

Leave of Absence

Tuesday, September 07, 1999

SENATE

Tuesday, September 07, 1999

The Senate met at 10.30 a.m.

PRAYERS

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

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Mr. Vice-President: Hon. Senators, leave of absence has been granted to Sen. Brig. The Hon. Joseph Theodore, Minister of National Security, from sittings of the Senate during the period September 6 to September 11, 1999. Leave has also been granted to Sen. Nizam Baksh during the period September 6 to September 12, 1999. Leave of absence has also been granted from today's sitting to Sen. Philip Marshall.

SENATORS' APPOINTMENT

Mr. President: Hon. Senators, I have received the following communications from His Excellency the President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago:

“THE CONSTITUTION OF THE REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

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

\s\ Arthur N. R. Robinson

President.

TO: MR. DAVE COWIE

WHEREAS Senator Joseph Theodore is incapable of performing his functions as a Senator by reason of his absence from Trinidad and Tobago:

NOW, THEREFORE, I ARTHUR N. R. ROBINSON, President as aforesaid, acting in accordance with the advice of the Prime Minister, in exercise of the power vested in me by section 44 of the Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, do hereby appoint you, DAVE COWIE, to be temporarily a member of the Senate, with effect from 6th September, 1999 and continuing during the absence from Trinidad and Tobago of the said Senator Joseph Theodore.

Given under my Hand and the Seal of the President of the
Republic of Trinidad and Tobago at the Office of the
President, St. Ann's, this 2nd day of September, 1999.”

Mr. Vice-President: There is a similar communication from the office of the President which states:

“THE CONSTITUTION OF THE REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

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

\s\ Arthur N. R. Robinson
President.

TO: MR. VINCENT CABRERA

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

NOW, THEREFORE, I ARTHUR N. R. ROBINSON, President as aforesaid, acting in accordance with the advice of the Prime Minister, in exercise of the power vested in me by section 44 of the Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, do hereby appoint you, VINCENT CABRERA, to be temporarily a member of the Senate, with immediate effect and continuing during the absence from Trinidad and Tobago of the said Senator Nizam Baksh.

Given under my Hand and the Seal of the
President of the Republic of Trinidad and
Tobago at the Office of the President, St.
Ann's, this 6th day of September, 1999.”

PRESIDENT'S ABSENCE

Mr. Vice-President: Maybe I should also let you know that the President of the Senate will be with us in a short while. He had an official engagement that clashed with the start of the Senate. He asked me to hold on in his absence.

**MR. DONALD GRANADO
(DEATH)**

Mr. Vice-President: Senators, I have been informed, as you would have read in the press, of the passing of the former Secretary and founder of the People's National Movement and former Member of Parliament, Mr. Donald Granado. Suitable expressions of condolences have been passed from the office of the

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President on behalf of the Senate. I, on your behalf, offer the bereaved family our heartfelt sympathy on his passing. At this point I would open the floor to the Leader of Government Business and the Opposition and Independent Benches to express sentiments of condolences.

The Minister of Finance (Sen. The Hon. Brian Kuei Tung): Mr. Vice-President, on behalf of the Government we wish to echo your sentiments for a gentleman who, in my opinion, can best be known for what he represented. I personally have not known Mr. Granado but I know of him. The reason why I can identify with him is because of a very close friend of mine who I understood was very much in the same vein. I speak here of Morris Marshall, therefore I can identify very easily with Mr. Granado only because I know that he represented that particular constituency, that he had the same caring, the same values and characteristics that Morris Marshall was known for which, unfortunately, also took him to his own death, his own passing.

So that, while we on this side understand the fight and the struggle that Mr. Granado has fought for the people of Laventille, and particularly for the people of Trinidad and Tobago, we can identify with the need to have better standards and quality of life for the people of Laventille. As I said, I can only express my sentiments more because of my knowledge and my own intimate friendship with Morris Marshall who, I understand, has been literally a protege and a guy who walked in Mr. Granado's shoes. He was also a former Minister of Labour. He was a gentleman who has helped us to forge our country as a young democracy.

Therefore, we on this side have a desire to express our deepest sentiment to the bereaved family and to wish him God's blessing.

Sen. Nafeesa Mohammed: Mr. Vice-President, we on this side join with other Senators in paying tribute this morning to a gentleman who my colleague, the hon. Minister of Finance, just described as being in the likes of a former Member of Parliament whom we all remember very fondly, the late Morris Marshall. In fact, it has been said that Mr. Donald Granado was to this country in the late 1950s and 1960s what Morris Marshall was to Trinidad and Tobago in the early 1990s.

Mr. Granado was a foundation member of the People's National Movement and a former Secretary of the party. He became the Member of Parliament for Laventille in 1956 and he won that seat again in 1961. Having emerged from the trade union movement in the 1940s, it was not surprising that he served as Minister of Labour and Social Services in the period after 1956. Eventually in the

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early 1960s he joined the diplomatic service and served this country as High Commissioner to Venezuela, Canada and even London. I am told that Mr. Granado was indeed a very outspoken man and a very dedicated person. His concern for the underprivileged is evident by the fact that he has been credited for being the founder of what we know today as being the Unemployment Relief Programme.

We on this side had the privilege of associating with Mr. Granado not too long ago when he was honoured by the People's National Movement, together with other stalwarts and foundation members like Mr. Kamaluddin Mohammed, Mr. Errol Mahabir and Mr. Gerard Montano. We, as the children of the PNM, are very proud to know that Mr. Granado was indeed one of the foundation members of this great party that has helped to build our country and we take this opportunity to extend our deepest condolences to the bereaved family. As it is often said, it is from God we came and to God is our eventual return. Thank you.

Sen. Prof. John Spence: Mr. Vice-President, like other Senators, I would like to add our condolences to the family of Mr. Donald Granado and also to say that we appreciate the work that he had done. Clearly, this is a man who started with some disadvantage. He had to work his way through his education. His early education was done privately rather than in so-called prestige schools. He obviously took an interest in many things. He was interested in sports, in trade union work, in credit union work and he then went into politics. He was founder of a labour party before the PNM.

So we can say that here is someone who, from the very beginning, has given public service to his country and we regret his passing. I would be grateful if the Senate's sympathy would be conveyed to the family. Thank you, Sir.

