

Leave of Absence

Tuesday, March 23, 1999

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The Senate met at 1.30 p.m.

PRAYERS

[MR. PRESIDENT *in the Chair*]

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Mr. President: Hon. Senators, leave of absence from today's sitting has been granted to Sen. Joan Yuille-Williams. Leave of absence has also been granted to Sen. The Hon. Sadiq Baksh with effect from March 22 and continuing.

SENATOR'S APPOINTMENT

Mr. President: I have received the following communication from His Excellency, The President:

“By His Excellency Arthur N. R. Robinson, T.C., O.C.C., S.C., President and Commander-in-Chief of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago

/s/ Arthur N. R. Robinson
President

TO: MR. KELVIN RAMNATH

Whereas Senator Sadiq Baksh is incapable of performing his functions as a Senator by reason of his absence from Trinidad and Tobago:

NOW, THEREFORE, I, ARTHUR N. R. ROBINSON, President as aforesaid, acting in accordance with the advice of the Prime Minister, in exercise of the power vested in me by section 44 of the Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, do hereby appoint you, KELVIN RAMNATH, to be temporarily a Member of the Senate, with effect from 23rd March, 1999 and continuing during the absence from Trinidad and Tobago of the said Sen. Sadiq Baksh.

Given under my hand and the Seal of the President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago at the Office of the President, St. Ann's, this 22nd day of March, 1999.”

*Joint Select Committee**Tuesday, March 23, 1999*

**JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE
(APPOINTMENTS)**

Mr. President: I have received also the following communication from the hon. Speaker of the House:

“March 22, 1999

Sen. The Hon. Ganace Ramdial
President of the Senate
Parliament
The Red House
Abercromby Street
PORT OF SPAIN

Dear Mr. President,

Appointment of Joint Select Committee.

I refer to a letter sent to me by the Vice-President of the Senate, dated March 18, 1999, in connection with the matter at caption.

At a sitting held on Friday March 19, 1999, the House of Representatives agreed to the following resolution:-

‘Be It Resolved that a Joint Select Committee be established to consider and report on the Bills entitled, ‘An Act respecting human reproductive technologies and commercial transactions relating to human reproduction’ and ‘An Act to make provision for the removal of human tissue for transplantation and blood for transfusion and for matters connected therewith.’:

And Be It Further Resolved that this House appoint the following six Members to serve with an equal number from the Senate on this Committee:

Dr. Hamza Rafeeq
Dr. Reeza Mohammed
Dr. Fuad Khan
Mr. Chandresh Sharma
Dr. Keith Rowley
Mr. Hedwige Bereaux

Yours Sincerely,

Hon. Hector McClean, MP
Speaker of the House of Representatives”

Oath of Allegiance

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OATH OF ALLEGIANCE

Sen. Kelvin Ramnath took and subscribed the Oath of Allegiance as required by law.

PAPERS LAID

1. Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the accounts of the Queen's Hall Board for the year ended December 31, 1990. [*The Minister of Public Administration (Sen. The Hon. Wade Mark)*]
2. Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the accounts of the Queen's Hall Board for the year ended December 31, 1991. [*Hon. W. Mark*]
3. Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the accounts of the Trinidad and Tobago Racing Authority for the year ended July 31, 1992. [*Hon. W. Mark*]
4. Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the accounts of the Trinidad and Tobago Racing Authority for the year ended July 31, 1993. [*Hon. W. Mark*]
5. The Minimum Wages Order, 1999. [*Hon. W. Mark*]

HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY (INC'N.) BILL

Question put and agreed to, That a Bill to provide for the incorporation of the Horticultural Society of Trinidad and Tobago and for matters incidental thereto, be now read the first time.

Bill accordingly read the first time.

COMPANIES (AMDT.) BILL

Bill to amend the Companies Act, 1995 [*The Minister of Legal Affairs*]; read the first time.

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

Question put and agreed to.

ECONOMIC PHILOSOPHY

[Fourth Day]

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on question [November 24, 1998]:

Be It Resolved that the Government of Trinidad and Tobago articulate its broad economic philosophy particularly regarding public participation in industry, economic liberalization and human resource management and its strategies for furthering the economic well-being of the nation. [*Sen. Dr. Eric St. Cyr*]

Question again proposed.

The Minister of Social and Community Development and Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs (Hon. Manohar Ramsaran): Mr. President, it is indeed a pleasure to join this debate and more so as Minister of Social and Community Development and Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs where these Ministries have now been put under the purview of one Minister to ensure that we reach the people of Trinidad and Tobago with a collaboration that has never been done before. Looking at the Motion, I would like to thank Sen. Dr. St. Cyr for giving us the opportunity to address this honourable Chamber.

I quote:

“Whereas in early post war years the economy of Trinidad and Tobago was actively redirected to providing enhanced infrastructure and higher incomes to the population through a policy of localization and industrialization and planning;”

I would like to look at that briefly, Mr. President. Recently I attended a meeting in the Netherlands, the Hague, where we discussed population planning and what this would mean not only to Trinidad and Tobago but the world. At this conference 177 countries were represented and what happened was that we came up with a 20-year programme of action and this is to provide sustainable human-centred development and a stable world population. Mr. President, this is very important for Trinidad and Tobago. If we are to continue the development of this country we must take a serious look at planning the population for the future, because if we continue in this trend we might find ourselves with more and more social problems.

Among the recommendations were the integration of population, production and consumption dynamics into sustainable development policies; development of policies and programmes to empower women; the promotion of the responsibilities of men in family life; the promotion of the welfare of the family, the basic unit of society, recognizing at the same time the varying family forms; reduction of infant and maternal mortality rates; meeting the health, educational,

training, social and employment needs of children and youth; improving in self-reliance and support systems for the elderly and persons with disabilities; the provision of universal reproductive health services for all; the promotion of the prevention, detection and treatment of sexually transmitted diseases including HIV/AIDS; the promotion of partnership between government and non-governmental sectors as well as the private sector in action being taken to meet the various goals.

Mr. President, you would realize that we have already started to take action in almost all these areas. However, we must always understand that it is important, if we want to create a country that we will be proud of, that human development must be the centre of our approach as we continue the good work that this Government has started and as we enter into the next millennium.

Looking at the Ministry of Social Development, our motto is to protect the vulnerable and disadvantaged and promote a better quality of life for all citizens through the provision of an integrated social service delivery system. And Mr. President, you will see in my hand a booklet entitled *Services of the Ministry of Social Development*. This has been something that only came into being a few years ago and I have made all the services that are offered by the Ministry of Social Development available to all the people of Trinidad and Tobago. And this booklet was circulated as far as possible to ensure that our services are directed and delivered to all who would need them.

We must say at the very beginning that none of the services of the Ministry of Social Development would be used in any particular area or areas but available to all the people of Trinidad and Tobago. If I may go quickly through some of the programmes we have, one of the changes I am attempting is that we will move towards sustainable development as far as is possible, but this does not mean that we will not continue with the present programmes as they exist. The idea in the long term is that we will move away from the handout or the welfare system into one that is sustainable.

The Social Welfare Division, Mr. President, has been with us for a long time and the division is responsible for old age pension. As we know, this is a non-contributable pension and it is available to people 65 years and over who would have to pass a means test. As you may know, recently we have increased that to \$620.00 and we will be continuing to ensure that those 65 years and over who are not in the best financial position would receive this grant.

1.45 p.m.

Mr. President, we in the Ministry of Social Development, through its social welfare, have introduced a disability assistance grant. This is another grant payable to people with disabilities who are 40 years and over and rendered unable to earn a reasonable living or a livelihood. Again, he or she must pass, or get past this means test.

Public Assistance, as we all know, is a grant given to people who are in trouble because of ill health or because of poor financial conditions. This is to really assist these people in time of need. Again, this is only a short-term measure: it is initially for six months, and we expect that in that time these people would move on to a better livelihood.

There are emergency cases, where assistance is given to people who are in need: cases such as fire, flood, hurricane, and other natural causes.

Educational grants are given to needy children attending public/secondary schools, whose parents are unable to provide for them financially.

Grants for special children are given to mentally and physically handicapped children to assist with transportation to and from special schools.

We also have Urgent Temporary Assistance. This is help given to persons who would not qualify for pension or financial assistance otherwise.

We have Burial Assistance for recipients of old age pension and public assistance.

We continue to give Bus Passes to senior citizens and public assistance recipients, to allow them free and easy access.

We also give pharmaceutical grants, which are again for the needy.

We have introduced Micro Enterprise and Training grants. This is given to probationers, public assistance recipients, and victims of domestic violence, to go into a business or a small business. Again, the idea here is to move towards sustainable development.

Of course, another responsibility is to monitor the Senior Citizens' Homes throughout the country—those that receive assistance from Government. While I mention that, Mr. President, we are in the process of ensuring that all these homes, whether they are given subventions or not, come within the purview of the

Ministry of Social Development, so that we will have the caregivers being given more equity, so that people will not suffer because of their dependence on these homes. Again, this is something that we have to look forward to. We know that people might say, "This is a private home and Government should have no business there"; but, of course, we have to ensure the safety of our elderly.

Sen. Mahabir-Wyatt: Thank you, Mr. President. I wonder if the hon. Minister would be so kind as to give us an indication as to when these provisions for regulation or, at least, inspection of senior citizens' homes, is expected to begin.

Hon. M. Ramsaran: Mr. President, recently—I think as late as last week—I was given a draft copy of the amendments by the Attorney General, and we are studying it at this time. The draft bill will have to go through the various stages before it comes to Parliament; but it is already before us.

Another area is the Adoption Unit. This is another part of the Social Welfare Division. You know, people would complain to us, from time to time, about the length of time we take with our adoption cases. But, Mr. President, you would know this is an area that we look at with great concern, because of what could happen if a child is adopted by the wrong parents. We have to take our time in ensuring that these cases are well done.

National Family Services Division is the division that is responsible for the family and the children in our society. They continue to work with the various children's homes across the country.

Foster Care Unit is another part of the National Family Services Division which provides a child-centred social service. The unit seeks to address the needs of children at risk from 4 to 16 years, by placing them into foster care.

As we all know, Mr. President, we in the Ministry of Social Development, and also the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, are looking at the Children Authority Bill. We have been doing a lot of work in that area. And, again, the draft bill is ready and we have to go through the various stages, then we could come to Parliament with a complete Children Authority Bill, with a revision of the Children Act.

Mr. President, as far as I am concerned, we cannot do this quickly enough, because of what is happening with the children throughout Trinidad and Tobago. Also, when we look at discipline in schools, for example, this unit is very important for

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the country to take care of its young ones. I know that a lot of work has taken place, and very shortly we will be coming to Parliament with those amendments, too.

The Population Council, as I mentioned earlier, is a council that is supposed to plan the population of Trinidad and Tobago. We have been doing quite a lot of work recently and I was proud of what has happened in the Hague. When our report was presented to the Hague, the authorities there were quite impressed and they thought that Trinidad and Tobago has done well over the years. Despite the fact that we have migration to help us, our population, more or less, remained at a slow growth, which is what is recommended by the Cairo Plan of Action.

NADAPP is another area—the National Alcohol and Drug Abuse Prevention Programme. Mr. President, you will want to know what the Ministry of Social Development has to do with the economic well-being of Trinidad and Tobago. But, indeed, without taking care of the less fortunate in our society, without taking care of the people who live below the poverty line, and so on, whatever we do at other levels would not be of importance to the building of Trinidad and Tobago if the less fortunate and those who are disabled, are not taken care of by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. President, as we move into other areas of the Ministry of Social and Community Development, we are looking at what the various arms of the Ministry are doing at this time. What is important at this time, Mr. President, is that there are many crises in our society and some of these are really because of family life and what is happening in the areas of drug abuse, domestic violence, and poverty. With all these social problems in our country, sometimes our young people are left without hope. I am proud to say that at this time we are doing many things in the Ministry; many projects have become operational and are becoming operational, as we move on.

One I have here is a half-way house for children leaving institutions. This has been established in Carapo. I know, again, this is taking a very long time to come forward, but I am told that we are about 80 to 90 per cent complete, and it should be completed in this year. This is for 16 to 18-year-olds who have reached the mandatory age for leaving the industrial schools and children's schools, and who have no other support system outside of the institutions.

The programme at this facility would equip the residents with life-coping skills to facilitate their integration into society, and provide avenues for training and development, to pave the way for independent living.

Mr. President, the aim of this project is to assist the disadvantaged youths, so that when they come back into the society they would have something to do. As you know, what happens today when people leave these institutions, they come back into society and they would just graduate with a Senior G.A. This area is where we expect to help them so that they would be able to do something better. We know that this one institution is not enough but, again, we have to start some place, and I think this is a good place to start.

Another one is a Probation Hostel. This is being built in Couva. This project is also well on the way; it should be completed this year also. Again, this is where we would send young people who are on probation, and who would not normally have another place to go, to again learn life-coping skills.

1.55 p.m.

Mr. President, we are talking about sustainable development, and I know we have our school system, but yet there are those people who, for some reason or the other, would not be part of that system, and we have to provide for them.

Another one of our projects is the remand home for young "remandees", if you can put it that way. Again, we do not want these children to go into institutions while awaiting trial, and when we put them into this remand home they would be taught life skills. Maybe some of them would not even know the basics of writing or reading, and we would be sending them to this remand home, so that they would not become seasoned criminals, but would be given a chance to come back into society to make a contribution. When we look at what is happening with the growing number of children at risk and in difficult circumstances, these measures are few to ensure that the future of Trinidad and Tobago is in good hands.

