quantum, but by and large, where the savings have accrued, as the hon. Minister of Planning and Development told us yesterday. The individual saves relatively little compared with corporations, but I think the more important issue is the form in which savings are held. In fact, the period when, in modern times, we experienced the greatest savings in this country, it was pretty nearly all done by the public sector. Really, what is critical about the quantum of savings and where they accrue is what form would those savings be held in. I think that we used to have substantial savings held largely in pension plans and insurance premiums, and those funds, I think, pretty largely built very substantial large insurance buildings in the urban areas.

I think also when we gave large incentives in the form of tax breaks on mortgage interest, what we saw happening was large amounts of savings, but they were held largely in the form of middle class residential homes. As Sen. Philip Marshall pointed out, really, the issue in economic development is to get our savings into those areas of social capital which either enhance production or the quality of life in the society. I think Sen. Marshall was very clear in telling us that it is not always bricks and mortar, not always physical capital, since human capital, which could be built up over the years by the study of Latin, Greek, French and

literature would so enhance the quality of the human person that life is not nasty, brutish and short, violence being taken out on the womenfolk in particular.

Sen. Mahabir-Wyatt really worried me when she spoke. It is a very serious issue she raised. All I could find in my thinking was: what is the cause of all this? What is the cause of such wicked, violent, inhuman behaviour? I was looking at Sen. Rev. Daniel Teelucksingh, because he would probably say it is sin in man, and we really need to address it in a way that I could say something more about, but probably another time, how to deal with the change we need to see effected in the human person. I do not personally think that we can chase everyone and lock them up or beat them up or so, I think we really have to go for a change in the human heart, which takes us even further away from the budget, to which I would like to return. *[Laughter]*

The final general comment I want to make pertains to the little reference on page 13 to agriculture and later on to the restructuring of Caroni (1975) Limited. Let me make two comments there. I read in the weekend newspapers, the *Sunday Guardian*, the presentation of the hon. Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources in the other place. I know some persons have wondered whether this was a proper use of public funds, but I am not going in that direction. What I want to say is that coming through the Minister's presentation is the return to the provision of subsidies on a whole range of items. I do not know of any country in the world where agriculture is not subsidized, so that I am not going in the direction of knocking the provision of subsidies to the agricultural sector because this may be necessary. The one comment I want to make on that is that subsidies should be production subsidies, but they should always be put at the output end of the production line and not at the input end of the production line. *[Desk thumping]* So that, we need to flesh that out and look at it and debate it more fully.

Pertaining to the restructuring of Caroni (1975) Limited, I see that the proposal is to divide the whole big company into a number of smaller companies built around specific costs and profit centres. I do believe that this is partly correct, not totally correct. The fundamental point being that Caroni (1975) Limited, as we know it, used to be what is called a field unit, that is a part of a wider world company and the specific function of this local entity was to grow canes, mill and produce raw sugar, ship it abroad. So that by itself, Caroni (1975) Limited as structured, cannot, cannot function effectively. It is as if you have cut the head off from an organism and expect one of the arms or limbs to function. But, it does

really seem to me that we are taking rather long to deal with this central issue. What we have is a number of resources in that area: land, people, roads, buildings, equipment and, the issue really is how to organize those resources to make them productive.

I would say quite frankly what I fear. I really fear that one of the companies which will emerge would be a land development company, which will then develop real estate and subsidize the rest. In my view, that would be the equivalent of consuming capital and going in the wrong direction. I put it this way because when I was involved in looking at these resources about 15 years ago, it was put to us that there should be a subdivision of sorts, with one company being a land development company and one would develop real estate and sell it off at enormous profit and use it to subsidize the other divisions. But I do not know what the plans are, what the thinking is, and I am trying to forestall our going in that direction.

Mr. President, I come to my final point, which I want to deal with and I probably will spend a little longer developing this argument. Let me start with Sen. Marshall's very graphic contribution, how the pot dwindles. Because, what he really led us to is the central business problem, namely, the surplus. In a home, in a business, in a nation, there are run-of-the-mill activities which we do every day, which we have to do every day, which use up so much of our resources. Those are inescapable, they are routine and, for instance, in a business one sets executives and functionaries and they handle those matters.

**4.40 p.m.**

Mr. President, the key in the growth and development of a business, as of the family and the nation, is how much of one's total income is not consumed in routine day to day activities. We would call that the surplus, because that is what you can deploy to change the structure and direction and to expand the productive base of what have you.

My understanding is that in most corporations, their leadership, the key executives, spend pretty nearly all their time really grappling with how best to use that surplus, because once you have placed it, you have used it. If it is successful you have done well. If it is not successful, you have virtually thrown it away.

What Sen. Marshall took us to is that the surplus in an economy such as this can be anywhere between \$1 billion and probably \$1.5 billion, in a total of \$14

billion, which is something of the order of about 9 per cent, which is good. Therefore, the problem of the budget exercise—and this is where I would like us to assist the excellent driver in finding the road [*Laughter*—as in a business, that surplus has to be converted into social capital, remembering that the objective of the society is enhancing the quality of life of the entire nation.

I did not congratulate the hon. Minister on this, but I was very happy to see old age pensions go up, and his concern for the weak, infirm and so forth, and some of the additional requests. I know that a small amount of additional money would do some good elsewhere.

The problem of the surplus being deployed to enhance the stock of social capital, is really critical. If we are to put it this way: the additional roads we may build for a young first time employed person working in the construction industry to drive his foreign used vehicle on, is at the expense of a computer or two in a school where a genius might be located, but could only be found if there was that facility there.

Let us not go at each other as though some are competent and some are not. It is very easy with the wisdom of hindsight to see what we did wrong. I nearly said 1975—1982 but we will say "in the past". [*Laughter*] I am really sorry that the hon. Minister of Energy and Energy Industries is not here because we could have debated this matter.

We are really going into unknown territory. We are making decisions now that we will only know in 10 years whether they were wise or unwise. Perhaps one of the first things I would appeal for is—and I know that political banter and "picong" are an essential part of our culture, but to me, pushed too far or too hard, could really cause us not to have as helpful a debate as we could have otherwise.

Essentially, the only basis on which we could make these choices is on the basis of a certain theoretical conception of how the society and the economy works. There are just two very simple pieces of theory that are fundamental to how this economic system works. The first piece we would call the "staple hypothesis". This is not new, we used to read of the merchants of the staple, and this goes back thousands of years. You went to America, there were new lands, you cut down lots of timber and shipped it back to the mother country; in exchange you got nails to build a house and so forth.

This economy's staple through the years has been cocoa, coffee and tobacco at some times, but in the modern time, sugar, produced by entrepreneurs from the developed countries for export back there.

We could come to the change into the shape that we understand coming in 1908 when oil was first discovered. If we were to trace the economic history of Trinidad and Tobago, we would see that there was a big change coming around World War II. I do not know if it is fully appreciated when Trinidad was the largest oil producer in the British Empire and a tremendous prize to the British war effort. In fact, one of the biggest decisions was taken on the basis of oil in Trinidad, whether to convert the British Navy from coal to oil.

I am saying this to make the point that we are not a third world country, we have always been a central part of the western economic system. In completing the thought on the staple, we tried to change the staple from commodities to labour which was really the essence of Sir Arthur Lewis' proposal: if you could get manufacturers then you could draw the labour in and export the manufacture and so forth. It was the same principle.

We found that enormously difficult to do, so that when the big oil boom came to our shores in the 1970s, the idea which was very magnanimous, grand and not far-fetched at all, was to use those funds to shift the staple to gas, which incidentally ties in with Sen. Marshall's point. That strategy was being grappled with very seriously during the late 1970s. The LNG plants coming on stream were being seriously discussed at that time. We ought not to say that it was simply a matter of not implementing because the technology has changed substantially between the 1970s and now.

One of the things we were also dealing with was a major shift in the entire world perspective of how the world should function. We came from a period of *laissez faire* economics when everything was private sector, the state was to have nothing to do with it. That led us seriously into the Great Depression. After the Great Depression we moved to a new way of thinking: that government had a responsibility for the welfare and progress of the nation, for the level of economic activity and employment in particular.

Thus, we came strongly into a paradigm of active government, with the British economist, Keynes, taking us in one direction and Sir Arthur Lewis taking the Third World nations in the direction that we tried to go. The so-called "Asian tigers" really were very successful in implementing Sir Arthur Lewis' model. We have come back now to liberalization and globalization.

One of the things we need to talk about when we come to debate the economic system *per se* is, how the thing works, because Lewis envisaged manufacturing to absorb all the labour. One of my own concerns about the liberalization and globalization paradigm is that, except we take certain steps to show how labour would be absorbed in that model, what we could have is "jobless growth" as it is called in the literature.

Mr. President, let us get back to the budget. The key element in the hon. Minister's budget is foreign direct investment. The growth we have experienced over the last five years is tied into this. I neglected to say what was the second bit of theory we needed, you could call it the "locomotive theory": there is an engine and if you hitch on, it would pull you along. In our economic system, foreign direct investment is the locomotive that has been pulling us along in the last five years.

There are two problems here: foreign direct investment has some long-term implications for the nature of the society. Let us not fool ourselves. In time, those who have their capital here will tell us how to live and what to do. This is not new, this is how it used to be prior to about 1960. Somebody put it this way: "there is a little bit of good and a little bit of bad in every living thing; the bee makes wax and honey too, but my, how it can sting."

**Mr. President:** The speaking time of the hon. Senator has expired.

*Motion made,* That the speaking time of the hon. Senator be extended by 15 minutes. [*Sen. D. Mahabir-Wyatt*]

*Question put and agreed to.*

**Mr. President:** Now is an appropriate time to break for tea. We will resume at 5.30 p.m.

**4.55 p.m.:** *Sitting suspended.*

**5.30 p.m.:** *Sitting resumed.*

**Sen. Dr. E. St. Cyr:** Mr. President, I thought for a little while I had driven all the Senators away. [*Laughter*]

I was saying that we need to take account of two theoretical constructs. The notion of a staple and the notion of a locomotive process. We see that natural gas is the current staple that we are mining and exporting and foreign direct investment is the locomotive that is being used to pull the economy along.

*Appropriation Bill*  
[SEN. DR. ST. CYR]

*Wednesday, October 21, 1998*

When asked what I felt about the budget overall—I would not say who by—my initial reaction was that I thought that too much had been given away. The reason is that I believe that the economy is in good shape and we paid dearly to put it in good shape. We want to remind ourselves that between 1983 and 1985 we were seeking to do what we termed a soft landing in the light of tremendously high expectations in the country, that we were a rich country.

I believe we were going quite well along the road until the third oil shock came and we want to remind ourselves what was that third oil shock. The first shock was when oil went from \$2 to \$10 in 1975, the second was when the price of oil went from \$10 to \$35 in 1979 and things were looking so good we thought the next one would have gone to \$70. Instead, when the 1986 budget was made, the year of the devaluation, December 1985, the price of oil used was US \$26 per barrel. But in January the third shock came and the price went under \$10. I think that our dear leader at the time knew it was curtains time and so, gracefully, he bowed out.

We next had the NAR government and their task, which was a very difficult task, was to bring adjustment. That was quite successfully done, not without turmoil if we remember 1990; but we did manage to adjust the economy and expectations.

We then came to stabilize the economy and the PNM government from 1991 to 1995 continued and did an excellent job stabilizing the economy. We are now into the present UNC Government which has continued with very responsible policies and measures.

I put that as the background to say that I would have been somewhat more cautious in this budget because I see some signs on the international horizon which suggest caution to me. The world economy always goes in cycles. There is nothing we can do about it and, for whatever reason, we could be facing an international economy which is not as buoyant as it was over the last five or 10 years. Already we have started to see signs. Our own oil output is down, our own agricultural output is down—and I want to say something about agricultural output being down in another context—our output of ammonia and urea are up but the prices are down and so the 5 per cent projected growth for 1998—which I do not doubt though it may be probably four and a half per cent but it is neither here nor there—that would seem to me to be the projection of what had happened in the last few years and the continuation of the foreign direct investment which is still in train. In



other words, if you set about to build some new plants, and we are doing substantially well in that direction, you do not stop in midstream, you continue.

I think the hon. Minister was very frank when he said that in the last three years we have attracted \$4 billion worth of foreign direct investment. I think that is good, but I would have been a little more cautious and this is where I think that we should assist the hon. Minister in finding the path. I know that he has told us how he operates, that is, he puts programmes which we can do should the revenue materialize and if they do not then we trim, and this is wisdom. But we do not want the country to think that we can just carry on. In fact, I think the country needs a good dose of “let us sit up and take sober note of what is happening on the international horizon at this time”.

I would have been inclined to have been a little more cautious and, as Sen. Philip Marshall pointed out, our balance of payments is not in good shape. It is clear that we had started a consumer boom and that is showing in the balance of payments. Incidentally, if not Trinidad and Tobago certainly Jamaica—that was their problem after the big bauxite boom of the 1960s. They miscounted capital inflows for income inflows and we want to be cautious there.

Just by way of summing up, let me say that foreign direct investment alone will not solve our problem nor take us where we need to go. It is good in that it brings the technology, access to markets, the management to assist us in mobilizing our natural resources for export and it brings in much needed foreign exchange. But it does not distribute incomes throughout the society and it is not a good generator of employment opportunities. We have to look elsewhere for that.

There is the other sector, the local unincorporated sector, sometimes called in the literature the residentiary sector. That is where goods and services are produced largely for home consumption by persons using their own capital, technology and so forth. Most of the goods we produce here are foods, services, cultural goods and so forth. That sector is far more effective at generating employment and spreading incomes. We have seen this repeatedly.

For instance, the lowest modern level of unemployment we have ever had in this country was recorded in 1946 just after the war when unemployment was 6.4 per cent, I think. Even at the peak of the boom of 1980 the unemployment rate was 10 per cent when many people had two jobs and so forth.

I think the big difference between the immediate post-war year, 1946 and the boom year, 1980 was that if not managed the foreign exchange inflows tend to be translated immediately into imports for consumption. During the war, because of the absence of shipping and the absence of the availability of imported consumer items, we were forced to develop many local services and manufacturing industries and so forth. We had the best of both worlds. We had substantial inflows of foreign exchange associated with the American navy and army here. We may call that military tourism and, at the same time, we had no access to lots of imported goods so we had to produce our own supplies. Grow more food was a big programme in those days. So you get the picture.

Whereas, by contrast, in 1980 we could translate that rapidly into imports and I think the then Prime Minister of Jamaica, Mr. Manley, had a way to describe the passage of foreign exchange through the system in language that I do not think befitting the Parliament.

I see yet again, at this time, the reduction in the agricultural output as evidence that the residentiary sector is always at a disadvantage and it is always killed by the rapid expansion of the export sector where there is just a natural preference for the jobs there and the money incomes and so forth.

We need then to carefully know the purpose of the export sector and the role of foreign direct investment. We also need to know that we have a residentiary sector which generates large numbers of jobs and involves the population as a whole and we need to nurture both.

**5.45 p.m.**

It might be said that if we could engage local resources into export production, then that will do the trick and this is where I think the Minister's thoughts on the young people in the new enterprise programme is headed. There is a niche market there for unique products and services with a distinct local cultural flavour if we could activate those young people, so that we could, in fact, get three legs to walk on and not try to hop along on one only.