Mr. Vice-President: Hon. Senators, I think it would be appropriate for me to invite you to stand and to observe one minute's silence as a mark of respect on the passing of this former Member of Parliament.

The Senate stood.

OATH OF ALLEGIANCE

Senators Dave Cowie and Vincent Cabrera. took and subscribed the Oath of Allegiance as required by law.

10.45 a.m.

PAPER LAID

Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on an Audit of Transactions Relating to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Project No. TRI/95/003—Technical Support for the Maintenance of the Automated System for Customs Data (ASYCUDA)—for the year ended December 31, 1998. [*The Minister of Finance (Sen. The Hon. Brian Kuei Tung)*]

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

Corporal Punishment in Schools

17. Sen. Diana Mahabir-Wyatt asked the Minister of Education:

Can the Hon. Minister of Education tell this Senate whether it is the intention of this Government to prohibit corporal punishment in schools in accordance with Article 28:2 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which was ratified by this country in 1992?

The Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources (Sen. Vimala Tota-Maharaj): Mr. President, this Government is committed to ensuring that all Articles of the Convention, including Article 28:2 and the related Article 19, are observed. No where in the Convention is there a clear reference to corporal punishment that suggests that states which allow corporal punishment are in violation of the Convention. Therefore, the Government does not interpret these Articles or any other Articles of the Convention as Articles requiring the abolition of corporal punishment in schools.

I thank you.

Sen. Diana Mahabir-Wyatt: A supplementary question. Do we have regulations governing the conduct of corporal punishment in schools that prohibit the beating of small children in public schools?

Sen. Vimala Tota-Maharaj: Mr. Vice President, the answer to that question is not right now. However, both Ministries of Education and Social and Community Development are having discussions concerning that issue.

**Plan of Action re Policy
(Persons with Disabilities)**

18. Sen. Diana Mahabir-Wyatt asked the Minister of Social and Community Development and Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs:

Have implementation dates for the various provisions contained in the Plan of Action with respect to the policy for persons with disabilities which was approved in 1994 been targeted?

If the answer is in the affirmative, could the Minister give:

- (a) Target dates for implementation of the various provisions;
- (b) The up-to-date position on what targets have been achieved and which are still in the planning stage?

The Minister of Social and Community Development and Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs (Hon. Manohar Ramsaran): Mr. Vice-President, the National Policy on Persons with Disabilities was developed by a multidisciplinary committee in 1994. The main intent of the policy is the integration of persons with disabilities into the mainstream of society. Following this, an operational Plan of Action was developed with implementation periods defined for the short term 1996—1997; medium term 1998—2000; and long term 2000 and beyond.

I wish to advise this honourable Senate that to date a number of the provisions targeted in the operational plan have been achieved. These include establishment of a National Co-ordinating Committee on Disability. In November, 1998 the National Co-ordinating Committee on Disability was established to monitor the implementation of the national policy on persons with disabilities. The committee's main focus has been the prioritization of programmes to improve the status and ensure equalization of opportunities for disabled persons and also to heighten public awareness of the issues pertinent to persons with disabilities.

The plan also made provision for the establishment of a Disabilities Affairs Unit to serve a secretariat to the National Co-ordinating Committee. This Unit became operational in August, 1999. The Unit is currently two server instruments to facilitate the acquisition of information from non-governmental organizations involved in the area of disabilities to determine their goals, objectives, capacities, services offered and other relevant issues. This exercise will be utilized to develop a database of NGOs and other interest groups and identify gaps in the system. It is expected that this project will be completed by November, 1999.

In the area of public awareness the Ministry of Social and Community Development also aired on the electronic media, information on issues relevant to disabled persons. My Ministry has also produced an information booklet for persons with disabilities, their families and other concerned persons. This booklet will provide information on various types of disabilities and organizations and government departments that provide assistance to disabled persons. Copies of this booklet will be available by the end of September, 1999.

With respect to the equalization of opportunities in employment, education and training, on May 23, 1996 Cabinet granted approval for the 144 Tripartite Committee to undertake activities prescribed under the ILO Convention 159, which includes, *inter alia*, formulating of recommendations for the equalization of employment opportunities for persons with disabilities. This Convention, which treats with vocational rehabilitation and employment of disabled persons, was ratified in June, 1999.

Trinidad and Tobago, with financial assistance from the OAS, recently participated in a regional project entitled, "Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities". The specific objectives of this project were to conduct national needs assessment of persons with disabilities in participating countries and to impart skills and techniques of integrated training to the educators, instructors or vocational training institutions. The project also aims to increase awareness and understanding of disability issues and policy in the Caribbean public. The executing agency was the National Centre for Persons with Disabilities.

The Government of Trinidad and Tobago, with technical and financial assistance from UNICEF, would soon implement a project through the Chief Statistical Office (CSO) entitled "Child Indicators Monitoring System", which will seek to institute and integrate a system of periodic data collection, processing and analysis of information on the status of children and their families. This database will facilitate policy making and programming for children including those with disabilities. Preparatory work for this project will commence in October, 1999.

Additionally, the Ministry of Social and Community Development is the executing agency of the Therese Guerrero Trust Fund, with the National Centre for Persons with Disabilities as the implementing agency. The objectives of this initiative are to eradicate all barriers that prevent disabled persons from accessing vocational training courses and to develop the capability and capacity of participants to be the trainers of trainers in delivery of skills to persons with

disabilities. The project addresses the following issues: training services; training delivery; support services; meeting learning styles and needs; offering of appropriate solutions to overcome the barriers of entry requirements, interview and selection procedures; work placements and employment opportunities. In this regard, training of trainers seminars were conducted in Trinidad and Tobago, Barbados, Grenada, St. Lucia, and St. Vincent and The Grenadines. This project is ongoing.

Another area which Government plans to advance the educational needs of disabled children is through the Ministry of Education's Advisory Committee on Special Education. This committee is an advisory board to Government on the most effective training mechanisms for persons with disabilities. The committee has been meeting with the NGOs and CBOs to exchange ideas on treating with persons with disabilities. The committee also plans to educate the wider public through the electronic media on issues pertaining to the disabled. In particular, educational programmes on disability would be featured on The Information Channel.

