

Leave of Absence

Tuesday, May 4, 1999

SENATE

Tuesday, May 4, 1999

The Senate met at 1.33 p.m.

PRAYERS

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

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Mr. Vice-President: I have granted leave of absence to Sen. The Hon. Finbar Gangar from sittings of the Senate during the period May 2 to May 5. I have also granted leave to Sen. Philip Marshall from sittings of the Senate during the period May 4 to May 11. I have also granted leave of absence to Sen. The Hon. Wade Mark from today's sitting of the Senate.

SENATORS' APPOINTMENT

Mr. Vice-President: Hon. Senators, I received correspondence from His Excellency The President indicating that with effect from May 2, 1999, Sen. The Hon. Ganace Ramdial has been appointed to act temporarily as President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago during the absence from the country of His Excellency, President Arthur N. R. Robinson.

I have been advised that His Excellency The President has appointed Mr. Kelvin Ramnath as a temporary Senator with effect from May 2 and continuing during the absence from the Senate of Sen. The Hon. Ganace Ramdial, President of the Senate.

I have received advice from His Excellency The President that he has appointed Mr. Roodal Moonilal as a temporary Senator with effect from May 2 and continuing during the absence from Trinidad and Tobago of Sen. The Hon. Finbar Gangar and also Ms. Nirupa Oudit as a temporary Senator with effect from May 4 and continuing during the absence from Trinidad and Tobago of Sen. Philip Marshall. I just want to advise that one of the temporary Senators to be sworn in, Mr. Kelvin Ramnath, is not with us as yet, so I will seek your leave to have him sworn in on his arrival.

OATH OF ALLEGIANCE

Senators Roodal Moonilal and Nirupa Oudit took and subscribed the Oath of Allegiance as required by law.

CONSTITUTION (AMDT.) (NO. 3) BILL

Bill to amend the Constitution of Trinidad and Tobago, brought from the House of Representatives [*The Attorney General*]; read the first time.

Motion made, That the next stage be taken at the next sitting of the Senate. [*Sen. The Hon. B. Kuei Tung*]

Question put and agreed to.

PAPER LAID

1. Report of the Auditor General on the public accounts of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago for the period of account January 01, 1998 to September 30, 1998 and on other selected audit activities. [*The Minister of Finance (Sen. The Hon. Brian Kuei Tung)*]

MOTOR VEHICLES AND ROAD TRAFFIC (AMDT.) BILL

Bill to amend the Motor Vehicles and Road Traffic Act, Chap. 48:50 [*The Attorney General*]; read the first time.

Motion made, That the next stage be taken at the next sitting of the Senate. [*Sen. The Hon. B. Kuei Tung*]

Question put and agreed to.

**MAINTENANCE ORDERS
(FACILITIES FOR ENFORCEMENT) BILL**

Bill to consolidate and revise the law and to make new provisions to facilitate the enforcement of maintenance orders abroad [*The Attorney General*]; read the first time.

Motion made, That the next stage be taken at the next sitting of the Senate. [*Sen. The Hon. B. Kuei Tung*]

Question put and agreed to.

ARRANGEMENT OF BUSINESS

The Minister of Finance (Sen. The Hon. Brian Kuei Tung): Mr. Vice-President, today the Senate should be dealing with Government Business. However, I seek leave of the Senate to deal with Private Business instead of Government Business.

Agreed to.

ECONOMIC PHILOSOPHY*[Fifth 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 liberalisation and human resource management and its strategies for furthering the economic well-being of the nation. [*Sen. Dr. Eric St. Cyr*]

Question again proposed.

Mr. Vice-President: Just as a matter of information, prior to and on the last occasion when this Motion was before the Senate, the following Members would have made a contribution; Sen. Dr. Eric St. Cyr, Sen. The Hon. Finbar Gangar, Sen. Muhummad Shabazz, Sen. Vincent Cabrera, Sen. Prof. Julian Kenny, Hon. Mervyn Assam, Sen. Cynthia Alfred, Sen. Philip Marshall, Hon. Trevor Sudama, Sen. Danny Montano, Dr. The Hon. Adesh Nanan, Hon. Manohar Ramsaran, Sen. Mahadeo Jagmohan, Sen. Prof. Kenneth Ramchand and Sen. The Hon. Wade Mark. Others wishing to contribute may do so now.

1.45p.m.

Sen. Rev. Daniel Teelucksingh: Mr. Vice-President, I join with the many who compliment Sen. St. Cyr for requesting the Government of Trinidad and Tobago to articulate its broad economic policy and to define strategies for promoting and guiding the economic well-being of our country.

In response, the Government has shared with us its economic policy statement for Trinidad and Tobago and its 1999—2001 medium term policy paper. We all must have studied this document and, as a policy statement, its objectives and proposals are quite commendable.

In addition to the several analyses we have had so far as to what may be the most appropriate economic direction we should take in these testing times, we have had excellent contributions so far in this debate. The opening paragraph of the Government's statement is quite instructive for us: "Trinidad and Tobago's economic policy must not only take cognizance of domestic issues but must also be placed within the context of the international environment."

This is a good place to start, and so many others have begun here. This is so true and the urgency to stop and understand our international economic

environment demands from us that we awaken from the euphoria of the abundance of foreign investment dollars we had attracted over the last few years and address with wisdom and great caution the new reality of globalization and how it is impacting on us as a nation and, also as a people in the Caribbean.

Mr. Vice-President, with economic, social and cultural fences being removed, we are now dismayed that the swarm of economic locusts that devastate and lay waste some of the world's nations, seem free to go anywhere within the global community. The question is a very relevant one for now: what about our strategies to meet the convulsions of the international economy of which we are a part, that can hasten a very serious global recession affecting us here in the Caribbean?

The Asian Crisis soon included the Russian Crisis, it spread to the Canadian Crisis, then the Brazilian Crisis, then the Latin-American Crisis and the Caribbean Crisis. Look at what is happening. In Guyana public servants are marching, they are asking for a 40 per cent increase in salaries and the government says it really cannot make that. In Jamaica gasoline prices went up and there has been civil disturbance and serious protest. It was only this morning I read in the *Trinidad Guardian* of an economist in Barbados who is warning that the economy in Barbados is in crisis. What about us in Trinidad and Tobago? It was the Asian Crisis, the European Crises, and so on. Now, it is the Point Lisas Crisis. Mr. Vice-President, Point Lisas, our industrial estate, the pride of modern industrial Trinidad and Tobago, is negatively affected by this international economic scenario.

Do you remember the *Sunday Express*, February 28, 1999, headline? Point Lisas loses about \$1 billion. The National Gas Company fears that there will be a loss of about \$10 million in 1999. Caribbean Ispat lost about TT \$378 million, they shut down two plants. PCS ammonia and urea plants—a loss of \$252 million reported. There have been lay-offs at PCS Nitrogen and the methanol companies.

Sen. Dr. St. Cyr is reminding us of the slowing down of the industrial boom world-wide in the 1960s, and I am sure that Sen. Dr. St. Cyr is seeing—as an economic historian he is talking about the slowing down of the industrial boom in the 1960s. History is repeating itself and we are now in the slowing 1990s: oil prices are falling.

I am very glad that we have some good news in the midst of all of this, that the first shipment of liquefied natural gas left for the United States from the brand new Atlantic LNG in Point Fortin—good news.

In the light of the deepening global economic distresses, I want to believe that we need immediate short-term strategies for our own protection. Considering now the significance and functions of the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago, one of the functions which we are now discussing, namely, the formulation, direction and management of the country's economic fortunes. I most respectfully suggest, as a matter of urgent public importance—and I do not know why it was not done before—that a joint select committee of both Houses of Parliament should be appointed, and it is not late to formulate an emergency economic strategy to insulate, to buttress and protect us against the shocks of the current international depression. Our committee must not hesitate to consult the best economic minds in our society.

I know the hon. Minister of Finance began the necessary exercise resembling this, spearheading what was described in the press as “crisis talks” on the economy. I respect Government's ability to plan, but this is a time for the entire Parliament and the nation to take on the challenge of the new economic order if we are to survive, with a view to defining certain methods in our response to the new order that is facing us.

This parliamentary committee will sit as an emergency economic survival committee, which I believe is absolutely essential at this time. I am not talking about a PNM committee, neither a UNC committee, it has to be a national committee that must go beyond the limits of narrow, partisan, most times arrogant and falsely confident confines of party politics. Their terms of reference must not be the usual confrontation style, but to formulate a national economic rescue plan.

We cannot sit down and not be prepared for the shock-waves of a recession that has already invaded us. Economic and social survival are more important than the result of any elections. This is not the time for us to say and to emphasize “I told you so,” or to say, “Give us a chance, for we have the answer.” This is the time for national challenge, and there is no room for us to say, especially those who may dislike the Government, that we will sit back in anticipation, waiting to rejoice and hoping that there will be an economic crash. Anyone who thinks like that would not be in love with the people of this nation. If we can formulate a national economic survival strategy, I believe the total citizenry will be very pleased with this and support it.

1.55 p.m.

Mr. Vice-President, let me touch on another matter. In addition to this, the Government and people of Trinidad and Tobago—bearing in mind these problems

Economic Philosophy
[SEN. REV. TEELUCKSINGH]

Tuesday, May 4, 1999

surrounding us—need to address the problem of “never-see come-see” consumer spending. The recent disclosure of a Central Bank official that close to \$1 billion in loans were taken for the purchase of motor vehicles in 1998 is mind-boggling. I do not know if we are going to survive if we continue like this.

Mr. Vice-President, with the millions of dollars more in private financing, how much foreign exchange is syphoned out of the country in these purchases? This Motion’s debate is taking so long, but it is challenging us to devise our own economic strategy, or else we will again face the structural adjustment of the International Monetary Fund or the World Bank.

I think we need a moratorium for about three years on the importation of vehicles exceeding \$150,000 each, and this is no time for us to fool around with the nation's dwindling resources. We have gone consumer crazy, seeing such incentives as multiple BMWs, each worth over \$250,000 offered as prizes in the business community. In the meantime, the Central Bank has noted that the Government has incurred a deficit of about \$192 million in the first quarter of the 1999 fiscal year.

Mr. Vice-President, we need to learn from the global family about setting our house in order. Globalization is not merely about market forces. Our nation's economic well-being implies moral well-being, and that is important. Recently, the brand new European Commission saw all of its 20 members resign after an enquiry into corruption, cronyism and financial irregularities. We have heard that story about Trinidad and Tobago for the last 20 years. What is the crime in the European Union? Commissioners denied wrong-doing, but they are lax and careless in programme monitoring. Charged for putting corrupt friends on the payroll of the European Union, they failed to stop fraudulent use of the European Union's funds.