But, we need to understand how the economy works, to recognize that there is an inherent conflict between the foreign sector and the local residentiary sector. When one is booming—the foreign sector—that tends to dampen or draw people away from there and when, as inevitably happens, the international system sags, then we do not have that sector on which to fall back.

**Mr. President:** Senator, to remind you, you have three more minutes please.

**Sen. Dr. E. St. Cyr:** Mr. President, let me wind up.

I think it is most important that we understand the nature of the budgeting process. The budget is a financial plan of what we are going to do in one year, but that cannot stand by itself. There should really be articulated that this is what we are doing in this chunk of time, probably five or ten years, and this is the bit we are going to do this year, so that the notion of what is called a “planned programme budget” or a “rolling budget” might be applicable here. So we see the one-year programme in the context of a programme for three to five years.

We must also be very clear that everything cannot be changed from year to year. In other words, once we set out in a certain direction, we have to stay consistently going in that direction and as one project is completed, we bring in a new project. I am making a general appeal for all the leadership of the nation to come to a realistic understanding of how the economic system works, what we are trying to do and how best we are to set about it, because it is as we build a consensus and an understanding, and communicate these to the population at large that we are going to build this highly desired national unity to which we are all aspiring.

I thank you very much, Mr. President.

**Sen. Agnes Williams:** Mr. President, I thank you for the opportunity to contribute to this budget debate. I must say it is my second time in a budget debate and I am very pleased by the excellence of contributions of Senators. I want to congratulate Sen. Rev. Barbara Gray-Burke and Sen. Andrew Gabriel for their contributions because I realize that one dealt with the young people and one with the elderly folks. I must say that it is only one year and two weeks since I have been here and the experiences I have gained have been invaluable; also, I am honoured to be among this illustrious group of people.

**Sen. Shabazz:** Including Sen. Alfred.

**Sen. A. Williams:** Yes, including Sen. Alfred. [*Desk thumping*]

I would not be very deep in my discourse, but I must commend the Minister of Finance for his creative, innovative way of presenting a budget. He has departed from the normal conventional procedures which I guess was deliberate. By so doing, he has—[*Interruption*]

**Mr. President:** Please let the Senator make her contribution in silence.

**Sen. A. Williams:** In so doing, in presenting his budget in this innovative and creative way, some folks criticized him and I said to myself if I were in his position, I might have done the same thing because I like creativity and innovativeness. He has elicited from everybody so much debate and has even caused many of us here to do our homework, to do research work and even created much public interest where we had the towns meetings. I must congratulate him because his new style of doing a budget has caused the nation to sit up and take note of what is happening. [*Desk thumping*]

Again, my colleague on the other side said that she encouraged our Government to cease fighting between Trinidad and Tobago. I am heartened to say this afternoon that I know the good book says, "It is a wise man who hears and increases his learning", and just after his presentation of the budget speech in the other place, at a meeting I said to him, "Do we have to make war? Why can we not make love?" [*Laughter*] I am pleased to see he has taken my advice and in his speech here yesterday, I quote him on page 8 of his Senate speech, as saying:

"...since the budget statement was presented in the other place, the Ministry of Finance has commenced discussions with officers of the Tobago House of Assembly on the probability of allowing the Assembly to source grants and loans from external sources for development purposes."

I am pleased because he said that he was determined to strengthen the relationship between our two islands. I am very positive. I have seen him make great efforts to do that because I know he has been having dialogue with us. I must commend him and the Government for taking note of Tobago's concern.

Of course, in all the budgets over the years Tobago never got what it really wanted, but as we say, we will keep asking and asking and somebody will eventually listen to us. I must quote again that, "Speech must be tempered by sound wisdom and discretion", and I am going to do that today.

I am pleased that the war has started to end. I trust that successive governments would continue to cease the war because this is the hundredth year of the union and we have been asking and asking and asking, and we have been listened to and, in my position as a public servant in the Tobago House of Assembly, there has always been, in spite of which political party was in power, we always had to be asking and asking and begging and pleading for money, so this is

no new game. Some people listen; some do not; some listen more than others; so I have to be wise in what I am doing because I want dialogue to continue. He has initiated dialogue about which I am pleased.

Most of all, the Tobago House of Assembly had seen the need to diversify its economy and when Sen. Marshall spoke about not depending too much on a foreign-led economy and trying to diversify, I said to myself that somebody in Trinidad is finally listening to Tobagonians because that is what we have been saying all the time, to move from that oil dependence alone and from that foreign controlled economy where they have us at their mercy; get our own tourism and service industries and we must have our economy more under our control. I must say that our Government is listening more than others might have listened in the past and I am pleased with that.

Now, Tobago always knew what it wanted and, in so doing, the Assembly had prepared its Tobago Development Plan, Report No. 1, Report No. 2, Report No. 3.

**Sen. Mohammed:** What about Plan B?

**Sen. A. Williams:** Plan B. Well it may be Plan B, too, but it is a plan that will take Tobago away from the complete dependence on the Trinidad economy and, with the constraints in funds, we want to show that even though we were a child for many years gone, we have almost reached adulthood and we want to show that we can help ourselves and break some of the dependency syndrome.

I want to mention that the Tobago Development Plan, Report No. 2, which is called the Medium Term Policy Framework of Tobago done in June 1998 by the Assembly, is in line with the national Medium Term Development Plan. We do not try to go off on a tangent on our own; we try to keep in line with what is the national policy, contrary to what some folks may think.

In earlier days, when I first joined the public service, I had a problem. The then public servants who were doing the estimates were just putting recurrent items and one day I asked, "Why can we not put in for a hospital?", and I was told, "You are anti-Government" and that got me mad, almost 30 years ago. I felt they did not have the vision and when people came along who had vision and were asking for what Tobago needed, they said we wanted to secede, but I think we are going to continue to ask and ask and fight, and I am seeing the future being very positive and I feel heartened by what has happened over the years.

**6.00 p.m.**

I did not think that after I had left the public service that I would have to come here and still fight, but if that is what it is supposed to be, I would still fight for Tobago and hope that when Tobago is developed the spillover would flow over and Trinidad would also benefit. [*Desk thumping*]

In this Tobago Development Planning document on pages 16 to 18 the fiscal policy as enunciated by the Tobago House of Assembly comes in seven parts and I am just going to read the headings. The first one is Deficit Budgeting in Tobago; the second one is Sharing the National Loan Capacity; Tax Relief is the next one; Efficient Revenue Collection; Compensatory Financing; Monetary and Financial Policy; Monetary and Fiscal Policy and Government Banking. I would not go into all this discourse because I am not an economist like my colleague who gave an excellent presentation a while ago, but people should take time to read this document which I know our Minister of Finance and Minister of Planning and Development have both done and the Government has looked at it and realized that we know what we are about.

We have literally taken a step ahead of the big sister isle in showing you the way that we can diversify our economy and do not rely on all those foreigners to control us. When we rely on our oil, and so forth we have no control of the fluctuations and we suffer, but if we develop our economy here and diversify—there is tourism which is here whether you want it or not, it is here with us and it is almost naturally given to us by the good Lord. If the infrastructure in Tobago is put in place first of all, and we do massive investments in infrastructure, then we can support a good, vibrant tourism economy and there would be spillovers even into the offshore banking scene.

The Government is listening. They are listening, despite what my colleague's face is telling me, they are listening and I trust that they would continue to listen. I know they would continue to listen because if major investments are made in Tobago, we have seen where Tobago does not have all the labour expertise and some people must come from Trinidad to work in Tobago. Imports must come from Trinidad, so by investing in Tobago we are also creating employment in Trinidad, for Trinidadians who always come over to work and they return to spend the money here and to upkeep their families. So do not think in our plans that we are selfish. No, Mr. President, we are seeking to give Tobago a viable economy that would have far-reaching benefits for the entire economy of Trinidad and Tobago in the long run.

Time should be taken to read our Development Plans 1, 2 and 3 and our Tobago House of Assembly Act. In our Tobago House of Assembly Act, despite the flaws, if serious consideration is given and time is taken to implement certain measures in that Act, like revenue collection, you will be surprised as to what would happen. When one has a child one does not always keep the child tied to you forever and ever, but as the child matures and shows that he can take care of himself into adulthood, he is given more autonomy and liberty and this is what we are seeing is going to happen with us. I am talking positively today, Mr. President, because I want the best for Tobago and Trinidad and Tobago as a whole.

I thank the Minister again. I can say so many things, but why go into all this discourse? We know we need more money for water, basic infrastructure, and we need more money for our sewage because if we are going to have the Tobago Hilton coming on stream very soon and plans for the other Four Seasons Sheraton Hotel to come on stream, what are we going to do with all that sewage if we do not have our sewage plant? I guess we cannot eat it, Sir, and Sen. Prof. Kenny does not want to swim in it. Would you please forgive me, Sir?

Mr. President, on a more serious note, our Ministers of Finance and Planning and Development have realized that despite all that has been happening, it is a very serious situation. We need basic infrastructure and no one would invest in a country where you cannot have water and sewage, proper roads, proper telecommunication, and to make a long story short we are going to continue the dialogue and our Government has shown one more time that it can listen to what people have to say. It may be a little stubborn at times, but we have to prove to our leaders that we know what we are doing and once we can show him we have a good plan and it seems viable, I know that discussions would take place and certain plans can be implemented.

I have an old lady friend and I know when I get back home she would be very elated to tell me that she is pleased with the increase in the old age pension because she complains that most of her money goes into medicine. She is hypertensive, diabetic, and she has heart problems and I know that the elderly folk are pleased with the increase, though if it were \$1000 they would have felt better. But a little increase is better than none and I must compliment the Minister for thinking about the elderly folk because sometimes you get old and folks throw you aside, but this Government has shown that it cares for the old people as well as the young.

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One other burning issue which has bothered me over the years. I am a proud product of a seven-year one-shift school, I never like the idea of the two-shift system and many evils have been foisted on our nation by having that two-shift system. The children had more time to go and lime and do wrong things, parents could not supervise them and some of them could not be properly taught by the system we had in place. I am heartened to see the efforts being made to bring back the one-shift system. It is a monumentous task, but I am sure that once we have taken the steps to start it, we would continue because our youth are our nation's future.

My other colleagues have touched on the other good points of the budget like the availability of computers at schools. I must say, especially on behalf of Tobagonians and the Tobago House of Assembly, to our Minister and our Government that I thank you for listening to us and I trust that your ears would always stay open so we can work together to build Tobago's economy that would surely spill over and help the economy of the entire nation. In the next 20 years you would see that Tobagonians were right.

Thank you.

#### PROCEDURAL MOTION

**The Minister of Public Administration (Sen. The Hon. Wade Mark):** Mr. President, on a procedural motion, and in accordance with Standing Order 9(8), I beg to move that the Senate continues to sit until 10.00 p.m.

*Question put and agreed to.*

#### APPROPRIATION BILL (BUDGET)

**Sen. Muhummad Shabazz:** Mr. President, larger pension for retirees, increases in National Insurance payments, lowest rate of inflation seen for a long time, lowest levels of unemployment, high foreign reserves, \$100.00 increase for old age pension.

Mr. President, they have presented a budget that has been dubbed the "people's budget" and after the joy and happiness I saw on their faces, I am certain that they are puzzled as to how people could react in such a way to a budget, as they say, is doing so many good things. Why have the people of Trinidad and Tobago reacted in this manner after they presented a budget which they found to be such a good budget?



From the Town Meetings when we heard the people and what they were saying, walking in the streets what the people were saying, to the masterful presentation of the Leader of the Opposition who indeed asserted himself as a real Prime Minister when the duly constituted Prime Minister of this country did not speak on this budget.

Mr. President, do you know why this is like that? Over the last three years when many people look at the behaviour and the promises which this Government has been making, they believe that something is wrong. Even when this Government gives to you, they believe that there is some sinister underlying reason why the Government does the things it does.

Sometimes when somebody speaks to you and you are not sure of what is being said, you take it with a pinch of salt, but with this Government, you have to take what it does with a spoonful of salt. People are asking why they must sacrifice for this Government, and the reason they are not prepared to sacrifice is because they believe that there is not an equal distribution of the resources of this nation. There is no strategic plan. This Government is the first one which started off without "A" plan. As a matter of fact, they started out with "B" plan; a plan which we call "plan bluff".

I listened to the Senator and I would get to her when I speak of Tobago. As a matter of fact, when she was finished speaking, although I must congratulate her on her contribution, I felt something was not right, but I would explain that as I go along. People believe in this country—and when this Government gives money to the people of this nation they take thousands for themselves and millions for their friends and family, that is the reality.

Mr. President, I walk the streets and I understand what the Independent Senators must do, they must present the thing from the highest level. When I walk through Pashley Street, John John, Laventille, Barataria nobody asks me about the PSIP and how it is going to affect them. Nobody asks me about the expenditure and revenue, people ask me about the Unemployment Relief Programme and what is happening with the money. They ask me about the food prices and these are the things to which I must relate and speak. As a matter of fact, the figures which were presented so nicely by Sen. Montano, not only were they presented nicely, but he comes from a line of good Ministers of Finance. We had a Minister of Finance, the hon. George Chambers on this side who had \$9.00 and still managed this economy; and Wendell Mottley from whom the hon. Minister now said he would take advice.

**6.15 p.m.**

I heard Sen. Marshall, and if I had a choice, I would like him to be a Minister of Finance. I was saying that I cannot be a Minister of Finance, but with the coming of this Minister of Finance, I can be a Minister of Finance. [*Desk thumping*] [*Laughter*] I can be a Minister of Finance because to him, figures do not matter. He is so intent on giving computers to the children of this nation, he does not even care about what computers are doing the figures in his Ministry. It does not matter to him. He has no plan, no real direction for this country and does everything that they do in a political manner in order to advance their party. I feel I can be a Minister of Finance because all I have to do is sit and let the technocrats and the people write whatever and I read it. I will just come here and present a budget that says probably just a few things.

Let me get back to this budget. Clearly, it excludes the Unemployment Relief Programme (URP), because we have heard nothing in the budget about it. It excludes, to a large extent, the small businessmen because when we look at the VAT measure, everybody says it is good, but I am to understand that when they increase the VAT measure, a lot of small businessmen do not get a VAT certificate and will be in a way unable to claim VAT and be under a certain problem. They talked about the Inland Revenue; \$50,000 and they do not claim. There were a number of business people making money off that. That was a small business industry.

The foreign-used car business excluded from security. They are no longer secured. What we call the 'bamboo business', after it helped this regime so much, it is now thrown into the bamboo. I want people to remember this. This is why it is extremely difficult to take what this regime is saying. A Government Minister brought a brand new BMW—his second—and a reporter asked him how he could be driving a next car like that, and he said that he did not take any vow of poverty. He was right. In the same light, this foreign-used car industry was a business of progress. People were buying cars and going into business.

Mr. President, the Minister said that he brought the measure because it is causing congestion on the road and pollution. I agree with him, but he made me feel that new cars do not cause pollution and congestion. They only put the measure on the foreign cars because new cars do not cause pollution or congestion. Maybe he is right because the BMW may have a certain part in its system that does not create pollution.

When we talk about URP there is a serious indictment. Six Ministers did not report to this nation on what they did with the Government money last year—with the taxpayers' money. When they felt they were clever downstairs, it backfired on them. The Attorney General—

**Mr. President:** The procedures and proceedings in the other place have no relationship to this House. Be very careful when you start criticizing, because this is what I gathered.