Mr. Vice President, I am also aware that action has been taken by the Ministry of Education to integrate children with disabilities into the mainstream of the secondary school system. It is expected that with the establishment of the Disabilities Affairs Unit these initiatives would be strengthened.

This Government, in addition to the above-mentioned initiatives, is also seeking to ease the economic burden of persons with disabilities. In April, 1997, Government approved a disabilities assistance grant of \$520 per month for disabled persons between the ages of 40—65 years. Government also provides annual subventions to a number of organizations which service disabled persons. Annually, approximately \$6.08 million is allocated to these bodies.

Regarding the medium and long term periods, the following areas would be addressed within my Ministry's strategic plan for the period 1999—2002. A collaborative approach will also be pursued with relevant agencies to ensure implementation of the following: the drafting of legislation deemed necessary for implementation of measures contained in the policy on persons with disabilities; access to the built physical environment; ongoing activities to promote the employment, education and training of disabled persons; the provision of adequate leisure facilities and equipment for sporting activities for persons with disabilities; greater access to information by persons with disabilities.

Mr. Vice-President, I feel sure that you would agree that a number of initiatives have been achieved. In closing, let me further assure this honourable Senate, that my Ministry, through its Disabilities Affairs Unit, is committed to the welfare of persons with disabilities in Trinidad and Tobago, and will continue to work towards heightening public awareness of the issues relating to these citizens as well as ensuring the development of relevant programmes to enhance their quality of life.

I trust that the information provided will foster greater appreciation of initiatives undertaken thus far towards the implementation of a plan of action.

I thank you.

ARRANGEMENT OF BUSINESS

The Minister of Finance (Sen. The Hon. Brian Kuei Tung): Mr. Vice-President, I seek leave of the Senate to deal with Motion No. 1 followed by Bill No. 1 under "Bills Second Reading".

Agreed to.

LAND ACQUISITION

The Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry of Housing and Settlements (Sen. Carol Cuffy Dowlat): Mr. Vice-President, I beg to move,

That the Senate approve the decision of the President to acquire the lands described in Appendix IV for the public purpose specified.

Mr. Vice-President, this acquisition is to acquire two parcels of land together comprising 2.02 hectares, more or less situated at Spur Trace, Penal in the Ward of Siparia in the County of St. Patrick and said to belong to Caroni (1975) Limited, and tenanted under long term agricultural lease to Ramoudit Sirju Moonesar, Rooplal Ramnanan and Lackan Deopersad

The Minister of Local Government has requested that the parcel of land be acquired for the public purpose of establishing a recreation ground. In accordance with the Land Acquisition Act, compensation will be paid to Caroni (1975) Limited, which will in turn, compensate its tenants for loss of the use of the land.

The Government is cognizant of the fact that sports play an integral part in the development of the country's youth and has moved to acquire lands to provide areas and arenas for sporting activities within communities.

The establishment of a recreation ground at Spur Trace will serve the needs of a wide cross-section of persons, not only in its immediate vicinity, but further away, since there is a paucity of such structures in the area. The nearest one is located approximately two miles away from the proposed site.

Further, the Government sees an urgent need for the establishment of this type of facility within communities, and is accordingly moving in an expeditious manner to complete the acquisition.

Mr. Vice-President, proceedings for the acquisition of the parcels of land were initiated on September 18, 1997. Information on the parcels of land can be found on a Survey Plan filed in Book 1243 folio 14 in the vault of the Lands and Surveys Division, Red House, Port of Spain.

The procedure for the acquisition of lands for public purposes is standard and the Ministry of Housing and Settlements has brought these arrangements before this honorable Senate from time to time. On this occasion we are indeed honoured to carry the process forward.

Before begging to have this Motion moved, Mr. Vice-President, I would take this opportunity to indicate, through you, to both Sen. Prof. Spence and Sen. Yuille-Williams, on the last occasion I had indicated that when next I speak on an acquisition, I would have some information ready on issues raised re: San Fernando Hill. Unfortunately, at this time I am unable to give a comprehensive report on this issue, so I am once again seeking an opportunity, some time later, to bring before this honourable Senate, answers to the issues raised on that occasion.

Mr. Vice President, I beg to move.

Question proposed.

11.00 p.m.

Sen. Nafeesa Mohammed: Mr. Vice-President, whenever there are Motions like these before the Senate, based on the purpose that is stated for the acquisition, we generally, tend to support these acquisitions. In this case, having listened to the hon. Senator present the Motion, alarm bells went off in me for a while, when I heard her saying that the Minister of Local Government wanted the acquisition.

I say alarm bells because, we are curious to know, for example, in terms of the parcel of land that is being acquired, I understand that there is an area called “Super Trace” and in this Motion they referred to “Spur Trace”. I was wondering if perhaps, it is a mistake or whether it is somewhere else—I do not know—it is a bit vague.

In terms of the establishment of the recreation ground, we would like to know, for example, which agency of the state would, in fact, be establishing this recreation ground. We know that there are Municipal Corporations that governed

the affairs of our various regions and, in light of what is happening at the Siparia Regional Corporation, we have to wonder about the agency that will be spearheading this recreation ground and especially, when the Minister of Local Government is referred to.

We saw in recent times, there has been a move towards decentralization of the affairs of these regional corporations, instead of decentralization as exists under the Municipal Corporations Act. We have to express our concerns and we would like to get a bit more information as to the agency that will, in fact, be establishing this ground. Is it the Minister of Local Government through the Ministry of Local Government? Would it be the Siparia Regional Corporation? Please tell us which of the agencies. Apart from the establishment of the ground and in terms of the maintenance of the grounds *et cetera* what would be the position after this ground is established. Are they going to pitch the ground too? We wonder!

Mr. Vice-President, what about the cost of the acquisition. The hon. Senator mentioned that Caroni 1975, Limited would be paid, and then the tenants would be reimbursed. Perhaps the Senator might be in a position to tell us something about the cost of this particular acquisition, and how soon these people would get their compensation.