I find that too frequently in a small country as Trinidad and Tobago, there have been endless allegations of irregularities in our small economy with all kinds of enquiries and investigations. Only sound and fury signify nothing. Can we learn from the European Commission which could teach us a lesson about moral responsibility?

Mr. Vice-President, as you will remember, we had some long sessions here, and included among the diversity of contributions was one from the hon. Minister of Education on this Motion. Its presentation focus, we remember, was on human resource management and a revitalized education system as an integral process in the formulation of our national economic policy.

It is most disturbing that over the past 10 years there has been so much emphasis on reform of the public service sector, but there continues to be a neglect over these years of such basics as the recording and storage of data within the service. The most recent example was reported last week that 40 personnel files are missing from the Ministry of Education. We need immediate police and ministerial investigations into that matter. Furthermore, the antiquated system of recording at the Ministry needs to be overhauled, but we must recover the missing teachers' files. While the regular bandit prefers to highjack "PH" cars and taxis or rob beer gardens, why would he want to steal 40 teachers' files? Was this an inside job, more subtle and devious in motive?

Mr. Vice-President, the hon. Minister of Education in his contribution on this Motion underscored Government's commitment to the improvement of standards in education from pre-school to tertiary level, and yes, he is correct: economic development implies human development. At present, the poorer students at the University of the West Indies are deeply concerned about the increased tuition fees for the academic year. We know that tertiary education across the globe is costly, but it is so essential, particularly for developing countries such as ours.

Government, in making education accessible to its young people, should increase its subvention to UWI as being strategic in our human resource development. I think this plea that I make is quite reasonable, and surely, I think it is a better trump card than the \$81 million that will be spent on that one-day party at Chaguaramas later this month. I fail to see that as a wise investment within our economic policy which, instead, should develop in our society a beauty that goes far beyond costumes and gowns. *[Desk thumping]* An inner beauty that may be the answer to the ugliness of illiteracy, poverty, crime and violence and the ugliness and bitterness that exist because of the hate which can tarnish almost beyond repair, our national and international image.

Sen. Dr. St. Cyr's Motion summarizes its concern with the resolution that Government's broad economic philosophy be articulated, particularly regarding public participation in industry and human resource management, and that Government articulates strategies for furthering the economic well-being of the nation. Mr. Vice-President, since yesterday was World Press Freedom Day, I hasten to list the media among the present prominent interest groups in our society whose place and function in the community must be carefully understood. Therefore, let me join with the many who congratulate the media on this occasion

Economic Philosophy
[SEN. REV. TEELUCKSINGH]

Tuesday, May 4, 1999

and all who celebrate the invaluable and priceless freedom of the press. [*Desk thumping*]

Whether or not these economic strategies for progress are defined, we cannot ignore the media with their own methodology and their unique systems of serving the nation. We may not approve of everything in their operations, but they ought not to be restrained, particularly since they function as society's most faithful watchdog which should not be on a leash. The free press is a gift to this nation and a voice much appreciated, though their reporting of certain events may, at times be considered unpalatable, but they merely reflect aspects of our communal life which may not be closeted. As a people, maybe it is better to know our follies and weaknesses than to live in a fool's paradise. We know that the press can be both loved and feared, appreciable but sometimes damnable, but without that free press, we will no longer be a free people. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Vice-President, if it had not been for the investigative work of the media in several matters, including economics, this nation would be waiting in the dark for other authorities whose investigations continue *ad infinitum*. We first hear from the press of corruption, for example, both in high and low places in the Government and the private sector. If we were to wait for someone else to tell us, we would never know. I am pleased that in this honourable Chamber we are permitted to quote so freely from the media, and without that free voice, we would, indeed, be devoid of vital information required for us in better understanding our society and its various problems.

Let me close by saying, Mr. Vice-President, whether or not the United Nations forces or the Yugoslav President Milosevic agree with international reports of the horrors of bombing or the events against the Kosovo people, the pain and grief of man's inhumanity to man, with the hope of possibly awakening in us a sense of true caring and the dire need for the rebuilding of a new social order, will be founded on justice, peace and freedom.

I thank you, Mr. Vice-President. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Nafeesa Mohammed: Mr. Vice-President, like the previous speaker, I too, join in this very significant debate to express my concerns in terms of the enjoyment of the fundamental right that is enshrined in our Constitution of freedom of the press.

It seems as though this very important fundamental right is under threat at present, as instructions are being given to only project the so-called good news,

but as we participate in this debate that seeks to extract information from a Government that speaks so much about transparency and freedom of information, here we are in the Parliament Chamber trying to elicit information from the coalition UNC government as to its economic policies after some four years of being in Government. I, like all the previous speakers in this debate, would certainly like to commend Sen. Dr. St. Cyr for piloting such a very significant Motion in this Chamber. [*Desk thumping*]

2.10 p.m.

Mr. Vice-President, Alvin Toffler in his third book entitled *Power Shift*, which is indeed a fascinating book about power at the edge of the 21st Century, seeks to help us understand a whole new system of wealth creation that is based on individualism, invasion and information. It is a book that deals with the transformation of not just business, but certainly governments and bureaucracy and it deals with a shift in power through the spread of knowledge. Knowledge and communication are regarded in this book as the sources of that power shift and Mr. Vice-President, any discussion that we seek to have on the future well-being of our nation must, indeed, take into account the current information age that we are in, and how we will face the future, especially with the kind of shift in power that is taking place.

When Sen. Dr. St. Cyr presented this Motion, I remembered that he specifically sought to focus on the need for Government to state clearly what its broad economic philosophy is, because if you know what the clear economic philosophy is then, certainly, you will be in a better position to make plans for the country and you would be able to ascertain specific strategies that are necessary to take us into the future.

Mr. Vice-President, it is not surprising that we have to extract this kind of information, because this is a coalition Government made up of people from all sorts of different backgrounds and, obviously, there are times when the right hand may not know what the left hand is doing and that is why we have been having so much difficulty in determining what the policies of this administration really are in respect of our economy.

In Dr. St. Cyr's presentation, he took a historical perspective. He referred to the post-war days, when resources were said to be exploited by international capital. He looked briefly at the period 1946—1960 when the debate then was on Arthur Lewis' Industrialization Strategy in terms of raising and distributing

Economic Philosophy
[SEN. MOHAMMED]

Tuesday, May 4, 1999

incomes by way of the spreading of employment and then in the 1960s, in an effort to save jobs there developed a situation of Government buying into industries. In other words, with the state beginning to own the commanding heights of the economy and then, of course, we all know that in 1970 in Trinidad and Tobago we experienced an oil boom and it was in this period that there was the development of the resource-based industries, particularly with the establishment of the Point Lisas Industrial Estate. Of course, we know that in the 1980s, our country started to experience a recession and globally there started to be a shift away from state participation in industry to a more private kind of involvement in industry.

Dr. St. Cyr also took us into that period of liberalization. I merely wish to express our disappointment about the debate. I think it commenced sometime last year around June or July, and because Parliament was prorogued, the Motion lapsed, and the debate re-commenced in November of 1998. Over such a long period of time, although so many people participated, we are indeed very disappointed in terms of the contributions from the Government, because we have had to sit and endure various ministers of Government coming into the Chamber and simply ‘ramajaying’ about things in their ministries as though they were actually identifying policies, objectives and strategies in an effort to help us glean what are the broad economic policies of this Government.

Mr. Vice-President, basically, it boils down to a situation where certainly what is coming across is that this is a Government by “vaps.” Have we, so far in this debate, heard any word coming from the Government in terms of its policies or its objectives with respect to the reduction of unemployment? What are their strategies for reducing the unemployment rate in the country? What is their policy towards public participation in industry?

Mr. Vice-President, in today’s *Daily Express* page 7, there is an article here “Government speeds up sale of state firms” and this article refers to the fact that Government is speeding up efforts to sell its shareholding in several large companies including TSTT, National Flour Mills and Caroni (1975) Limited.

Mr. Vice-President, what really is the Government’s policy, its objectives and strategies with respect to divestment?

This is a book that I often read, because in it is a compilation of speeches by the present Prime Minister of the country—the name of the Book is *Basdeo Panday—An Enigma Answered* and it is edited by Samaroo Siewah and our good

friend who sits in the Senate from time to time, Mr. Roodal Moonilal. I saw him smile just now when I picked it up. I am sure he will agree with me, that over the years that he has been struggling together with the Prime Minister and others, as they participate in this so-called struggle, that from what was being advocated then to what is being practised now, there has been a clear shift in position and policy.

In this book, at page 60, it was Mr. Basdeo Panday who said:

“It is clear that not all state enterprises were set up for the same objective and purpose. Many were established to perform multiple objectives while others were mandated to provide purely social services and/or largely societal objectives. It is only when the objectives are clearly identified and stated can the performance of the particular state enterprises be measured and assessed. Sometimes there are inconsistent objectives. It must follow that an enterprise which is directed to perform societal objectives or multiple objectives or inconsistent objectives can hardly be expected to be compared favorably in terms of profits of a firm the objective of which clearly is to make profits.”

And this article goes on. The long and short of it is that Mr. Panday says:

“When we are talking about privatisation in Trinidad and Tobago we must first of all identify and define the privatisation measures...”

One needs to clearly identify the objectives of particular state enterprises, and then you can measure performance of these various enterprises, and one has to ask whether profitability is the only criteria to judge the success or failure of that particular industry.

Indeed, Mr. Panday goes on to elaborate and to talk about the tri-sector approach and concept of economic organization, and he said that we must deal with worker alienation and I have to ask the question to this Government: Has the Government taken into account the concerns and views expressed by the many workers and farmers who are involved with Caroni (1975) Limited as the Government seeks, yet again, to come up with yet another plan to deal with Caroni (1975) Limited? I will come back to that issue in a short while.

2.20 p.m.

Dr. John La Guerre in a book entitled *Structural Adjustment and Public Policy in the Caribbean* in an article published in this book sought to put the structural adjustment policies that so many Caribbean countries are presently involved in into some kind of perspective and he says on page 1 of this book:

“One of the most remarkable features of the post-independence economies of the Caribbean was the expansion of the public sector. At first the state was content, as in Jamaica, to confine its role to regulation and limited participation in the economy. By 1980, however, the public sector in Jamaica accounted for 20 per cent of GDP. In Trinidad, following the ‘Black Power’ incidents of 1970 and the OPEC price rise of 1973, the public sector expanded to the point where in 1986, the Government was the majority shareholder in forty-six firms, in thirty-five of which it owned 100 per cent of the shares.”