Amongst those disciplines that would be addressed are remedial therapy and education, as well as night shelter, meals and clothing. We will continue—what is happening is something that I would like to touch on quickly—the national health and family life education in this country. As we all know we have many problems in the school system. Recently the Ministry of Social Development and the Ministry of Education had discussions about re-introducing, in a serious way, health and family life education. People would ask us, "What is that?" People immediately talked about sex in schools and so forth, but the time has come where

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we must boldly attempt to get these problems out of the way. The best place we could start is in the schools, to get people to understand what is happening and what would happen with our future generations, if our children are not rounded into individuals of whom Trinidad and Tobago could be proud.

Another one of the programmes in the Ministry is the SHARE programme. This is another one in the form of a food hamper which is given to the poor in the country who do not qualify for old age pension, public assistance, any other form of employment or income. With the collaboration of 84 non-governmental organizations, 64,000 families on a three-month rotation cycle received these food hampers. The rehabilitation part of SHARE would now be focussed to assist these people so that they would not return for these hampers if we could avoid it. The idea here is for sustainable development and sustainability in the development of people in Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. President, in the Community Development Division we have another programme called CARE, the Committee Action for Revival and Empowerment programme. This again renders financial assistance and co-ordinates an education and skills training programme for this purpose. When you look at what is happening in the Ministry of Social and Community Development, we are trying to move away from the welfare approach to one of sustainable development.

Last year, the Ministry of Community Development came under my purview for the first time, and I went to the graduation ceremonies of these training courses throughout the country. I was really amazed at the quality of work done by these people after about 18 contact hours. I was so impressed that I had a flea market set up at the Brian Lara Promenade and one in Chaguanas to get the people from the various districts to come forward and sell whatever they made. This went down quite well with the people themselves, as well as the people who bought, because I was told their prices were even better than those in the stores. This is what we must encourage in this country. We must encourage people out there to do things to get them out of this poverty trap.

In talking about the poverty trap, this Government has established the Ministerial Council on Social Development. The idea is collaboration among all line ministries as we move towards eradication of poverty and better livelihood. We also have an arm headed by our good Senator Mahabir-Wyatt, and this one is to deal with all the non-governmental organizations, to get them to work to supplement the ministerial council. We know that it is a challenging task, and she would admit that too—getting rid of poverty in Trinidad and Tobago is not an

easy thing, but so far, I think we are well on the way. For the last two years Trinidad and Tobago was given thumbs up in our approach. I think that we were placed first in all the developing countries in our efforts to eradicate poverty.

The next question is the vexing one of drug abuse, and this is a social problem, which is impacting negatively on our country. To curb this menace our Ministry is spearheading a two-pronged approach whereby substance abuse addicts would undergo treatment, as well as training, at facilities to be established in Piparo and Caura. As we all know, recently we turned the sod at Piparo to get that centre to be one of the best rehabilitation centres in the Caribbean. This centre would provide drug rehabilitation, of course, but we are going into an approach that would be different from any other, with about six life-coping skills to be taught there, including agriculture, masonry, mechanics and so forth. The idea there is for it to be a long-term rehabilitation process.

There is something I will mention: when I assumed office as Minister of Social Development—I used to read in the newspapers about things happening to deal with the vagrancy problem. When I went in there and asked the then permanent secretary, "Can I have a meeting with the people to discuss social displacement or vagrancy?" He smiled and told me there were no such persons there, but that it was being done on an *ad hoc* basis. I was quite amazed that here it was we would talk about vagrancy, and at that time the number of vagrants in Port of Spain was over 800 and there was nothing in place, except from time to time you read in the newspapers about somebody doing something.

When I saw this I was quite amazed, not only surprised, that nothing was happening to deal with this vexing problem of vagrancy, so I set up a task force. As you know, a task force would take some time to do its report. This report was handed to me in 1996, and from then to now we have attempted to get different parts of this task force report going. One of the things I am proud to see happening is the development of two rehabilitation centres, one at Piparo, as I just mentioned, and the other at Caura where we have 16 beds at this time. We are hoping to extend that to 45 beds in the next couple of months, so that we would have an area where people who are drug addicts would have their problems attended to.

The drop-in centre in Port of Spain which is near to the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, is an area where people are taken off the streets and put there. From here it is expected that they would be moving into different areas for rehabilitation. As you may know, about 80 to 90 per cent of the vagrants in Port of Spain are drug

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addicts, and we have to deal with that problem. As I said a couple minutes ago, nothing was in place in the Ministry. I am proud to say that a couple of weeks ago I opened the Audrey Mollineau House in Barataria. This would be a home to deal with mentally ill women in Trinidad and Tobago; 30 women would be treated to get them out of the drug habit and get them back into society. Again, this would be a long-term programme, about two years, and when the women leave these institutions they would be able to go back into society.

Mr. President, I am working on a programme right now with the non-governmental organizations that deal with drug rehabilitation. I am pleased to announce that about 70 persons would be taken into these homes within the next couple of weeks, so that would assist us in getting people from the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. I am trying to set up this scenario that when we take these people from the streets and into the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, I repeat, we must find a place for them, and we had none. Within the last couple of months we have found places for about 110 such drug addicts. It would be very costly to the Government, but we have to continue to do that.

So when people get up and ask what this Government did about the vagrancy problem in this country, it is quite unfair to us, because this problem has been with us for quite a long time, and nothing was done. I am not here knocking anybody, because we cannot really knock people with this problem. We did not expect to have these problems in this country, as people would say, and nothing was done. We did not build a home for vagrants, we did not do this and that, but we must not sit here and lament, but continue to work on the eradication of vagrancy in Port of Spain.

We must also understand that we must take a humane look, not just go out there, as some people would say, from time to time, to do things to embarrass the country, but to move in a way that could really work. I am pleased to say that at our last count in March 1999, the vagrancy population has dropped to under 200. When it started in 1995 it was over 800. We are not only staying in Port of Spain, but in San Fernando by the end of April we would be opening a drop-in centre as we have in Port of Spain. Again, this would take about 100 vagrants off the streets at any one time to be housed there, and this would be one similar to the Society of St. Vincent de Paul in Port of Spain where the vagrants would be put into this centre and then moved to the other areas. We must have movement.

This has been one of the areas that really hindered us, because you might find a vagrant in Port of Spain who would need to go to the St. Ann's Hospital. When

we call the Ministry of Health they would say that there is no room at the St. Ann's Hospital. We call the other agencies that exist, and they would have no room, so this is an area where we are really bogged down.

I would also announce that even at the Caura Hospital, as we speak, the AIDS patients are now being given a place. Dr. Furlonge and the Ministry of Health are working towards a ward to deal with AIDS patients. He has promised me—we discussed it—and he would give us some room for the vagrants who suffer from AIDS to be placed at this centre. [*Interruption*]

Sen. Mahabir-Wyatt: Mr. President, I wonder if the Minister would be so kind as to tell us whether at Caura where the AIDS sufferers are going to be housed, will there be space for women victims as well as men?

Hon. M. Ramsaran: Yes. As a matter of fact, we had a meeting with Dr. Furlonge yesterday, and he gave me the breakdown, about six males, six females, six persons on their death beds and about six young people. That is how the 24 is made up. He is trying to do his best to balance what is happening. All this is to rid the streets of our vagrants.

I would like, as I said on more than one occasion, that this should not be a political issue, but, something that this country should look at very seriously. If we are talking about sustainable development and the economy of Trinidad and Tobago, we must look at the least fortunate in our society. These people must be treated in a manner that would make the country proud, and we cannot just respond to people in such a way that they would wake up one morning and say the Ministry of Social Development and the Minister of Social Development, or this Government, promised to rid the streets of vagrants and there are still vagrants on the streets.

2.10 p.m.

I think we must understand what has happened and what is happening. As I said, and I want to repeat, when we came into office there was nothing in place except the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. They too, did not receive the support financially and otherwise to deal with this problem. I am proud to say that the Society of St. Vincent de Paul is quite happy. As a matter of fact, I have something here. When we opened and blessed the Audrey Mollineau Halfway House for women with psychiatric problems, in the vote of thanks—I would not read all—Brother Clive Belgrave, senior Vice-President of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, said that the Society is held in some measure of esteem in the

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community, but that this was not possible without the support of ordinary people and organizations that have the responsibility of ministering to the poor. He thanked people like Audrey Mollineau who are prepared to entrust their property and support to a society which ministers to the needs of the poor.

If I may say something about Audrey Mollineau whom we might not know, this lady entrusted her entire property—her house, land, everything—to build this home for females with psychiatric problems. This country must really remember people like Audrey Mollineau.

He also thanked the Government for being the financial partner in a joint venture and asserted that the Society of St. Vincent de Paul enjoys a good relationship with the Government and, in particular, the hon. Minister Manohar Ramsaran, that he envisions would continue, as he saw in Mr. Ramsaran a real possibility of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul being able to make a serious dent in the social problems and bring some measure of relief to the vulnerable in the society.

Mr. President, this is just to show what this Government is doing, and with the Society of St. Vincent de Paul leading the way. Many people would talk about vagrancy and what they would do, and whenever we try to deal with this problem of vagrancy people would protest. They would say: “This place is too close to my business place”. The vagrants would be in the streets and they would want the vagrants off the streets, but once we plan something—as a matter of fact, in San Fernando where we are building this centre we had more protests than you could imagine, and yet the same people would come to the Ministry and say they want the vagrants off the streets. This is where we find ourselves. People want the vagrants off the streets but they do not want us to set up a centre for these people. We were told that if we build these centres far away from Port of Spain and the cities, the vagrants would not go there.

Another area we have to look at when we deal with this vagrancy problem is the funding. Mr. President, the funding to deal with a vagrant on the last count was about \$5,000 per month. So, we have to look at the other side now; we have to look at NADAPP, and NADAPP has been doing some good work recently. We have now entered communities.

To say a word about NADAPP, when I assumed the Ministry’s responsibility I had a meeting with NADAPP and I was told that they had about three to four people manning NADAPP, and I thought this was quite unsatisfactory. As a matter of fact,

the then co-ordinator of NADAPP, who is now working in the Cayman Islands, was very, very frustrated. He told me that three years prior to my coming he had been asking for staff and nothing happened. I am pleased to say—I am saying those words so many times this evening—now NADAPP has its full complement of staff that is required. The staff is about 30, and they are really going throughout the country doing what they have to do. They have posts in different areas: We have people from the Ministry of Community and Social Development and Ministry of Health. What we are attempting right now is to go into schools. We call it the Schools' Component. We have hired an expert from the Ministry of Education and she is working with NADAPP. We are attempting to go to every school in the country with our drug programmes.

Mr. President, we have to understand that there is NADAPP, and there is vagrancy; there is prevention and there is cure. We must now get all the people of Trinidad and Tobago, especially leaders, people whom I see sitting here today, to go into our communities and to assist not only Government, but to assist people who could really be victims of drug abuse. When we look around and we see what is happening—this is just to strengthen my point—recently, I visited the Chaguanas Senior Comprehensive School to launch a sports meeting, and while waiting the Principal took me to her office and there she displayed alcohol and—she did not have the drugs present, they were sent to the police station—but she told me about the amount of drugs found on students. It was quite amazing. The alcohol found there was not the ordinary rum, but Puncheon rum. Mr. President, I think this is something we have to look at. This is something we have to get our people and everybody including our—*[Interruption]*

Sen. Rev. Teelucksingh: Thank you very much. Did you remind that Principal that at the school function they sell grog and serve grog? That is important. They said the teachers do it. Valedictory functions, graduation functions—they serve grog in these schools. There is a double standard, the teachers led it and now they are seizing it from the children.

Hon. M. Ramsaran: I want to thank the hon. Senator for that. We are aware of these problems. The Principal of that school is a devout Muslim and she, I know, never touches alcohol. In this case she was not really the one to be blamed—this is just a personal thing. Your point is well taken. As a matter of fact, you might be pleased to know that the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs took a decision that all our facilities would be drug and alcohol free. *[Desk thumping]* At this time the only exception is the Hasley Crawford Stadium and maybe later

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on we would do that, but all the new facilities, indoor/outdoor, are drug and alcohol free.

I have raised the question of having community centres to be declared drug and alcohol free. As you know, there was a big hurrah: Where would the funds come from? And because of that I had to just pull back a bit, but the thought is there. If we really want to do what we say, I would have to agree with the Senator that, yes, we must get our leaders to do that.

Mr. President, just to continue on what NADAPP is doing—we are back to the Principal. When she showed me all this alcohol and talked about the drugs, it was surprising that we could have those children there in that kind of environment.

I hope the question would not arise. What I am saying has to do with human resource management but, of course, when one talks about the youth and the evils of alcohol and drugs and all that would destroy a human being, this in itself is protecting our future and our human resource. So, we have a lot of work to do and I am, again, calling on the population. I am calling on everybody present here today to assist us; to assist not the Government only, but the people of Trinidad and Tobago into getting our act together.

I would like to turn to the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs and to say at the very beginning it is a pleasure to be the Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs in this country, especially with our recent successes we have been having with Trinidadians and Tobagonians throughout the sporting world. One of the more important aspects of that Ministry at this time is the young people—the Youth Affairs—we must not leave them without notice.