**Sen. M. Shabazz:** Mr. President, as I have said, I have seen one of those Ministers arrive and make a contribution. I am hoping we do not have to take the other five hours to listen to contribution from these other people in this House. I am just hoping that we will not have to continue with the budget debate for an extra five hours because of what happened in another place.

What is happening with the URP? Here is a Government which in 1998, in its Blueprint for Human Development, Savings and asset building under “Empowerment of People and Empowering our Communities”, has said:

“Mr. Speaker, let us now turn to the Unemployment Relief Programme. Based on our evaluations on the operations of the URP, it has become apparent that this programme must be reviewed to provide greater efficiency, effectiveness, relevance and accountability. The decentralization of the programme to the co-operation will be a significant step in empowerment of the citizens of our community.”

Why in this budget, after URP has been mentioned twice, is it no longer mentioned? What is happening with the Unemployment Relief Programme? It was like a political football that they tried to use in order to find themselves and get their strength in the communities that were basically PNM communities. As a matter of fact, there is a story that the Minister, after getting pressure with it, asked that he be relieved of the URP. I do not know how true it is. It was then given to somebody else and it is still not working.

For the first time in Trinidad and Tobago, the masses seem to believe that Trinidad and Tobago is now divided into three parts: URP/PNM owned constituencies, Tobago and Central Trinidad. The URP was designed to provide jobs more along the East/West Corridor to bring about peace and stability, because in these areas there are no places to plant, no sea front, the people there depend heavily on that. If they know the history of the URP, it was because of what they

called the “Bad John mentality” of the steelbands men to bring about a certain peace, give them work and empower them. They took the URP and put it all through their areas, and while the Unemployment Relief Programme was for Laventille, it has gone throughout the nation. Caroni has the biggest ‘employment relief programme’ in Trinidad and Tobago. I will develop that as I go along.

Everyone has been making a case for Tobago and it is very sad, because God can only help those who help themselves. One cannot fight for somebody who is not fighting for themselves. When Sen. Alfred spoke about Tobago and what she wanted to see for Tobago, I felt really proud. When I think of Tobago, I think of A. P. T. James, ANR Robinson, Deborah Moore-Miggins and all these fighters.

While the Senator was speaking, I took a note here. She is saying the Government is listening, but the Government is not really hearing what she said. To listen means to take heed and pay attention, and I do not think the Government is taking heed or paying attention to what is happening in Tobago. That could never be true! If that is a position of the party and the hon. Senator has to take a party position, that is fine, but do not tell the nation that this Government is listening to Tobago. It is definitely not true.

They spoke about Tobago in agriculture in 1996 and 1997. At page 11 in 1996 under agriculture:

“Special emphasis will be placed on an increase in foreign exchange earnings providing for social stability in rural development and revitalizing agriculture in Tobago.”

Page 13 in 1996, this was when they just came and Tobago was in their arms and everything was nice:

“As a means of encouraging visitor expenditure, the number of duty free shopping areas would be increased to include Crown Point Airport, Scarborough Wharf, Port of Spain Wharf and Chaguaramas.”

They had Tobago in mind all of the time.

In 1997 at page 11 they talked about agriculture again. The same programmes came and they talked about facilitating and development of agriculture in Tobago. We are not hearing anything about that this time. We are hearing: “Let them take us to court if they want”. After they say all of that, we know there is a Dispute Resolution Council in Tobago where they could talk. How is it that all of a sudden

the court comes into the matter and nobody cares about Tobago? This Government no longer cares about Tobago. I hope Mr. Hochoy Charles is listening to what the hon. Senators on that side who are supposed to be fighting Tobago's cause are saying and take note, because we cannot fight Tobago's issues.

They talk about accountability in Tobago. When Caroni wants \$42 million, they find it and after they find it, they say, "Let us work it out" to the point that the Minister after presenting the budget goes on the national television and radio and says that the Prime Minister has Caroni at heart, so not one job would be lost, and jobs are being lost all about! Workers are marching and losing their jobs in this country, but he guarantees only to Caroni that not one job will be lost because the Prime Minister has Caroni at heart. I have no objection to that, but give the same benefit and privilege to the people all over the country; in Trinidad, in Tobago, on the East/West Corridor! Let him give that guarantee.

I do not want anybody to lose their job, but I told them here some time earlier in the year that they are presenting themselves not as we did, as a democratic government of the people, for the people and by the people. Mr. President, they have presented themselves as a Government of a people, for a people and by a people. That is why they are having problems and people are not taking their word and not trusting them. Anybody should be glad to get \$100. Anybody should be glad to hear certain increases, but we are not believing, by what they have been saying and doing, that they really mean it. We feel that all is just play, games and propaganda and to win people on their side. We do not believe them. The nation does not believe them.

Today, while I was sitting here, it made me understand and I take a stronger resolve that when we get back into power, we must not lose it. They do not understand that there are a number of people out there who have a vote, and are making points. Some of them look like they are stupid, old and do not know what is happening, but they understand what is happening. They are wise people. They may not be as educated as a number of us, but they are making decisions, and that wisdom is what makes a difference to these people who have to come down to the ground in the next three years. I wish that they could come to the ground and another PNM government must walk and will walk—we have always done it, but we will do it even more—closer to the ground this time.

**6.30 p.m.**

I want to tell the Tobago Senators something. The foundation for Tobago was really built on a number of great people, but mainly people like A.P.T. James. He

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was not educated, he was not a brilliant man. As a matter of fact, this may sound like a joke, but it is serious. A man once made a statement here that somebody—A.P.T. James had said something—and the man came to the House and said that, “Somebody made an allegation, and if I find out who made that allegation, I will deal with them. Because the allegation was incorrect and I will deal with that person.” A.P.T. James, who, they say, was not bright, kept listening to the man, but he got up because he was brave enough to admit that he did it. He was brave, strong and fearless enough to admit that he did it.

A.P.T. James, who built that whole platform for Tobago for us to sit and be here. But you know what his answer was? When the man spoke about the allegation, you know why they said that A.P.T. James was dunce? Because A.P.T. James, who was brave, jumped up and said, “Is me. I am the 'allegator'.” *[Laughter]* And people laughed and said he was a “duncey head”. But he was one of the brightest and most brilliant men who passed through these Chambers. He opened the first secondary school in Roxborough, because he was wise. It is that wisdom which has many of us today—I do not want to be knocking the Senator, but A.P.T. James must have turned somewhere in his grave about 20 to 30 minutes ago. I am certain that he turned—A.P.T. James, the ‘allegator’. All he meant was that he made an allegation.

A country does not only have a financial side, and, as one says, “Okay, God, I will take that up immediately”, there is a spiritual side to a country. Many people do not understand that. Many people do not understand that in the beginning was the word. When one begins with the words that, “I will sleep with the devil to achieve anything I want”, and one looks around today and sees certain things: three diseases are going around; pitbulls are biting people all over the nation.

This might sound like a jokey thing, Mr. President. I was standing in my house and I heard a very feminine voice on the television. My back was turned and I heard a voice saying, “Well, you know what is causing the darkness in this country, and you know who is causing it.” So when I looked around, thinking it was a lady, I saw the hon. Minister of Local Government. He spoke that way and I got tied up with the thing. He said, “They caused the darkness”. But after he said that—

**Mr. President:** We have been carrying on a very respectable debate so far. Please, do not let it degenerate. Especially when that person is not here to defend himself or herself.

**Sen. M. Shabazz:** Mr. President, I take your ruling. I am telling you what I saw on the television.

**Mr. President:** You may have seen it. That is it. Please get back to the budget.

**Sen. M. Shabazz:** What I am saying is that even after they challenged us for the darkness in the nation, we see certain things happening. I am saying again that the word is vital. Having said that they slept with the devil, and with what we see happening in the nation, it is something we must take note about.

You know, this is why the people on the East/West Corridor do not believe them. While there was a flood in Central, the Prime Minister was playing golf in Tobago. Big flood in Central again, Mr. Baksh was kicking ball in Morvant. We could believe that! And not a word today about the flood! Charity must begin at home. If Central is your area and you are not and cannot take care of it, do not feel you will fool us in Morvant. Election time we will make you know that in Laventille and Morvant, you did not fool us.

Mr. President, that is the reality of the situation. Last year they presented a budget and they called it the "Panday's regime budget". This year they presented and it is strictly the Minister of Finance's budget. I feel that some people there may have good intentions, the Minister's heart may be proper, I may want to believe that. Sen. Wade Mark, yes. But as I have always said, when they come together as a team or a clique, somehow they lose that vision and whatever they intend to do for this nation. They come together under a party ideology and philosophy, and everything changes.

So when one hears about corruption, ghost gangs, mismanagement in the URP, no accountability in Tobago; Caroni (1975) Limited seems to be running fine, and I want to make the statement that it is the greatest unemployment relief programme in Trinidad and Tobago.

I look at the promises made by this Minister and this regime over the last three years. The first one is on page 32 of the Budget Statement 1998. They are trying to capture certain constituents, and when they feel they cannot capture them, they change. The constituents they are trying to capture this year are the old age pensioners. Fine. Because they feel our old mothers will tell us, "They are treating us nice, we will vote for them". Last year they tried to capture the single mothers and children. Hear the Minister of Finance:

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“Mr. Speaker, globally, it is becoming abundantly clear that while economic growth can go a long way to increase employment and reduce poverty, it is clearly not enough.

In many instances, poverty is not only a consequence of the structures and processes which determine the distributions of income but also the misfortunes of individuals.

Single mothers are more vulnerable than any other group in society, especially in the areas of education, employment and asset ownership.

With fewer opportunities open to them, they have great hardship in freeing themselves and their children from the poverty trap - an issue about which our Prime Minister has often spoken.

Any programme for arresting this trend must therefore focus not on dependence today, but on independence for tomorrow.

I therefore propose to allocate, initially—”

Initially! This was an initial sum, Mr. President. This was not to be a sum for all times. I continue:

“I therefore propose to allocate, initially, the sum of \$25 million, to be utilized in programmes such as education, job readiness and skills development for single mothers.”

You know, they have not given them anything! The Minister does not even have the courtesy or the decency to come here and say why, or “I am sorry single mothers, I did not give you this because of this reason. That was the initial sum, but the others were before the tail”.

At a time when they are talking more about gender affairs than anybody else; at a time when they are talking about care for mothers and women more than anybody else—as a matter of fact, they are making so much out of gender affairs, that sometimes when I am referring to a woman, I say, a “gender”; “fus” they tried to move out that word “woman”. They made gender affairs such a big issue, and not a single cent to single mothers, who the Minister understands are vulnerable.

They are talking about buying houses now. Bring back that \$25 million and help some of those single mothers with children. They could say, “Okay, we could not give you it in cash, but any single mother living in a house which needs to be



bought, we will give you some kind of grant to take care of that home. They are not even talking about that.

They talked about dependency syndrome, when they talked about mothers, but let me tell them. InnCogen depends on this Government to get a contract. There are certain business people depending on this Government for the airport. The oil people are depending on this Government to get tax concessions. But only the people who are buying foreign used cars and all the people who are dependent—

That foreign used car issue stinks, you know, Mr. President. I will explain to you why. People are in a line waiting with a cheque to go to license their car, while he gave the concession and he does other things and says we will start in January or February, this one starts immediately. So one reached in the line with one's cheque, the cashier said, "The budget was just read, you will have to go back with that". That is the kind of callousness, the kind of not caring for the people of this country. *[Desk thumping]* If he had to deal with it at a higher level, people would have known and it would have been different, I am certain. So one reaches with one's cheque, one's dream is nearly fulfilled, and when one looks at a line of 150 people, 75 of them had to go back and get \$10,000, \$20,000 and \$30,000. And nobody cares!

Nobody cares about that on that side. They get up and say, I compliment the Minister on his good budget. What good budget! Good? There are some things good to use and some things not good to use. I do not know what good they mean. But we will know as we go along.

They are offering homes to mothers. "I cool with that!" They are not taking into consideration that if somebody lives in a nine-storey building, and the toilet downstairs is clogged up, and is affecting upstairs: who has to fix it? They are not saying why this is happening. I would like the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to say. They are not saying who will take care of this building. Who will see about the painting? Who will see when the electricity goes? Those are the things the people need to know. Why could they not tell us that in a comprehensive policy? Instead, we have to come to the Parliament to ask them to tell us what they would do.

Mr. President, hear what they said again. After they spoke about single mothers, well we saw no money. I read from the Budget Statement 1998, page 33:

"Mr. Speaker, in developing the required educational opportunities for our young people, Government proposes to establish a National Community College."

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I have not heard anything about that today. I have not heard anything in his budget presentation about that.

“An initial sum of \$7.5 million will be provided for the implementation of Phase I of the National Community College to be established by NIHERST.”

Mr. President, where is that money? When was it allocated? What has happened to it? No talk, no say. They also made the statement that they will establish an open university with direct linkages to the University of the West Indies, distance education outreach programmes and other similar programmes available at similar institutions of learning will be part of the Government’s strategy to modernize the system of education. What is happening there? Nobody says anything. Nobody has the decency to tell this Senate and the country what is happening.

On page 33 of the Budget Statement 1998, he talked about a computer for every family. In 1998, there was supposed to be a computer for every family, and nobody got a computer! But today, a computer, not for every school, but for every class in every school. You believe that? They could not give every family a computer, working people. The Parliament, which they should have given a computer, everybody here was looking forward to computers, and—I wish the hon. Minister of Finance would raise his head, because I am really speaking to him as my friend. *[Laughter]* Not a person in here got a computer, but they are now going to put a computer in every class in every school. You could believe that? The nation is not believing that! That is what people are asking us. As politicians—I do not mind the people who claim they are not politicians, “I cool with that”, I understand that; but as politicians, this is what the people are asking us on the street. Where are the computers? Not only where are the computers, not even a mention, not even a word of decency to say, “Well, I promised you all a computer and could not do so”. And a number of other promises.

Let me just touch on health and make you understand certain things which are happening in health. In this nation, I am hearing that this fella is good, so let him do what he wants. The Minister of Health—everybody said, from the time I came into this Senate—is a nice man. But being nice and not producing is not good again; nice and not effective is not good, you know; humble and honest, but not doing the work is not good. That is what is happening in this Health Ministry. As a matter of fact, they understood that earlier this year. The biggest movement of money was from the Health Ministry, \$25 million!

**6.45 p.m.**

Look at the number of things happening in health: no beds in the hospital; doctors refusing to handle patients at the hospital. There was industrial unrest some time earlier in the year and an oil worker from Quinam Road in Siparia had an accident. The Siparia hospital had to transfer him to Mount Hope, and he died. We could also remember the case where a man could not get a bed in the hospital. His sons started complaining, and when the press listened, the chief doctor at the San Fernando hospital told the camera man, "We did not bring you here to take pictures, but to take out the Minister cutting the ribbon to open the play park. [Laughter]

Mr. President, do you know that the man's father died after that. [Interruption] The hon. Senator is saying yes, but she did not stand up for Tobago, so she could say yes. A nurse died at the Mount Hope hospital after documenting all the atrocious mistreatment that she got. Nothing happened, and this has been going on and on. [Interruption]

They are asking how long. Well, at least, for three years. Lifts are not working in the hospital, problems in the theatre, equipment problems and personnel problems. As a matter of fact, Dr. Chattergoon spoke about a number of other problems, including serious improprieties being conducted at the San Fernando General Hospital with respect to bed money. They spoke about problems with the neonatal unit.