I simply referred to that, Mr. Vice-President, especially in light of today's article in the *Daily Express* which talks about Government selling state firms. We need much more information from the Government in terms of how it is going about with the sale of these firms.

Mr. Vice-President, when in 1986, the PNM was replaced by the NAR, it was during that period there was a situation where the country had become subjected to IMF policies. When in 1991 the government changed, with the whole package of structural adjustment policies, there had been some continuation of some measures and we would recall that in the period 1991—1995 there was a significant number of economic measures being introduced in this country that certainly helped to take our country out of the period of recession and bring about some measure of stabilization in the economy and, indeed, to actually effect a period of growth in the economy.

You would remember when, I think it was in 1993, the theme of the budget that was presented by the then Finance Minister under the People's National Movement was, “From Stabilization to Growth”. Actually, the figures for 1992 showed that there was a minus 1.7 per cent growth in the economy. By 1994, there was actually a positive growth of 4.6 per cent. There was growth in the non-oil sector moving from a negative of 0.7 per cent in 1992, to a positive of 3.7 per cent in 1994.

In terms of unemployment, at the end of 1991, the unemployment rate stood at 19.5 per cent. As at June 1995, the figure had dropped to 16.5 per cent, the lowest ever in 10 years. That was under the People's National Movement. So when Mr. Basdeo Panday, as Prime Minister of this country seeks to take credit for the unemployment figures dropping, it was because of the policies and measures that were put in place by the former People's National Movement government.

In fact, it was under the then PNM government that the projection had been made that by the year 2000 we would have had the unemployment rate actually going down to single digit figures. It is no wonder that this Government is seeking to suppress the news and only project what it wants the people to hear, and so many people in our country are falling prey to its propaganda. It is nothing short of propaganda, because when we asked them what initiatives they have put in place in order to reduce that unemployment figure, they cannot tell us. When they came into office, they knew that the economy was actually on a growth path, and since they came into office, it is a case where our country is virtually operating on auto pilot, thanks to the very solid foundation which was left behind by the former People's National Movement that we are not in a worse off position than we are. Certainly it is not as a result of any initiative on their part.

Mr. Vice-President, the facts and figures have shown that, clearly, there has been, and is a decline in economic activity. In the Central Bank's Quarterly Economic Bulletin dated September, 1998 I would refer to some figures quoted here at page 1.

It says:

"...the rate of inflation increased by 2.4 per cent during the quarter. The increase in the overall Retail Prices Index (RPI) was due mainly to higher food prices as that sub-index showed the largest increase for any category (5.2 per cent) during the quarter. The longer-term trend also indicated some acceleration of underlying inflationary pressures as the RPI excluding food rose by 2.4 per cent in the twelve months to September 1998 compared with 1.2 per cent in the twelve months to September 1997."

Under this Government, inflation has been rising, food prices have been going up and it is there for all to see and it cannot be denied. I recall when my colleague, Sen. Montano in his contribution—and I must indeed commend him publicly for that very comprehensive contribution which he made in this debate. [*Desk thumping*] He sounded like a real Minister of Finance and we must pay tribute to him, because in his contribution, he sought to make a very important distinction and I hope the hon. Minister of Finance would take note and learn from him. My colleague can certainly train and teach the Government because he took the time to emphasize how important it is to, first of all, find what your policies are, then determine your objectives, and indeed your strategies. That is what we are begging for. We would like to hear that from you all. In his contribution, he referred to an article published—I think it was in the Latin American Monitor—which forecast

Economic Philosophy
[SEN. MOHAMMED]

Tuesday, May 4, 1999

the real GDP for 1998 as 2 per cent and 3 per cent for 1999 and not the 5 per cent about which the hon. Minister of Finance has been boasting, especially last year in the budget debate, but I am sure we would hear more from him on that.

Mr. Vice-President, in all that has been said so far in this debate, the areas about which I am most concerned, especially when it comes to what contribution this Government has made, is the agricultural sector of Trinidad and Tobago. Because under the United National Congress coalition government, we are actually experiencing the demise of agriculture in Trinidad and Tobago, and I make no bones about saying that. The facts and figures are there for all to see. The UNC, and the present Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources are killing agriculture in Trinidad and Tobago. For years, they have gone around this country and I have said it time and time again in Trinidad and Tobago.

I notice my good friend, Sen. Tota-Maharaj is smiling. She is probably so relieved to be out of the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources and now sitting in the Ministry of Education, and we can understand why; because under the present Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources, we are witnessing the demise of agriculture in Trinidad and Tobago and that is a fact.

Sen. Prof. Spence: Mr. Vice-President, I wonder if the hon. Senator would ask the Government if it would allow the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources to come and listen to this debate. I would welcome him.

Sen. N. Mohammed: Mr. Vice-President, certainly we would be more than delighted to hear him in the Chamber, but I am sure he is going to come with the same speeches he had been making. He did not make any for the last debate. I cannot recall, but I can give you the facts and figures to prove what I am saying.

Mr. Vice-President, their propaganda—as they go around the country riding the backs of our farmers in this country—has been that the PNM did nothing for agriculture and the PNM neglected agriculture. The country was in a state of development. Over the years, we have become an industrialized state and to some extent the agricultural sector became less significant than the energy-based industries and so forth, but this did not only happen in Trinidad and Tobago, it happened in England in the days of the Industrial Revolution and what is necessary is for us to take stock of the situation and see what we can do to improve the sector.

Instead, we have a Government that is basically a rural-based Government because so many of its Members, Ministers and Senators come from parts of the

country where agriculture has traditionally been a most important part of the well-being of their particular community and I ask this Government: what new initiatives has it brought into the agricultural sector? What is it doing to help the agricultural sector to grow in this country? Instead, and just for the record, I need to state certain things. I remember long before 1986, there was a time when our food import bill was very high and it was in the pre 1986 days that the food import bill was slashed considerably by some \$200 million.

I would refer to a very significant document which any student studying the history of this country should look into. It is the 1986 Manifesto of the People's National Movement. It is a documentation of the development of this country, with particular reference to several of the issues which are linked to the Motion which is before this Chamber. In terms of the agricultural sector, we have to state it for the record because it is the People's National Movement that certainly has been doing much more for agriculture than this UNC coalition Government.

Last year, they started to boast about an agricultural incentive programme as though it was some new initiative on their part. There has always been an agricultural incentive programme. In this documentary, you would see the kind of incentive programme which was in existence in terms of things that were happening in the agricultural sector. It was the PNM government that removed import duties and purchase taxes on agricultural machinery, equipment, implements and tools. The PNM made agricultural credit available through the Agricultural Development Bank, it even had a system of price adjustment to assist farmers and to encourage production. It maintained a programme of guaranteed prices on some 23 vegetables and food crop commodities. There was a tight support system and incentive system; the subsidy programme was outlined.

It referred to what initiatives were taking place in cocoa, coffee, and food crops, the Oropouche Lagoon, land reform and in this document it talks about the government entering into a government to government arrangement with the Government of the Kingdom of the Netherlands for the development of agricultural settlements. The Dutch consultants arrived in Trinidad in March 1981 and have commenced their work. It talks about the principal areas of activities and it goes on to the areas where they were actually looking at some reform.

My colleague is talking about being shameless. If I refer to the facts they must offend you because you know you can in no way match these records, because you have done absolutely nothing and I am not blaming you personally, hon. Senator. It is certainly the lack of initiative on the part of your Government and your

Economic Philosophy
[SEN. MOHAMMED]

Tuesday, May 4, 1999

present Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources where certainly there have been no new initiatives in agriculture.

Mr. Vice-President, I must put on the record some of the things that happened in the agricultural sector during the period 1991—1995. The hon. Minister of Finance was then in the PNM government and he can bear testimony to some of these facts. One of the first things Government did in 1991, early 1992, was to appoint a committee to look at Caroni (1975) Limited and that was a tri-sector approach where even the then leader of the trade union, the then leader of the Opposition, Mr. Basdeo Panday played an integral role in that particular discussion. That was when the tripartite report was introduced in order to deal with a very significant sector in our economy which is Caroni (1975) Limited, where I have heard it being said that some 250,000 persons are affected by what goes on with Caroni (1975) Limited.

2.35 p.m.

Apart from that Tripartite Agreement which was arrived at under the initiative of the People's National Movement, there was the PNM government of the day writing off \$2.8 billion in debt owed by Caroni (1975) Limited. Under the PNM government, there was a strategic plan being formulated where an organizational structure for the company was formulated, dividing the company into five divisions. There was a \$45 million upgrade of the refinery and the modernization of field equipment. Whatever projects that were on stream were being re-evaluated. A backpay of \$108.4 million was liquidated between 1992 and 1995. The price of farmers' cane was increased from \$120 a tonne in 1992 to \$136.07 in 1995.

In the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources, there was a programme of institutional reform being undertaken; there was a five-year strategic plan; there was the establishment of a Human Resources Management Division. In terms of planning, there was a white paper on agriculture actually being formulated. There was a restructuring of the Agricultural Development Bank taking place. The National Agricultural Marketing Development Corporation (NAMDEVCO), which was a white elephant prior to 1991, became operational.

In terms of land, there was the new land administration division being established to co-ordinate the ministry's distribution and land management functions. There was a new standard agricultural lease being developed. It was

under the PNM that the initiative was taken to develop that lease. It was only recently, after four years of being in Government, about two weeks ago, they introduced the agricultural lease for debate in this Chamber.

There was, under the People's National Movement, an agricultural access roads programme that was started in 1995. Phase I of the Inter-American Development Bank Rural Access Roads Programme was 95 per cent completed by the time the PNM left government. It inherited that programme. Yet, they ask me how they have been performing with that programme.

There were 525.5 hectares of state agricultural lands in certain blocks being surveyed and sub-divided for allocation to farmers. But, they are quick to go around telling people that the PNM did nothing for agriculture in this country. These were things happening under the former People's National Movement government. There were 563 farm plots being allocated to farmers.

In terms of drainage, in 1994, there was a water management and flood control programme actually being started, even in Aranguez. I remember the days when there used to be major floods in that area, and it was in 1994 that there was real development taking place in an effort to alleviate flooding in that area.

There was credit being granted to youths in agriculture. In terms of fisheries, there were steps being taken to formulate a fisheries policy. God alone knows, after four years in government, what is the status? What is that fisheries policy? What is happening with it? Please, someone tell us.