When the Prime Minister gave me that Ministry I wanted to know what was happening, but when I went into that Ministry and looked at the Youth Affairs side especially, I saw there was some continuity. As the Minister of Social Development, I am responsible for juvenile delinquents to 16 years. When I went to Youth Affairs I realized that Ministry is responsible for the youths between 16 and 25, and in Social Development I am responsible for the old people. So, here I had the opportunity to look at the development of our entire population, the human aspect of the development of the whole country, and I really see that as a challenge. So, we must continue to work with our young people so we can promote, sustain economic growth and encourage our children to do that.

When I went into that Ministry—I would like to say at the very beginning as I talk about sports—it is so very committed to the development of sports in this

country and over the years they did not receive the support of Government in the past as they are receiving now.

2.20 p.m.

Mr. President, when I go to the football federation functions, for example, the Vice-President of CONCACAF and even the President of our local football fraternity would say that this is the first time a government and a Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs are supporting them in what they do; and they are very pleased with this Government in what we are doing for them.

As a matter of fact, we are building four stadia throughout Trinidad and Tobago; and this would be the first time we are going to have these sorts of facilities in these areas. I am sure the impact will be very positive and one that will encourage the growth of our young people, because as far as I am concerned—being a sort of sportsman myself growing up—I know that as a young person, with your energies spent in sport, that will take you away from some of the social ills in our society. Once we can do that in a productive manner, and with all the professionalism we are seeing in sport today and what is available to our young sportsmen, this could only be enhanced by these four stadia. Of course, if you count the Hasley Crawford Stadium, we have five international stadia to be built here in Trinidad and Tobago. As far as our future human resource is concerned, yes, sports must make a positive impact.

I should like to quote the Mission Statement of the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs:

“To increase the level of participation, as well as the quality of training in sport and physical recreation for the citizens, and to provide social education for young people between 15 and 25 years of age.”

Again, the Ministry is working in collaboration with other ministries, other agencies to ensure that we continue to help the young people in their youth development.

Mr. President, if I could just read for a couple minutes to let you know what is happening in that ministry, in the youth area especially, we are continuing with our Youth Apprenticeship Training Programmes, again, to ensure that our human resource is taken care of. We are now working to assist the Ministry of Social Development because when I was Minister of Social Development, the former Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs and I met at a function and I told her that she

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was in charge of developing the youth of the country and I would only be there to deal with those who fall out of the system. I told her that the better she does, is the better for me in the Ministry of Social Development. But here I have both responsibilities; and I think that we have to look at really developing the youth of this country so that they will not fall out, they would not go to drugs, they would not be vagrants, they would not be an embarrassment to this country but, indeed, they would be people of whom we can be proud in this country.

Mr. President, I am indeed happy that we could have these ministries merged for the simple reason that we could look at the development in a more holistic manner. When the permanent secretaries and the senior officers from both ministries meet from time to time, they try to have both ministries collaborate in such a way and more importantly now, to duplicate the efforts. So, we would continue to work to develop our youths as we move on. I am extremely proud.

Before I move, I am sure you would have noticed that cricket was carried on Channel 4, the Information Channel, Trinidad and Tobago versus Barbados—the Busta Cup Final. This happened simply because when I was a member of the S. M. Jaleel Company, they called me to say that TV 6 and TTT had “blanked” covering this final, and they thought this final was very important as it was the first time Trinidad and Tobago would be playing a Busta Cup Final, and we would not be seeing it live in Trinidad and Tobago. I immediately called my colleague, Dr. Griffith, who is the Minister of Information, Communications, Training and Distance Learning, and in two days, we had Channel 4 take up the responsibility to cover this final. [*Desk thumping*]

I would like to say that even though the business community has supported us quite well—as you see the number of advertisements we had during this game on Channel 4—so maybe this might be the turning point for Channel 4, in default of TTT and TV6.

The point I was making is that on television, those who look at the cricket, would see an advertisement about areas of communities where youths have been marginalized. We have chosen three communities in the country to have pilot projects, and the names would tell you; these are: Vegas in Morvant. This was named after the movie Las Vegas, a movie about violence and so on. The other one is Datsunville in Enterprise. For people who know, that area is one with a high level of crime. The other one is Cap-de-Ville, Point Fortin, which we know as Gun Hill.

Cabinet has approved that we go into these communities to spend about \$9 million, not only these three, but in communities like these, over the next three years to ensure that we have a participatory process by the people, especially the young people living in these areas, to get them to do things that will make them better human beings.

Mr. President: Hon. Members, the speaking time of the hon. Minister has expired.

Motion made, That the hon. Minister's speaking time be extended by 15 minutes. [*Sen. W. Mark*]

Question put and agreed to.

Hon. M. Ramsaran: I do not think I will be using the 15 minutes.

These communities, as I mentioned before, have been given these nicknames after the bad West. What is happening is we have had people from these communities working with the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs and they have responded quite nicely to our programmes. We will be launching these projects within the next couple of months to get these people into the mainstream of our society and not to be wasted away, and not to be given the stigma of being gun-toting youths, or drug addicts. I think that with more projects like this, we must really commend the people from the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs and the people from these villages who want to make a meaningful contribution to the development of Trinidad and Tobago.

As I mention that, I would like to talk a bit about my Adopt a Community Programme. I use the word "my" because I thought that this country—the Minister of Finance would tell us about jobless growth, and we have various big companies come to Trinidad, and at the end of the day it would not affect the unemployment figures. So I was sitting in my office and thinking and I came up with the idea: Why not ask corporate citizens to adopt communities? So far about 25 communities have been adopted.

When I saw what was happening—just one aspect of that is relevant to this debate—is the giving of scholarships to the poorest students in these communities. So far, we have given over 500 scholarships to both primary and secondary school students—children who would not normally have money to go to school. I see education as the surest way to break this cycle of poverty. Brasso Venado is an example that I will always be proud of because it was something that made a difference to me.

When I went into the village—which is just 45 minutes drive from Chaguanas—and saw people still drinking water from holes in the ground, I

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thought that was depressing. The school that they use, they still have latrines. The whole village was in a sense of despair; nobody was interested in anything. Today, I invite anybody to go to that village and they will see what has happened—with the help of PowerGen and the Ministry of Social and Community Development—to make this a place of which we can be proud. I am indeed proud about that, and we are continuing with this Adopt a Community Programme.

Again, I would use this Chamber to ask anybody who is interested in adopting a community, to come and talk with the ministry because we still have about 20 such villages like Brasso Venado that need to be adopted. When we say “adopted” we do not mean that the Government will be giving up its responsibility for physical infrastructure, but this is a more social thing.

I think the story of Brasso Venado was on television recently. Again, I would mention that these three villages: Datsunville, Las Vegas or Vegas, and Gunhill—if we could get these three communities to lead better lives, I think that would be another achievement of the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs and the Ministry of Social and Community Development.

2.30 p.m.

Mr. President, the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs started what we call a Community Sport and Physical Recreation Leadership Programme. This programme is geared for community sports leaders.

The Community Swim Programme, as was advertised, is designed for school children and the public at large. The Coach Education Programme is geared for physical education teachers, community coaches and former players.

Mr. President, we continue talking about what is happening in the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs and the coaching programmes that we have had instituted throughout Trinidad and Tobago.

Recently, when people went to the Queen’s Park Oval and saw that debacle when the West Indies was bowled out for 51 runs, immediately people started to ask what the Government is doing for cricket and to assist cricket. I just want to say something that would sound a bit facetious. When things are going well, nobody asks what is the Government’s contribution, but when things go bad people want to know what is the Government’s contribution.

We are going to set up coaching programmes throughout the country. I was quite heartened recently, when my colleague, the Minister of Energy and Energy

Industries asked me what we are doing about cricket coaching in this country. A thought came to my mind, yes! this is indeed something—not the normal coaching, but he said why not use the test players of Trinidad and Tobago to lead a one year coaching blitz throughout the country to get the young people to come back to cricket. Indeed, I was happy to get a contribution like that from my colleague and we would be working towards that within the next year, so as to bring forward the talent of Trinidad and Tobago.

We will be hosting 2001 Youth World Cup Football. I do not just want to be the Minister to be hosting this cup, but to do well. We are looking at the coaching programmes in the football areas too, to ensure that something positive happens with the team.

Mr. President, I was also proud recently to learn that Trinidad and Tobago, for the first time, would be playing at a higher stage of the Davis Cup. These are positive things that are happening in the world of sports and as the Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs, I know we have a lot of work to do with the grounds in our country.

We must get people to understand that sports is an area that they must take very seriously. When you look at all the problems in the Ministry of Social Development and what could be made available from the Ministry of Sport, I think it is very important to develop a nation that we want to call “a total quality nation.” We must look at bringing sport to a more serious place in our community.

The Super Five Community Sport Programme was launched in 1996. Again, you will notice that all the programmes in the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs and the Ministry of Social and Community Development seemed to be born in 1996. When you look at the future human resource of this country, this Government must be given an opportunity to continue to make our presence felt because, I think this Government is serious about the development of Trinidad and Tobago, and sport is an area on which we must concentrate.

Sen. Prof. Kenny: Before the Minister ends his contribution, I wonder whether he could just give a little clarification regarding the population policy. He did say earlier that the Government is coming in for praise on its population policy. The population growth is, I think, somewhere approaching one per cent, which is totally unsustainable. I wonder whether the Government has any policy regarding managing the population of the country—the size of it.

Hon. M. Ramsaran: Thank you very much, hon. Senator. What I alluded to in the beginning is that we have had a lot of planning done. What we need to do is to get these plans into gear, with the help of the Family Planning Association of this country and the UNFPA. I think we have to put this in a global context. I will read just one paragraph that should assist—

“ICPD also made a global commitment to mobilize US \$17 billion annually by the year 2000 and US \$20 billion by the year 2015 to carry out this programme of action.”

So all countries, especially the lesser developed countries will be given a sizable subvention to carry on with their population planning programme. We are talking about going from here into the next phase of ICPD Plus Five which would be held in New York in June.

We are taking this population policy in a global context not only in a local context. I think the country would be well supported by the United Nations and other agencies as we move towards curbing our population growth. If you remember, a few years ago it was projected to grow faster than it is growing now. We have managed to put it in an area so that we can control it. So, I think that based on these programmes, we are talking about what would happen if we continue like this and the poverty level increases. We are projecting a path that would help us to control the population.

Sen. Prof. Kenny: Is there actually a projected zero population level for Trinidad and Tobago?

Hon. M. Ramsaran: I can answer and say yes. But as I said we do not just want to have a zero per cent growth, but remember, Mr. President, you cannot just take this and say, well yes, we are going to do that. We have to educate our population in order to get this whole system to work. We all know that the people who are living in the upper echelons of society may have one or two children, and those who are poorer would have seven or eight. So it is a matter of educating our country. I would answer and say, yes, we have a zero per cent growth. We have to be realistic and understand the kind of problems we have and the culture of our country before I could commit myself and say that we are going to zero tolerance—but we have to put this whole answer into the context of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. President I like to wrap up by just talking about—

Sen. Prof. Spence: I did not want to interrupt the Minister earlier because it would have interfered with his flow. But I want to take him back to his alleviation of poverty discussion. One of the things that I have always felt very strongly about is that one thing that helps to alleviate poverty is for people to grow some of their own food. You only have to look at Tobago and see the difference between Tobago and Trinidad in this regard. Everybody in Tobago grows a little bit of their own food. I have had two special Private Members' Motions in this Parliament in my 12 years, on the "Grow More Food" campaign. Neither of the two past Governments has taken me on. I have "not" bothered at this time because clearly, it does not wear in Trinidad and Tobago. But if we are really serious about alleviating poverty, one of the things that we must do is to use the tremendous resources that we have in the Ministry of Agriculture which are in no way affecting agriculture, except that it is continuing to go down. At least let us use these resources to alleviate poverty.

Sen. Daly: Coming back to the population policy. Could he give us some indication how the Government plans to spend this UN money to which he has referred, on the problem of population growth?

Hon. M. Ramsaran: To address Prof. Spence first. I agree with him that agriculture must play a role. I think, right now, the Ministry of Agriculture has brought forward our incentive package and we know that is on a bigger scale but on the micro scale, when I go from village to village, I encourage that. I want to say that people are now coming on and the Ministry of Community Development has had many projects throughout the country in our "Grow Box Campaign" and I am pleased to say that a person in my village has now become a millionaire—and this is no boast, through a global system of agriculture.

Sen. Prof. Spence: We are talking about two different things. I hope it is not about making people millionaires or commercial agriculture which is what the Ministry's incentive programme is aimed at. I am talking about a sustained campaign to teach every individual how to safely grow fruit trees in their gardens [*Desk thumping*] their children do not have to go to school and eat pallet which has no nutrition but they can eat a fruit. This is what I am talking about—nothing to do with commercializing.

Mr. President: The hon. Minister's speaking time has, in fact, expired but I will give him five minutes' injury time [*Interruption*].

Hon. M. Ramsaran: Quickly, what I am saying about this global system is that the Ministry of Community Development is going through the country

teaching people that and the idea, yes, to have a little agriculture in their backyard for sustained development. I am doing it in my own way to ensure that this happens.

2.40 p.m.

To Sen. Daly, about the population programme, I want to assure him that we have had several meetings with different interest groups in this country about the population programme, and we will be going throughout the country within a short time, to different villages and different groups to build up our momentum to educating the people. Most of the money from the United Nations will be used to educate the people about population planning. As you know, and I said it before, our culture really needs to accept this change in our approach to population planning.