In St. James, patients are having problems with the diet, persons working are not being paid. Although major surgeries are being done at the Mount Hope hospital, because of what is happening it is now called "Mount Hopeless". As a matter of fact, the press tell us that if you want to die go to Mount Hope. Why is that? No proper staffing, diet or medicine, all these problems. Sure, give the aged and the diabetics their tablets, but try to furnish the hospitals with the tablets.

A man chopped another man somewhere in the country—Oh the E999 working good—so they called the police who locked up the man who did the chopping, but do you know that there was no ambulance for the man who was bleeding so he died. [Laughter] Yet they are not studying to buy ambulances for the country.

The Morvant Fire Station has no ambulance for the last three years, and they do not care about that. An arsonist burnt down a man's house. While the house was burning—Oh the E999 came—the police locked up the arsonist, but there was

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no fire truck to wet the house. Is that management? Is that a total quality nation? Is that what they expect? And that is how things are going.

The hon. Senator spoke about the man who had beaten his wife, do you know that the E999 locked him up, but when the wife went to the hospital there was no medicine, no plaster, nothing, not even an ambulance to carry her to the hospital. Do they feel proud about that?

Some of them would say that the PNM caused it, but after three years that is not an excuse again. We established the Regional Health Authorities (RHA), and when we did that it was a known fact that the RHAs took the properties, but did not take the staff. There must be some attempt to get the staff.

We must look at the question of insurance, and how you could blend insurance with what is happening, in order to provide a better health system. I understand that the Minister is spending money, but most of it is going for labour, to pay staff and buy other things. We see it here in the book; all those millions!

The problem with this Government, even when they came into power—I would say this, even though I am a PNMite—I felt I might have seen something different, but they are just running along the same PNM tracks and blaming us. They are not putting down anything new. Everything this Government has taken credit for and is taking credit for, is what they came and met. They are not saying that they would build new houses, instead they are saying, "The houses the PNM gave you, we would see how we could work it out for you to buy them." They are not even sure how they would work it out.

They did not come with anything, I have not even heard a new idea. Mr. President, do you know what is the new idea they are speaking about? Even to expand the airport: we started to build it, but they are now expanding it for their own cause.

They are talking about the desalination plant which is big money, but there is no water in the place, and we have so much water to do so many things, but they cannot harness it, but they are talking about taking water from the sea. Hon. professors and eminent people are telling them to take the water from the hills, the rain and from all about—even the Chaguanas Main Road [*Laughter*—but they are not studying that. Instead they want to take the water from the sea at a cost of one hundred and something million to the poor taxpayers of Trinidad and Tobago—\$600 million.

Mr. President, when I said \$100 million I meant US dollars, because they are only talking US dollars now, "fus tings nice with them". [Laughter] They are not seeing what this is all about, so they keep the game going. They keep telling us what they want and feel they are fooling us, but when they looked at the Town Meetings they saw that the people understood what was going on. They are pretending that they do not understand, but the people understood.

If they observe, the PNM is rising in the polls. Now they are saying that they do not care about polls, but last year when the polls were giving them an 85 per cent rating, they cared then. They cared when they were getting 92 per cent in the polls, but now they are coming down, they have reached 60-something per cent and we have gone up 40-something, so they are saying that the polls are not important again. When we reached 60 per cent, they said that the pollsters are PNMites so that is why the polls are saying 70 per cent for PNM.

The polls would show 70 per cent for PNM because the people realize that having given them the country for a few years, thinking they would have done better, they are not even doing as good. As a matter of fact, that regime over there is doing worse. I would feel sorry for some of them sitting there, but since I would be glad to sit over there, it would not make a difference really. [Interruption] We will get that.

The woes go on and on in the health sector. I would just show a few things about what is going on. In 1996, the hon. Minister said that the investment programme allocated \$43.7 million to finance improvement in the health sector. The Minister said that \$10 million would be spent in the completion of three existing projects: the upgrading of health facilities in Arima and Mayaro, and the continuation of the commissioning of the San Fernando hospital. The programme also supported the continuation of technical training for primary health care.

In 1997, the Minister said that the Health Sector Reform Programme would be advanced significantly in 1997 with commencement of loan funding from the Inter-American Development Bank. The entire programme was estimated to cost \$192 million: the refurbishment and construction of 10 district health facilities and four enhanced health facilities at Port of Spain, St. James, Arima, Couva and so forth.

In 1998 it was the same thing. He spoke about implementing the health sector reform which was delayed in 1997, but expected to gain momentum in 1998. The Ministry of Health was allocated \$127.3 million to carry out the programmes during the year. The entire programme would be implemented over seven years.

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In 1997, they were going to do it in five years. They wasted a year, so now it would take seven years. After they wasted that time in 1997 they came back in 1998. The Minister said that the Health Reform Programme would be advanced significantly in the 1998/1999 fiscal year. The Ministry of Health was allocated \$87.1 million to "continue implementation of the core infrastructure...", the same thing again. They are going to refurbish seven districts facilities, St. James and all of that.

There is the same problem in Point Fortin. They interfered with the Point Fortin hospital. They promised us a burn centre. Two or three people got burnt in Couva, the first thing they bawl, "We must have a burn centre!" Today you are not even hearing anything about that burn centre, "like dey burn the idea to bring that centre to Couva and Point Lisas." While they were talking about upgrading Point Lisas, they were also talking about closing the hospital in Point Fortin. It is a good thing that the people rose up against them.

Mr. President, I do not know why they want to close the Point Fortin hospital. That area has the biggest hazard, an LNG plant: everything could blow up out there, but they are not talking about that. I do not want to impute any bad reasons but this is something important to look at.

What is happening with the health system in this country? They are blaming the PNM after three years, when they came with such hope for the poor and the masses! They talk that, but we live it. This is what the people keep realizing, it is really the PNM that lives that. That is why this Government is in trouble, and although the Minister of Works and Transport would try his best to keep the ratings up, he has proven that he alone cannot do it.

**Mr. President:** The speaking time of the hon. Senator has expired.

*Motion made,* That the speaking time of the hon. Senator be extended by 15 minutes. [*Sen. N. Mohammed*]

*Question put and agreed to.*

**Sen. M. Shabazz:** Mr. President, there are a number of things happening. I ask the Government to look into the question of the school in Parrylands where the gases are creating problems for the children. Somebody spoke about Demerara Road. This Government has been in power for three years and should look at these things.

All these programmes the Government is talking about that are not being implemented, were our programmes. We had intentions and had put everything in place. We had gotten the loan in order to make the health facilities better and bring them to 24 hour facilities. They are not thinking about that. They have the whole thing, but they are not dealing with it.

The reopening of schools being held back and teachers having to write letters to the Minister of Education. Nobody is thinking about what is happening in health. It is a very sad thing happening in the nation. In the papers yesterday there was an article entitled, "More Woes for South Hospitals Daily".

They are talking about taking care of old people and giving them \$100 more. We like that, but when they give them \$100 and the health facilities are not good, and all these other problems they are having with no ambulance to take them to the hospital or no proper training for staff to carry them, what is the position? They want me to tell them that they did a good thing by giving them \$100 more. Yes, it is a good thing, but they are doing a bad thing by not seeing that the health facilities in this country are developed. That is even worse!

It is like milking the cow and kicking down the pail of milk. All the milk is being thrown away, we cannot drink it. So all this amount of milk they are filling up and wasting—try to take care of it, Mr. Minister of Finance.

There are other promises he made to this nation, a number of other things. Besides employment—well this is an area I do not want to touch too much—taken from page 13, of the 1997 budget statement the Minister stated:

"In the area of culture, one of the distinctive features of Trinidad and Tobago is its cultural diversity. Government intends to maximise this potential while increasing its employment generation capacity. In fact, Government views the various expressions of our culture, through the creative and performing arts, as avenues for both social identity and integration...

To facilitate the professional development of our artistes, Government has earmarked the Old Fire Station Headquarters for the Trinidad Theatre Workshop, and preliminary work on the construction of a Centre for the Creative and Performing Arts on the Princes Building grounds will begin in 1997."

They were to begin it in 1997, they were to do it in 1998, they would do it later in 1998, now they come again to tell us that they would do it in 1999.

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They also said that they would formulate a national cultural policy to create opportunities for our people to work together and make best use of our diversity and develop culture as an economic product. What did they do?

We have a Senator on this side who will tell us about what is happening in culture: talk and confusion. As a matter of fact, the greatest extempo calypsonian in Trinidad and Tobago right now—although they do not like calypsonians—seems to be the Prime Minister. Mr. President, I will tell you why. When there were problems downstairs with the NP issue, do you know what was the Prime Minister's extempo line? "Because is voodoo and not Soodoo, yuh talking." [Laughter]

When the budget speech was to be read and we sent out a threat that we would eat the Minister raw, do you know what was his extempo line? If a calypsonian had said that he would have been vexed, he said, "He say he going to eat Mr. Kuei Tung raw, that I would like to see. I hope he doh operate like Monica Lewinsky." [Laughter] But he does not like calypsonians, from the time they sing about him or talk about anybody next to him, he gets annoyed.

There are a few things more I would like to say, so Mr. President, I wish you would guide me when I have three minutes left.

**7.00 p.m.**

One: the Minister of National Security. This Minister of Finance said that he took care of all bargaining, he took care of all the public servants' money and paid everybody money. The soldiers in this country have not been paid. There was a buy out for them which they were promised since earlier in the year that they did not get. They promised to pay them their increments which they did not pay. Soldiers are going home because there are no rations. They say they have money to pay them and today I asked the Minister when and he said they will pay them before the end of the year. The people do not want to hear that. They want their money before Christmas.

I am putting this Minister on notice and I am asking every soldier to give me two members of their family—because the reason they are doing that is because soldiers cannot march because they are an essential service—and I will organize them in a march to ensure that they get their money by Christmas. The trade union leaders on that side do not seem to understand that it is important to pay the soldiers.



I heard them say that the special reserve police are going to get their money. The special reserve police are saying that is a farce and they are claiming that they went to do a test weekend and although they are good enough to carry a gun and they have to pass the test like everybody else, they are not good enough to go into the regular service now but they are good enough to perform the work.

The people feel that they should be given special consideration. Not only that, they were told that although they passed the test on Saturday they still have to line up when they are selecting again. The people do not want to hear that.

I just want to quickly and easily tell the Minister that a lot of soldiers are talking about what is happening with the head of the army. The head of the army seems no longer to be in Teteron. Just as they move with the police service they seem to be moving somebody close to them to take over the army. Soldiers are looking at that. The army people remember—I do not want to bring this up—the toothbrush incident and they keep feeling that the hon. Minister does not care about them.

Let the Minister show he cares. He was a soldier. He has to be the first fighter and the first line of defence where this Government is concerned for them. The people already have their pay cheques prepared and he cannot tell the people they will get their money in the next two weeks or as soon as this budget is passed he will ensure that it happens. His answer is by the end of the year and they are hearing that so many times that they will not be able to take that.

I hope the soldiers will not do anything untoward and I am asking them to give me two family members from each member of the defence force and I will lead them around this Parliament until they get their money. I am preaching that. That is what the hon. Minister used to preach before but he is no longer preaching that. As a matter of fact, I just want to ask the Minister to invite me to his house warming in Flagstaff. *[Laughter]* I am looking forward to that. He is no longer living with the plebes, he has moved on. He no longer cares about the soldiers, he has moved up and things are nice with him; hon. Minister of Government. Mr. President, through you I ask again, please invite me and my family to Flagstaff when you are moving over Minister Mark.

On and on the woe goes. Problems, promises, promises, promises. I want this Government to understand that even though I seek for my party to be in power again I want to ask them—the reason I am asking and putting what I have put over in this manner is so that they will heed and listen and do what is required of them.

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It is not right for me to hope things go bad and Trinidad falls. I want Trinidad to go good because I have to live here for the next two years. I have a family here and I want them to do well. They have two more years until the year 2000. We have hope on this side because we know we are the government which will lead this country into the new millennium. Our founding father made that promise and gave us that as a hope to go with and we know it will happen.

I remember Sen. Marshall speaking yesterday—and that is a sad indictment on the country—about the people who took foreign exchange out of the country and things are going good for them and the people who stayed and worked hard to build the country seem to be paying a price now because the money is gone and things have gotten harder. It appears that it might have been better to do the wrong thing.

I want, in the same spirit as Sen. Marshall, to do the right thing and support the Government. Not under any false philosophy of national unity. I would like to support them not for any total quality nation but for a world class nation. I would like to do the right thing and support them in the same spirit of which Sen. Marshall spoke but they must listen. Not hear, listen and do the things that the nation requires of them in order to make this country a better nation.

There are a number of other things to be spoken about but I would be here to continue to speak, by the grace of God, and bring points to them and hope they will take heed. Good PNM sensible points and hope they will take heed of them.

Again, I am appealing—I must appeal for the soldiers again. It might seem that I am overdoing it but I am asking for soldiers to get their money and for the health workers to be given better conditions. Form a policy, create a vision. *[Interruption]* This month? Say it hard for the press to hear. What did you say? I can sit and give you time. Let them get their moneys; and you must make the conditions better for the health workers. Treat this nation far better.

The Minister of Works and Transport, since last year and year before when they removed licences for motor cars, spoke about opening garages. Where are the garages? People built and opened garages. What I would ask in this Senate soon is whether people are being paid for those garages. What contracts did they have with these people? What is happening with these garages?

There are a number of other things. Help the nurses to get their uniforms. See about a number of other things. One of the questions I would like to ask the

Minister of Finance to look at is why has the Airports Authority been removed from parliamentary scrutiny. We need to get answers to these questions. This is what the nation wants to hear. If he can answer the nation it will be fine.

Sen. Teelucksingh spoke about corruption and that is a real issue in this country because they made it an issue. We spoke about InnCogen but they did not tell us that InnCogen did not get a sweetheart deal. They did not tell us that the people of InnCogen had a close association with their regime. They are trying to make us believe that some past government minister was involved in some \$4 million corruption.

That former government minister may well be somebody on their side, among them. Tell them to be careful and look at it. Do you know how they are defending the InnCogen matter? We said the man goes to the Prime Minister's house in short pants and drinks scotch and they say the man does not wear short pants because he does not have good legs. Is that any way to defend it? He does not drink scotch because he is not an alcoholic. That is not what we mean. We mean he goes there in a casual way and has drinks and they meet him in a fete somewhere. They are not telling people these things. Defend the thing properly.

When we talk about InnCogen, Mr. President, what we mean is that there is something going on. We know they are not going to call them. I have more and more to go. As a matter of fact, I would like to continue this speech at the next budget debate.

Good bless the country and thank you for the privilege. *[Desk thumping]*

**Sen. Vincent Cabrera:** Mr. President, I will get back to my good friend, Sen. Shabazz, in a while.

In the trade union movement when workers join the union for the first time we put them to sit and carry them through a period of awareness and education because many times workers come into the union and they are very enthusiastic and they have all the best intentions but they go about it the wrong way.

I do not think classes would serve anything here. What the Senator needs is really some political education. I will encourage him to attend some of the UNC meetings to get serious things in his mind because I have heard him speak quite often but never have I heard such wild and unsubstantiated statements made in this Parliament.