There was a national forestry action plan being completed. There was an expansion of Tanteak's facilities. There were discussions on the national parks and watershed management programme.

There were pieces of legislation in very advanced stages—as I mentioned before, there was the Agricultural Smallholdings Bill already being drafted; there was the Fisheries Bill; the Forestry Bill; the Wildlife Bill; the Land Surveyors Bill; the Plant Quarantine Bill. What is happening with all these pieces of legislation? Four years later, where are we in the agricultural sector?

I repeat that if it is one thing the United National Congress would be remembered for, it is for killing the agricultural sector in Trinidad and Tobago. I say this with special reference to what is happening at Caroni (1975) Limited. As far as we were aware, there were discussions taking place and what was supposed to be happening with Caroni (1975) Limited, and from our perspective of things,

Economic Philosophy
[SEN. MOHAMMED]

Tuesday, May 4, 1999

we thought they were going ahead with the implementation of the Tripartite Report. Then, we knew that some time ago, the hon. Minister of Finance had the Price Waterhouse Report and, only recently, I started to hear about the Transformation Imperative Plan.

I refer to an article published in the *Newsday* of March 21 at page 4, headlined “CARONI PLAN: SEND 3,672 WORKERS HOME”. What is going on at Caroni (1975) Limited? It says:

“As tension continues to grip the sugar belt with shutdown of the two sugar factories, Cabinet has been asked to consider a Transformation Imperative Plan (TIP) that will send 3,672 sugar workers home and increase the price of sugar by 33 per cent.”

Do you know what is very shocking? It was the same Mr. Basdeo Panday who, for years spoke about this tri-sector approach and we would like to be told about involvement in terms of this Transformation Imperative Plan: To what extent has the trade union movement, particularly with respect to Caroni (1975) Limited, its workers, farmers and so forth, played a role or has been involved in the discussions that led to this plan, a plan which I heard them saying is just a discussion paper and is not yet in force? But, the fact of the matter is that this plan went to Cabinet. I think they are calling it the Job plan and Cabinet has approved the plan. We need to know if it is a fact that under this plan some 3,672 sugar workers will have to go home.

Last week, I was very fortunate to tune into a television programme—I suppose that would have been one of the last open discussions taking place on TTT prior to the National Broadcasting Network board being appointed. It was a discussion that took place at Rienzi Complex and it was shocking to see and to hear that in the formulation of this Transformation Implementation Plan the workers, the union representatives, and whoever else was there to represent the workers, were alienated from the discussions. They did not participate and, in fact, they now have some proposals.

Our colleague in the Senate, Dr. Roodal Moonilal, from what I gathered from that discussion, has also submitted some proposals. To what extent are they taking these views on board? I know that Sen. Moonilal is going to stand here this afternoon and try to cover up, as he sought to do on the television programme, to be a bit apologetic for the Government. But, the Government has to take full blame for what is happening, because on such an important discussion, the

Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources could not be found. I wonder in which part of the world he is.

This Transformation Imperative Plan is something new that we are hearing about and we are calling on the Government to be open and transparent about the process. From what I gather, the plan is to break up Caroni (1975) Limited into some stand-alone companies and, while under the Tripartite Agreement, there was a plan whereby in terms of the work force, you would deal with the attrition of the labour force by a process of voluntary separation packages, what is being said to the workers who are interested in that package is that the company has no money to pay them.

So, obviously, it means that workers will have to go and, more and more, we are seeing reports and reading about Caroni (1975) Limited—just two weeks ago, the farmers protested and as soon as they protested, it was the poor Minister of Finance. Let me not say “poor” Minister of Finance; let me withdraw that word; it is the hon. Minister of Finance who, regardless of how tight things are with the economy, once that protest is taking place, just as they did in Couva North last weekend—bam! Instructions. Find the money. Take the money.

This is what I am talking about. You are not seeing any clear-cut economic policy being enunciated. Are you concerned about the economic viability of Caroni (1975) Limited? If so, in terms of the plans you are coming up with, please tell us where you are with them and how they are going to impact on the labour force? That has to be a legitimate concern. Mr. Panday himself, in the days when he used to be a struggler, talked about concerns with respect to the labour force and workers in the workplace. He was a trade union leader. But God alone knows what is happening now whilst they are in Government.

There is a document which was included in our package when the budget was presented. It is very revealing. In this document, if I may refer to pages 15 and 16, under the heading “Agriculture”, listen to what legacy this coalition United National Congress Government—I do not know how else to describe it; this Government by “vaps”. This is what it will go down in history for; it will be remembered for its neglect of the agricultural sector. It says under the heading “Agriculture”:

“Both cocoa and coffee production fell in 1998.

Sugar

Activity within the sugar industry slowed in 1998...In addition, the increased production capacity expected from the upgrade of the Usine St. Madeline (sic)

Economic Philosophy
[SEN. MOHAMMED]

Tuesday, May 4, 1999

Factory did not materialise due to several ‘teething’ problems experienced with the new equipment.”

Do you remember what they called the Dhanpaul mill that came from India? I think even the engineers who were here got frustrated and went back home and left us with the mill. God alone knows if the mill is functioning properly. I continue:

“In contrast, export sales of raw sugar are forecast to drop by 16.7 per cent to 57,970 tonnes, down from 69,600 tonnes in 1997.

Similarly, foreign exchange earnings from the export of the by-products of sugar, including rum, amounted to TT \$5.6 million, marginally below the earnings obtained in the corresponding period of 1997.

Domestic Agriculture

...output of oranges, grapefruit and beef and veal contracted by 38 per cent, 3.0 per cent and 4.6 per cent respectively. In addition, food crops harvested declined...

...the quantity of rice harvested declined by 17.6 per cent to 1.43 million kilograms.”

I can go on. The UNC will be remembered for killing agriculture in Trinidad and Tobago.

“Citrus production was also severely curtailed in this period. By the end of 1998, output of oranges and grapefruit is expected to fall to 4.8 million kilograms and 3.3 million kilograms respectively, approximately 46 per cent and 22 per cent less than the quantities harvested last year.”

The document goes on. These are the facts and figures that are there for all to see and you would see how under this Government, the agricultural sector, a very significant sector in our economy has, in fact, been declining. I would say that is not just a case of neglect; it is a case of actually killing agriculture.

You know, Mr. Vice-President, over the years since we have been in this Chamber, in all the previous budget debates, when we get the opportunity to speak about agriculture, one of the issues that I have raised time and time again in this Chamber is that in our country, when you are talking about agriculture, it is our farmers, especially the small farmers, who are experiencing the most hardship. I make yet another call to this Government to please consider setting up, constructing or establishing a proper wholesale market for our farmers.

This is something that is needed.

2.50 p.m.

Over the years, Mr. Vice-President, as we speak about agriculture which is, indeed, a very significant part of our economy, when it comes to the marketing facilities, especially for our farmers, it is a fact that the Central Market in Port of Spain was not designed to be a wholesale market for farmers. The Central Market in Port of Spain has traditionally been designed as a retail market. Over the years, there has been a situation where our farmers go to the market to sell their products—as though they are merely boarding and lodging.

In 1994, I distinctly remember under the former PNM government—the government took a decision to actually construct a new wholesale market for farmers in the Aranguez area, which is known to be the food basket of our country. That would have been such a strategically located place to have such a market, where there would be proper cold storage facilities, proper security, proper car park facilities, proper wash rooms for our farmers, who during the day have to be in the hot sun or the pouring rain toiling the lands, and yet 2.00 o'clock in the morning, sometimes midnight, 10.00 in the night you will see them having to line up on the Beetham Highway trying to get into the Central Market in Port of Spain. Our farmers need a proper wholesale market.

The present Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources is always quick to come into this Chamber and boast and brag about the market in Debe/Peñal. Although he went several times to open and reopen and brought the cameras in to give an impression that things are happening in that market, it is a well-known fact that that market is not servicing the needs of the farmers and the wholesalers in our country. I am just simply asking the Government: what is so hard? They talk about building or rebuilding rural markets, fine! But we are talking here about—not a retail market, but a wholesale market for our farmers.

Mr. Vice-President: Hon. Members the speaking time of the hon. Member has expired.

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

Question put and agreed to.

Sen. N. Mohammed: Thank you very much, Mr. Vice-President. I am approaching the end of my contribution. But, when it comes to agriculture, I

Economic Philosophy
[SEN. MOHAMMED]

Tuesday, May 4, 1999

really, really feel a deep sense of concern. It is very close to my heart and it is a very sad situation to see how the hardships of our farmers continue—if not, they have been worsening—under this UNC Administration.

Another very critical area of concern for our farmers is the high cost of chemicals. Today we are hearing about the cement war taking place. We are hearing a lot of talk about monopoly and breaking monopoly and so forth. When it comes to the sale of chemicals in our country for our farmers, it seems as though there is a certain kind of monopoly status that exists. As a result, the prices of the chemicals, obviously, cannot be controlled. We need to see what help we can give to make chemicals less costly than they are at present. Certainly, basic costs of seeds—the seeds that you sow. The costs are so prohibitive in some cases. I cannot understand how it is, in our country that we have an ammonia plant, which is now called the Potage Company of Saskatchewan—it used to be Fertrin, it used to be known as the Urea Company of Trinidad and Tobago; a company that is producing ammonia for export. How is it that in Trinidad and Tobago where our farmers rely so heavily on that particular chemical in order to fertilize their crops or what have you, farmers have to pay close to \$200 for a bag of salt? There are two basic types—a blue salt and a white salt, and the cost is escalating. Long ago the cost of a bag of salt used to be probably \$30 or so. Can the Government do something to assist? It comes just like a basic food item that one may have at home—butter, oil or rice. When it comes to these salts—the ammonia products—this is something which farmers rely heavily on, and I am calling on the Government to see what they can do to assist in this regard.

In terms of land distribution, whilst there have been pronouncements made about land—whatever it is with the land division, I think the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources spoke about the number of acres of land that they have to distribute. We know of that, because it was under the PNM that the agricultural sector loan was being negotiated. I think some 2,000 acres of Caroni (1975) Limited lands were supposed to be distributed and 7,000 acres of state lands were supposed to be distributed. In fact, under the former Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources, Dr. Keith Rowley, a programme of distribution had actually started—I think in the Aripo area.

Now, I am hearing that land is being distributed under this Government. In fact, only yesterday, I was informed that some surveys are being done. But, there is so much confusion. I am not too sure where the Lands and Surveys Division is at present. Is it under the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources, or

is it now under the Ministry of Housing and Settlements? If it is under the Ministry of Housing and Settlements, and you are surveying lands for distribution, please tell us: what criteria are you going to be using for the distribution of these lands? I am raising this because I come from an area, where for years there have been a number of farmers in a particular area in Aranguez. A lot of the lands there had been state lands. We would like to know. Is there some process or procedure whereby people who had been farming those lands for 20, 30 and 40 years—all their life time—would be able to now regularize their occupation of those lands?