Generally, in terms of the purpose, which deals with the establishment of a recreation ground, we have no objections. The Senator did indicate that in that particular area—given the geography of the area—the nearest one is two miles away, and we know that in those areas the population can be quite dense. So, if it is that efforts are being made to establish a recreation ground, in what we may want to refer to as a “rural area”, we have no difficulty with that purpose. But certainly, we would like to know a bit more about the management of the recreation ground and who would eventually be in control.

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

The Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry of Housing and Settlements (Sen. Carol Cuffy Dowlat): Mr. Vice-President, I would like to commend my hon. colleague for some of the issues raised and to indicate to her that, it is “Spur Trace” and not “Super Trace” and as to her enquiries: I am certain that the Senator is well aware that the application was brought to the Ministry of Housing and Settlements on behalf of the Ministry of Local Government.

Municipal Corporations, as the Senator is also well aware, have responsibility for development of recreational sites. So that I have no doubt, that the relevant municipal corporation would be dealing with this issue.

Land Acquisition
[SEN. CUFFY DOWLAT]

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Secondly, on the issue of compensation, again, my hon. colleague is well aware that this matter would be determined by the Valuation Division of the relevant Ministry, so that when that valuation has been completed it would be sent to the Ministry that is acquiring the land and the relevant compensation would then be paid. So it is not an arbitrary process, it is done—I think it is—by the Valuation Division of the Ministry of Finance.

Mr. Vice-President, I think I have attempted to answer the issues raised by my hon. colleague and in these circumstances, we do ask that this Senate approve the decision of the President, to acquire the lands described in the Appendix for the public purpose specified.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved:

That this Senate approve the decision of the President to acquire the lands described in the Appendix for the public purposes specified.

Description of Lands	Public Purposes For which To Be Acquired
<p>Two parcels of land containing 20.233 ha more or less, situate at spur Trace, Penal in the ward of Siparia in the county of St. Patrick and described in the schedule and coloured raw sienna on a plan of survey signed by the director of surveys and dated 2nd January, 1999 and filed in his office is required for a public purpose: Establishment of a Recreation ground.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>SCHEDULE</u></p> <p>Two parcels of land comprising together 2.0233 ha situate at Spur Trace, Penal in the ward of Siparia in the county of St. Patrick. Details of this are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) 1.8248 ha said to belong now or formerly to Caroni (1975) Limited (ii) 0.01985 h said to berong now or formerly to Ramsankar <p>These parcels are more particularly shown coloured raw sienna on a survey plan filed in book 1243 folio 14 in the vault of the Lands and Surveys Department, Knox Street, Port of Spain.</p>	<p>Establishment of a Recreation Ground</p>

**FINANCE (SUPPLEMENTATION AND
VARIATION OF APPROPRIATION) BILL**

Order for second reading read.

The Minister of Finance (Sen. The Hon. Brian Kuei Tung): Mr. Vice-President, I beg to move that a bill entitled "An Act to Supplement and vary the appropriation of the sum issue of which was authorized by the Appropriation Act, 1998/1999" be now read a second time.

Mr. Vice-President, I wish to inform this honourable House that the other place met on Friday, September 3, 1999 and at that time, I approached the other House with a view to a number of proposals which were approved by that place.

These proposals included:

- (a) An increase in the 1998/1999 appropriation by \$87,820,928.00;
- (b) A variation of the 1998/1999 appropriation in the sum of \$55,898,504.00 as follows:
 - (1) Under the recurrent estimates a sum of \$38,298,504.00; and
 - (2) Under the Public Sector Investment Programme a sum of \$17,600,000.00.

Mr. Vice-President, given the increase of \$87,820,928.00, the 1998/1999 appropriation will now be \$313,862,974.00. The increase of this amount that is \$87,820,928.00, is in respect of only one head of expenditure, that is Head 19: Charges on Account of the Public Debt.

Mr. Vice-President, I am asking this honourable Senate for a provision of supplementary funds in the sum of \$87,820,928.00 and I shall provide some of the details for this increase.

The fact is, that supplementary funds in the sum of \$87,820,928.00 are required to meet expenditure under Head 19: Charges on Account of the Public Debt to meet management expenses, principal repayment and interest on 1998/1999

11.10 a.m.

The necessity to seek supplementary funds is as a result of the following: you see, Mr. Vice-President, at the time of the preparation of the Estimates of Expenditure for 1998/1999, the prime rate used to determine payments was 17 per cent, however, the latest forecasts of the fixed prime rate for 1998/1999 stood at 17.5

per cent, but this increase in the prime lending rate only affected those loans that are based on a local floating rate; in other words, it does not affect the fixed rate of lending we have.

You would recognize that the Government has a number of bonds outstanding at any given time. Some are at fixed rates of interest, whereas others have been at floating rates of interest. This means that the rate of interest charged to the Government varies depending on the prime lending rate.

Secondly, Mr. Vice-President, it is as a result of estimates under certain items of expenditure which were reduced during budget preparation based on the information available at that time.

Mr. Vice-President, I would like Members of the Senate to note that the provision of the supplementary funds in the sum of \$87,820,928 under Head 19 will not result in any net increases in the approved 1998/1999 estimates of expenditure as savings have been identified in a number of areas to offset this increase. In other words, what I am seeking today is a supplementary, but in essence, I could have come to the Senate and asked hon. Senators for a variation. The fact is, there were a number of savings in a host of other ministries and several Heads and Subheads, but I found it more convenient to ask for a supplementation of the 1998/1999 estimates because the amount of paper I would have had to supply would have been fairly voluminous. I want to repeat, even though I am asking for an increase in the sum of \$87 million to meet the increased cost of Government debts, there are a number of savings that I have identified which should have said just \$87 million. It would mean that basically we do not expect that there would be any change in our original projection of a small surplus.

Secondly, the variation of the 1998/1999 original appropriation in the sum of \$17,600,000 under the Public Sector Investment Programme, in this case, I am asking for a reduction or decrease in a number of Heads equivalent to the sum of the number of increases I want to make under a number of other Heads to the tune of \$17,600,000.

Mr. Vice-President, Cabinet had agreed on November 19, 1992 that the Ministry of Planning and Development should assume responsibility for the Public Sector Investment Programme. As an integral part of this responsibility, that ministry undertook a review of the performance of the total Public Sector Investment Programme as at May 31, 1999 and based on the analysis of the performance of the Public Sector Investment Programme, the Ministry of Planning and Development recommended a reallocation of funds to a number of

projects and programmes which require additional funding in 1999, as well as a corresponding reduction in allocation to projects and programmes which, unfortunately, had performed below expectations. These recommendations had been approved by Cabinet.