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Mr. President, I want to begin by firstly complimenting both Sen. Dr. St. Cyr and Sen. Marshall for providing, what I will consider to be, very stimulating input into the debate on the question of economics. I think that Sen. Marshall was very relevant when he made the point that we need to get the macro economic fundamentals correct. I remember one other Independent Senator making the point that possibly this Senate ought to sit, at some point in time, and have a discussion on economics.

I really like the point of Sen. Marshall when he referred to the Asian countries because people like him, for a long time, were referring to them as the Asian tigers. No longer can they do so. The point I am making here is, economics has never been and is not a specific or an exact science. You will find one economist giving you a view on a matter and another giving you sometimes a slightly different view or a totally different view on that same matter.

We know about those economists who talk about on this hand and on that hand. The same economist can tell you different things about the same matter at the same time. I think it is important that at some point in time we have, maybe, a general discussion on economics and so forth.

The Government does understand that the Asian flu has migrated. We have the situation developing in Russia and Brazil. Not that the economy is that large in Russia because their economy is just about the size of the Netherlands; but because of the political importance of Russia sitting on the security council and owning quite a lot of nuclear weapons the world had to take notice of what was going on, and fortunately or unfortunately, the person who won the elections in Brazil is someone whom the international financial organizations are willing to work with.

The fact of the matter is Trinidad and Tobago will not be able to escape, in the long run, what is going on internationally but we can brace ourselves. It is my view that when this Government talks about a total quality nation too many people are taking this to make a joke. We cannot become a total quality nation in one, two or five years. We have to put things into place to do that. It is my view that a government ought to have that kind of vision.

If we are to ensure that we do not end up like some of those societies that are now on the periphery of world economics, we had better get serious about that question of being a total quality nation.

**7.15 p.m.**

I appeal, therefore, to have the notion of a total quality nation being part of our shared vision in terms of economics and economic development.

Mr. President, I think it is important at this point in time that some Senators—not all, but some—ask themselves: What is a budget? Because, apparently, some people are of the view that a budget statement can cure all the ills in the society. I am of the view that the budget allows the Government to state broadly its philosophy of how it is going to run the country for the coming year and it allows the Government to state what are its specific measures in order to get there.

When the Minister of Finance talks of a people's budget, it must be taken seriously. I make no apology to anyone on that side or outside the Senate for saying that, in fact, the budget is a people's budget.

When the question of measures taken is looked at, they can be described as measures aimed at alleviating poverty. So, when my good friend, Sen. Mahadeo Jagmohan, talked about members of the Public Services Association marching and members of the National Union of Government and Federated Workers marching, well I am sorry that the President of NUGFW is not here.

It was stated in the media that union was, in fact, marching in celebration of a matter which had been settled between itself and the Government. Why give the impression that the union was marching against the Government? As far as I know, too, the Public Services Association was not marching because the Government owed its members money; the PSA was making the point that in its view more money should be pumped into the health sector and any trade union has the right to protest if it feels that its views are not being heard and it wants to push its views.

There is no problem with that, but I am sure that most Senators would agree that money is not all that is needed in the health sector. Yes, if we had more money, more would have been put into the health sector, but money is not all that is needed. However, I do not propose to continue on that point.

In moving away from the point that the goodly Senator made, I remind him that it was a teachers' and nurses' march which caused the removal of a certain Prime Minister in Trinidad and Tobago. Let us not forget our history.

When the trade union movement listens to a budget, it does not only listen to hear what are the specific measures and how they would impact on its members. We know that a strong economy leads to greater levels of employment, so the fact that the Minister was able to argue and prove his case that the economy was in a strong position, we are of the view that is the first step towards making things better for the workers of this country. It is sad to say that there are some trade unionists who take up positions that one can only describe as ill-advised.

I attended a seminar on the Saturday before the budget was read at the University of the West Indies. One trade unionist at that seminar said he was predicting since he had information, that the Government was going to put four state enterprises on the chopping board in the budget. I listened to the budget and I have heard absolutely nothing about that. I am saying that one cannot take the view of one trade union as the view of the entire trade union movement.

I want to make reference to this question of the money which people say the Government does not want to pay to the National Trade Union Centre. NATUC needs to put its own house in order and I say so as the Assistant General Secretary of the National Trade Union Centre because one does not just walk in to the office of the Minister of Finance to ask for a cheque. Certain information has to be provided. But, I will leave the rest for when certain people put their heads out.

If one were to believe the Opposition, one would believe that there is absolutely nothing positive with the budget that has been presented. But I know what is the problem. If they support the budget—and people have been quoting a number of calypsos and other things, I think I will quote one—How it go look? If they were to stand and say, “We support the budget”, “How it go look?” Because I just heard a Senator agreeing and saying in one breath that the \$100 increase is a good thing but, why not do other things? In fact, that is bad. The \$100 should not have been given. That is all that is left for him to say. It seems to me that when we look at the contributions of the Opposition Senators, they have come here with one intention, to discredit the budget and not, in fact, to deal with truth. What they are dealing with, Mr. President, is political fiction. That is what they are dealing with.

I am glad the Senator has arrived. In Jamaica, there is a town character called a “bag and pan” man. If the Senator is a Caribbean man, he will know what I am talking about. But sometimes when the hon. Senator is attacking my Government, he sounds and behaves like a political “bag and pan” man.

**Sen. Shabazz:** It is our Government, too.

**Sen. V. Cabrera:** I feel that if a budget has positive measures, they must be brave enough to say so.

Listen to what Sen. Cynthia Alfred said. She said there was absolutely nothing in the budget for disabled people. Page 29 of “A Platform for Progress—Security for all” said, and I thought it was the wrong budget I was reading:

“...I propose to exempt from both customs duty and VAT, items such as artificial joints, artificial limbs, pace-makers, hearing aids, crutches, surgical belts and trusses.”

It seems to me they have not read the budget, but they read it from an angle other than what they should have looked at.

**Sen. Alfred:** Mr. President, I rise on a point of order. The hon. Senator is saying that I said there is nothing in the budget for disabled people. That is absolutely incorrect and the record will show. I would like him to withdraw that statement, please.

**Sen. V. Cabrera:** Mr. President, that was not really a point of order and I would not choose to argue. I took copious notes of what was said and when people are on their feet they must remember what they said. The point I would like to make is, if the Senator did not make that direct statement, the impression given to this Senate was that the budget had nothing for disabled persons.

I continue. I refer to the proposed sale of National Housing Authority units. I note that Sen. Danny Montano who, apparently, is the person regarded as some kind of shadow Minister of Finance, criticized that proposed measure. But, from the little economics I did, reading Nevin, one of the old writers—because they read all kinds of new people who are writing books now—that is a form of capital accumulation and if I am wrong, tell me. There is a political characteristic of the history of this country which says that one of the peoples of the country has been denied ownership of everything, whether it was land, capital, or what have you.

This Government is giving an opportunity to the same people on the East/West Corridor of whom the Senator said, he was their hero and was in charge of them, although I know that is not true, because when I talk to people about Sen. Shabazz, a number of youths do not know who he is. [*Laughter*] The point I am

making is, they will be allowed to own something—whether it is a shell—they would be owner of something and, if they own it, they would take care of it in a better manner.

When the media takes a few pictures of people who live in these places, I ask myself: Why can a few of them not get together and form a plumbing company? Because, if there is one thing on the East/West Corridor, it is people with many skills. They may not be totally professional, but guys doing plumbing and electrical work can be found there. I am making the point that this is a measure to empower people, because if, in fact, they are allowed to own their units, as Sen. Rev. Barbara Gray-Burke said, they will be able to use it even for security. Who does not want the people on the East/West Corridor to own something? It seems clear what is the answer.

**Sen. Mark:** The PNM! Dependency! That is it!

**Sen. V. Cabrera:** Again, they have opposed the increased registration fees for the foreign used cars. The real question here is not whether the present Government allowed it, or the past government allowed even more shady activity in the bamboo; the real question here is the establishment of a proper modern transport system and the Government has to deal with that at some point in time. I am saying—[*Interruption*] These kinds of little nonsense statements—anyhow...

When the PNM removed the railway from Trinidad and Tobago, it set the stage for maxi-taxis and foreign used cars, as far back as that. [*Desk thumping*]

**Sen. Mohammed:** Bring back the train.

**Sen. V. Cabrera:** I am saying that I was born in South; I started to work in town; I live in Caroni East. I work in Port of Spain still, so I am always up and down this country. Whenever a little rain falls, look at the people on the East/West Corridor how they “catching dey tail” to get a ride out of town.

**Mr. President:** Senator, not that kind of language at all.

**Sen. V. Cabrera:** I withdraw the statement. They are, in fact, getting great and immense problems in reaching their homes on time. That is the point I make. I say further that on a Friday afternoon, some Senators may not be in town, but when what goes on in town is seen, with all the private maxi-taxis, people still cannot get home. If a little rain falls, they have to be fighting one another. I am saying that whichever government it is, some government has to bite the bullet and really establish a proper transport policy.



When I listened especially to my good friend, Sen. Muhammad Shabazz, I thought really that the PNM was in power for two years and for some reason got overthrown or removed and then the UNC came into power. The gentleman talked of corruption as though it were a new word. The PNM was in power for 34 or 35 years and there is not one law on corruption. [*Interruption*]

On that question of corruption, I really thought when this Government came into power, a few people would have landed in jail, but there are no laws. I am making the point that they used what they have been accused of over the years and they are now attempting to accuse us of that. More than that, it is as if we have been in power not for three years, but 300 years.

Do they want us to change certain historical situations? Things for which colonialism should be blamed, they want to put blame on us. In fact, I am convinced that that PNM that got into power within the colonial era and which took us into independence, was programmed by colonialism. That is why they cannot get out of that niche and that *cul de sac* in which they are.

I commend the Minister of Finance for having the foresight in stating that the National Housing Authority units will be sold, because as far as I am concerned, technocrats may have developed such a position, but the Minister had to approve it, so I am complimenting him 100 per cent for that fact.

I heard a number of Senators talk about the question of foreign investment, including one Opposition Senator. That is not a new thing. That started long ago. We knew of the struggle of Comrade George Weeks down in South against what he used to call "Tex-are-co", and nobody on that side knows it better than me because I grew up in the oil. [*Interruption*] Yes. That is why I am here.

I am stating, Mr. President, that the fact of the matter is that even Viet Nam and Cuba are, in fact, encouraging foreign investment so that, although some people and world leaders would prefer to develop their countries without it because there are difficulties, we need the foreign investment. That is a fundamental principle. The question is: What do we put our foreign investment into?

### **7.30 p.m.**

Because of the kind of agreements, the international lending companies are not stupid organizations, sometimes they insist on how it is spent so some of it would return to them, but it is something which our economists would have to deal with as we go forward towards national development.

I compliment the Minister for his measures as far as agriculture is concerned because it is very easy for us to say after being in power for 34 years that this Government is not doing anything for agriculture, they did all. In fact, I want to make the point that this Government should have been able to take a society, develop it to a certain level and move forward, but what they did not do in 30 years, we have to be doing now. So the Government may need one, two, maybe three terms in office to really carry the country forward after the morass in which it was left.

The Minister has announced a new schedule of subsidies beginning at 15 per cent for agricultural vehicles, machinery, and equipment. The incentives are water for agriculture, soil conservation and land preparation: I was very pleased to hear Sen. Dr. St. Cyr say that he does not believe that subsidies are necessarily a bad thing because at one time the international lending agencies were pushing that down our throats.

If you want to know how I know certain things listen, when the Trinidad and Tobago Trade Union Movement was invited to Washington, I was part of the delegation and they took us both to the headquarters of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. In fact, I think they are just across the road if my memory serves me right. One of the things which the people at the IMF told us was many of your Governments—and this was while the PNM was in power—come here and take what we tell them, they do not negotiate. And it was then trade unionists started saying it is better they start putting some of us on those teams to negotiate with the foreign governments.

I compliment the Minister because agriculture always has a special place in my heart and I want to say as a Back Bencher, if the Minister could find the money, try to help those farmers who have received a lashing by the elements. I read where in Japan, rice is produced and it is the most costly country to produce rice, but yet the state subsidizes the farmers there, so I am making a plea to all those concerned, do not let our farmers become broken. When I saw on the television last night all the slush—some of them may have savings, not all would have. I think we must do something to put them back on their feet because in this stage of trade liberalization, it is unfair for them to be getting that kind of lash and when the foreign farmers get it, their government helps them. So again, I very genuinely compliment the Minister for his bold steps on the question of agriculture.

Mr. President, I move on quickly by paying some attention to the contribution made by Sen. Shabazz and I think he attempted to mislead the Senate on Tobago. A representative of Tobago, a UNC/NAR Senator stood here, someone who lives in Tobago, and reported that the marriage may have been rocky but it is still together. It is not even receiving treatment or counsel, the marriage continues. Again, we have done what you all have failed to do and by coming here and talking about A.P.T James and this one and that one—yes, leaders are important, but you must understand the role of the individual in history and an individual can do nothing if people around him do not respond. So do not stand here and only compliment one or two Tobago leaders, compliment the people of Tobago. That is what he should be doing. When I hear what the gentleman says about URP, I really have to listen to what my political leader says: never have so few people done so much in such a short space of time.

Sen. Shabazz, in Nazi Germany, there was a guy called Gobbels, when Hitler spoke he used to jump up and applaud him and he told Hitler that a lie repeated over and over becomes the truth. When you come here, and offload that kind of misrepresentation of the truth, there are some who would believe.

Mr. President, through you, the URP did not begin as URP, it started as the Crash Programme and in fact, recently one of the former ministers, Donald Granado was making the point, and it was not meant for the East/West Corridor. Is Point Fortin in the East/West Corridor? Is San Fernando the East/West Corridor? I am saying to the hon. Senator, through the President, you are wrong, totally wrong.

Apparently, the Senator does not like good news because I am certain he read the “Platform for Progress”, there are so many good things here but he did not deal with them, he went into the budget that has passed. I ask the Senator—and he does not have to answer now, he could go and do a research—all those budgets which the PNM had in fact laid in Parliament for the period it was in power, is he telling me that it never carried out at least one measure it said it would have carried out? Answer me on some other occasion, but I am certain that if he had listened to what Sen. Dr. St. Cyr said, he would have heard him deal with the question of having to cut and trim. Everybody knew what happened with the oil dollar this time around. The Minister of Finance had to prioritize certain things over other things so I am saying that it is unfair to come to this Senate and attempt to mislead the nation.

The Senator talked about this brilliant statement made by the Leader of the Opposition, but to be truthful, when I heard this “eating people raw” talk, I said I had to listen to what he had to say. His statement was an anti-climax, if ever there was one; an anti-climax. In fact, it was made up of lies, half-truths, and innuendoes.

**Mr. President:** I have already stated that you cannot criticize Members of the other place when they have made their contributions.

**Sen. V. Cabrera:** I withdraw the statement, Mr. President. People in this country are listening to what the politicians are saying and through you, Mr. President, Sen. Shabazz said that the people of this country are being asked to sacrifice for the Government. Check *Hansard*, that is what he said and that is a most unfair and untruthful statement. The people have to sacrifice for their country, not for the Government, and if that is the PNM’s style of politics, that is not the politics that is being practised today. I ask the Senator to reconsider what he has said here today because it is going down in history. The children would be reading what he has said. I do not want to venture to ask the kinds of questions which I think they would ask when they read that statement.