Only yesterday I was told about people from Gasparillo coming into Bamboo Settlement and getting lands to occupy. They can just go there and get any plot. How can that be? We need to know what are the guidelines? What are the criteria for the distribution of these lands? I am calling on the Government to ensure that those legitimate *bona fide* farmers, who have been farming those lands for a number of years, be given the first right to get some tenure with respect to those lands. If it is that you are embarking on a distribution programme, please let us know. I was shocked when I heard from a particular activist that he was going to get, God alone knows, some 50 acres of land, out of the blue like that. You mean a Minister could just sign an order and give somebody a piece of land like that? There should be [Interruption] a UNC activist. That is how this Government is operating the business of this country. Friends and family are benefiting, but the people, the masses, are the ones who are suffering.

We want transparency in the process that is being used for land distribution. In fact, I am very concerned. Very often, I am sure many other Members in this Chamber would be accustomed to travelling down the east coast of Trinidad into Mayaro. I have been shocked to know that one individual in this country has now acquired thousands—I am sure it is thousands, if not hundreds of acres of land in the Manzanilla stretch; and he is a very close friend of the Minister of Works and Transport. Acres and acres of land, the whole coconut stretch there in Manzanilla is now owned by one individual. One good thing I see happening is that he certainly seems to be involved in agriculture. I see coconut branches blocking off the fields, I hope it is water melons that are being planted. It must be of concern. The Minister of National Security, I am sure would be familiar with that area. There is a big river there. Also, the east coast is very close to Venezuela, so the hon. Minister would know what I am talking about.

The long and short of it, Mr. Vice-President, as we seek to elaborate on the economic policies of the government—I have sought, this afternoon to focus

Economic Philosophy
[SEN. MOHAMMED]

Tuesday, May 4, 1999

especially on the agricultural sector and what is happening. I remember there was a time when you spoke about agriculture you would hear comments, for example, that you are seeking to become self-sufficient in food.

3.00 p.m.

I remember times when there was a campaign encouraging people to buy locally produced foods in order to help our farmers produce more. I remember when people used to be encouraged to grow more food, not to eat more bread. I remember a ranking senior Minister of this UNC Government being on television, as though he was doing an advertisement, encouraging people to eat more bread. *[Interruption]* You mean drink more champagne for you all?

When one eats more bread it means more wheat must be imported into the country, but if one tells the nation and encourages the people of Trinidad and Tobago to buy locally produced goods and to grow more food, then eventually we can reach the stage where we become self-sufficient in food. It is a pity Minister Mervyn Assam was not here. God alone knows whose interest he was seeking. However, Mr. Vice-President, the long and short of it is, we have not been hearing much about the articulation of the Government's broad economic philosophy.

Another issue that is going to cost this country millions of dollars is the establishment of a desalination plant. Why can the Government not initiate more discussions in terms of the merits, the pros and the cons, of establishing a desalination plant in the country? Instead, soon we will hear about \$500 million to \$600 million going into somebody's pocket. Mr. Vice-President, I am hearing some murmuring coming from the other side, but as I continue with my contribution I mentioned earlier that we are not too sure what the Government's policies and strategies are for dealing with the unemployment problems of the country.

We have been reading about and hearing that the prices of petrochemicals and hydrocarbons are declining, yet some months ago the hon. Minister of Works and Transport was boasting and bragging that soon they will be building a port in Toco costing some \$500 million. Where is the money going to come from? Just around the time he was boasting about that, the Sangre Grande hospital did not have electricity, one could not even get basic food supplies; the nurses were not being paid and there is a virtual crisis in our health sector.

Mr. Vice-President, what is of even greater concern to me this afternoon is the fact that only today or yesterday—I think it is in today's *Guardian*, the front page,

we saw that students at the University of the West Indies were protesting. They are protesting because of an impending hike in fees. Like a thief in the night, suddenly they are being confronted with a reality that the fees in the various faculties are likely to be raised. I am a former student of the University of the West Indies and I think when I was on campus, not here, probably in Cave Hill, our good friend, Sen. Roodal Moonilal was very involved as well with the guild. He would understand the serious effects of a sudden hike in fees and the consequences for university students, and more so their parents.

One of the outstanding legacies left behind by the People's National Movement has been its policy towards education in Trinidad and Tobago [*Desk thumping*] and it was under Dr. Eric Williams. If I may, I would like to put on record, Mr. Vice-President, a statement made at an independence youth rally at the Queen's Park Oval on August 30, 1962 by Dr. Eric Williams. He said:

“Tomorrow Independence Day, you will be the children of the citizens of the Independent State of Trinidad and Tobago, and in a few years after that, you will be called upon, by the law of the land, to share in the privileges and responsibilities, the rights and duties of citizens.....

Our new nation must maintain and develop its political system and its democratic machinery. It must provide the Cabinet Ministers, the Members of Parliament, the Civil Servants, the doctors, the lawyers, the engineers, the ambassadors, the nurses, the teachers, the skilled workers and the writers and artists which every independent nation has and provides for itself. It must organize and plan our economy to increase the national wealth and improve our living standards....”

It goes on. This was the speech where, at the end, it says:

“When you return to your classes after independence, remember therefore, each and every one of you, that you carry the future of Trinidad and Tobago in your school bags.”

This is just part of the vision and legacy of the People's National Movement. Mr. Vice-President, today we have several Senators and Members of Parliament who have been the recipients of PNM's very sound educational policies. [*Desk thumping*] I say this with specific reference to our policy of equality of opportunity for all in our education system. [*Desk thumping*] When it comes to tertiary education, the PNM will go down in history as the only government which,

Economic Philosophy
[SEN. MOHAMMED]

Tuesday, May 4, 1999

for a number of years, subsidized fees at the University of the West Indies and helped to defray the cost of our students acquiring a tertiary education.

I can testify that, like so many others, in my days when I was on campus I remember our fees used to be a mere \$300.00 or \$400.00 and when the NAR came into power they instituted a system where a cess was imposed and from then, because of the shift in economic focus on policies, we had a situation where fees had been going up. However, we have to express our concerns at the present hike in fees because now we are in the month of May. This is a time when the poui trees are blossoming all over the country and we know when the poui trees are blossoming it is an indication that exams are about to start, if they have not already started.

Every student, especially the UWI student, knows that and they are already under pressure having to prepare for their exams. Now their stress and problems are compounded by being told of an impending increase in fees, in some cases from \$7,000.00 to \$10,000.00 or so. Mr. Vice-President, if certain measures need to be implemented, certainly, the students who have already planned their business for the future and who are already in the system should not be subjected to such a harsh and sudden increase in fees. I ask the Government to please be sympathetic and I am sure our colleague, Sen. Moonilal, will try to do something to help the situation.

Mr. Vice-President, as I wind up my contribution—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Vice-President: The Senator's speaking time, I am afraid, has expired. Thank you very much for your contribution. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Dr. Eastlyn Mc Kenzie: Mr. Vice-President, like the previous speakers, I want to very warmly congratulate Sen. Dr. St. Cyr for bringing this Motion. I thought the Motion would have taken a different form of debate. I thought that we would have heard the Government outlining its philosophy and strategies and we would have put our collective heads together, we would have made our contributions and we would have added to or modified the Government's philosophy and policies by our genuine contributions.

I am afraid, Mr. Vice-President, I am very disappointed by the turn of events. What has made it even worse is the fact that, from the Government's side, six Ministers have spoken and one temporary Senator and today when we are continuing this debate not one of them is present. It means that the Government has outlined its policy through the various Ministers who have spoken and they

have said their piece and they have left. It gives me the impression that, regardless of what we say, it does not modify, it does not change anything. It gives the impression that we are just doing an exercise because it is a procedure in this Senate and it is a very disappointing feeling for me this afternoon. [*Desk thumping*] Nevertheless, Mr. Vice-President, again I say congratulations to Dr. St. Cyr.

I want to repeat the Motion which asks the Government to articulate its economic philosophy in general and in particular regarding public participation in industry, and so forth, and human resource management and to articulate its strategies for furthering the economic well-being of the nation. We have had contributions from a number of Government Ministers but I would like to focus on the contributions of the hon. Minister of Education and the hon. Minister of Public Administration. My focus, therefore, would be on the human resource management aspect of the Motion.

It was emphasized that our greatest resource is our human resource and I am sure everybody agrees with that. In the contribution made by the hon. Minister of Education, he spoke on several matters including the indiscipline and violence in schools and Government's proposed action; the introduction of the local school boards; the abolishment of the Common Entrance Examination by the year 2000; school maintenance and secondary school construction; the introduction of secondary education modernization programme. He spoke about the early childhood sector and he spoke about the introduction of Spanish in the primary schools.

Mr. Vice-President, I would have liked to hear of a policy on early childhood education for every child. I would have liked to hear Government saying every child of this nation would be entitled to early childhood education or exposure. I would have liked to hear about a policy from the Government regarding the entry into secondary schools of students based on the selection examinations. I say this, having read the report of the task force on the removal of the Common Entrance Examination. What I have gleaned from the report is that we have a purely numbers game where we query the fact that we cannot place more and more children from primary school into secondary schools.

When I looked at the analysis of what was happening, there were children who scored less than 30 per cent of the total scores being placed in the secondary schools. I would have liked to hear Government's policy or some sort of strategy acknowledging the fact that these children are not yet ready for secondary school

work and outlining what was going to be done in order to prepare them for that process. They have already been selected.

Come June or July of this year we are probably going to say we have increased the number of children who would be placed in secondary schools, but we are also saying that we have taken children who attained Ds and Es, that is, from one to 39 per cent of the total scores, and we are placing them in secondary schools. I would have liked to hear the Government say that during the July/August period, since the emphasis is on mathematics and English, “We are going to cap those children who have scored under a certain point and do some remedial work with them before placing them in secondary schools because we are going to place them.”

That is the type of strategy I would have liked to hear and I would have liked the hon. Minister to be here so that he could listen and we could have some sort of discussion on how to handle that type of situation.

3.15 p.m.

Mr. Vice-President, I would have liked to hear more on the recommendations of the task force, on the training of teachers and supervisors, on a policy consistent with appointments and promotions in the teaching service. We heard absolutely nothing about these types of problems.