Mr. President, just to end, I will mention our national sports policy and our national youth policy. Our sports policy is completed and our youth policy is about to be completed. With these two policies in place, the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs would make a greater charge on the human development aspect of our young people of Trinidad and Tobago. So, I hope that my contribution today would clear up what we are attempting to do—as far as our human resource management is concerned—for those who are less fortunate in the society, for the younger people and those who find themselves in difficult circumstances.

As I continue to be in charge of the Ministry of Social and Community Development and the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs, I will do all in my power to ensure that we have a better future for the young people of Trinidad and Tobago. Thank you very much. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Mahadeo Jagmohan: Mr. President and hon. Senators, I take great pleasure in joining the debate at this time. The Motion brought by Sen. Dr. Eric St. Cyr is indeed the act of a loyal and patriotic citizen. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. President, with your permission I want to refer to the Economic Policy Statement of Trinidad and Tobago. My understanding is that this was distributed in the Senate through the efforts of the hon. Minister of Finance. On page 1, under the caption, “Goals and Objectives”, he has stated five goals and these are not new; these are objectives of all governments everywhere. The last line on this page says, “The achievement of these objectives is being pursued through a policy agenda mix that is supported by a number of strategic initiatives”, but there is no

clear philosophy stated on this page or any other part of this document and I am wondering why the hon. Minister left us in such a difficult situation.

On page 2 under the heading “Fiscal Policy” the Minister talks about the macro-economic environment and so forth, but he did not mention the role of the state, which I think is lacking in this document. Then, in the last paragraph, he said a few things and the last sentence ended “...Public Sector Investment Programme with an emphasis on strengthening the social and economic infrastructure”. I am saying that more detail is needed here. What is this social and economic infrastructure? Nothing is said about it. What is the role of the state, for example, the health sector, the education sector and the banking sector? Nothing was said with respect to policy. Perhaps somebody could help the Senate in that regard.

Then on page 3, the third paragraph, the last sentence ends with “...the capacity of these Ministries to expedite the implementation of public sector projects”. What projects are they? Social and economic, or infrastructure? No indication is given. We are hoping before this debate ends that some impression will be given as to what is meant here. Then the paragraph to follow says that they would encourage the private sector investment, tourism and agriculture, and I imagine the learned Prof. John Spence gets excited when he sees agriculture mentioned in any document for the well-being of Trinidad and Tobago. What is seen here—the role of the private sector—in what areas of the economy would they be encouraged to participate? There is no statement.

Then, we go on to page 4 of the same document; the second paragraph under the caption “Divestment Policy”. This is a heavy one. I would like to find out, because especially from the last two lines of the second paragraph there, we did not hear anything about the new role which was mentioned. What is this new role? Government must say, and it has not said so in this important document. If this document has come from the Minister of Finance, then some serious thought might have gone into it.

The last five items mentioned: national significance, protection of the public interest—the public interest is not defined and there is great difficulty in not having the public interest defined. On page 5, the first paragraph, around the second line and part of the third line talks about “the achievement of policy objectives for the sector in which the enterprise is located”. Are these policy objectives stated anywhere in this document? I did not see them. How do we decide such necessity in the absence of a policy? That question has to be answered.

With respect to the second paragraph under the heading “Diversification Policy”, it seems to me that the Government, on the basis of this paragraph alone, has placed all its dependence on the private sector in terms of what is stated here with respect to development; totally on the private sector, which is a dangerous thing, to my mind, Mr. President.

Then on page 7, the third paragraph seemed to disagree with other areas of the document and it reads thus:

“Government recognizes that given the existing structure of the economy it will take some time before the benefits of economic growth trickle down to the less fortunate members of the society.”

It is unfortunate again that the words “trickle down” had to be used in this policy statement of the Government. Then the last line of that paragraph refers to “especially at the micro and small business level”. I am wondering what is the difference between micro and small business level. I have some difficulty with that. With regard to the inequality in wealth and income, what is the role of the state in the redistribution process? Nothing is said so far.

What am I saying, Mr. President? Maybe the intellectuals in our midst or across the country may not have the difficulty I am having in understanding what this document is all about. This document gives some of the measures that will be used to encourage private participation, but it does not state what is the new role of the Government that is referred to in the document. Is it going to sit back and be a facilitator for the private sector? If so, how is it going to protect its people from the disadvantages of this system? For example, inequality in income distribution, environmental pollution, provision of goods such as tobacco, foreign used cars, and so forth. I have a great deal of problems with this document, Mr. President.

The hon. Minister of Social and Community Development and Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs covered a great deal of ground, but I wish to state that some of the ground he covered and some of the issues he raised were all matters put in train by previous governments. There is no doubt that he is making an effort to do some work in these areas—we cannot doubt him—but we are yet to see exactly to what he is referring.

Questions were already asked, but I intended to ask him—it is not his role to reply anymore—in the absence of the Government's population policy, what would all the development and grandeur plans do for the country? How will the

citizens reap benefits in the absence of population control? So many NGOs in the country have attempted to talk about population control and family planning, but very few people are aware in this country that the labour movement has done tremendous work regarding population control and family planning. It must not be forgotten that this has come about as a result of the previous speaker. I did not hear him say, but we are saying that the present Government—and that is absolutely all right because all Governments do inherit things—has inherited a sound and healthy economy and the economic policy on which they are building, which is their duty and their right with which to proceed. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Tota-Maharaj: Is he living in Trinidad and Tobago?

Sen. M. Jagmohan: Bus passes to pensioners was mentioned by the Minister. This is an old PNM thing. I am surprised how this is taking up a major position in the debate. At least on the Government Benches there are two persons today, one temporary and one perhaps permanent for the time-being, who took the last government to task for doing what it did to produce and give what is known as the Brian Lara Promenade, and I observed that the hon. Minister of Community and Social Development and Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs chose the Brian Lara Promenade to display some of the work that the youths of the nation have done. He must be commended for that, if I may be permitted to say so, but the infrastructure for the production of those goods and articles was put in place by the PNM.

We are worried—[*Interruption*] Mr. President, with due respect, a certain culture should exist here. When others speak, I listen to them; and when I speak, they should listen to me. With regard to the drug abuse programme being undertaken at Piparo, I am really sorry for the Minister and sorry for the Government. That place carries a stigma which will take another 100 years to be eradicated. It is not too late to change the site.

With respect to all the programmes—with the exception of one I have identified—that the hon. Minister alluded to and about which he gave us information, we are glad for the information, but all those programmes were already there. He met them and did not say one word with respect to what he met and what he intends to do with them. He said what he intends to do with them, but I am really sorry that he did not mention what he met. And I may advise Sir, you were not here last week; I know, you were on business of the state elsewhere.

2.55 p.m.

The hon. Minister of Planning and Development, an experienced politician, spoke for an hour on the Motion. He repeated what has been said in this country about one million times, about the PNM and so forth. He gave us a textbook presentation of how economic theory works, and how they should be applied, but, he did not really speak on the Motion before the House.

Members on the Government Benches surprised me last week, when the hon. Minister of Education spoke. He spoke about all the plans in the Ministry of Education which he met there when he went, and he used one word about 13 times; and he was lustily applauded by the Government when he said that was inextricably associated with this or that, and he got the applause of all my friends—one word 13 times he repeated. I could not understand that.

Mr. President, the subject of the Motion cannot be over-emphasized. The economy of any country, this country in particular, is the business and concern of every visitor to this country, and every citizen of this country; and, side by side with economic policies of a government, there must be a policy on population control. I am repeating myself deliberately, Sir.

Does the Government have such a policy? Does it have a policy on wages, on salary? We do not know. The present economic downturn. How does the Government manage the downturn? All we know is what the Prime Minister has said and what the Minister of Finance has said, and that another Minister has put a lie to what the Minister of Finance has said. That is all we know.

I am sure that investors to Trinidad and Tobago as well as prospective investors, will be alarmed to learn that there is a great difficulty by the public sector officers and workers, in receiving their wages and salaries on scheduled payment dates.

We warned that in 1999 there would be very tough and painful decisions to be taken with respect to the actual operations of the economy. When we warned about this, again we met with a barrage of talk to perhaps change the belief with regard to what we had said.

Mr. President, on the basis of activities in the other place, and leading newspaper reports, it seems that the Government is hell-bent on its war with the sitting Chief Justice, and other eminent former Chief Justices and former Presidents of the Republic and not on dealing with the economy as objectively and as effectively as it should.

If the Motion is calling for the Government's policy, one would have hoped that policy formulation exercises would have been undertaken; and we all know how policy formulation is done. We all know this. The newspaper does a good job in finding out; they investigate the reporting, I may say, of what is going on in certain regards, and you have not heard anything from the media as a whole—the news media—that anything took place with respect to policy formulation on the economy of the country. So it does not seem as though the mover of the Motion would really hear much in that regard from anybody at all.

Another strange thing is happening with the economy, Mr. President. We know it, so many other people know it, the Minister of Finance together with his technocrats, particularly a Chief Economic Adviser if there is one, or at least the Permanent Secretaries are the ones who manage the economy on a day-to-day basis with policy from the Government or decisions of the Parliament. What we have observed, is that the Central Bank is announcing policies that seem to be the policies of the Government; or it seems as though the Government is consulting the Central Bank for policy direction and not the Minister of Finance.

It seems—somebody has to explain this. Why is this so? The economy of the country seems to be like a rudderless ship in the middle of the ocean. This is what it seems to be. People are getting retrenched everywhere. Perhaps, the Minister of Finance did not have good advice from his advisers and technocrats before he decided on the price of oil in formulating the budget. We imagine the Minister will make efforts and take steps to correct such a situation.

Recently, we learnt that because of the price of oil, the oil industry in Trinidad and Tobago is getting depressed in terms of its programmes, in terms of its personnel at its disposal. We have also learnt that oil companies have released, or retrenched all casual workers—our friend the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries is not here at this time. Contractors have also been put on hold with respect to the execution of contracts as well as payment for jobs already done.

Mr. President, such developments will certainly cause the economy to slide, and when the economy slides downwards, the price of food in all forms will skyrocket; and the poorest of the poor will suffer the most.

Just a matter of weeks ago, the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance were saying that the economy was on a good footing, and we should not bother, but be happy on the basis of a newspaper report—alluded to a newspaper report, that we should be happy. But the recent statement of the Prime Minister saying

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that he cannot employ a single person in the public sector at this time gives the lie to the statement that the economy is good and we should be happy.

The service sector in the oil industry is now hardest hit, because their operation to a large extent has been closed down. It is time that the Government articulates its economic policy as is being sought by the Motion before the House.

In the *Daily Express* of March 2, 1999 there is an article which says that 500 persons from Petrotrin have either been laid off, retrenched, terminated or severed from their employment.

3.05 p.m.

[Sen. K. Ramnath stood]

Mr. President, I would give way provided a small statement is made, I am not going to entertain any speech on my time.

Mr. President: Please continue.

Sen. M. Jagmohan: The media are making serious issues of impending decline of the economy. Most new industrial plants were completed in 1998—there might be one plant still having finishing touches being done to it. I am saying that the unemployment situation is definitely likely to get worse.

Mr. President, this month the Government may have to borrow from the Central Bank to pay wages and salaries to public servants and public sector workers because of what happened over the last two months. The last set of information given was that there were just four or five months reserve left at the moment. The Prime Minister's recent statement where he said that things were real bad, he repeated again by saying there would be no new employment. What is happening in an economy which we all want to see reach a high standard? Doctors, nurses and other medical personnel from the health sector are leaving this country and going to other countries in droves.

Mr. President, when this Government came into office, the then Minister of Public Administration was one of the finest minds in the country with respect to human resource development, and personnel management both in the public and private sectors. When he speaks in Parliament, not a single Member can say it is a lie. I am talking about Mr. Draper. I am urging this Minister of Public Administration—he might have loads of them—that he should put some of the crucial documents together which the Minister of Public Administration of the last administration had put together and the training programmes which he had put

together, and the personnel he had trained to continue the training and it would augur well for this country.

Human resource management takes time and the boasting we are hearing from the present Minister of Public Administration and other people that things are better, those statements and wishes and that type of thinking are questionable. Development of human resource has to be done over a lengthy, sustained period and I am suggesting to the hon. Minister who is labour-oriented that he should pay some attention to the work done by the last Minister.

Mr. President, the economy of a country is sustained and assisted by everyone. Thirty or 40 years ago someone could have said the child who buys a sugar cake or a toolum or the boy who buys a press—many persons do not know what that is—contributed to the economy. Nowadays, the child who buys a Chubby and a snack pack for \$1.00 is also contributing to development of the economy of Trinidad and Tobago, therefore, the Government, in formulating economic policy, should consult every sector of the economy in a serious way and they are bound to get good advice, but it does not seem as though that is being done.

We just heard some gun war plans from the hon. Minister of Social and Community Development and Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs, and when he started counting millions I could not write it down, but even the chief representative of the labour movement from the Government Benches, a remarkable man who is not in his seat at the moment—there is a great scare and fear all over the country that the Government has among its plans, to retrench 5,000 daily-paid workers from the public sector and they have engaged the attention of the World Bank and other subsidiaries of the World Bank.

This is a very serious matter which would plunge this country into great turmoil and hardship which would be extremely difficult to deal with, and after all this retrenchment that has taken place, and is taking place, and is likely to take place, our friendly Minister of Works and Transport has announced that he is going to build something in Toco for \$500 million and the Prime Minister has said nothing can be done, there is to be no public project, no this, no that, no hiring of new people.