Mr. President, I now turn to a statement which was made by Sen. Rev. Gray-Burke last night and for my short period here, many times I hear statements, but they do not reach me; I do not feel them. I really felt Sen. Gray-Burke’s statement and perhaps it is a bit of a tragedy that the media—and I am not attacking the media here, because there are some people on that side, once you talk about the media they say you are attacking the media; once you talk about calypsonians, they say you are attacking the calypsonians—but when tea time passes and the media leave, they miss some of the best contributions in the House. I feel that it is time that the editors of the newspapers understand that they have to pay the people overtime. Instead of saving a little money, cover what is going on in the Senate. *[Laughter]* In doing so, I support her position on the old age pension or OAP as it is called in the trade union movement.

I remind the Senate, through you, Mr. President, that the Minister of Finance did not only raise the old age pension, but he in fact raised the threshold. There are many people who have complained over the years about why they should not be getting a pension, and this oppressive level which the former regime had for so many years. I really compliment the Minister for doing that.

One of the measures which have been announced by the Minister of Finance in the present budget we are debating, has been an increase in the NIS contributions,

but the few people are attacking it—and most of them belong, unfortunately, to a certain side—are not even bothering to take note that the benefits have also been increased and I think we need to note that. In fact, for those who want to know how I know so much. I sat on a team of NATUC to meet with the board of the NIB and on which NATUC has four representatives, thanks to the present Government. Five years before, an actuary—in those days there were only three actuaries in Trinidad and Tobago, and the leading actuary in the country, working with the largest insurance firm—came to us and told us that if we do not effect an increase in those contributions that the NIS would quickly become insolvent. Do you understand what that means, Mr. President, the NIS becoming insolvent? As small as the money is or was, that is what many people depend on when they retire. I am saying that those who are going up and down the East/West Corridor trying to mislead people and telling them they have to pay more NIS now, must be held accountable. The reason workers and employers in this country have to pay such a sudden jump is if it was done gradually before, we may not even have to raise it now, but they have to pay that steep increase because the former regime abdicated its responsibility to the people of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

I say to the Minister of Finance that it is a natural reaction for workers when they know they have to pay more money, to criticize it, but what is needed is education and awareness. You do not need “wildmanism”, you cannot be a bag and pan man in today’s politics. There is a time when you could take your political opponents and deal with them, but when you are dealing with these budgetary measures, you are dealing with the lives of the people. Do not go and mislead them because you feel you could score some political points.

In fact, we have a regime that had been in power for so long and there is a former Finance Minister who from time to time talks to them and so forth. Where is their budget? They should have had the common sense, if they had the political acumen, to produce an alternative budget and circulate it in this Parliament, but they have not done so.

**7.45 p.m.**

All they have come with is a set of old paper and some documents. The learned Senator almost made a point to say that the URP should be in the East/West Corridor alone, and I hope the media take note. What happened to the rest of the country? How could he decide that a benefit like that must be for one area alone? I know it went further than that. I know that in the 1970s, when the learned Prime

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Minister, Dr. Eric Williams—the real father of the nation—took off his tie, put on his scarf and started to walk up and down the country, it was then that they started to get serious about the URP in this country. I am going to make sure and let all of those other people in the other parts know that Sen. Muhammad Shabazz does not want them to have URP. He wants the whole thing for Laventille alone. [*Desk thumping*] [*Laughter*]

I would like to conclude by saying that from time to time, three people who sit in this Senate on this side have been castigated by an opposing Senator because they feel that the role of the trade union movement is only to criticize. One can never satisfy the trade union movement, and I am a trade unionist, because in doing a negotiation, sometimes one gets an increase and when one goes to the workers, they want more. It is part of man's nature. The workers have just aspirations. The employer has just aspirations too, but the workers call that greed. [*Laughter*]

Mr. President, in winding up, I want to accuse through you, in a very parliamentary way, Sen. Shabazz. I am putting an example on the table. I want to accuse him of being misinformed. When one accuses a friend of being misinformed, it is because one likes him and wants him to be more informed. This morning when I went to my office before I came here, my General Secretary informed me that he was part of a delegation yesterday of the Board of the Cipriani Labour College that met with NIHERST to discuss this same Community College matter, yet I come here today and hear the hon. Senator taking up one of the old budgets—because he did not read the new budget—and talk about how we spoke about the Community College; what about it? Things take time! We need the time to implement for things to be done properly.

Another example is the desalination plant. Has he forgotten the horrors people got for water in Central and Point Lisas? Desalination plants are not a big thing in any part of the world. All about the world, even in the countries with deserts, they are using it. Why does he insist that we must not have a desalination plant? It is right next to the industrial estates. Does he want to run it from somewhere up in Laventille? While the Senator accused my Minister of Public Administration of wanting to move on to Flagstaff, he should really be concerned about who has moved on to South Africa and left the seat empty in the Parliament. That is what he should be concerned about! [*Laughter*]

Mr. President, I want to conclude by apologizing to you for maybe using some trade union language, but as someone whom I have met over the table at a different place, you would know that our intentions are to raise the cultural level of the people in the country and also to ensure, as a movement, that the workers of this country are not led down the garden path. I have all confidence, after reading this budget, that the Minister put his best foot forward, and I am proud to state that with budgets like this we will reach where we have to reach as a total quality nation at a very fast rate so that the people of the country would not have to think again about the return to the horrors and the nightmare of the last 34 years.

Thank you, Mr. President.

**Mr. President:** This House is now suspended until 8.30 p.m.

**7.51 p.m.:** *Sitting suspended.*

**8.30 p.m.:** *Sitting resumed.*

**The Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry of Housing and Settlements (Sen. Carol Cuffy-Dowlat):** Mr. President, it is my honour to rise in support of the Appropriation Bill 1998/1999, the theme of which is “A Platform for Progress—Security for all”, and attempt to give a brief synopsis of the stewardship of the expanded portfolio of the Ministry of Housing and Settlements under the venerable captain, the hon. John Humphrey. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. President, this Senate would remember that in January 1998, the sum of \$83 million was allocated under the Public Sector Investment Programme to the Ministry of Housing and Settlements and its then agencies, namely:

The Project Execution Unit (PEU);

The Sugar Industry Labour Welfare Committee (SILWC); and

The National Housing Authority (NHA).

By way of *Trinidad and Tobago Gazette* No. 102 Vol. 37 of June 1998, the portfolio of the Ministry was expanded significantly to include the Interim National Physical Planning Commission, the Town and Country Planning Division, the Lands and Surveys Division, including the Hydrographic Unit, and the Urban Development Corporation of Trinidad and Tobago (UDEcOTT).

As a consequence of the above, the Ministry’s allocation for capital projects increased from \$83 million to \$110.9 million for 1998. Based on the Ministry’s

good performance, this sum was further increased by \$20 million following the mid-term review of the Public Sector Investment Programme 1998.

This restructuring of the Ministry resulted in all agencies responsible for physical planning being strategically placed under the Ministry of Housing and Settlements. The new focus of this Ministry will now be physical planning and settlements planning and development in Trinidad and Tobago. The Ministry of Housing and Settlements proposes to undertake such work as is required to fulfill its mandate to the people of Trinidad and Tobago. Following on the lead suggested by Sen. Philip Marshall and other Senators, I will attempt to give to this honourable Senate a brief summary of the accomplishments of the Ministry of Housing and Settlements and its agencies and its objectives for 1998.

With regard to the accomplishments of the Interim National Physical Planning Commission, in 1998, it finalized a draft of the Planning and Development of Land Bill 1998. The Bill seeks to make physical planning more accessible to local communities and to render it more responsible and responsive to changing circumstances and to the policies of government. Key provisions for the support of these reforms would include the establishment of a National Physical Planning Commission which would advise the Minister, as well as ensure that the preparation of local area plans and consideration of a preponderance of development control matters are devolved to local government level.

In keeping with the proposed structure of the National Physical Planning Commission, a plenary and four standing committees dealing with the preparation of a national physical development plan, codes and standards, development control and national land use policies and long-term goals have been temporarily established.

What are the objectives for 1999? A major objective of the Interim National Physical Planning Commission for 1999 pending the enactment of the Planning and Development of Land Bill, is the establishment of the National Physical Planning Commission to undertake certain core functions. In this regard, during October 15—17, 1998 a workshop with key stakeholders was held as part of the efforts of the Ministry towards the institutional rationalization and design of the National Physical Planning Commission.

In the interim, however, the Commission would continue work related to the review and establishment of the following: development codes and standards; development control; national land policy and long-term goals; physical planning



standards; subdivision regulations; national building codes; plumbing codes; electrical codes; and fire system codes. In effect, we do not have these codes in our country and, as such, we find that a lot of haphazard planning and development has been taking place. It was thought that it is necessary for the future that we attempt to take us on the right road. I see my good colleague, Sen. Shabazz, smiling. I know that he knows that the Almighty takes care of his children, hence he allowed us to be here and saved us and this nation from the wrath and burning fires of the PNM. *[Desk thumping]*

Among the major accomplishments of the Town and Country Planning Division for the year 1998 are: contributions to the work of the Interim National Physical Planning Commission with respect to the finalization of the Planning and Development of Land Bill, and the preparation of the draft Land Subdivision Regulations. Also, the Division has enhanced the computerization of its head office and four regional offices, establishing Year 2000 compliance, and has also embarked on the revision of the Database Management System for the land use planning functions. We are becoming technology wise.

Contracts have been awarded for three consultancies under the BEIRL Environmental Assignment. Accordingly, consultancies have commenced with respect to:

- The training of professionals in environmental impact assessment;
- The design and implementation of an environmental data collection programme; and
- The design, development and implementation of a comprehensive information system.

The Town and Country Planning Division's initiatives for 1999 include *inter alia*:

- The preparation of the National Physical Development Plan Review to provide an up-to-date strategic framework for national physical development.
- The preparation of local area plans of six selected settlements to provide the detailed planning framework for development.
- The preparation and publication of land use policies for specific local areas within the broad North, South, East and Tobago regions.

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- The computer enhancement programmes and the establishment of a comprehensive database system for land use planning.
- Ensuring public awareness and public information with regard to the new land legislative requirements, planning regulations, codes and standards and securing public participation in the land use planning process.

You see, Mr. President, we are aware that our work will come to nought if we do not have public participation and involvement in these processes.

Major accomplishments of the Lands and Surveys Division in 1998 were: the successful installation and commissioning of a Digital Map Production Facility. Further, the consultancy for the establishment of the facility is expected to be completed in 1998 and as a result, and following on Sen. Marshall, and knowing of the decision of *Pratt and Morgan*, we expect these contracts to be executed in 1998/1999. We also expect the digital mapping of the total area of Trinidad and Tobago; management of the mapping of Trinidad and Tobago; and restructuring of the Lands and Surveys Division.

In the Land Administration Section, which oversees the management of state lands, 81 leases were executed and 300 consents were granted for transfer and mortgage leases. In addition, the division implemented an extensive programme aimed at the collection of arrears of outstanding lease payments.

To date, 38 compulsory acquisition matters have been completed at a cost of \$2.7 million. However, 74 matters are at an advanced stage of completion. A total of \$10 million was allocated for the acquisition of sites, for development purposes in 1998, which sum is committed and expected to be disbursed pending the finalization of the above matters.

In January, 1998 there was a 10-month backlog of survey plans to be checked and this has been successfully addressed. Plans are now being checked within one month of submission.

The computerization of the records is on stream and data entry has been brought up-to-date. As a result, data entry and verification are now being effected simultaneously with data collection. A design of the database for the division's survey records has commenced and draftsmen have been trained in digitizing techniques.

In 1999 the Lands and Surveys Division will continue with the digital mapping contract for the remaining 87 per cent of the area of Trinidad and Tobago and will include the establishment of a digital cadastral database; the restoration and computerization of the vault records; and the upgrading of the digital topographic database from 1994 to 1999 status.

Mr. President, the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources, in conjunction with the Lands and Surveys Division, will be distributing approximately 1,700 parcels of state lands for agricultural purposes. The Division has a pivotal role to play in this exercise by facilitating the survey processes and ensuring that leases are executed within a reasonable time-frame.

The Ministry of Public Administration has earmarked for sale approximately 1,000 government quarters and the Lands and Surveys Division will be facilitating this exercise by managing the survey and land distribution.

The acquisition of approximately 650 parcels of land for the Natural Gas Pipeline Corridor Project and the extension of the Solomon Hochoy Highway will continue. It is expected that payment of compensation will be made for approximately 40 per cent of these matters which will amount to \$23 million.

Resources for systematic enhancement of the computerization of the Division's records have been proposed under the 1999 development programme. The anticipated \$2.1 million will allow the achievement of the following goals:

- (i) purchase of a network computer system capable of manipulation of the resulting large database;
- (ii) aggressive data collection to complete the selected priority areas;
- (iii) accelerate data entry;
- (iv) establishment of new posts needed for system implementation;
- (v) acquisition of appropriate staffing for the system;
- (vi) training of the human resources in key areas related to the implementation of an LIS; and
- (vii) procurement of contracting and consultancy services in areas relevant to system implementation.

Mr. President, we now turn to the Project Execution Unit of the Ministry. In 1998, under the IDB assisted Settlements Programme co-ordinated by the Project

Execution Unit, a total of 475 houses were constructed on nine sites throughout Trinidad and Tobago; a total of 386 loan applications were processed and \$33.8 million disbursed for housing construction through the Trinidad and Tobago Mortgage Finance Company Limited; and the construction of two of the five multipurpose community centres at Bon Air West and Couva North Phase II was completed. The centres have been handed over to the Ministry of Social and Community Development.

**8.45 p.m.**

Here are some of the significant objectives for this Unit and Division for 1999. In 1999, the Project Execution Unit proposes to complete the construction of 600 shelter units for low income beneficiaries at the Unit's settlement sites. It is also expected that the remaining three multipurpose community centres at Harmony Hall, Union Hall and Malabar will be completed.

The Sugar Industry Labour Welfare Committee, to date, has invited tenders to develop 158 housing lots at Brothers Garth, Princes Town; SILWC has applied for approval from Town and Country Planning Division to develop a total of 58 lots at Bien Venue and Orange Field Road; granted loans in the sum of \$5.1 million to facilitate the construction of 78 new houses and repairs and extensions to 45 existing housing units; and finalized agreement for the legal transfer of title to land at Frederick Settlement, Caroni, and Kumar Village, Williamsville to legitimate occupiers.

In the year 1999, the Sugar Industry Labour Welfare Committee intends to complete the Land Development Project at Brothers Garth, Bien Venue and Orange Field Road, which will yield a total of 216 fully developed serviced lots; to grant loans for the construction of approximately 1000 new dwelling houses and repairs and extension to approximately 70 existing dwelling units.

The Sugar Industry Labour Welfare Committee intends to regularize the land tenure of 80 squatter families at Tarouba, Golconda, Union Hall and Picton and the provision of pipe-borne water, electricity and infrastructure works on these sites, to continue the investigative process and to put in place the relevant mechanisms to ensure legislation of an issuance of Deeds of Conveyances to residents and legitimate occupants at Frederick Settlement, Caroni, and Kumar Village, Williamsville.