Is there really a philosophy to cover all of education? I ask this against the background of what is happening in schools—what is happening after primary school. We seem to have inconsistencies. In Tobago the youth camps are actually being scrapped; in Trinidad it is going on. The Youth Training Employment Partnership Programme of Trinidad and Tobago is being whittled down, yet we are hearing more about YTEPP. We have a mushrooming of private agencies in education catering for what the Government is not providing.

Coming out of our secondary schools, are under-qualified and non-qualified students. There is a Signal Hill wing which has been there for three years with no equipment or furniture; it is just locked up. Is there a philosophy for education for all in this country? Is there a rationalization process, Mr. Vice-President? Because the Tobago House of Assembly has the responsibility for implementation and framing policy of education is there no rationalization as to what happens with the Central Government? What is really happening with education? I am concerned because Tobago is losing. There is nothing in technical/vocational, they have closed the youth camps; the trade schools are limited in what they produce. There is no technical/vocational wing at Signal Hill. What is happening?

I would like to see a strategy coming out of the Tobago House of Assembly and the Central Government attempting to rationalize the policies and the philosophies of the Central Government with that of the THA. I would like to see co-ordination and not confusion. There is confusion, and not only in education, but also in labour. We have been reading and hearing of the furore between the Secretary for Labour in Tobago and the hon. Minister of Labour and Co-operatives here in the Central Government. What is really happening? We must have co-ordination.

Mr. Vice-President, I want to draw attention to the fact that we must have a follow-through programme. What I see happening in education is that there are starters. We put children in secondary schools, we are not following any process and we could not care less as to the end product. I think there is some problem. Is any attention being paid to the process and the finished product of what comes out after they have started? There is a level of frustration of putting those students who made under the 39 per cent mark into the secondary schools, with a curriculum that they cannot handle; teaching styles and strategies from which they cannot benefit. They are just passing through the system and we wonder why there is so much violence. There is frustration of young people who cannot handle a secondary school programme as it is now fashioned, and we are putting more and more people with lower and lower grades to fill places in the secondary schools. There is need for a philosophy and a strategy.

I know that the Continuous Assessment Programme (CAP) is going to come and do that, but what is going to happen? Are we going to wait and allow those students who are there now to continue? We cannot just start, we have to follow through and make sure that the finished product is what we want.

There is a vivid example of what happened last year or the year before in the training of women. We had the hon. Minister of Works and Transport trying his best—and we know the importance of the situation. Women are in the majority, they head more households, and we know all the ills. In an attempt to make them employable and to take them out of this dependency frame, the hon. Minister devised training programmes for women in the Unemployment Relief Programme (URP). What have we heard of that? I would like to know what are the results of the hon. Minister's effort. Have they been successful? If not, why? What is the philosophy? Do we have any hope for it again? What is really happening? We cannot start things—as we say in Tobago—“high and dry” and just drop them and that is it, and then boast that we have put these things into operation. We have to

follow through, we have to correct and we have to change, do whatever we have to, but we cannot just start without knowing what is happening. So much for that aspect of it.

I now turn to Sen. Mark's contribution and, again, all the things that we know—he talked about the human being being the greatest resource, about more efficient and organized approach to the whole question of human resource management in the central public service; he spoke about the archaic rules and regulations which are no longer relevant; about the need for a coherent, contemporary, human resource management system in the country; about reorienting and restructuring the education system; about the philosophy that education and training are absolute imperatives. I could go on and on about all that we heard, changing the job specification and so forth.

Mr. Vice-President, judging from the Motion, the focus for me is on earning, productivity and employment. Why non-productivity and what are we to do? What is the Government's philosophy on that? Why unemployment and, what are we to do, and who are the people who are untrained? They say it is women, but what is the philosophy, what is the strategy? If you have implemented a strategy, what are the results? We do not know.

Any fallout from education and training is an economic loss. We have a nil return on our investment. In fact, the investment in education in putting people who are not ready for the secondary school level there is costing us. The Government is operating at a loss. Now, the hon. Minister responsible for education has to talk about violence, indiscipline and he has to put armed guards—

This morning on 92.1 Radio Tambrin in Tobago, it was mentioned that the Senior Superintendent of Police was going on leave until October, and they talked about a replacement coming, but what grieved me was when I heard the message that the Senior Superintendent was leaving with the people of Tobago, which was this: "I have left instructions to increase police security and patrol in schools." Can you imagine that that was his departing message? "Keep heart my dear people of Tobago, worry not over the secondary schools, violence, indiscipline and drugs. I have left more guards and we are going to have more police patrols." Is it not costing the Government?

So, the investment in education is not only in teachers and plans anymore, it now includes money for national security. That is why I say it is a pity that the

hon. Ministers who spoke about all their grandiose plans are not here to listen to what humble people like us have to say. Mr. Vice-President, all of this is tied to how our country earns, how it maintains and develops itself and its people.

Public administration deals with the management and growth of our human resource. We have our problems, we have intellectual flight. Here we are, training nurses, training engineers *et cetera*, but our young experienced bright people are leaving us after we have trained them. Who are the nurses leaving—not the trainee nurses, but the nurses with valuable experience and expertise are leaving, and where are they going? Are we going to continue to train them, poor country as ours, and then export them to the richer countries after we have spent and invested so much?

3.25 p.m.

Mr. Vice-President, we have to think. We are exporting our knowledge, skills and expertise at a loss to our country. Probably, and just maybe, we may need to look at the strategy of utilizing the resources of people who are not so young, the people who are probably retired and experienced, healthy, qualified and suitable. We might have to change our strategies to incorporate such into our system, because we are losing and not finding the resources amongst the people we are training.

Mr. Vice-President, I am almost at the end of my contribution. I would like to suggest that Government takes into consideration that when we are dealing with the human resource functions, we are dealing with three very interrelated and interdependent areas, but separate in their own roles. We are dealing with the human resource development aspect, and that deals with our training, education and development. It is very important that we differentiate these different entities.

When we talk about human resource and training, we are talking about making people who are doing a particular job more efficient in doing that particular job. So, we are improving performance on the job. When we talk about education, we are talking about preparing people for the next job, the next promotion. What we find is that today one is a teacher, tomorrow one is a supervisor. No training, no education, no preparation. It is very important that we differentiate, otherwise we will always have new jobs, new situations and nobody will be prepared for them. That is what has been happening in the Signal Hill situation. True, we have no equipment in the place, but we also have no people to fit into there. They knew two or three years ago that we were going to do this.

With respect to the human resource management aspect, Sen. Wade Mark dealt very well and spoke much about the recruitment, selection, replacement, appraisal, compensation and workforce plan. And with respect to the human resource environment section, he dealt with the job enrichment, job enlargement and the organizational development.

Mr. Vice-President, our people need to see opportunities for growth. They need to know what our strategy is for dealing with the archaic system that the hon. Senator spoke about. We need to do things in a certain sequence. We cannot jump into doing other things and we have not yet changed the job specifications.

Do you know, Mr. Vice-President, that there are situations—I could give you my own situation; despite my qualifications, I could not have been a School Supervisor I, because the job specification says that I had to be a principal of a primary school for five years. That still obtains, yet we are talking about strategy and philosophy of education and keeping bright people in the teaching profession! There are people with their Masters and Bachelors degrees teaching in the primary schools, supervised by people who do not have any qualifications; we are not going to change job specifications and qualifications, and we are talking about something else? We have got to get serious! When we talk about philosophy, we have to start with the strategies from the ground up, and I am hoping that we are going to examine this from the ground up.

I am sorry for people like the hon. Minister of National Security. He has police constables with 19 years' experience with Masters degrees, more qualified than their bosses, and we do not understand why there is disrespect and why big people in charge cannot talk to younger, junior people.

Mr. Vice-President, this is serious business, and I am hoping that we could put our heads together as a Parliament, forget the rhetoric with which we come here and for the development of this country, this nation, our people, our children, let us put our heads together; let us have a consistent philosophy and let us outline our strategies. From some of the contributions I have heard philosophy with no strategy, I have heard strategy and no philosophy. Very rare have we had a philosophy outlined and the strategies to make that philosophy operational.

So, I again want to say to Sen. Dr. St. Cyr—he was my geography teacher at Bishop's. He was and still is an excellent teacher. I hope that all of us would have learned from the exercise that we have gone through because of his Motion. I want to tell him thank you for bringing this Motion, and I want to congratulate the

hon. Minister of Finance because he is probably the only one who is here to listen to us. He is the one who has actually given us his policy framework, and so forth, that we can sit, discuss, learn and be able to comment.

I hope, Mr. Vice-President, that this is not going to be the end of the exercise when the debate on this Motion is finished. That we are going to hold people to the things that we have heard them say in this Senate, and that we are going to assist—I am sure all of us are willing—in moving the policies forward through the strategies that would have been outlined.

I want to thank you, Sir, for the opportunity, and I want to again congratulate Dr. St. Cyr for bringing this Motion to us. Thank you very much, Sir.

Sen. Nathaniel Moore: Thank you, Mr. President, for the opportunity to participate in this discussion. I have read the Motion repeatedly, and I thought to myself that what is required then is for various Ministers in Government to come in and state their policies and philosophies and give their various strategies, outlined or conceived, to deal with these. Perhaps we will hear observations from people, not Ministers—perhaps the Independents and the Opposition—on their views about the contributions of the Ministers and their alternative plans and strategies.

I, myself, like Dr. Mc Kenzie was slightly disappointed in the sort of contributions we got and the way in which they were given. Sometimes I wondered how the mover of the Motion, Dr. St. Cyr—whom I congratulate warmly for bringing this Motion to our attention and giving us an opportunity to account somewhat for our planning for this country—thought about certain contributions. Whether he thought that they answered to the definition that Dr. Mc Kenzie gave. I noticed she spoke about genuine contributions. I wondered how Dr. St. Cyr classified the various offerings in terms of if they were genuine or not genuine, or if he did not think about it. I thought about how he would grade, as a past teacher, some of the contributions in relation to the Motion.

So, it is with a bit of fear that I stand to speak in the context of the grading, or my thoughts on the grading: what grades I might receive. I am quite aware of it, being a teacher myself for many years, and like Dr. Mc Kenzie, I was taught by Dr. St. Cyr as well, although at a different level. Nevertheless, I will try to make my contribution, and this will be difficult as all other contributions for me, because I am not a Minister of Government to outline Government plans, and I am not in the Opposition to criticize the plans or to say that our plans were better.