Mr. Vice-President, the variation of expenditure which, as I said, totalled \$17,600,000 in the first instance only affects the development programme. I would just give an idea of the following which provides information on those Heads of Expenditure which are recommended for increase as well as those recommended for decrease.

Mr. Vice-President, under Head 17, the Personnel Department, I am seeking an increase of \$1 million; under Head 21, the Ministry of Planning and Development, an increase of \$3,412,000 under Head 24, the Ministry of Legal Affairs, an increase of \$6,703,000; under Head 25, the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources, a decrease of \$9 million; under Head 26, the Ministry of Education, an increase of \$1 million; under Head 30, the Ministry of Labour and Co-operatives, a decrease of \$2,500,000; under Head 41, the Ministry of Culture and Gender Affairs, a decrease of \$1,400,000; under Head 42, the Ministry of Local Government, an increase of \$5,485,000; under Head 48, the Ministry of Trade & Industry and Consumer Affairs, a decrease of \$1 million; and under Head 51, the Ministry of Public Administration, a decrease in the sum of \$3,700,000.

Those totals therefore have an increase of \$17,600,000 million and a corresponding decrease of \$17,600,000.

Mr. Vice-President, the main reasons which were identified by the Ministry of Planning and Development for the reduction of expenditure on projects and programmes for 1998/1999 are: firstly, a lack of institutional capacity which continues to hamper programme implementation and, secondly, a need for greater improvement in managerial systems and procedures. The details of the programmes and projects that have been varied and explanations of the variations and allocations have already been circulated. Finally, a variation of the 1998/1999 original appropriation in the sum of \$38,298,504 under the recurrent expenditure.

There are Heads of Expenditure under the recurrent estimates that acquire additional funds based on actuary requirement, while there is one that has excess provision.

[MR. PRESIDENT *in the Chair*]

Mr. President, the objective of this exercise, therefore, is to transfer amounts from one expenditure Head that has excess provision to expenditure Head which has a shortfall. The proposed variation of the 1998/1999 appropriation affects the following Heads of Expenditure under the recurrent estimates.

With respect to Heads to be increased: Head 5, Parliament, an increase of \$2.5 million; Head 8, Elections and Boundaries Commission, an increase in the sum of \$11,203,804; Head 22, the Ministry of National Security, \$14,058,000; and Head 42, the Ministry of Local Government, a sum of \$10,536,700, giving a total increase under the four Heads of \$38,298,504.

Mr. President, the Head to be reduced, the Ministry of Finance, in the same sum of \$38,298,504. Explanations of programmes and projects which have been varied under the recurrent estimates have also been circulated to hon. Senators of this House.

Mr. President, in closing, may I remind hon. Senators that the Bill will actually increase the 1998/1999 appropriation by \$87,828,928; total amount to be appropriated for 1998/1999 will therefore be \$13,313,862,974.

With these words, I beg to move that a Bill to supplement and vary the appropriation of the sum, the issue of which was authorized by the Appropriation Act, 1998/1999 be now read a second time.

Question proposed.

Sen. Danny Montano: Mr. President, the hon. Minister started off by explaining that his supplemental appropriation of \$87 million is likely to be covered in his annual expenditure by budgetary savings in other departments, but that it would be rather voluminous in paperwork to actually do a variation of appropriation rather than going the simple route of a supplemental appropriation.

I understand what the Minister is saying, but we are nearly at the end of the financial year, and, in fact, I do not really want to get into a budget debate before we have a budget. I would have felt that it would have been appropriate, notwithstanding the volume that he might have presented us with. It might have been appropriate and ought to have been appropriate; in fact, it is an appropriation rather than a supplemental at this time.

Mr. President, I understand that \$87 million is but a mere 0.7 per cent of the total budget. So, if in fact, the Minister is saying that at the end of the year he has over-budgeted by a mere 0.7 per cent, I would say that is not too bad, but this is

not a business we are talking about, this is in fact, the people's moneys that we are talking about. I think we have to look at any supplemental appropriation very carefully to see exactly what we are dealing with.

I looked at the Schedule which was circulated and I looked at page 6, and I would like fellow Senators who are interested in what we are talking about to follow me. On page 6, Head 19 dealing with the charges on account of the public debt, the Minister indicated that certain increases, in terms of notes, were subject to floating rates of interest and these had to be adjusted because the local prime rate had increased from 17 per cent to 17.5 per cent.

Mr. President, I would advise you that an increase of 0.5 per cent on 17 per cent is 2.94 per cent increase, so there is an overall increase from what the Minister is saying from 17 to 17.5 which is an increase in the rate of 2.94 per cent. It is a half of a per cent when based on a hundred; when based on 17, it is 2.94 per cent.

I would like Senators, and I would like you to follow me, Sir. Subitem 27, \$10 million, 7.15 per cent bonds, March 1996—2000. The first column, provision in the original estimates was \$357,500. That actually would start at 3.575 per cent. It has now been corrected to \$715,000 which is, in fact, as the note says, 7.15 per cent. It begs the question if the note is stated at 7.15 per cent, how could anyone budget 3.5 per cent, because that is the fixed rate bond.

The next line item which is subitem 45: \$145,310,000 floating rate notes 1988—2002. The provision in the original estimates was \$10,898,250. That rate of interest is 7.5 per cent, and it has been increased to \$22,222,340 and that rate of interest is 15.29 per cent. The amount of the increase is 103.9 per cent. While the Minister is saying that the increase in the interest is only 2.94 per cent, we have an increase of 103.9 per cent.

Line Item 51: \$206,740,000 fixed and floating rate bonds. The original interest was \$28,547,120, that would sell at 13.8 per cent. The revised is \$31,094,807; that is 15.04 per cent, an increase of 8.9 per cent.

The next one again is line item 53: \$50 million, floating rate bonds as at 10—14 March. The original amount in the Estimates was \$3,875,000 which is a rate of 7.75 per cent. The revised rate is \$7,875,000; that rate is 15.75 per cent. The amount of the increase represents 103 per cent of the original amount.