What I do know is that we have a galaxy of Ministers of Government who would still be speaking after today, either on this, or some other motion and it is hoped they will explain exactly what is happening, because the human resource of any country is the most important asset of that country. In that regard, therefore,

this country needs to be more mindful of the importance of this statement. There is no point in developing this statement any further but to state that the human resource development has to be properly planned and executed with great care. It is people with whom you are dealing.

Mr. President, everybody knows that economic activity in the main revolves around land, labour, and capital. Perhaps the man with the capital and the entrepreneur is the same person in a number of cases, but we have, and should be careful to see to it that the providers of the land get their fair share. The providers of the labour do get their fair share and that is a difficult area, and the person providing the entrepreneurial skill must not be allowed to run away with all the profits and gains from economic activity. The Government has to ensure that. It is its responsibility.

Mr. President, early post-war concerns of all the people and governments of the time, were low incomes, poor infrastructure, and unemployment. Resources were directed to solve such problems. In some cases, they were done by localization, industrialization and proper planning. Here is where the People's National Movement comes in. When the People's National Movement came in to Government for the first time in 1956, it had to give thought to some of these things to which I have alluded and the only time the economy of Trinidad and Tobago was really opened up was when the PNM came into Government and it was opened up to a point where anybody could have participated in economic activity.

The philosophy then was greater state participation. The state was now at the centre of all economic activity taking the role of leader, especially in new capital intensive industries where the private sectors were unwilling to participate either because of lack of resources, or they considered it a high risk. Then the paradigm shift from heavy state participation to a greater reliance on the free market system and the private sector got into motion.

Sen. Mohammed: What kind of shift?

Sen. M. Jagmohan: I said paradigm shift. This system is characterized by very little interference from the Government, but it did not work well all through that period from 1956 to now. There were problems. There was private participation by producers and consumers, but producers of goods do have a great motive, they only produce if it is profitable and we cannot blame them. They are not only producers, they are risk takers. In the absence of the Government's economic policy, there could be confusion in that area.

Certain vital but unprofitable goods and services may not be supplied, for example, defence or justice. Disparity between the rich and poor in some of these settings was one that made so many people cry and even in the present state of things it is getting worse in this country. Producers only produce goods which people want to consume, and the consumers are the main people who sustain the economy of a country because the producers may produce, and if there are no consumers, there is difficulty.

The destruction of the environment is a very important consideration in economic policy formulation because it is the intention of a number of entrepreneurs and large business enterprises to get down to making profits and not bother about the environment, and then we have people like our distinguished friend who get very worried about the environment when such a situation occurs. The depletion of resources like oil and gas, is something about which we have to be concerned in formulating economic policies and declaration of economic policies.

I see the Minister of Energy and Energy Based Industries took a hard look at me when I said oil and gas.

3.20 p.m.

The pollution of air and water is a common example of real problems in our country. The competition, both local and external, can lead to efficiency and greater competitiveness, however it can also result in many industries closing down because they cannot compete with the large, efficient, foreign producers, and the result would be higher unemployment in the absence of a sound economic policy.

The removal of exchange control is always a consideration. The market forces of demand and supply will determine many things for us—the exchange rate being one.

Mr. President, the Motion before the House is timely I would say, in the sense that the economy of Trinidad and Tobago seems to be heading on a path of no return, in the sense that, a great deal of expenditure is taking place. I do not always talk about this, but side by side with our concern for the economy and prosperity of the country, every newspaper: daily, weekly, bi-weekly or monthly in Trinidad, as well as some radio programmes, on the basis of what discussions take place in the national community, are alluding to corruption of this, that or the other project. Can we not—all of us, but the Government must take the lead—take up a posture where it is made difficult for the media to pick up and publish information like this, or is there truth in what they are saying? Someone has to explain.

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Mr. President, I should end in just a few minutes more. In any economy, the protective services matter a lot to all the people—industrialists, entrepreneurs and business people would want to know that the protective services are efficient, the personnel of the protective services are happy, comfortable, want to work and would want to protect and serve in Trinidad and Tobago.

Recently, the police are claiming that before they were allocated houses in housing estates but now they are not, so there is no proper place to live. This means that there is an area—and our friend the Minister of National Security is always putting his best foot forward, but he is discouraged or whatever in other places. I do not know if that means the Minister of Finance. If I knew that, I would say so, but I do not know. What I am saying, Mr. President, is that great care should be taken to put the members of the protective services at ease in terms of whatever rightly belongs to them. What do I mean by that? All the equipment, and tools of the trade that they need must be supplied, and supplied adequately and on time, so that the protective services, and the personnel of the protective services would be happy, and comfortable.

I have chosen to state that all economic policies should be making policy statements or implementing programmes that would be of help to the poorest of the poor. In this country, the poorest of the poor and the very rich or middle-class pay the same prices for goods and services. I have a difficulty with that. I am not saying that there must be a two-tiered system for pricing of goods and services, but I am saying that some kind of subsidization should take place so that the basic food commodities for the poorest of the poor would be within their reach, within reason. So that, no one in this country would go hungry because the economic policy did not provide for them.

I am hoping that from this point onwards, the Government would give some consideration to putting machinery in place—whether it is the removal of a percentage of the value added tax, or all of it, so that food and other services for the poorest of the poor would be within their reach, then the economy of the country would be showing some respect for people in dire need of help.

I thank you very much Mr. President. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Prof. Kenneth Ramchand: Mr. President, I had hoped to speak first today, when hon. Senators would have had patience with what was going to be a gigantic contribution. I hope that Senators would bear with me, even at this stage.

I am grateful for Sen. Dr. St. Cyr's Motion which calls upon the Government to articulate its broad economic philosophy, particularly regarding public participation in industry.

Mr. President, to articulate is to put into words, and articulation presumes some thought beforehand. When you articulate, you are forced to measure what you are doing against what you think you are doing, or what you say you are doing, and you give others a chance to do the same. So, I am very happy that the Government is being given an opportunity to articulate its economic philosophy so that it can measure, properly, what it is doing so that we can measure as well.

Mr. Vice-President, there are many gaps—sorry, Mr. President, we have gotten accustomed to your not being here—between what we think, what we say, and what we do, that when we articulate we really open up a field for people to make all kinds of observations about contradictions, incoherences and inconsistencies. That is why some people prefer to look at what you are doing and deduce from what you are doing, what your policy is. I do not think that I would like to do that. If I were to examine what the Government is doing and deduce an economic policy, what I would deduce is, that the policy of the Government is to make a few people richer and to make more and more people poorer and dependent upon trickle down. I would deduce that it is the policy of the Government to put ownership and management of national resources in the hands of foreigners, and settle for a share of their profits. I would deduce that the policy is to raise the figure for the GDP, even if it means lowering the standard of living of the majority of people in this country. I would assume, that it is the policy to turn the population into consumers with an appetite for imported foods. I would assume, that it is the policy of the Government to discourage agriculture and especially food production. I would assume, it is the policy of the Government to turn the whole population—mother, father and daughter—into cheap labour for foreign investors.

3.30 p.m.

I would assume that it is the policy of the Government to encourage consumerism and materialism. I would assume it is the policy of the Government to stimulate turnover and cash flow to create an illusion of busyness to keep all economic balls in motion and pray that nothing would happen to stop the juggling, or else stopping the juggling, which will make the whole system come crashing down like the Kirpalani empire, because there is no solid policy about savings to underwrite what is, in many respects, a virtual economy. In short, if I were to

examine what is happening, I would assume that it is the policy of the Government to turn the whole nation into a pageant company.

Sen. Cuffy-Dowlat: Thank God he is only assuming!

Sen. Gangar: Headlines!

Sen. Prof. K. Ramchand: I get headlines for scoring 213.

But, Mr. President, I am not doing that. It would be wrong to make such inferences without giving the Government an opportunity to articulate its philosophy. This is why Sen. Dr. St. Cyr's Motion is such a generous and fair-minded one.

I am going to pass over certain aspects of economic policy which I have given hints I am critical of, for cultural and economic reasons and because of the effect on our values, except to note that the Government's globally dictated view of itself as facilitator, its view of itself as an ally of existing capitalist enterprise or business, is an abdication from the proper responsibility of an elected government to a population, the majority of whom suffer lack of equal opportunity and suffer socio-economic disadvantages that are the continuing legacy of the old plantation system.

You cannot come to a society like this and create a state of free-for-all and leave everybody where they are because those who have been historically advanced will continue to be historically advanced.

Sen. Ramnath: You are talking like Marx.

Sen. Prof. K. Ramchand: I am the last of the Commies.

Without going into economics, I say that a major target of our economic policy should not be the plastering solution of eradication of poverty or alleviation of poverty. The major emphasis of economic policy should be the redistribution of wealth and opportunity; the major aspect of economic policy should be a genuine structural adjustment.

Mr. President, I am going to leave economics out a bit, or perhaps appear to do so, because I want to focus on the education system. I plead for a complete overhaul of the education system. I argue that a complete overhaul of the education system will address the very profound question of: What is education and what is education for?

That will lead us into education for the fulfilment of the individual in a given society; also, a profound overhaul of the education system may lead us to break the chain of poverty and deprivation by concentrating on the child. If we can concentrate on the child and educate the child as a human being and as somebody who is trained and skilled, we might break the chain of poverty that has existed for the majority of people in this country for 300 years.

So, I am associating the overhaul of the educational system with a recreation of humane and civilized values. I am associating the overhaul of the education system with the creation of a just and equal society.

Mr. President, I doubt very much that you will give me any injury time and since my speech is long, I just wish to say that there are about six or seven themes that run through my contribution. One of them is the need for a different kind of primary school and preschool care, to offset the consequences of poverty.

Secondly, the need for there to be a free flow from primary and free primary schools into the secondary system without examination. [*Desk thumping*] It is useless to say you are abolishing the Common Entrance Examination if you are going to replace it by another examination.

Thirdly, one of my themes will be a diversification of secondary education so as to cater to the aptitudes of all the young people in our society and to set up the system in such a way that even if we stream, there will be a built-in possibility of stream-switching, as it were.

I also call for a diversification of tertiary education, for a recognition that somebody who has a degree in welding or motor mechanics is not less prestigious or has less prestige than somebody who has a degree in the arts, humanities, or philosophy. For too long, we have been ruled by a western notion that a university degree is a classical university degree and everybody else is just a technician, a mechanic or a fire officer.

Now, there is a difficulty about doing that. There is a difficulty about bringing it about, that young people would feel that a degree from a polytechnic or a technical university, is just as much a source of pride as a degree from the University of the West Indies. But the only way we are going to do this is by looking at the mess we are making with the levels of education beyond the secondary that at present exist in the society.

A company comes to offer training; another firm is offering training; the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries is offering his own training; everybody

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is offering training that we would call tertiary training and they are doing it in an isolated way, just teaching how to rivet. So they are giving skills training in riveting.

Training, as it is developing in this free economy and in this free educational system, is being focussed very narrowly on one or two skills and it is being dissociated from education. It is being cut off from any kind of standardization procedure. The function of a Technical University of the West Indies would be to oversee, overlook and co-ordinate all the efforts at technical/tertiary education that are going on haphazardly in the society; to co-ordinate these, to apply standards to them and to associate them with education in the other sense of the word; about training to be a thinking, creative, fulfilled person.

Sen. Daly: And we cannot get that.

Sen. Prof. K. Ramchand: Well, I have been writing to the Minister about this.

Mr. President, other parts of my themes would be the need for teacher training and motivation. I do not understand how a country can spend so much money on education and talk so much about education and show so little concern for teacher training. In most of the advanced countries which we like to imitate, a person cannot even become a primary school teacher if he or she does not have a university degree. That is what this Government should aim at, as part of its economic policy.

Of course, beneath much of what I am saying, is this underlying concern—philosophical, call it what you like—about what is education. What is education for?

But the immediate and most obvious plank in all I am going to say is that primary education is the base of the whole educational system. Primary education, which takes place when the child is in his or her most formative stage, is the base for all human development and, therefore, any government which has an eye for the future, an eye for development and an eye for education has to begin with primary education that gives the same high quality of primary education to every member of the society. [*Desk thumping*]

That is why I say that the question of education is linked with the question of poverty. Over 60 per cent of the people in this country live under the poverty line and cannot buy the books, cannot buy the shoes, cannot buy the clothes, cannot

afford the food and cannot offer the home life, the caring, loving, serene, secure environment that the child needs. We have to bear that in mind when we are thinking about primary school education.

Sen. Cuffy-Dowlat: Inaccurate statistics—not 60 per cent, 35 per cent.

Sen. Prof. K. Ramchand: Mr. President, the economic policy statement issued by the Minister of Finance mentioned education only in passing under the heading “Economic and Social Infrastructure”, but I want to point out that education is a major economic activity.

There are 106,188 students in public secondary schools; 9,160 in private secondary; 176,113 in public primary; 12,416 in private primary; about 6,000 at the university; 4,208 in tech/voc; making a total of 314,092. There are over 15,235 teachers; about 1,000 booksellers; 7,062 printers and publishers, and these are people directly involved in the economic activity called education.

3.45 p.m.