I am sitting on the Government Benches and I am also from Tobago. I am one who sat in this very House and advocated for the establishment of the Tobago House of Assembly and for greater autonomy for Tobago. In fact, I was involved in advocating greater autonomy for Tobago from the 1970s—more than 25 years ago—and somehow, I believe that big people know what they want and big people could make decisions for themselves, and I, too, like the democratic way of life so that people could put their heads together and strive for what they need, what they think they deserve.

I will say what I know about the policies of the Tobago House of Assembly in terms of development and, perhaps, some of the plans they have in mind, but I cannot be very firm on that, because I am not an Assembly person myself.

I hope I will be permitted to make a few observations. One has to do with this matter of autonomy in Tobago. There are certain things I do not like to say. I think about them, but I do not like to say them. One of the things I wish was different in this House was the unwarranted slinging across of accusations and “should have” and “would have” that I hear. I want to remind us because, maybe, for us who are present, those who may be present in the future and those who were present before, in relation to Tobago, what we aspired to, in terms of our development, was not so much for a benevolent Government seated in Port of Spain to come to Tobago and hand out things to us: give us a highway, a National Insurance Board (NIB) mall or give us certain secondary schools, and even the education programme within the walls of the school building. That was not the real thing.

What we looked for as a people from Tobago who are fiercely independent, I want to tell you, is the opportunity to decide things for ourselves and to decide how to provide what we think we deserve. That is the main thing. [*Desk thumping*]

3.40 p.m.

I cannot be tired of saying it because this is one thing that many people do not understand. Though, we may, often have an adult/child mentality in what we are doing—in fact, people tend to say that adults are just grown up children, and you think that if you give enough plums, children will keep quiet. So, if you give enough good looking things for Tobago, the people would be quiet and nice. Tobago people are always nice and quiet, but giving them plums and so on would not work, as I am sure some people have learnt.

If you built the highway, the mall, and distributed farms which do not exist anymore and you did many things and the people in Tobago are still calling and clamouring, then you know that what you gave was not what the people wanted, right! So do not ask the question, why are those people in Tobago so hard to please? The point is you should go and ask them what they want and when they tell you what they want, see how you could satisfy it: do not try to tell the ordinary child what he wants is nonsense, and that you would give him something else.

That is the main point I thought I would bring in terms of satisfying not only Tobago. I have a strong feeling that is the same thing in Trinidad or any part of the Caribbean. I want us to think about that. I believe it is the same thing, that you do not give people what you feel is good for them but you give them good things that they want. This may be, perhaps, the secret to some of the problems we have.

We are talking about vandalism and violence in our schools, and I experienced it. Being a teacher for a very long time myself, I used to wonder why some of these things happened because you are bringing children into a school to give them education and training and here they are kicking down the doors, marking on the desks and even damaging and tearing up books and all this kind of thing. If the children only are doing that, then we might find a way to correct it but adults are doing it too in the public domain.

A few days ago, I was driving on the road and a fellow was driving a convertible—he was just turning from a side road unto the main road and when he reached out the main road, he took a plastic bottle from the vehicle and just dropped it on the street and he drove on. I am talking about the kind of mentality that committed a thing like this.

I am saying that if people are a part of planning for what they get and providing what they want, then they may put greater value on what they get. So it is a case of bringing people into the planning process and if you do not do that then they may not appreciate things around. They will translate that to their children and their children may grow up with that and compound the problem.

Mr. Vice-President, permit me to move from that. I am teaching because that cannot get out of me. I want to see in this House that we stop this self-righteous proclamation of how good we did and what we did not do, because much credit was taken by Members on the other side for free education and good policies and so forth. Let us state particularly, the good things that happened for the foundation laid for the restoration of the economy. I said this here already and I am going to

Economic Philosophy
[SEN. MOORE]

Tuesday, May 4, 1999

say it again. The PNM today was taking praise for that and I said it before that the foundation in my view was laid mainly by the NAR. I am a member of the NAR, so I am blowing their trumpet.

In this country, if I remember well, we started to see about our affairs in 1956, it was from 1956—1986, we had one party or regime running the show; that was 30 years. We had another regime, the NAR, from 1986—1991; five-plus years. Then we had returned to the PNM from 1991 to around 1995; that is about four years or so, maybe less. Following that, we have now a UNC/NAR coalition from 1995, to the present, almost four years. What I am saying is that who should have provided the country with free education, good schools, good roads and a sound agricultural policy and programme, obviously, is the party that ran the show for the 34 years; and not the ones that ran it nine years. If you expect that the people who would account for nine years—two different regimes—would have done all the good work, then what excuse do you make for yourself not doing enough?

The testimony is that all these things that you are finding fault about now are things you think that the other regimes should have done in nine years, and then how do you excuse yourself for the other 35 years? So what I want us to do is to cut out this kind of thing and to say let us take the thing step by step.

I like the idea that the PNM started well and they did a few things and when money came they did not know how to spend it, they got mad and became in a rage. [*Laughter*] Things got bad and then we came to a stage when a regime came in—in fact, before the regime came in what had happened is that when the money came in such a rush there were people who did not know how to spend it—one, we stopped planning and deciding how to spend the money, and the others had planned that they were going to spend it on themselves and they loaded their pockets with it. [*Desk thumping*]

The point is, that the people reacted and we got out of the situation and we want to move on from that and that regime and any other must tell themselves we are never going to do that kind of thing again. We are not going to get into that mistake, so that the country would benefit more from the resources of the country and individuals must not be the ones to benefit from what belongs to everybody.

Sen. Mohammed: Teach the UNC that lesson.

Hon. Member: We learnt that lesson from you all.

Sen. N. Moore: I hope that the lessons are going in. It is not always good either to follow the pattern of regimes that have gone because we have the boast that we do this and that. Do we have the acknowledgment that we have to be responsible for the vandalism, ignorance, and illiteracy now that pervades the country? Are we going to boast that we laid the foundation for that? I am saying as one who also was a recipient of education under the PNM—It is, and there are two main things which have put us in this predicament:

- (1) The falling standards of family life. Whatever you blame for that and how we became of that but I do not want to detail it.
- (2) Failure of our education system.

I have taught children in schools who have moved right up and could hardly read by the time they graduate. I know that, so something was wrong about the programme. So let us not boast about it so much. We really did make a good start but please try to help those who are coming now and redirect them, so that the mistakes we made in the past we are not going to fall back into that, we are going to build on that so that we will have a better programme with this UNC/NAR coalition.

3.50 p.m.

I am not sure we would see the results. If you have the opportunity, perhaps you could see the results later. Quite clearly, what we are seeing now is the result of past education on the population, and now what we have to think about is how to correct that. There is need for radical measures now to correct that pattern so that we improve on the level of living in our society. We do not want poor family life, and a faulty education system to ruin our lives as citizens in this country anymore. We want to move on from that.

With regard to the Tobago House of Assembly and some of its programmes, there is very little I could say about policies and philosophies operating in Tobago, because their policies and philosophies are generally about the same as those of the central government. Sen. Cabrera, in his contribution said—I think he used the words “third world countries”. I am going to paraphrase what he said. He said these developing economies, and developing third world countries have very little choice in terms of their policies. So many things are conditionalities. If we have to build a road, or restore agriculture, we depend on loans from the so-called developing countries and they tell us we must do this, get this kind of study, and when it comes down to the crux, it is what they dictate for us to a great extent. To

me, this is a great problem because we must have guts as a small nation to be able to negotiate with them and do not fall under the destructive results of some of the policies they are going to give us as conditionalities because we are seeing them.

Many countries in the Caribbean are complaining of how these conditionalities are ruining the economy. We have to have the guts in negotiating with these people for loans to stand up and insist on certain minimum conditions that we must maintain in order to keep our dignity as a people, and to really have meaningful and sustainable development. I hope the future and the present legislators would take this in mind when we have to negotiate. We have a narrow latitude in which to move in terms of our policies and so forth.

Even though Tobago and the central government policies are not very different, because we are being bombarded by some of the same pressures, nevertheless, there is one basic difference of which I know. In fact, we must bear in mind first that the main thrust of the philosophy is centred around people, and the idea is that whatever we do, land development and so forth, it must be for the enhancement of the life and the living standards of our people and that is the whole thing in a nutshell.

Mr. Vice-President, perhaps there is one area I could point out and that is, whereas in our central government we are aiming for a balanced budget that we spend what we earn, or at least we try to have, if it is, a little surplus at the end of the financial year, or something of the sort. In Tobago, we are saying, because of our past experience, and until we have our leg strengthened, we are thinking we must do some deficit budgeting, that is to say for the time being, we want to spend a little more than we earn and that would call for getting loans to fill the gap between what we now have to invest and what we are providing. That is, perhaps, the main difference because for a long time really, we have been moving together as two islands Trinidad, and Tobago and it would seem to us that most of the emphasis was on the larger island and not so much on the smaller island, and more than that, there is a certain potential we have in Tobago to be developed and we do not have the financing at present to develop it.

In Tobago as a sector, we would hope that we are going to be permitted to spend a little more, for the time being, so we can earn more in the future. It would profit us to use the extra funds to develop some of the industries we want to develop. I think, to some extent, all countries which are faced with the situation would sometimes raise loans for certain types of development and we are hoping that the production in these developing areas would earn enough to pay back the

loan and to enhance our own standard of living in the economy. That is what we are thinking could happen for Tobago within the whole economy of Trinidad and Tobago. So we are plugging for a little deficit financing for the time so that we could build ourselves up and develop some of the potential in the island so that very soon we would be able to contribute adequately, or pull our full weight in the economy, and we have the assurance that this can happen.

Some people regard the Tobago House of Assembly as local government and, indeed, it is to some extent, but I want to state that in Tobago we also share some central government functions. The Fifth Schedule of the Tobago House of Assembly Act mentions some of these areas: state lands; finance—that is the collection of revenue and the meeting of expenditure incurred in the carrying out of the functions of the Tobago House of Assembly; land and marine parks; public buildings; tourism; sports; community development; agriculture; town and country planning; aspects of infrastructure; air and sea transportation; highway and roads; industrial development; even Customs and Excise; education including the curriculum, and housing are some of the areas I mention. These are not under local government operations but also some of the central government.

The Tobago House of Assembly shares central government functions and executes them according to the Fifth Schedule in the Tobago House of Assembly Act, No. 40 of 1996. The Executive Council in Tobago is responsible for the Government in Tobago and its role in developing Tobago is:

1. to ensure the creation of an adequate system of infrastructure and education;
2. to promote the development of efficient marketing and distributing systems;
3. to ensure the appropriate location of activity;
4. to protect the environment and to ensure that the private sector becomes increasingly productive and efficient.