Mr. President, the point I am making is that these appear to be budgetary errors and do not seem to have a lot to do with changes in the floating rate, maybe

a small part of it. It seems to me, Sir, what we are talking about are budgetary errors.

The other thing that concerns me also, I recall when we were debating Sen. Dr. St. Cyr's motion on the economy—no, it was not that, it was on the occasion when the Minister was asking for an increase in the borrowing limits. He had indicated then that the average borrowing rate in US currency was between 8.5 and 10 per cent, and the borrowing rates locally were between 12 and 13.5 per cent. That is what I recalled him saying.

11.25 a.m.

But, Mr. President, what I see here, in fact, is what is actually being spent is considerably in excess of what the Minister led us to believe on that occasion.

In Subitem 45, the revised amount is 15.29 per cent; in Subitem 51, it is 15.04 per cent; in 53, it is 15.75 per cent and in 54, it is 16.95 per cent. If you go to Subitem 71 on page 8, it is 18.09 per cent. So, one gets a rather skewed view of what is actually taking place, and one begins to question the veracity of what the Minister says.

On page 10 of the Schedule, included in the charges on account of the public debt and the management expenses, Item 004, Subitem 02, Management Expenses – Foreign, the provision in the original estimates was \$9 million; it has been revised to \$17 million, an increase of \$8 million. I would very much like to know to whom that is being paid—the whole amount—and what was the reason for the increase?

Mr. President, I also ask on Item 005, Subitem 09, External Commercial Bank Creditors of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, the original estimate was \$24,206,594 and the revised is \$31,206,594, an increase of \$7 million. Now, what we are talking about are external creditors of the Government. I ask: Who incurred those liabilities? How were they incurred? For what were they incurred?

The other matters on the Schedule, I am sure that my colleagues will ask the Minister to explain. But, while we are talking about money and an increase in the appropriation of some \$87 million which, as we can see, is to pay for our loans, our borrowings and so forth; when we are talking about interest, then it is important that we talk about surpluses and deficits. The Minister says that he still expects to have a surplus by the end of the year, but the Central Bank, as I read out on the last occasion when we were dealing with the last issue that the Minister brought to increase the borrowing limits, indicated that by the end of April there was a budgetary deficit of \$788 million.

Now, I do know that the Minister plans to sell shares in the National Enterprises Limited (NEL), which are essentially the shares of TSTT, plus the National Flour Mills Limited and Trinidad Cement Limited, and the asking price is some \$600 million. I understand that is going on the auction block before the end of September, and those numbers may come in to offset that budgetary shortfall.

Allow me to say at this point that I consider that a shoddy way of doing business and an unfortunate way of trying to balance one's budget at this time. We are, in fact, selling the family's assets to cover our living expenses and, whereas I am in general support of the Minister's statement that his Government is not in the business of being in business, and I certainly support that policy and, therefore, I support the policy, generally, of divestment, I am not in support of the policy of sacrificing our assets in order to salvage our budgetary deficits. That is the opposition.

What we should be doing is replacing one asset with another and we should be selling assets and building schools, and we should be saying we are going to take the \$600 million and build \$600 million in schools or \$600 million in hospitals or something of the sort. I am not satisfied that is an appropriate measure at all.

Furthermore, on the eve of the opening of all the public schools, it is a shocking indictment of the scandal of waste and mismanagement within the present Government, when it can move helter skelter and complete the hangar down at Chaguaramas for the Miss Universe Pageant on a very strict time schedule, spending approximately \$80 million fixing it and everything else that has been spent down there. That was a very tight deadline and, in fact, the estimates are that it was well over \$100 million which was spent. But when it comes to spending a mere \$18 million to upgrade and repair our schools, we do not seem to be able to get the deadlines right. It does not take rocket science to understand that there is a complete imbalance in the priorities of this Government.

Not only that, the Government has clearly demonstrated that when it wants to do something quickly of that nature, it can do it. We had three or four acres of the Savannah paved in a weekend. I am astounded that they were able to do the engineering studies, the environmental impact studies, the whole thing and pave it in a weekend, and spend \$4 million in the process, but we cannot get our schools repaired and opened on time. It is a shocking indictment.

At the same time, while that is taking place, we unfortunately have a power failure in the centre of the city and the hospital is without lights, without a

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working generator and the Intensive Care Unit is stuck there with patients being manually ventilated by the nurses, and there are no lights at all, barely even flashlights. It was only the lights of the television cameras that allowed the doctors and the nurses to attend to their patients and what did they receive in reward? Chastisement. They were escorted out with security.

Mr. President, much is said by this Government about accountability and transparency.

Sen. Mohammed: Far from it.

Sen. D. Montano: Accountability is not accounting. They are quite different concepts. It is interesting to note, at this point, that as we are preparing for a new budget and for the last year of this Government's administration, that they will be held accountable to the people of the country and these questions are going to loom very large in the minds of all the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago. It is disappointing, but we can look forward to a change and we can look forward to better management. It is only a question of time.

Mr. President, we could talk about many things insofar as money is concerned, but I will reserve my comments for a later date when we have more time and when the Minister has had a chance to present his budget for the last year of the UNC Government.

Thank you, Sir.

Sen. Prof. John Spence: Mr. President, I am sorry to hear that we are short of time today. I did not realize that. [*Laughter*]

There are three or four things that I would like to comment on in the Bill itself. I must say, of course, not being an accountant, I do not understand the figures and so forth, so I was glad that Sen. Montano addressed some of these. I must say, just on the face of it, by simple arithmetic, it did surprise me in that an interest rate increase of .5 per cent could result in \$87 million worth of increased expenditure. My simple arithmetic will tell me then that the amount we must be borrowing is \$87 million multiplied by 200, but perhaps I do not understand these matters of high finance, and perhaps the Minister of Finance should explain it to us in simple terms. But I was certainly worried about that \$87 million, not so much because it was there and, obviously, if it has to be paid, it has to be paid; but I could not really understand it.

The second point I make is that I found it surprising that the Ministry of Finance could find \$38 million worth of savings. I am almost tempted to ask the

question: Does the Minister of Finance deliberately pad his own Ministry's budget in order to find savings when they are needed here and there? Because a saving of \$38 million, would seem to me, to be a very substantial saving.