Mr. President, there are 477 primary schools and 100 secondary schools. Education involves construction, repairs, renovations, maintenance of buildings, cleaning, painting, getting rid of termites, pests, plumbing, electricity, providing lumber, galvanize, glass, taking care of the grounds and security. Education, Mr. President, involves people in transport, school feeding, agriculture, fish, poultry, drinks, furniture making, provision of water, provision of electricity, provision of equipment, provision of uniforms and shoes, provision of stationery.

Mr. President, I would say that in the economic activity called education, over half the population is involved. So education is an economic activity in itself that creates jobs. It is an employment for many people. A child going to school is working. He is part of the workforce. He is part of the economy. Now, Mr. President, not all of this economic activity is registered in the figures relating to revenue and expenditure, and I think that the failure to reflect education in the economic figures as the single most important economic activity in society is a serious accounting oversight or a reminder of the lack of refinement in these procedures.

So how can you say that education is only 4 per cent of the GDP? That is absurd. Mr. President, in the figures you will see that Government expenditure on education for 1991—1993 is calculated at \$658 million and that figure is broken down into \$622 million as recurrent expenditure and \$35 million as capital

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expenditure; and that is a problem. There is a problem with this classification, Mr. President, and I want to refer to and quote from *System of National Accounts 1993* where there is considerable debate over this subject, “Should current expenditure on education be classified as investment or capital formation rather than as consumption”.

The upshot of the argument is that although it is difficult to deal with some items that seem to fit under both categories, it would be wrong to shunt moneys spent on education as recurrent expenditure; you have to think about it as investment or capital formation. The first quotation from *System of National Accounts* is as follows.

“It is often proposed that expenditures on education should also be classified as gross fixed capital formation as a form of investment in human capital. The acquisition of knowledge, skills and qualifications increases the productive potential of the individuals concerned and is a source of future economic benefit.”

Mr. President, I am admitting, with the document, “the intrinsic difficulty of trying to draw a dichotomy between consumption and gross fixed capital formation...” But I am pleading that that dichotomy should not be allowed to exist and work to the disadvantage of how we look at spending on education. I quote again:

“Some care and sophistication is needed in using the accounts. For example, goods and services ‘consumed’ by households—i.e., acquired for the satisfaction of their needs or wants—are not suddenly ‘used up’ and do not ‘vanish’ at the moment of acquisition. In particular, households ‘consuming’ services such as health and education may continue to derive benefits over long periods of time. The ‘consumption’ of such services therefore has some points of similarity with ‘investment’ in assets. Similarly, enterprises may continue to benefit over long periods of time from the intermediate consumption of services such as maintenance and repairs, training, research and development, market research, etc. Thus, while the acquisition of fixed assets by enterprises—that is, gross fixed capital formation—is undertaken specifically to enhance future production possibilities, they are not the only types of expenditure that may be expected to bring future benefits.”

Sen. Dr. St. Cyr: Mr. President, would the hon. Senator permit me to ask a question? I have not read that work myself, but does it discuss the problem of boundaries of production? Because I think that would be the solution to the problem raised.

Sen. Prof. K. Ramchand: It does not do it but in my hypocritical researches, so that I could come and pretend not to know anything, people have spoken to me about that. This particular article does not but I am aware of it and I do hope, Sir, since I am in very deep waters here, that when you come to wind up you might say something on this issue.

Mr. President, there have been many commendable attempts to place a value on education, an economic value, a value as economic activity providing employment, a value as an activity that is productive activity. And there have been many arguments around the phrase “human resources development” or “creation of human capital”. I want now to refer to some of these arguments.

In her 1987 doctoral study of the continuing professional education needs of Tobago, Sen. Dr. Eastlyn Mc Kenzie is very critical of a tendency to limit the concept and application of human resource development to corporations and organizations that are profit oriented. She supports the view that continuing teacher training should be classified as human resource development. She quotes a definition of human resource development as “organised learning experiences in a definite time period to increase the possibility of improving job performance and growth”. She quotes from a writer called Nadler.

I would like to modify Nadler and Mc Kenzie and claim that all education is human resource development and it involves children, the teachers, the officials and the administrators. I would like at this point, Mr. President, to point to three kinds of education, because if we do not notice these three kinds of education, we would not recognize our biases. Under the heading education there is:

“i. training in certain clearly defined skills, within a definite time period, for a specific job”

That is education. There is:

“ii. education that is not determined by the requirements of a specific job but is calculated to qualify someone in a general way for a certain range of jobs after graduation”

And there is:

“iii. development or life-long learning which is not job-related but which contributes to the development of the emotional, spiritual, imaginative and creative capacities of the person, and is more than likely to improve job-performance.”

And although we recognize these three varieties of education, Mr. President, we should not think about them as separate. We should think that whichever type we put the emphasis on should have some elements of the other two. That, Mr. President, is one of the weaknesses in our educational provision. We have set up walls between the three types of education.

Human resource development is an important concept in the formulation of economic policy. Its importance, however, has been restricted by the difficulty of assigning ready value to the type (ii) and type (iii) education that I spoke about. This is why Dr. Mc Kenzie can observe that the concept and application of human resource development is limited to corporations and organizations that are profit oriented.

Another limitation of current attitudes, Mr. President, is that when people talk about human resource development in relation to education, the focus is very much on training. Now, training has visible and immediate economic benefits to the trainee and especially to those who have organized this training. It can be argued that such training is only minimally educational although it smothers itself in, through its association in people's mind, with science and technology and, nowadays, information technology. So people tell you this is training in science and technology, this is training in information technology, but it is a much more limited, controlled and uneducational type of training than that.

So, Mr. President, I have many things to say in detail about education and economic policy as it relates to education, but I am choosing to spend more of my time on dealing with the broad kinds of philosophical issues which will open up a sense of the choices, the options available to us in trying to relate education to economic policy. So I want to refer now to a document that was referred to by Sen. Philip Marshall at an earlier time. It is an article called "Expanding the Measure of Wealth"; expanding the terms and the ways in which we measure wealth.

There is an article that begins with the assumption that we measure wealth in too narrow a way. That article by John Dixon and Kirk Hamilton which appeared in *Finance and Development* of December 1996 begins with a definition of a term that nearly every speaker in this debate has used, and it is the term "Sustainable development". The article says:

"Sustainable development has never lacked definitions, but perhaps the simplest equates it with well-being that does not decline over time."

“...well-being that does not decline over time”. And the authors say that what follows from this definition, Mr. President, is the importance of assessing wealth and measuring what constitutes wealth.

4.00 p.m.

So this article is about “Expanding the Measure of Wealth.” And it suggests that we should measure wealth in this way:

“The approach to measuring wealth combines elements of bottom-up valuation for agricultural land, forests and protected areas, minerals and fossil fuels, produced assets, and urban land, and top-down valuation for human resources. It is important to emphasize at the outset that ‘human resources’ combines the value of raw labor, human capital, and social capital. Human capital is generally conceived as the return to education.”

Mr. President, this article, as I said, was referred to by Senator Marshall. He pointed out in his summary that if you think of wealth in terms of natural capital, produced assets, and human resources, then he noticed that if you look at the world, natural capital is much more equitably distributed than other forms of wealth. Management and the methods of obtaining returns from natural capital, is what makes the difference.

The second category of wealth, human resources and produced assets, can be interfered with, can be manipulated, by conscious decisions. One of the greatest imperatives in the world is to use education to improve your human resources so that your human resources can then turn around and work on your natural capital to increase produced assets. In the whole economic exercise, education is a major factor in making the difference between rich countries and poor countries.

Mr. President, so far I am trying to pitch my tent in the camp of the enemy, and say that education is very much economic activity, and that it is an important part of economic policy and that even economists should understand that. I have been suggesting that education is an economic activity involving over 50 per cent of the population. That there is a need to reflect this in economic figures and in economic policy. I have been suggesting that expenditure on education should be classified as investment or capital formation, not recurrent expenditure. And in the measurement of wealth, I was saying that education plays a key role in the development of human resources which then go to work on our natural capital to enhance produced assets. Education is the key to the development of human resources.

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But, Mr. President, I am not 100 per cent comfortable, even if I win on that score. I do not want to win on that score only, because I would be departing from the things I believe in, if I were to justify education on visible and tangible economic grounds. There is a danger in focussing on the economic character of education, because if you focus only on the economic character of education you fall into an outlook, an economistic and hand-to-mouth outlook, that is partially responsible for undermining humane values and civilized life in society. You are succumbing to an outlook that is responsible for cynicism, disbelief, violence, in our society.

I do not know why people are looking at the violence in a few schools and making a big hullabaloo about it, when there is violence everywhere—there is violence in church, there is violence on the road, there is violence in the lecture room. The society is saturated, it is exploding with violence everywhere, because there is something fundamentally wrong with the society. I do not want to be simplistic and say, “Somebody is stealing the soul of the nation”, but that is part of it, Mr. President. The decline of education is associated with the decline in social values, sense of community; it is associated with the rise of violence. So when we talk, when we focus upon the violence in the schools as if that is the only thing, we are fooling ourselves. We have a major set of problems to address—and I have to repeat it—most of our problems arise from our failure to re-distribute wealth and opportunity, after coming out of enslavement and indentureship.

Mr. President, I want to talk now about some other senses in which education is important. I think it is necessary to establish a balance or complementarities between economic progress and social and human progress; there must be a balance between them. And any economic or educational policy which goes for one to the exclusion of the other, is doomed to create a society of barbarians and Philistines.

I want to turn, Mr. President, to an article that discusses—well, after what I had to sit through this afternoon, I feel I have a right to “make mas” —[*Laughter*] [*Interruption*].—There is an article, Mr. President, entitled, *Learning: A means or an end? A look at the Delors Report and its Implications for Educational Renewal*. I hope every country in the world, every Ministry of Education in the world, has multiple copies of the Delors Report. The article I am referring to offers a kind of review of the Delors Report. It was reported to UNESCO.

According to the man who is reviewing the report, the sub-title of the UNESCO Report, the Delors Report, is entitled “*Learning: The Treasure Within*”, and according to the author of the article, Mr. Colin Power, this report—

“...differs quite strongly from most other reports on education and human development: it is not a blueprint...”

Mr. President: Sen. Ramchand, if you are reading from the article, please quote the date.

Sen. Prof. K. Ramchand: Thank you, Mr. President. “Prospects, Vol. XXVII, No. 2, June 1997”, page 188, Sir.

4.10 p.m.

"The report of the Commission, *Learning: the treasure within*, differs quite strongly from most other reports on education and human development: it is not a blueprint for educational reform but a framework for reflection and debate about the choices which must be made in formulating policies. The Commission views choices about education as stemming ultimately from choices about the types of society that we wish to live in. Whereas many contemporary reform agendas seem to be driven, explicitly or implicitly, by what market economists perceive to be the ideal society, the report of the Commission is more closely aligned with the intellectual and humanistic ethical principles which inspired the founders of the United Nations and UNESCO. As such, its analyses of issues and recommendations are more profoundly humanistic and less market driven than those of the World Bank or the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.

The Commission's report takes us back to the fundamental purposes of education. The report's title...reminds us of the importance of learning throughout life, about the need to develop both a vision and a practice of education that goes beyond schooling. The treasure is learning itself, that remarkable asset possessed by every human and every culture which needs to be tilled and used wisely. It is the knowledge, values and wisdom accumulated, the inheritance our forebears have left us which we must not sell. Knowledge and minds are not commodities, not just 'human resources' to be developed, exploited and then cast aside, but treasures to be cultivated to improve the quality of life of both individuals and societies."

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. Prof. J. Spence*]

Question put and agreed to.

Sen. Prof. K. Ramchand: Mr. President, I thank you for the extra half hour. [Laughter] I hope that is recorded in *Hansard*. I would have been glad for an extra half hour.

The part of the article that I would like hon. Senators to focus on is the part in which the writer uses the phrase that is used in the report called "The four pillars of education". I have to give you one more quotation, and later on another one from this article.

The writer states:

"The Delors Report, then, wishes to reposition our thinking on education, to base it on four pillars: *learning to know, learning to do, learning to be, learning to live together.*"

Mr. President, I have to repeat it: "*learning to know, learning to do, learning to be, learning to live together.*"

"Education systems are quite strongly focused on *learning to know*. They cope more or less adequately with *learning to do*. They may or may not pay lip-service to *learning to be* or *learning to live together* in the form of civic education, artistic and sports education, and through attachments to the curriculum. But it is not an exaggeration to say that there is hardly an education system in the world that rewards achievements in the latter two areas by testing or evaluating the progress made by individuals or rewarding individuals or teachers for focusing on the latter two pillars."

Those two pillars, "learning to be", and "learning to live together", tend to be neglected in the educational provision of most economies. I have to try and conserve my time, and so I would not give the additional quotations from the Delors Report. The Delors Report reminds us of the full range of education and educational possibilities and educational need.

I now turn specifically to our educational system and some of the problems in it. I quote from my own contribution to the Appropriation Bill in this Senate, on January 22, 1996. In the first quotation I tried to locate the errors of our ways and the waste of human resources in the system that we have devised. The figures have not changed very much since 1996, so I would not give the update. What I argued then was that every year 30,000 children sit the Common Entrance Examination; of these 21,000 make it into the secondary school system, 9,000 are left back, 4,000 repeat the examination and 5,000 take up places in post-primary

centres or places like Servol. Of the 21,000 who go into secondary schools, 14,000 go to junior secondary schools.