These are some of the policies of the Tobago House of Assembly, so that in fact, the philosophies and strategies of the Government in Tobago are identical to that of the central government which were enunciated and emphasized here by several speakers, but there are several, or a few exceptions bearing in mind the peculiar history and location of Tobago to the rest of the nation. Remember Tobago is an island. Perhaps, one of the policies of the central government about

balancing its budget at the national level may be to aim for a surplus budgeting, but in Tobago, while we subscribe to the main policy for the country as a whole, we advocate that in the Tobago region for the time being, we budget for a deficit and this perhaps is slightly different from the rest of the central government. We are hoping that in time, as we develop the resources we have there, the situation in which we want to work on a deficit budget would become unnecessary over a short time.

You see, in Tobago right now, we need some expansion in some of the sectors, particularly the tourism sector. There is need for large outlays particularly infrastructure, water, health facilities, roads and waste water management. These areas are now crying out for financing.

4.05 p.m.

We actually need some extra to take care of these so that Tobago could fully share, as we see it, within the national plan. Indeed, there can be no reasonable expansion of the tourist plan in Tobago without prompt attention to adequate provision of infrastructure. We need extra funds to prepare the infrastructure for greater future development.

We think, too, that it is desirable, to some extent, that the Government must intervene with some kind of investment, or at least in joint ventures with the private sector. For example, as happens right now in the hotel industry, the Coco Coco Reef and the now developing Tobago Hilton, the Government joins there with the private sector, assisting in the development of these areas of the tourist industry in Tobago.

At this level, we understand that clearly, and in Tobago we have hope, because I remember when we were discussing the national budget, the Minister of Finance did pledge that he would look into the possibility of permitting Tobago to raise loans to see about certain aspects of development, particularly, the tourist industry there, because we need extra funds to bring us up to the desired level, so that we can function in a way to satisfy all development wishes.

The Tobago House of Assembly has a plan for developing Tobago. Right now, it is out for public comment, but I want to read a portion of the plan. It is called the Tobago Development Plan—Report No. 4. If you permit me, Mr. Vice-President, I read from page 202 of this document put out by the Tobago House of Assembly planning team:

“All things considered, and looking from an economic perspective, the volume of debt taken on by the Assembly and by Tobago as a whole poses no significant threat since the projects being undertaken are highly economical when taken in combination with private sector investments in the dynamic clusters of the economy. They will add more to national income relative to while raising the productivity of imports. Short run problems can be handled by a lender of last resort such as the government or an international agency. The programs undertaken will add to the national capacity to export while allowing the Assembly to glean an appropriate share of the extra income accruing to the Tobago economy in the form of tax revenues. It could then create and accumulate its own pool of foreign exchange as needed.

...In general, then, loans given to the Assembly will not be burdens creating debt crises. Instead, they will be undisguised blessings and the more of such blessings Tobago can get the merrier for the island and the nation as a whole, so the more it should take.”

As I said before, all the departures—

Sen. Prof. Spence: Mr. Vice-President, I wonder if we could be told how it would be possible to get hold of a copy of this Tobago Development Plan.

Sen. N. Moore: Well, Mr. Vice-President, I can say that there are copies in many places. I am sure there is a copy in the library.

Sen. Prof. Spence: This library here?

Sen. N. Moore: Yes, our library here. There are Reports Nos. 1 to 4—the fourth one is out for comments—the Process of Planning; the Medium Term Plan and the Strategic Plan. They are available in our library here.

The point I am making is that in the case of the Tobago House of Assembly, we depart from the general national plan in that there is provision for budgeting for a deficit. Within the region of Tobago, while not dissenting with the national plan, they have a balanced budget. I do not think this is an outrageous position because this happens in so many places, and I made mention of it here before, that in certain countries, certain areas are designated development areas, and particular emphasis is put upon development in these sections of the country. I remember it happened in Britain during and after the war.

So, we think that we could do some deficit financing in Tobago within the overall balancing of our budget on the national scene, because we realize that to

take care of the expansion of tourism in Tobago, which is the area of the nation now showing great prospects, we need to improve the infrastructure.

Some people may see we have some good roads in parts of Tobago, but there are some very bad roads elsewhere. The way our roads were developed was such that they were designed to connect settlements which existed. Formerly, how the settlements came up in Tobago was through access by water. People would go by boat to Palatuvier, or to Bloody Bay, or to Castara, or wherever, and start to farm the land and, as we developed, we saw the need to connect these settlements, so roads were built to connect them. Many of the roads we have now were not laid down with any proper planning and so, now that we want to develop our tourism, we need to place some emphasis upon our infrastructure, especially the roads. We need some additional financing to take care of the roads, and to prepare the infrastructure generally.

We expect that this is one case in which some additional government spending will be done to develop the infrastructure, so that we might reap the fruits in increased earnings in tourism in the future. Because, as I said here when we were debating the budget, there is no way that Tobago could develop and make the meaningful contributions it ought to make, within the national economy, by the annual additions and appropriations from the budget. We need something extra. I do not think it is an unreasonable expectation. Remember, the Finance Minister himself has promised that he would sit with the House of Assembly to see how well they could work out a programme for the Assembly to access loans for development and to access grants available on the international scene.

Now, in the matter of debt, I would like us to see how the Assembly views this, because people frowned upon the idea of incurring debt for our development. It is good for us to spend what we have. On page 202 of this document, the Tobago Development Plan, Report No. 4, it says:

“All things considered, and looking from an economic perspective, the volume of debt taken on by the Assembly and by Tobago as a whole poses no significant threat since the projects being undertaken are highly economical when taken in combination with private sector investments in the dynamic clusters of the country. They will add more to national income relative to while raising the productivity of imports. Short run problems can be handled by a lender of last resort such as the government or an international agency.”

So, the idea is that once the debt is taken for investments which are viable investment projects, the debt will pay for itself. So much for the idea of deficit financing.

In the area of manpower training and management, I think we know that in Tobago we have a particular problem, in that we know we are talking about the education of the people in Tobago. For a long time, we have been saying that opportunities for education in Tobago are too limited and, in fact, too far below those of the national level. Without going into details, we find that the intake into secondary schools through the Common Entrance Examination, is lower in Tobago than almost anywhere else. If there is any place lower, it is one area. It is one of the lowest, but at the same time, we have the irony where the level of marks earned by students attending secondary schools in Tobago are relatively low. We know it is a case of deficiency in the educational programme in Tobago.

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

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

Question put and agreed to.

Sen. N. Moore: Mr. Vice-President, I will try my best to use less than that.

It is through education that we get the training for manpower and the training generally for people. We know that if our nation were more educated, then we would have fewer problems in terms of crime, in terms of the economic development and so forth. So, we are crying out in Tobago for more educational opportunities, but mainly at the tertiary level.

When I say I am speaking for Tobago and the Tobago House of Assembly, I also refer to the point that Sen. Mc Kenzie made about Signal Hill which has been idle for about three years. I do not want to excuse them on that, or to explain why, but I heard talk about establishment to be approved, about a debt to Nipdec which had to supply certain equipment and they said that they could not supply it while the debt was owed to them.

4.20 p.m.

I do not know every detail about the whole thing and I am not trying to make any excuse for them, but I know about these. Indeed, in Tobago, our policy is to seek for greater tertiary educational opportunities for the population. So, more

training and education could be done to assist our population in facilitating the development in the island. The Assembly has a plan within the system of the development plan for seeking to access tertiary education for which we are in dire need in this part of the country. We believe, with more tertiary education we will be able to take better care of our development.

Mr. Vice-President, I do not wish to take up very much more time. But, I am saying, to summarize again briefly, that in Tobago the Assembly has philosophies and policies similar to those in the central government, except that it would like to be able to get some loan to develop the infrastructure for tourism, for which there is great potential right now.

Also, we would like to provide greater opportunities for tertiary education within Tobago for our people, so that we can realize our dreams in developing Tobago, to the extent where it could pull its fair share and contribute adequately towards the national well-being.

Thank you, Mr. Vice-President.

ARRANGEMENT OF BUSINESS

The Minister of Finance (Sen. The Hon. Brian Kuei Tung): Mr. Vice-President, before moving the adjournment, let me indicate to hon. Senators that we would be doing the following order of business next week. If you look at the present Order Paper:

“8. A Bill entitled ‘An Act to amend the Regional Health Authorities Act, 1994.’ *(By the Minister of Health)*”

will be the first Bill that we will do.

“9. A Bill entitled ‘An Act to amend the Mental Health Act, Chap. 28:02.’ ”

will also be done by the Minister of Health.

Third Bill, this of course, time permitting—

“The debate on the second reading of the following bill which was in progress...”

“2. A Bill entitled ‘An Act to provide for the promotion of investment in Trinidad and Tobago and for the repeal of the Foreign Investment Act, 1990’. *(By the Minister of Trade and Industry and Consumer Affairs and Minister of Tourism)*”

“7. A Bill entitled ‘An Act to provide greater protection for victims of domestic violence’.”

that is the fourth Bill, and possibly a fifth.

Hon. Member: Will we be going late?

Sen. The Hon. B. Kuei Tung: I hope not. [*Interruption*] I am merely giving an order of procedure. I am not threatening anything late. What I would offer is, to provide Royal Castle dinner.

Fifthly—

“1. A Bill entitled ‘An Act to establish a system of plea discussions and plea agreements and matters incidental thereto’. (*By the Hon. Attorney General*)”

Agreed to.

MOTHERS' DAY GREETINGS

The Minister of Finance (Sen. The Hon. Brian Kuei Tung): Mr. Vice-President, if you could allow me one second before I move the adjournment.

On Sunday, we celebrate Mothers' Day. I would like to just say one sentence in tribute to mothers. This is something that was just passed to me which I thought I should share with my honourable colleagues.

“Mothers are towers of strength and today, more than ever, with so many ‘cracks’ showing...we all need to applaud Mothers universally, for their ability to stand tall and strong, to face challenges, to overcome obstacles, to nurture and instil positive values in their sons and daughters.

She is the one they can count on for the things that matter most of all. There is no substitute for her, her maternal instinct is ever alive and strong.”

To share a thought with you:

“A mother is she who can take the place of all others but whose place no one can take.”

Happy Mother's Day to all mothers. [*Desk thumping*] I would like to wish Happy Mothers' Day to mothers in this Senate and also outside.

Motion made and Question proposed, That the Senate do now adjourn to Tuesday, May 11, 1999 at 10.00 a.m.

Question put and agreed to.

Senate adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 4.26 p.m.

Economic Philosophy
[SEN. MOORE]

Tuesday, May 4, 1999