The third point I make is that I am very surprised that there are no variations to do with the Tobago House of Assembly. I thought that would be one with all sorts of expenditure that would need to be juggled about. Perhaps I should say that I am very pleased to see that the Tobago House of Assembly has no financial problems as far as the Minister of Finance goes.

Finally, I take this opportunity to talk a bit about—really, I think variation of appropriation is really dealing with financial management. It really is a question of how well you were able to manage your affairs. No doubt, there will be some unforeseen circumstances such as an increase in the interest rates, but Sen. Montano pointed out that perhaps that increase of \$87 million was not all due to increase in interest rates, so financial management is extremely important. That means that the Government has to be on its toes always whenever there is expenditure that seems unjustified.

With that in mind, I am going to use as an example, a recent activity in which I considered there to have been most unjustified expenditure of taxpayers' funds. I refer to the paving of the Savannah. One of the problems with this issue is there is great confusion between whether the Savannah should be paved or not, and the way it was done, particularly the financial expenditure. So, I think it is important that one separates the two issues so that people can understand the implications of the use of the funds. To do this, I have suggested that there are five issues, all of which were quite separate from each other.

The first issue is: who has the authority over the grounds which were paved? The second is: were proper design works prepared before the work was commenced? The third is: were funds available for the work and was a proper contract made? The fourth is: should that part of the Savannah be paved? That is the one that we keep confusing with the others. And, fifthly: what should be done now? Especially as there seems to be unauthorized expenditure.

I have broken down those five issues into a number of questions which I think are important from the point of view of how, as a community, we address this aberration, I would call it, especially as it involves taxpayers' funds and bad financial management.

Who has authority? The first question I would ask is: Did Mr. Carlos John have this authority? The answer would seem to be no.

Secondly, if he did not have, was permission given by the proper authority? Again, the answer would seem to be no. Because the two Ministers who seem to be involved in the Savannah both say that they did not give authority.

What are the laws governing the Savannah? Well, the laws are rather ancient but, nevertheless, they still apply. They were captured in 1980 when our laws were being redone although the original law was 1882 and, then the regulations were made in 1923 but they were captured in 1980 when the laws were gathered together. Sen. Daly would, no doubt, be able to explain that more fully than I.

The only point that we need to note here is that it is illegal to dig grass up from the Savannah without permission, so any interference with the grounds is an illegal act.

Fourthly, who is responsible for managing the grounds of the Savannah? Well, my understanding is that the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources is responsible through a management committee which was being set up by Cabinet. So, that deals with the first question.

11.40 a.m.

The second question is, were proper design works prepared before the work was commenced? This is a very difficult one to answer because we have no information. The questions I would ask are:

- (i) who prepared the design works, if any?
- (ii) who approved the design works?
- (iii) was an Environmental Impact Assessment done?
- (iv) was an assessment made of the drainage which was needed in works of that sort?
- (v) was an assessment made of the water table in the area? and
- (vi) was Town and Country Planning Division's permission necessary, and was it obtained?

The answers to all those questions are not known. One can glean, from public pronouncements, that there would not have been time to do all of that. But since the Government has been completely silent on these matters, one does not know whether there were design works, what specifications were given and whether the Ministry of Works and Transport had a hand in assessing the design works. All of these involve whether there is proper expenditure or not.

Mr. President, with respect to drainage, for example, on Sunday I drove up a road in Champs Fleurs which had been relatively recently resurfaced. That road is completely erupted with holes, potholes and cracks, because of underground water. What is extremely interesting is the contractor involved in that work, I am told, is the same one who is involved in the work in the Savannah. But that is by the way. The fact of the matter is if you do not do proper design works, in this country with the soil that we have; underground water will undermine anything that you do. Have we, indeed, spent \$2.5 million of taxpayers' money, which should have been going to some of the other deficiencies which the hon. Minister of Finance had and had to get money from here and there to fulfil? Indeed, as has been pointed out: it is just about the sum that was needed for the standby generator in the hospital.

I must say that I would have forgiven the Chairman of the Regional Health Authority if he had gone out and bought a standby generator for the hospital. [*Desk thumping*] But to spend it on this, when it may, indeed, be very shortly disrupted. I have talked with drainage engineers and university professors on this subject. They assure me that if you do not have proper underground drainage in that sort of work, in a very short space of time, there will be damage to the surface.

With respect to the Environmental Impact Assessment, was any assessment done of the runoff that occurs when you pave five acres of land? Already I am told—by people who drove around the savannah last week with the heavy shower of rain—it is clear that the volume of water coming down into that section of the south-east of the Savannah, has greatly increased, they could see it visually, even without an Environmental Impact Assessment.

Is there going to be a cost in compensating people for floods? Of course we do not compensate people at all. On the television last night was a woman who was in great distress because she is just constantly flooded and she has given up—unemployed, with a child, and all of her belongings were destroyed by flood. Another gentleman, because a contractor put down a load of gravel and blocked where the run off of the water would occur, he is flooded out. Who is responsible? Does he go to court? How can a poor man go to court? Would he get legal aid to sue whom, the contractor, the Government, whom?

I know we tend not to take the Town and Country Planning approval very seriously, but I would like somebody to tell me whether, indeed, it is possible to remove a large area of grass and replace it by a solid surface without the Town and Country Planning's permission? I would very much like to know that,

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because if that is so, then certainly it must be ensured when the new Bill comes in for discussion again the next session, that we make that sort of provision. If I am on that committee next year I should certainly do that if it is not the case. It would surprise me if it was. I tried to find out from the Town and Country Planning Division whether it was indeed so, but my call was not returned.

Again, it is a problem of expenditure which may not, in fact, do the job—even if it were properly done, properly approved, it would not do the job—because of the lack of—It is horrific to think that, perhaps, something like this may be happening at the Airport. I assume at the Airport there are properly designed works that the Ministry of Works and Transport has approved and so forth. But this is just the Savannah: what does it matter? It is the principle, Mr. President, whether it is \$2 million or \$200 million, that is not the way you do it.