Mr. President, part of the problem is the junior secondary schools. The problem we have now was not envisaged, it was not even planned for by the people who introduced the junior secondary schools. These schools were introduced to the nation in the *Draft Plan for Educational Development in Trinidad and Tobago 1968—1983*. This plan went to Cabinet in March of 1967, and it was this plan that proposed the introduction of junior secondary schools. But what it was doing, it states:

"3.1 The Junior Secondary School as proposed here would offer Secondary Education on a three (3) year course for the Age-group 12—14 after which a National Examination will be used for determining both whether and where the students will continue in the full-time public education system."

So far so good. Everybody would go to a junior secondary school for three years. We were removing the bottleneck of the 11-plus examination, so that was the plan. The devisers of this plan knew what they were doing.

"3.4 The introduction of the Junior Secondary School would represent a significant restructuring of the system in that the all-age Primary School (5—15) and the all-age Secondary School (12—19) offering separate courses would give way to a fully integrated system from age 5 upwards with first cycle general education and second cycle general education. Selection for specialized education would be made at age 14+ when considerations of educational and vocational interest, aptitude and abilities would enjoy vastly superior validity than they could ever have at age 12."

The people who introduced the junior secondary school did not want the Common Entrance Examination. They recognized the evils of the examination, and were devising a system to create some kind of equity at the start of the secondary school system, to postpone the decisions about what kind of persons you are going to be until age 14. The only thing I see wrong in this is that it had to introduce the shift system, but even while doing that, it apologized, it said, "Sorry, we do not have the resources, we have to use the shift system, otherwise everybody would not get."

This plan envisaged a diversification of secondary education after age 14, an almost automatic flow right up to age 14, and then a process of selection about what kind of secondary school you should go to. Well, I do not know, that was

1967, it is now 1999 and something happened to prevent the fulfilment of that plan. [*Interruption*]

Sen. Cuffy-Dowlat: PNM happened!

Sen. Prof. K. Ramchand: I am not here to blame governments or anybody. I try to analyze—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Prof. Spence: Would the trouble not have been the resistance of denominational schools to that process?

Sen. Prof. K. Ramchand: I think that is one factor in it. [*Interruption*] I never knew that Independent Senators could be partisan. [*Laughter*]

Sen. Ramnath: You would be surprised, ask the service commissions.

Sen. Prof. K. Ramchand: Mr. President, in this document they give an explanation of the junior secondary school that I find very acceptable. I know that in 1975, Dr. Williams decided that "all must go under one roof" and that contributed to the inability of the nation to do what it said it wanted to. Maybe the denominational schools partly sabotaged, by refusing to create junior secondary schools, to abdicate from being posh prestige schools. That may be one factor.

The other factor was that Dr. Williams said "money is no problem", 1975, "all must proceed under one roof."

Sen. Cuffy-Dowlat: Who said that again? [*Laughter*]

Sen. Prof. K. Ramchand: Who said that? The "Father of the Nation".

Sen. Tota-Maharaj: Manning. [*Laughter*]

Sen. Brig Theodore: The Godfather. [*Crosstalk*]

Sen. Prof. K. Ramchand: I still call him the "Father of the Nation". [*Crosstalk*] Mr. President, I am trying to say that 30 years ago we knew what we should do, and 30 years later we still have not done it. [*Interruption*]

I just want to spend a few more minutes—

Mr. President: You have two more minutes.

Sen. Prof. K. Ramchand: Mr. President, I have spoken at other times about my suggestion for primary schools. The primary schools have to take on the burden of parenting, providing love, sustainment and emotional stability. The physical plant that is the primary school has to be designed in such a way that it can be felt to be a kind of home by the children, even while it is giving them education.

4.25 p.m.

The primary school has to exist in relation to the community and the families within the community. There has to be a close relation between the education of the young and the community surrounding the school. Parents have to be involved in the primary school, in the sense that they come there to attend classes about parenting and helping their child through school, and the ones who do not need that kind of help they would have to be part-time teachers in these schools.

It is a very expensive thing, Mr. President, but it is an investment that is well worth it. We know now, we have all recognized the importance of the child. The child is the future; the child is the economic future; the child is the spiritual future; the child is the intellectual future. I do not think it is too much to ask that we really close up shop and start all over again, spend our money on the primary education of our children. Thank you. [*Desk thumping*].

Mr. President: We would suspend for tea at this stage and resume at 5.00 p.m.

4.27 p.m: *Sitting suspended.*

5.05 p.m. *Sitting resumed.*

[MR. VICE-PRESIDENT *in the Chair*]

The Minister of Public Administration (Sen. The Hon. Wade Mark): Mr. Vice-President, I rise to make my contribution on this very important Motion, standing in the name of Sen. Dr. Eric St. Cyr. This particular Motion has been on the Order Paper for several months now, and it has in fact put on the agenda the critical need for us to engage in some discussions on Government's economic philosophy and direction, as it relates to public participation in industry, economic liberalization and human resource management and its strategies for furthering the economic well-being of the nation.

I would like to deal with this particular issue from a very broad perspective, as well as, how this question of human resource management is tackled and addressed in the context of the central public service of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. I want to start by looking at some broad issues and then we would get into the area of what we have been attempting over the last three years and some months, to address the issue of a more efficient, more organized approach to the whole question of human resource management in the central public service of our country.

There is no doubt that many of us are aware that there have been ongoing discussions and developments focussing on the practice of human resource management in the central public service, and in the wider public sector in Trinidad and Tobago. I would not go into details, Sir, except to say that the historical and traditional reality is that there exists a web of rules and regulations in the public service of Trinidad and Tobago that have outlived their relevance and have virtually hamstrung public personnel managers in the public service of Trinidad and Tobago, and it has resulted in failure to take advantage of the knowledge that has been acquired and accumulated about human performance in organizations.

Mr. Vice-President, the resultant dilemma has caught the attention of an increasing number of people who recognize that for the public service to rise to the challenges of the 21st Century, it will have to be freed from the chains of traditional personnel administration that succeeds so effortlessly in suppressing individual creativity, organizational commitment and the desire and enthusiasm for excellence in human performance in our public service.

Therefore, Mr. Vice-President, what is required is a coherent contemporary human resource management system in our country. This is what the Government is seeking to have established as one of its primary goals.

5.10 p.m.

Mr. Vice-President, this Government has identified the realization of human potential and the pursuit of human development as being critical to the Government's process in our country. Indeed, the Government subscribes to the view that the greatest resource of our nation is its human resource. We recognize that in order to survive in a rapidly and ever-accelerating, changing and increasingly competitive global environmental, if we are to cope with the rapid change in technological developments, as identified by Sen. Dr. St. Cyr, our human resource base must constantly evolve to a higher level of competence and capability in order to face the challenges posed by a developing country as ours, moving into the 21st Century. The Government, therefore, seeks to lead our nation along the path of self-empowerment and self-reliance so that every citizen can realize his or her full and true potential. This is why we have espoused the notion of a total quality nation.

To this end, we are committed to the reorienting and restructuring of our education system as outlined at the last session by the hon. Dr. Adesh Nanan; and this is necessary to provide our population with the type of training and education

that Prof. Kenneth Ramchand so eloquently spoke about earlier. That is absolutely necessary to accomplish what Dr. St. Cyr's Motion seeks to address, that is, the fullest participation of our people in today's demanding world economy.

We believe that a population that is educated and highly trained in the competencies—and we talk about skills, knowledge, attitudes and technologies used in productive enterprise—represents an investment of incalculable returns in the future. Therefore, the philosophy of this Government is that education and training are absolute imperatives in this system. We cannot and will not have a total quality nation without a total quality people. We must have total quality. Therefore, the 21st Century will demand an educated population with highly specialized skills that can help us to adapt and adjust to the ever-advancing technology.

In preparation for the new millennium, we have embarked on a revolution in education which is rapidly gaining momentum. There are a number of initiatives which provide substantial evidence in this regard; and I wish to outline some of these initiatives that have been taken to really prepare this nation for this revolution in education.

One of the things that this Government did in June, 1998 was to establish the Ministry of Information, Communication, Training and Distance Learning. That was really done in recognition of the need to make training and development more easily accessible to a wider cross-section of our population. This ministry has overall responsibility, *inter alia*, for some of the following critical areas with a focus on human resources. This ministry is responsible for training and retraining—that is, human resource development. It is also responsible for distance learning. It is also responsible for the National Apprenticeship System, as well as the Youth Training and Employment Partnership Programme.

Mr. Vice-President, you would also note that we have established a number of National Energy Skills Centres: we have one at Point Fortin, one at Macoya and another one at Ste. Madeleine, with additional centres planned in 1999 for Tobago as well as Mayaro. These centres are funded by contributions of investors in the energy sector and provide for skills training beyond the sector for nationals of our country. Already, some 130 trainees with marketable, technical skills have graduated from these National Energy Skills Centres, with 90 per cent of these finding productive employment in various companies in the energy sector. There are currently some 320 others in training right now, as we speak, at these various centres in our country.

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We have also taken another initiative, which I think Members of this honourable Senate need to know, and that is the establishment of a National Training Agency in our country. That agency is attempting a creative approach to an education and training delivery system which provides an alternative path for higher education and focusses on training as opposed to the traditional academic stream in our country.

The main function of the National Training Agency includes the whole issue of accreditation of training agencies, training programmes, setting standards for training and identification and maintaining a stock of skills to meet manpower demands for the economic development of Trinidad and Tobago.

Another significant component of the revolution in training is the Youth Training and Employment Partnership Programme (YTEPP), that takes training to remote areas and communities across Trinidad and Tobago in order to enhance personal and community development.

The recently introduced mobile bus programme—I do not know how many of my colleagues are aware of it—which is a computer training unit virtually, provides the relevant training opportunities where they were, hitherto, inaccessible. The Youth Training and Employment Partnership Programme has played an integral part in improving the unemployed, out-of-school youths by enhancing their employment opportunities and enabling their entry into the labour market.

An appreciation for our continuing quest to expand and upgrade the skilled labour base of our country is deepened as we turn to the second phase of technical training capabilities which would entail the establishment of a US \$15 million advanced technology centre by the year 2000. The College of Advanced Technology will provide specialized and professional levels of technical training to engineers, technicians, managers, supervisors and employees of energy, and the industrial sectors. It will also emphasize training in information technology.

We should soon be able to provide practically-oriented programmes in advanced instrumentation, maintenance technology, petroleum engineering, process control website engineering, safety, the environment and a host of other technologies to support our industrial advancement.

5.20 p.m.

Mr. Vice-President in addition to all these Government initiatives, the hon. Prime Minister announced in his last year's Independence Address to the nation

that the 1999 budget of the Government would seek to provide tax incentives for every dollar spent by every business organization on the funding of education and training for employees and the children of employees. The initiatives I have outlined, Sir, addressed only one aspect of our human resource management philosophy, that of training and development to enhance the skills base of the population. But there are many others, Mr. Vice-President.

The Government of this country is committed to the maintenance of an atmosphere of industrial peace in the nation. We are also convinced that economic activity should result in a higher standard of living and a better quality of life for all our citizens.

Mr. Vice-President, the Government also supports the rights of workers to join associations of their choice, in order to enhance their quality of work life. We have therefore, moved very expeditiously to conclude negotiations with all representative workers' organizations for the current period and will be soon embarking on a fresh round of negotiations for the ensuing period 1999—2001.

Mr. Vice-President, the legislative agenda of the Government includes a number of human resource management strategies for enhancing the relationship between the employer and the worker. The Industrial Stabilization Act and its successor, the Industrial Relations Act, have proven to be inadequate in protecting the rights of workers as only unionized workers enjoy protection. It is the intention of the Government to modify that policy to ensure that all workers, whether unionized or not, enjoy some minimum level of protection in our country.

Only today, we tabled the Minimum Wages Order in Trinidad and Tobago and that covers a large cross-section of workers who are not offered any protection under the law at this time and are exposed to some of the worse exploitative practices by some of the employers, a minority I would say, because most employers try to observe the law but others flout the law.

Mr. Vice-President, it is also the intention of the Government that workers and employers alike should act responsibly in an industrial relations system, which emphasizes rights, as well as, responsibilities. Government is therefore, determined that the new industrial relations system must promote the expansion and growth of enterprise, even though laws are developed to protect workers. The new industrial relations system must aid the process of eradication of poverty and must assist in the promotion of total sustainable development of our society. Therefore, the legislative interventions must take account of the need to promote and enhance productivity, efficiency, profitability and competitiveness of Trinidad and Tobago in the global economy.

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The labour legislative programme of this Government is diverse and reflects the intention of the Government to modernize labour legislation and also to build parallel systems of collective and individual employment laws, underpinned by adherence to acceptable international labour standards and the promotion in the appropriate circumstances of laws to protect workers.

Mr. Vice-President, for instance, as we talk about human management and how we are strategizing, the Maternity Protection Act of 1998 and the new Minimum Wages Order are only two examples of our determination and action to ensure protection for the workers in our country.

The Occupational Safety and Health Bill, which we have already laid in the Parliament, signals the intention of the Government to ensure a safe and healthy working environment for the workers of this country. There is also the Industry Injury and Disability Benefits Bill, soon to be introduced, Mr. Vice President, to replace the existing Workmen's Compensation Act and a Termination of Employment Benefit Bill to replace the Retrenchment and Severance Benefit Act. These are examples of measures aimed at supporting the implementation of sound human resource management practices in Trinidad and Tobago.