Mr. President, I now turn to the National Housing Authority. In 1998 the NHA undertook the following major activities:

Land development work at Tarouba North, to date, 60 per cent of the infrastructure work has been completed. This project is expected to yield 344 lots; completion of the work on the Sewage Treatment Plant at Edinburgh 500 which services 3,500 residents. It is now completed.

The NHA would continue construction work on seven high rise apartment buildings at Almond Drive, Morvant which will provide 112 apartments.

The National Housing Authority will continue joint venture arrangements in housing construction in the following areas:

- i) El Dorado, Tunapuna—96 apartments completed.
- ii) Savannah Villas, Aranguez—15 buildings (14 residential and one community facility). These buildings are at varying stages of completion. The project is expected to be completed by December 1998. The residential buildings would provide 250 apartments.
- iii) Valencia—25 mortgage units completed. A total of 110 units has now been completed.
- iv) Bien Venue—24 mortgage units completed; to date, a total of 47 units have now been completed.
- v) Sangre Grande—8 mortgage units completed.
- vi) Couva North—25 mortgage units completed and infrastructural facilities have been completed for 250 single family units.

In the area of squatter settlements, development works were undertaken on 12 sites throughout the country. These sites are: Brazil Village, San Raphael; Lawrence Wong Road, Longdenville; Graham Trace, Sangre Grande; Tarouba South; K.P. Land, Valencia; Wallerfield, Demerara Road; Las Cuevas, Maracas; St. Mary's, Moruga; Bon Air, North; Five Rivers, Arouca; and River Estate, Diego Martin.

A breakdown of the development works on these sites which are spread geographically across the country, are as follows:

- 1) Infrastructure upgrading—1,500 metres of water mains were laid and water connections were made to 153 properties. Four thousand one hundred metres of roads and drains were upgraded, while three retention ponds were designed and two constructed.

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- 2) Service Connection—120 water connections and 78 electricity connections were made.
- 3) Lots surveyed—Cadastral surveys were approved for 796 lots and preliminary surveys were done on 40 lots.
- 4) House Construction—Nine houses were constructed in Buen Intento to facilitate the victims of the Piparo Mud Volcano and 27 houses at Wallerfield to accommodate the unfortunate victims of lead poisoning.

What then are the major objectives for the NHA in 1999? The main thrust of the National Housing Authority will be:

- a) To explore mechanisms for housing financing for low and middle income persons, thus widening the scope of options available to prospective home owners;
- b) to establish a loan credit facility to improve access to housing;
- c) disposition of rental housing stock;
- d) transfer of responsibilities for squatter settlements to the Land Settlement Agency which would seek, *inter alia*, to facilitate: the regularisation of squatters on state land and the land of state enterprises wholly owned by the state;
- e) the settlement of other landless households on new sites to be identified by the state; and
- f) to enter into joint venture relationships with the private sector to develop suitable housing to meet the housing requirements of the country.

These objectives will be achieved by pursuing new technology for the procurement of shelter solutions. A pilot project at Picton Hill will provide 400 shelter solutions.

We hope in 1999 to complete all Joint Venture Projects listed in the achievement for 1998. This is expected to yield a further 557 units. We intend to facilitate the development of 251 sites, including both squatter and Greenfield sites, as identified in the State Land (Regularisation of Tenure) Bill, 1998.

We will continue to upgrade the computerization of our mortgage and rental portfolio and extend the computerization to other departments. We will also

continue our efforts geared towards institutional strengthening which will include organizational restructuring and upgrading of the information technology platform.

I now turn to the Urban Development Corporation of Trinidad and Tobago (UDeCOTT). In 1998 its achievements included completion of the construction of section 1 of the Harris Promenade Development, from Penitence Street to Paradise Street on the East. The corporation was able to raise \$1.9 million from commercial banks, private and state owned companies for the aforementioned work.

The Urban Development Corporation of Trinidad and Tobago commenced activities aimed at the development of the Port of Spain International Conference Complex as part of the Port of Spain development plan. These facilities will be sited on Kings Wharf.

The following major activities have started and are expected to be completed by UDeCOTT during 1998:

- i) refining of the site planning based on the feasibility study;
- ii) detailed surveys of the site;
- iii) incorporation of a development company; and
- iv) preparation of a share subscription agreement between UDeCOTT and the Port Authority.

Mr. President, UDeCOTT has commissioned scope exercises as it relates to planning studies for the following growth pole areas, namely, Port of Spain waterfront, San Fernando, Couva, Sangre Grande and Point Fortin. Final terms of reference were prepared for these growth pole areas and to date, land use and development plans have been commissioned for the Port of Spain waterfront and San Fernando sea front.

UDeCOTT has also commissioned the formulation of a Strategic Investment Plan for the entire west coast from Carenage to Point Fortin. This plan is necessary in order to rationalize the proposed investments along Trinidad's west coast.

The objectives for UDeCOTT for the year 1999 include the completion of the construction of Harris Promenade in San Fernando; and continuation of work on eight scoping exercises for planning studies for the following growth pole areas: Arima, Rio Claro, Chaguanas, Barataria/San Juan, Tunapuna/El Dorado, Princes Town, Siparia and Scarborough.

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Further, UDeCOTT is expected to prepare local area plans for six selected growth poles which will provide the detailed planning framework for development. Within this framework a Strategic Investment Plan will be formulated for the entire west coast; and completion of architectural and engineering designs for Phase I of the Port of Spain International Conference Complex.

I now turn to the matter of general interest, even more so than that outlined before, and this is the tax free housing bond. We all remember that in the 1998 budget, the Minister of Finance had proposed to raise a tax free housing bond in the sum of \$300 million to fund housing for low income earners.

In this regard, the Trinidad and Tobago Mortgage Finance Company Limited (TTMF) is currently taking steps to raise an initial \$100 million in 1998. Further, given the anticipated demand, the TTMF proposes to raise the remaining \$200 million in 1999 to assist in meeting the financial requirements for housing for low income earners of Trinidad and Tobago. A tiered interest rate structure for lending to low income and fixed income earners would be developed as follows:

AMOUNT (\$)	EFFECTIVE RATE %
10,000	Nil
20,000	1
30,000	2
40,000	3
50,000	4
60,000	5
70,000	6
80,000	7
90,000—150,000	8
151,000—200,000	8 ½
201,000—300,000	9
301,000—500,000	12% or the interest rate of the Home Mortgage Bank.

Further, loans up to \$80,000 would be computed on the basis of the first \$10,000 interest free, with an incremental rate of 2 per cent for each additional \$10,000. It is hoped that incentive programme will meet the demands of the low income and fixed income earners.



So what of our middle income earners? The Approved Mortgage Companies Programme (AMC) comprising 11 private financial institutions was established in July 1989 for the purpose of improving access to shelter financing by middle income earners.

In order to improve the operations of the AMC and to facilitate greater access to funding for housing, Cabinet in December 1997, agreed *inter alia* that:

- a) The housing regulations would be amended to allow for loans for the purchase of existing properties and not only newly built houses;
- b) the income ceiling of \$6,000 per month previously agreed to by the AMC would be removed so as to allow for wider access by prospective home owners;
- c) a national mortgage indemnity insurance scheme would be established in order to make mortgage insurance more affordable; and
- d) loan categories should be consolidated to coincide with interest rate categories as follows:
 

up to \$150,000	8% per annum
\$150,001—\$200,000	8.5% per annum
\$200,001—\$300,000	9% per annum.

Based on the foregoing, efforts are currently being made to enhance the programme in order to meet the housing needs of the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago, particularly the middle income earners.

I now turn to an area that is dear to the heart of my colleague sitting on the Opposition Bench, which is the rental policy and proposal for the sale of rental units of the National Housing Authority.

Mr. President, this is our attempt to empower the people of Trinidad and Tobago. Empowerment is not just about talk, or URP and "10 days", it is about doing something that is real, tangible and that can make a difference to the lives of our citizens. [*Desk thumping*]

The National Housing Authority has been providing housing for the nation since its establishment on August 7, 1962 by Act No.3 of 1962, Chap. 33:01 of the laws of Trinidad and Tobago. In accordance with this Act, the NHA provides

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housing solutions which include mortgage units, rental units, serviced lots, squatter regularisation and technical assistance for the construction of houses.

To date, there are 8,113 apartment units rented by the NHA. The monthly rental rates for these housing units range from \$9—\$350, while a rental of \$2,000 is charged for business places in apartment buildings constructed after 1982.

Despite the relatively small rental rates, particularly for the housing units, the NHA has been experiencing and continues to experience great difficulty in collecting rents. Maybe when they hear some of my colleagues speak, you will well appreciate why there is such difficulty in collecting these small rents. The NHA continues to experience much difficulty in collecting rents and arrears.

It is interesting to note that the approximate cost of maintenance of one rental apartment unit is \$3,600 per year, and persons sometimes pay \$9 per month, giving a total of \$29,206,800 for the maintenance of all apartments. The average monthly rental collected for the 8,113 apartment units is \$692,434.

**9.00 p.m.**

Mr. President, I think I need to repeat this information. The approximate cost of maintenance of one rental apartment unit is \$3,600 per year giving a total of \$29,206,800 for the maintenance of all apartments.

The average monthly rental collected for the 8,113 apartment units is \$692,434. This figure falls far short of the amount required to provide maintenance on a regular basis. It is important to note, and we are quite aware, that several of the units are now in need of repair.

Mr. President, research conducted by the National Housing Authority in the field has indicated that many of the tenants who now occupy low cost housing units are no longer in the low income category. In addition, since the minimum wage has been increased to \$7 per hour, tenants should now be in a better position to afford the proposed new minimum rental rate. Contrary to what is being said, many tenants have expressed a willingness to pay marketable rates and to acquire the apartments.

With these findings in mind the National Housing Authority is considering disposing of suitable rental units. It proposes to increase the minimum rental rate to \$100 per month. If this is to be instituted the monthly rental collection will actually double. The National Housing Authority is also considering special

facilities for senior citizens and disabled persons. I know my friend, Sen. Cynthia Alfred, will be quite pleased that special citizens and disabled persons are being considered.

As you are well aware this Government is a caring Government. We care for our old and young; we provide for our old and we give a future to our young.  
*[Desk thumping]*

Mr. President, what of the disposal of other National Housing Authority property? The Government has agreed on an equitable means of disposing the following housing units which were built on lands owned by the National Housing Authority and, in fact, ready for disposal:

Multi storey apartments at Cook Street, John John - 23 units;

Almond Drive, Morvant - 112 units;

Ramdial Mahabir, Phase II, Morvant - 48 units;

El Dorado Heights, Tunapuna - 96 units;

Savannah Villas, Aranguez - 250 units.

These are to be distributed based on the following general criteria and I would implore and beseech my friends, especially those on the Opposition Bench to take note that these are the following general criteria which would be used for the disposal of these units: 199-year leasehold title; the price of the units should be either valuation or market price, whichever is higher; only non home owners will qualify; units must be owner occupied; only adult citizens of Trinidad and Tobago qualify; and mortgage commitments should not exceed 25 per cent of income.

Interest concessions should relate to income levels. Low income mortgagors should be eligible for further loans on established interest scales as means enable upward mobility. The apartment complexes should be managed—through you, Mr. President, I think my friend Sen. Shabazz had indicated his interest as to who is going to look after the plumbing, community facilities and so forth. I was hoping that I could get his attention so that he would understand that when he goes out to preach and he meets all these people along the corridor and elsewhere he would be able to give them accurate information. Apparently his interest and aim is not to pass on accurate information to those few of his followers but to propagate misinformation as they are accustomed to doing on that side.

Mr. President, apartment complexes should be managed by companies or co-operatives of respective owners both for vesting land and continuing maintenance. We want to foster and encourage community development. If people have a stake and interest in their future and development, they will, in fact, take care, maintain and take pride. All the surveys world-wide have shown that if someone has a stake in his future he will ensure that he creates a real good future, not only for himself but for his children and grandchildren.

Mr. President, marketing by lottery will be done until the supply meets the demand for the units. Further, Government has agreed to dispose the housing units at subsidized prices and interest rates ranging between 3 per cent and 8 per cent with the life of the mortgage being up to 50 years. What this means, in effect, is that if you borrow up to \$100,000 you will be paying 3 per cent interest; up to \$200,000, 4 per cent interest; up to \$250,000, 5 per cent interest; up to \$350,000, 6 per cent interest; up to \$400,000, 7 per cent interest; and over \$400,000, 8 per cent interest. Mr. President, we are, in fact, encouraging home owners. We want them to have a real stake in their future. This is the vision and hope of this Government and it is being implemented as far as possible by the Ministry of Housing and Settlements under the stewardship of the hon. John Humphrey.

The Ministry of Housing and Settlements is committed to facilitating physical planning and development in Trinidad and Tobago for the benefit of all citizens. The country is, in fact, poised to enter a new and dynamic era with a revolutionary approach. The Ministry of Housing and Settlements is geared towards taking the country into the year 1999 and the new millennium.

Mr. President, I reiterate my support for the Appropriation Bill 1998/1999 and commend the good work of the Government to the people of Trinidad and Tobago. I thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

**Sen. Nizam Baksh:** Mr. President, let me at the outset congratulate the Minister for putting together Government's thrust for its programme for 1998/1999. From all the previous speakers we have heard commendations coming for the Minister for his ability to pull together the programme for the 1998/1999 budget.

If we look at the previous budgets that we have presented we will recognize that there has been continuity over the years. If we look at the tax regime that this Government has been looking after, we will see the thread that continues from year

to year. If we look at our social programmes we will also see existing there the kind of support that we promised would take place.

We are aware that whenever any budget is being prepared there are a number of lobbyists prior to the presentation, and even months before, with regard to the special interests of groups and individuals. This makes it difficult for the Minister. I am sure that when he has to take into consideration all the requests that are made to him in different ways and times, it is difficult for him to say or promise anything in this regard, but I know that he would take into consideration all these requests and come up with a balanced budget. This is what he has done in the past years and in this year as well and he is getting better every year.

Sen. Marshall indicated that we have a population of 1.3 million in this country and if everyone had the opportunity to give recommendations for this budget we would have, perhaps, ended up with 1.3 million different views. Similarly, among us 30 Senators we would have the same results if we are given the opportunity to say something: each one of us will come up with something different. Therefore, I can see the precarious position that a Minister of Finance would find himself in when he has to prepare a budget taking into consideration all the various interest groups and individuals that he has to look after.

I am sure that Sen. Shabazz would deem it a good opportunity, as he indicated tonight—Minister of Finance. On behalf of this Government I thank the PNM for their remarks on this budget. They are the ones who said from the very opening day that it is an election budget. I want to thank them because history has shown us that election budgets are described in terms of sweetheart budgets, the people's budgets and that they are vote catching. This is the history we have had over the years that I can recall. Therefore, when our budget is labelled “an election budget” certainly, it tells us that it is a good budget and we want to thank them for identifying, from the very beginning, that this is the kind of budget presented by this Government. They gave us loud acclamation for this.

I want to follow up by saying that the budget addresses the needs of the poor and underprivileged and we know that we have a substantial number of people who are categorized in this section. We have also looked at children and parents and employers and employees. The budget also sent a signal on the importance of education to the people of this country and it included the young and not so young—all the people in this country.

We want the nation to understand that this Government is putting emphasis on education. We are also looking at the introduction of computers in schools and community centres. *[Interruption]* Sure, it will come, I believe it. You asked the question, I gave you the answer.