The area of human resource planning is also an area that is receiving close attention in our country, in the public service in particular. You would appreciate, Mr. Vice-President, the need for relatively accurate forecasts of demand and supply of skills to support the industrial thrust of our country. This requires a massive technological infrastructure that ties in all the supply sectors with the demand sectors for skills. In this regard, the Ministry of Labour and Co-operatives has embarked upon an information technology system that would form the basis for the establishment of a national human resource management information system in our country. Such a system would require inputs from both the public and the private sector, as to manpower needs throughout the country.

Mr. Vice-President, it is expected that other ministries and departments of Government, like my ministry and the Service Commissions Department and the Personnel Department would be involved in this project when it is fully developed, resulting in a technologically supported public service employee database.

At, the level of the general public service of Trinidad and Tobago, several reform measures have been implemented in the area of human resource management, to ensure more effective service delivery to the various stakeholders and greater responsiveness to citizens as consumers or as customers.

I want to bring to the attention of this honourable Senate, the decentralization of human resource management in the public service of our country, where we have moved from that particular function—that is the traditional central organization function—and we have now devolved responsibilities to line ministries in various government departments. As such, human resource management units are being established in all ministries and government departments and the Service Commissions and Personnel Department are now undertaking devolution of authority, to these line agencies. So, both the Service Commissions and the Personnel Department are devolving their traditional functions to line ministries, and they are now taking up the responsibility of monitoring, supervising and policy formulation at those levels. We are trying to separate the policy question from the operations question in many of those ministries. We are hoping that that process would generate more efficiencies within line ministries, and overall, the citizens and the public would be better served.

Mr. Vice-President, as I said, the Personnel Department has been decentralized. If hon. Senators are not aware, that has taken place. The Personnel Department that we have known for a number of years has been decentralized under our administration. They attempted to start it under the last administration but I do not think that they were successful fully; we have proceeded and decentralized the Personnel Department.

5.30 p.m.

So, line ministries are now assuming the responsibility for the operational functions, once the domain of the Personnel Department. The Personnel Department is now, as I said, policy-making; it is now advisory, it is now monitoring, regulating, facilitating and reviewing. That is the role of the Personnel Department today.

Sen. Prof. Spence: Does that mean that the CPO no longer negotiates contracts?

Sen. The Hon. W. Mark: There has been a complete restructuring of the Personnel Department in order to transform it from the traditional Personnel Department into what is called a Central Human Resource Management Agency. Within that agency, they are now advertising for a director for the Industrial Relations Department who will be responsible for negotiations with the public sector unions. Of course, the CPO will have this overarching responsibility, but

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there is going to be a director who is going to be engaged to deal with negotiations.

Sen. Prof. Spence: I was really referring to personnel employed by individual ministries on contract. You said that devolution has taken the place of the personnel functions, but what I was asking is, is the negotiation of individual contracts now a ministry activity or is it still CPO?

Sen. The Hon. W. Mark: It is still CPO.

Sen. Prof. Spence: So what devolution has there been?

Sen. The Hon. W. Mark: There are a number of areas. Take, for instance, leave administration. Let us take the question of sick leave, vacation leave, partial awards of scholarships. All these matters were centralized. So, if one is sick and one has to apply for sick leave, the CPO or the Personnel Department was responsible for granting approval. Now, one can go to one's line ministry and there is a human resource manager who is heading a human resource management unit who will now have the responsibility of administering these matters.

Grievances that traditionally would have had to come to the CPO can now be solved at the line level and the human resource managers and the human resource management unit would now be responsible for the planning of human resource management and organization within their respective ministries. So, whether it is a partial award—scholarship—one can now access that at the line ministry and will not have to come to the Personnel Department to deal with that. These are some of the functions, Prof. Spence, that have now been delegated to line ministries, all in an effort to improve efficiencies within Government operations generally.

Mr. Vice-President, another innovative approach we have taken to allow what Sen. Danny Montano referred to as better governance—on the whole question of scholarships, we have had repeated complaints by members of the public on how they have not been treated fairly; they felt they had applied and were interviewed and were somehow overlooked. What we have sought to do over the last year is restructure the Scholarships Selection Committee, so rather than just have public officers interviewing these potential scholarship awardees, we have invited the private sector, the trade unions, the NGOs and members of the public who would sit on this Scholarships Selection Committee to interview people. In other words, in terms of equity and fairness, because of the broad-based nature of the Scholarships Selection Committee, we are hoping to democratize the process even more.

That is an initiative we have taken so that today, the Scholarships Selection Committee of the Personnel Department has been transformed to some extent, and we have brought in the private sector through the Chamber of Commerce, the Manufacturers' Association have a representative, and the union—in this instance it is Miss Jennifer Baptiste who is the President of the PSA—also has a representative on the Scholarships Selection Committee of the Personnel Department. So, that is a very important initiative we have taken to ensure, as I said, that the democratic process is deepened and this whole question of ensuring equity and fairness in this whole process is addressed.

Also, Sen. Prof. Ramchand made reference earlier to the whole question of education and training. In keeping with current worldwide organizational trends in human resource development, we have taken a decision because we have restructured the Ministry of Public Administration, and in our restructuring organization we are moving from what is called the traditional central training function—we have a Central Training Unit at Chaguaramas. We are moving away from that particular training paradigm to what we have now described as the Public Service Learning Centre. Training is still also part of learning, but in an effort to ensure that there is maximum participation by the members of staff, we are now moving towards this new concept of a Public Service Learning Centre.

Mr. Vice-President, I want to indicate that when we talk about a learning organization, it distinguishes itself by its ability to adopt creative new ways and means for its members to learn on a continuous basis in order to increase their capability and capacity to demonstrate superior performance. This is one of the directions we are taking in the public service because the empirical evidence today has revealed that the training function has not been able to result in, let us say, broad-based access.

When there is a training vote, only a limited number of people are able to access training. Even the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has now gone in the direction of a United Nations Development Programme Learning Resource Centre because they too have realized that even within the UNDP, over the years, less than 15 per cent of their staff members were exposed to training, even though over the years they have been in this particular process of training and retraining their staff. They have discovered that this paradigm has to be shifted, given advanced technology and given the ever rapid increases and changes taking place in the world today.

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We have now accepted that principle that in our organizations we need to get into the learning mode on a more continuous basis, and we want to make that shift, as I said, from the training paradigm to the learning paradigm: Life-long learning. Therefore, even though training would be a component of learning, we want learning to be the main concept that is driving the process in the future. In the United Nations Development Programme, as an example, they have advocated a process where, for instance, each member of the UNDP staff must allocate five per cent of his or her working time towards learning, so at the end of the year, instead of having a 15 per cent training, there will be 100 per cent learning. This is the concept that is being advanced, and that is where we are going in the public service in terms of this particular institution we are about to establish. Cabinet has approved it and it is a question of us now translating it and moving on.

Let me just provide hon. Senators with the mandate of this centre. It is to continually develop, maximize and monitor the intellectual capital value of public officers. It is also to strive constantly to improve their performance, to support a strong learning capability through the ongoing training and development programmes and also, the adoption of new and more relevant models of the learning for the workplace.

Mr. Vice-President, the centre will create a learning environment wherein all public officers would be able to pursue their life-long learning goals through a variety of learning opportunities and formats. But, it will give special attention to the learning needs of the different management levels of the public service of our country. The centre will also be accountable for reflecting in employee learning strategies, those characteristics, values and principles espoused in the Government policy agenda for a new public administration which, as you know, was laid in this Parliament in 1997. So, we have to ensure that whatever we are doing, whatever learning people are going to enjoy, there is a connection between the goals of the organization, the goals of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago and the learning that people are going to experience in the process.

In the new order of business, individuals must assume a greater responsibility for their own training and development. Gone are the days of one depending on an agency, and even when one is depending on an agency like Government for training opportunities, only a limited number of people could have accessed those opportunities. So, people and workers must also assume some responsibility for their own self-development and they have to engage in self-studies as well as group work. They must do so within a learning culture that actively promotes

values and encourages and supports initiatives in the area of personal competencies, enhancement, and which recognizes the value and importance of learning in settings other than the traditional, formal ones.

So, we have to make what is called the paradigm shift. As I said, new technologies are forcing us to shift. We now have to look at the whole question of changing, with the support of the PSA, job specifications in the public service as we move to revolutionize the public service and create a technological infrastructure. It means to say that the workers who are employed in the public service must have a certain level of competency. They must be literate in computer science or have some knowledge in terms of being computer literate. This is why the hon. Minister of Finance took this very important initiative in his 1997/1998 Budget when he announced that public officers and daily-rated employees would be able to access up to \$15,000 interest free to purchase their own computer. They are able to access at least 80 per cent of that sum. It has even been extended to us as parliamentarians. So, those of us who are not sufficiently computer literate can access that \$15,000 or 80 per cent of it and go home and understand how to use the computer.

What the Minister of Finance was attempting to do is, seeing that we are somewhat behind a number of countries, we are trying to see how—we are talking about 60,000 public officers in the public service of Trinidad and Tobago and 35,000 daily-rated workers. That is roughly 100,000 workers. If there is an average of four members per family: wife, husband and children, we are talking about a large access in terms of possibilities of our children being able to use and understand the computer. That is a revolutionary approach we have taken to ensure that our children and the population of this country become ready for the new century that is going to be knowledge based. It is knowledge based already, but it is going to become more knowledge based and, therefore, we have to prepare our people to understand the intricacies of that whole process.

5.45 p.m.

Mr. Vice-President, one of the biggest challenges we see for the centre, will be to create networks and alliances with external human resource development organizations and practitioners, in order to promote, offer and deliver an integrated learning strategy using all the resources that are available to, and in the interest of the country as a whole.

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Mr. Vice-President, other measures that we have taken for improving the technological capacity in the public service and the country at large include, as I said, the provision of loans for public officers to purchase computers.

Mr. Vice-President, the hon. Senator would know that one of the things we have to ensure as we move towards managing our human resource base and to strategize in equipping that base, is that an environment is created that is motivational; because if you have a discontented staff, or discontented employees, you can bring all the equipment, you can have all the modern resources, it will not work. You need to have a contented, and satisfied workforce. This is why, for instance, in the public service over the last three years, we have attempted to introduce mechanisms to ensure that public officers are involved in a more direct way, and to demonstrate to the population, what they are capable of delivering to the citizens at large.

Mr. Vice-President in this regard, for the first time in 1997, we initiated something called National Public Service Week in this country, where for the first time public officers were able to showcase to the entire country, what services they provide and they had open house for children, schoolchildren and the private sector. So they could come to different ministries and agencies and see what the public service offers.

Mr. Vice-President, this initiative, as I said, was taken by us, and driven by the Ministry of Public Administration. From my own assessment, it has engendered a deep sense of recognition and achievement in public officers. Therefore, to my mind, for the first time National Public Service Week witnessed a situation where, in the public service some 700 retirees were appreciated through retirement awards.

I mean to say, Mr. Vice-President, you know when you work in an organization for 30 years, you want to at least get a handshake from your employer, and it was amazing to me when I entered the public service and became a Minister that public officers who laboured so long and hard in the vineyard, after 33 1/3 years or even beyond that, some 40 years of service, would leave without even a whistle being blown, not a sound was heard, not a funeral note as well. *[Laughter]* Mr. Vice-President, we thought that we had to take the initiative to introduce an award system for those public officers.

In 1997, we had a gala function for 600 retirees in the public service. Every one of them was given a clock, a teacup, and a plaque, and everything marked

National Public Service Week, with their name on it. I saw big men and women cry. They said, they never in their 40 years of existence as public officers had any government in this country recognize their contribution as this Government has recognized their contribution, for the first time—appreciation. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Vice-President, in 1998 the numbers had increased to 700 retirees again, in recognition of their service to their country. We think that is a very good thing and that has now become institutionalized in our country.

I know that I have a few points to make still, but I know there are some other matters that we want to attend to. So, with your permission, and your leave, I will hold my contribution and continue with it at the next session of Parliament.

How many minutes, Sir? About 20 Sir?

Mr. Vice-President: You have two more minutes of normal speaking time.

Sen. The Hon. W. Mark: Okay. I will stop now Sir, so I will have 17 minutes when I come back, at the next session [*Laughter*] and I will wind up my contribution then, Sir.

ADJOURNMENT

The Minister of Public Administration (Sen. The Hon. Wade Mark): Mr. Vice-President, I am on my feet already so I want to stay here at least and make a move for the adjournment. I had indicated to my colleagues that we wanted to meet on Thursday, but having regard to the fact that we can in fact come back on April 6, 1999 if I am not mistaken, Tuesday, April 6, 1999, I believe is the next.

Sen. Dr. Mc Kenzie: That is the day, in Tobago, on which there will be goat races.

Sen. The Hon. W. Mark: Oh! Mr. Vice-President, I think that having regard to the representation made by Sen. Dr. Mc Kenzie and our Tobago colleagues, what we will have to do is probably to meet on Wednesday; having regard to the fact that we are not coming back on Thursday, and we want to manage our agenda very carefully, I do not want to bring Senators out, three times a week.

Mr Vice-President, I would prefer that we come back here on Wednesday, April 7, 1999, instead of Tuesday in order to facilitate our Tobago colleagues.

Mr. Vice-President, in light of all that, I would like to consult with my colleagues and I would like to move that we adjourn to a date to be fixed. I beg to move that this Senate be now adjourned to a date to be fixed.

Question put and agreed to.

Senate adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 5.55 p.m.