Our Prime Minister indicated his concerns with regard to training in skills. He identified the energy sector where we have a shortage of the necessary skills and he has indicated to us that we must focus our attention in this direction. This tells us that our strategies certainly are there to prepare for security for all. This is the theme of our budget: "A platform for progress and security for all".

We are also removing the Common Entrance Examination. This has to do with the total package of education. It is not a piecemeal kind of thing. Whatever we are doing we are taking a holistic approach which one can see, if one looks at our social services and the educational efforts there. We also intend to remove the shift system in secondary schools.

**Sen. Mohammed:** Have you corrected the errors in the textbooks yet?

**Sen. N. Baksh:** It does not come overnight, ma'am. It takes time. The distance learning programme is to come on stream shortly as well. As I indicated the social programmes: this is one of the aspects in which this Government has indicated that it has a social conscience and I think this is one of the topics on which this Government came into power in 1995 when we articulated to the population that we have a social conscience.

We are adopting a holistic approach with regard to our social development. This is a Government with a plan and we are working this plan. We have the plans and we have shown that we can work the plans as well.

When we look at the old age pension situation we have been very consistent with regard to trying to meet the needs of our senior citizens and we have been raising this for the last three years. What we have been doing is providing them with liquid cash which provides them with the purchasing power when they get out into the market place.

**9.15 p.m.**

This increase has benefited 68,000 people as the present figure and this comprises about 89 per cent of the total elderly population of 65 years and over. We have also increased the ceiling from \$5,000 to \$7,440 per annum which

automatically brought in more people into this net, an additional 8,000 senior citizens. This is something we need to look at and people are understanding that what we are doing would redound to their own benefit. This is what we are about to do when we say we have a social conscience.

The PNM will say that we are only doing this to reduce the numbers, to play with numbers, but if those elderly people are spoken to on the outside, they will tell of the benefits being received here.

The United Nations has designated 1998/1999 as International Year of Older Persons. I would like to make the request here that as Senators, we work together with our non-governmental organizations in our communities to see what we could do for the poor and older people, and identify with them during this period as a beginning, as a starting point.

We have also looked at persons with disabilities and, again, we are ensuring security for all in this programme. If we look at Customs Tariff 9021, we will be given a comprehensive list of all the benefits from which physically handicapped persons will be able to benefit.

Again, continuing with the social programmes, this Government will embark upon the establishment of a halfway house for children 16—18 years old who will be leaving the orphanage and industrial schools. We know that very often children who leave these homes have nowhere and no families to go to; this will help in preparing them in going to live outside there. There will be house parents who will help them prepare themselves for the challenges as they move outside.

We know, too, that this is an age group where, when they come out of the system, there are seasoned criminals who pull them in to work for them because with that age group, the law has it that they cannot be sentenced for murders or hanging because of their age, so that they are a protected group for criminals who use them for going out there to commit murders and criminal activities. This halfway house will help to keep them out of that and prepare them to move outside in the open community.

We are also embarking upon the training of more mature persons to provide day-care centres for the elderly within a house setting. This is especially good for the rural communities where, today, there are children who are working and unable to look after their parents. This day-care service will enhance the service that we want to see given to our elderly citizens.

We are also establishing community-based home work centres, where we will be using retired teachers. I could give an example in my own community where we use the A' level students to assist the students who are doing the CXC exams and the CXC students assist those who are now in Forms I and II. The advantage of this is that those A' level students, by teaching the CXC students, are able to master their subjects and when they write exams, the difference in results can be seen because they mastered their subjects because of the opportunity they had to teach others what they had to learn for themselves for the exams.

This is a wonderful opportunity which we are providing for both retired people who are looking for opportunities to keep occupied, as well as to help those who are in need.

We also have coaching programmes. We know that a number of persons who drop out of the schools or who leave secondary schools are looking for jobs. There is a period when they have nothing to do and this is a vulnerable period when they can be pulled into doing the wrong things. We have embarked upon coaching caravans which are aimed at assisting the youths in the rural communities. They have been doing coaching in basketball, football, netball, track and field. The objective of that programme is bringing together the old and the young and encouraging sports for all. This is a very important aspect of it.

We are also embarking on the school and communities coaching programme. This will develop the fellowship and love for sports. Today, we look at the stars in sport—I refer here to Brian Lara and Dwight Yorke. When the money they make is looked at, this could be an incentive for the young people to get involved so that they, too, can get involved in sport as masters in sport. So, we want to take our community to that level as well.

If we look at the Singapore situation—many people have made references to Singapore—and if we look at the kinds of programmes put in place for sports; I am talking about sports and fitness for all—there are programmes for the senior citizens to keep fit. I have seen them myself. When we look at the programmes for retired sportsmen, there are indoor and outdoor swimming pools; there is a total package for sports, and for young people and old people. This is something we need to follow and look at; it could help in developing programmes for all people of our country.

This Government will set up three mediation centres intended to provide first-time offenders with an alternative to litigation for minor crimes and civil disputes.



We know that the laws have been put in place already. The Government has allocated \$1 million in the Public Service Investment Programme to set up these centres at San Juan, Cunupia and Scarborough. This will create a significant impact on the young people who will have an opportunity for redemption.

We know that usually when these people go to court, they are committed to prison and they get a kind of stigma there. We hope that these centres will assist them by removing them from that kind of thing there. We hope that this will be an addition for the young people as well.

We are also looking at the compensation for victims of crime. A system of compensatory justice to alleviate some of the suffering and hardships of victims of crime and their dependants will be put in place shortly. The Government will ensure that victims receive compensation in the shortest possible time for injuries suffered.

Mr. President, we can go on and on with the number of social programmes that this Government is going to put in place for members of our community.

We also looked at the NIS beneficiaries who will receive higher benefits. We see automatically that 38,000 existing NIS retirees will stand to receive higher pensions than they now receive with the introduction of the new measures, at no additional cost to themselves.

I spoke earlier on about the tax system. We are seeing that those who will be earning \$50,000 or less per annum, will no longer have to file an income tax return with the Board of Inland Revenue. This does not exempt them from paying income tax. It means that 100,000 taxpayers, or one-third of the tax-paying public will no longer be required to file tax returns. It will be recognized immediately that the human resource there can be redirected to other areas.

Much has been said about the foreign used car market. I just want to read one or two excerpts from the media about what the key players had to say about the used car market. Caption—"TT Chamber Thumbs up for auto Taxes". This is the *Trinidad Guardian* of October 6, 1998. It says:

"According to Chamber president, Gordon Deane, while a further analysis is needed for the seemingly 'reasonable' budget, the increase in vehicular taxes will serve to ease road congestion and curb pollution. Deane said the measure will also decrease the demand for foreign exchange.

The Chamber also supported:

- tax free bonds and special rates for first time homeowners
- relief for tertiary education
- the exclusion of VAT on computer purchases
- small business loan subsidies
- the introduction of a pension plan for daily paid Government workers
- non-VAT for supplies to the disabled
- increase in old age pensions and
- non-filing of tax returns.”

Under another caption—“Foreign used cars still have a chance”. This is the *Trinidad Guardian* of October 11, 1998:

“The nation’s largest dealer of new cars said on Friday that foreign used car dealers could maintain a “favourable” share of the local car market if they are willing to accept lower profit margins.

Neil Mohammed, the general manager of Diamond Motors which sells Mitsubishi vehicles, was commenting on the fee and duty increases imposed on car imports in the 1999 budget...

‘Sales of foreign used units should remain favourable if these dealers are willing to accept lower profit margins and reduce their prices to those dictated by the prevailing market demand,’ ...

The car executive said that the Budget had sought to ‘bring some respectability back into this (foreign used car) market and indeed some degree of consumer protection.’

Then, we look at another side of it. A lot has been said about the small car. From my own experience, and I talk here from information that I have from people who purchase these cars as well, a number of these cars that come into the local market are old vehicles which are obtained at very low prices. In fact, those cars when they used to cut them some years ago and bring them into this country, were virtually obtained free in Japan, because those people had to pay to keep those cars in warehouses and car parks because of the rules across there with regard to age of vehicles. So, those cars were coming in here and people were welding them together and putting them on the road.

What I see as the advantage here is that those who want to survive—now, those people had a good opportunity; they took advantage of it; but the situation is now that because of the glut on the market, the market has been saturated, so that what will happen now is that those same people will have to bring the current models.

Let me give an example here. Look at the current models of the Nissan Sentra, those cars can come in at a price of \$50,000—\$55,000 on the road with the tax inclusive. I say this because I am privy to the figures as they come into this country. Therefore, it redounds to the people in this country who buy the cars that they will no longer have to pay the same price for the older cars, because if somebody wants to survive in the business, definitely they will have to bring in the current models with, of course, a lower profit margin.

The Minister made reference to the people who buy new cars here. My own experience is that I have a Lancer that is two and a half years old. The firm has indicated to me that the market value is \$65,000—\$70,000. I am trying to sell it at \$60,000 and I cannot get a sale for it. In view of the adjustments made by the Minister of Finance, I can now see myself selling this car, perhaps at \$60,000. The Senator will experience it soon. She can ask Sen. Nafeesa Mohammed; she made a change; I did not have a chat with her to find out how she made the change. This is a reality and we have to face it.

What happened, too, is those people who were buying Benz, BMWs and Volkswagens—new ones—they were costing \$500,000 and over, but there were people bringing in those cars, purchasing them abroad for \$150,000—\$200,000; dismantling them, coming here, mounting them up again and paying \$30,000.

**9.30 p.m.**

Once a car is brought in under the old system over a particular cc you pay \$30,000, so there was a big difference in this thing. This is one of the matters that is addressed in this new adjustment. I say that local demand has saturated and if one travels along the highway, one would see the car lots with as many as 50, 60, 80 cars and one feels he is in the United States of America.

I want to touch finally on the housing programme. We have heard the statement before that rent buys nothing, instalment buys a home. I have been told that rent buys nothing but if you could spend your money towards instalments, then certainly you can earn something. There are many people going around and telling people they should not buy their homes and if you look at it, those people own homes, but they are telling others not to buy.

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People should look at this as a golden opportunity to invest in their own home. If you own something and there is a deed for it, you have collateral and could venture into small business. This is your tool for it, you could also educate your children, take opportunities of the programmes which have been provided by the Government to benefit your family or yourself. This is the point I want to make with regard to the ownership of homes. The NHA houses which this Government proposes to sell to its tenants, people should look at it from this angle.

Mr. President, I thank you for the opportunity and I am sure that the few points which I had the opportunity to raise, the population of this country would see that this Government is doing something for their upliftment.

Thank you very much.

**Sen. Dave Cowie:** Mr. President, it is my privilege to rise in support of this Appropriation Bill and to congratulate the Minister on the excellence of his initiatives. I want to briefly touch on the question of what political alternatives there are to the Minister's appropriation provisions. Perhaps our friends on the Opposition Bench would like us to emulate their descent into the snake pit of racism and their consignment to the wilderness and the wildness of their political vagrancy. *[Laughter]*

Mr. President, if one looks at our friends on the other side and their marginalized base that they purport to represent, except for their past masters, their fellow travellers and their surrogates, we and others might as well be hewers of wood and drawers of water. In fact, without the benefit of political patronage and indeed, in spite of their institutionalized misfeasance and I could simply go back to the DC-9 debacle, the perversity of Pegasus, the BWIA freeway, the Tesoro treason, the Farrell House fritters and the Sam P. Wallace shenanigans. We can go on, but in the face of all that, our own political constituency has managed to thrive and flourish and rest assured they would not be returning to Opposition.

In fact, I fear that my friends now in Opposition would experience a great degree of difficulty surviving the loss of political office without invoking the spectre of racism as they have institutionalized. If we accept, as no doubt our friends must do, that racism is an amalgam of compulsive ignorance and obliviousness of history and that they have managed to pervert what originally began as an industrial relations dispute over perceived strike-breaking by emancipated ex-slaves on the part of newly-arrived indentured servants and, in fact, the quality of their political dialogue has degenerated into that of who is more

racist than whom, who was racist before whom and who is racist because of whom, and certainly that is not a very redeeming discussion, there is no quality to that debate in my respectful view, Mr. President.

Unfortunately, the colonial hostages of divide and rule have become its republican protagonists. Theirs is the recourse to all sorts of political necromancy to rehabilitate defectors and deserters back to political half-life, and if I may say so, futility is something that they share in common with a certain political party from the neighbouring co-operative Republic of Guyana. Indeed, they also share the first two letters of their respective acronyms and an apparent shared ambition to create a pan-Caribbean and transcontinental rearguard of racism.

If I may quote from Frantz Fanon *Black Skin, White Masks* on page 68 his question was, Is there in truth any difference between one form of racism and another? Do not all of them share the same collapse and characterize the same bankruptcy of man?

If I may be so bold as to add, there is nothing that is more dangerous than sincere ignorance beside conscientious stupidity.

Mr. President, the PNM has unfortunately aborted a most sacred mission of consolidating mutual respect and enhancing the solidarity between the races of this country and that abdication of this sacred trust is like the albatross, in fact, it is like the balisier noose which hangs around their necks. Their tradition is one of derelict political architecture full of monuments; monumental waste, monumental narrow-mindedness, monumental mismanagement and the Caroni Racing Complex.

Mr. President, they have traditionally been nothing more than a drag on economic lift and elevation, and in fact, it is precisely in the throes of its demise that the PNM is at its most toxic. They are characterized, in fact, by their treatment of their very own, Teshier, Marshall—

**Mr. President:** Hon. Senator, I do believe that it is time that you get down to the business of the Senate, the preamble has been long enough.

**Sen. D. Cowie:** Mr. President, we have heard their compendious criticisms of the budget presentation and we are in fact anxious to accommodate all those who are not fearful of the political shift in this society's tectonic plates that the Minister of Finance's budget presentation reflects. We are anxious to accommodate all those who are not apprehensive of the reconfigured axis of influence and control and the repositioning of political centres of gravity.

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To my friend Sen. Montano, I say that it is clear that based on the respective shares of sectoral revenues that diversification has succeeded beyond the PNM's wildest expectations. I say too that there are two levels to reportage and accountability to the people, directly out there, and indirectly within the precincts of this hallowed Chamber and in my respectful submission, Mr. President, the Minister has done both. I say further, that compliance with the Exchequer and Audit Act is neither a matter of relativity nor discretion, in fact, it is an imperative.

Sen. Marshall has most helpfully enunciated a very attractive, theoretical approach that unfortunately, may not be ideally operable in the face of contending political constituencies, but we shall strive to do our best to realize the shared vision which he espoused.

To my colleagues in Opposition, before one attains a state of knowledge, one must first collectivize all the ignorance. In particular to my colleague, Sen. Jagmohan, I say that there can be no redemption where the practice of geopolitics is founded upon acrimony.

To my friend, Sen. Shabazz, whose return I am most grateful for, I say that in a political pack of cards with only jokers and bush cards, it is very difficult to kick a jack. *[Laughter]*

Mr. President, on that note, and with your leave, I thank you for the opportunity.

*Motion made and question proposed,*

That the Senate do now adjourn to Thursday, October 22, 1998 at 1.30 p.m.  
*[Hon. W. Mark]*

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Senate adjourned accordingly.*

*Adjourned at 9.45 p.m.*