Were funds available for the work and was a proper contract made? Did the National Carnival Commission (NCC) have the funds available for this work? The Chairman has said that he is anticipating next year's budget. Clearly he did not have the funds for this work. Was there a written or verbal contract? We do not know. Was there a tendering process? He says not. What were the terms of the verbal contract, if it was a verbal contract? We do not know. Has the Ministry of Finance called for a copy of the contract? I would be grateful if the hon. Minister would tell me in his winding-up. Have they called for a copy? Has the Ministry of Works and Transport called for the design? Have they asked whether there was a design or not? Did the contract specify the size of the area to be paved?

When the Chairman first came on the television he said: "about two acres". It turns out to be six. It would seem, on the face of it, that there was a verbal contract to pave two acres that certainly spread into six. So, what sort of contract is that? Even if it was a verbal contract—surely even in a verbal contract when you are spending \$2.5 million you know what area of surface you are going to deal with, because you have to know what materials you are going to put into it. It is absolutely amazing! Were taxpayers funds involved and what is the cost? We still do not know the cost. The figure of \$2.5 million—but if the contract was as loose as that, how do we know that it will stick at \$2.5 million? The contractor may, indeed, say: "Well you know you varied the contract from two acres to six acres, it is now \$6 million." If it is as loose as that, you will have to pay. Somebody will have to pay. I hope not the taxpayer. Were taxpayers' funds involved? Seemingly yes, because the Chairman of the NCC said that next year's budget was going to be used.

I see that there is a slightly different tack now, no doubt, because of the reaction to that. I said that this was anticipating and usurping the functions of Parliament. Now it is being said that rental from the area of land will pay for the paving. Now let us examine that in a while. If the paved area is rented out, who gets the income? Again it involves taxpayers money: either income that we should earn or money that we spend. Why should the Government of Trinidad and Tobago say to a private organization: "Here is part of our property which you can rent and earn income from." Why should they do that? If any income is earned from the renting from that place, it must come into government coffers, into taxpayers' money: to build schools, to look after hospitals or to look after the savannah. How can we say to a private organization: "Here is a government property; here is Whitehall, here is Knowsley: rent it out and earn income from it." Who earns the income? Of course, this is not an idle question.

In fact, if you read the *Express* newspapers of Sunday, September 05, 1999, there is already, I quote:

"Show producers rush for paved Savannah."

It appears as if this newspaper report is correct: the NCC is already receiving cash for renting out an area of the Savannah that does not belong to them. I mean it is unbelievable! Not only was the original action done, but it continues to be done. Of course, I have no doubt that it should continue because there was no reaction from the Government. Not one member of the Government has said that this action is inappropriate. [*Desk thumping*]

This gentleman has treated two ministers like doormats. He does not consult them. He does what he wants with things under their jurisdiction. We should have respect for our ministers. What example is this? [*Desk thumping*] And by implication, the whole Government. Because, even if the ministers had a problem at a particular time, Cabinet has met on this issue. No statement, nothing at all. No protection for the two ministers. So does the Government, as a whole, agree to this sort of action and this sort of treatment to their ministers? It is an extremely important issue, because what we think of the Government, very largely, determines how we act in a society.

11.50 p.m.

This is why I insist on speaking about it at every opportunity, because it has more far reaching effects than people are seeing. They are only seeing it as an issue and, indeed, Mr. President, it is most unfortunate. The matter is being

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degenerated into—as the Chairman said—“people who go down the islands and the masses who have no place to go”. I will address that a little later.

Here is an article by the Treasurer of the United National Congress, which states:

“Meanwhile Senators Julian Kenny, Muhummad Shabazz and John Spence, along with the other opponents of change...”

“opponents of change”—I, who have fought for change all my life!

“will continue to sip cold drinks in the cool of a Grand Stand Box...”

I have never been in a Grand Stand Box!

This is just a deliberate attempt to try to set up ordinary folk. They are being told that they are being deprived of an opportunity by many privileged people. That is what the Chairman tried to do until Eden Shand pointed that out to him and he backed off a bit. But it clearly is going in a most unfortunate direction, because the issues are being lost. That is why I keep coming back to the issue. The issue is, one, an illegal action by an action in property that did not belong to, or was not under the control of the person who did the action, and an irregular financial action by using funds that were not available.

Mr. President, who gets the income? I know where it should go. Who gives permission for the rental of that area which is being paved? Certainly not the National Carnival Commission. I am told that the Cabinet Minute which, in fact, goes back to the PNM times, was quite clear. The Minister of Culture and Gender Affairs is in charge of the Grand Stand and the Minister of Agriculture, Lands and Marine Resources is in charge of the grounds. The Minister of Agriculture, Lands and Marine Resources gives his permission for use of that area through the Savannah Management Committee, which was set up by Cabinet.

The question that is occupying most people's mind is, “should the savannah be paved?” Now, that is a separate issue; but I will give some points on it as well. That does not have to do with the financial management, but that is what is being used to justify all sorts of irregular activities. Who will benefit from the paving of the savannah? Well I suppose those organizations that put on fetes and concerts in the savannah [*Interruption*] and the armed forces for their military parade. First of all, is there any alternative parade ground? I will address the one on that question, subsequently. Why can we not have the military parade in Chaguaramas, and provide buses for people to go?

Mr. President: Senator Spence, I have permitted a virtual discourse on the paving of the savannah on the basis of a connection with moneys being spent. I think your last point now is veering off totally from the financial aspect which is what today's debate is all about. If you wish to continue I would advise that you get back on the financial track, rather than on matters outside that area.

Sen. Prof. J. Spence: Thank you, Mr. President. I was coming to that.

Mr. President: Well, please do it urgently.

Sen. Prof. J. Spence: The fact of the matter is that if we do not provide that area for recreation, we have to provide another area and that would involve expenditure of funds. Mr. President, if you think I am out of order with my proposal I will discontinue. But my proposal comes from an idea, which I think will be in a letter to the newspaper shortly sent by Mrs. Miller, that we should think about building a proper facility for recreational purposes.

It is not the case that expenditure of public funds for recreational purposes for the people who attend concerts is being disregarded, but the money is to be properly spent. If we want to provide a proper concert facility, out on the foreshore is very much better for all concerned. Mr. President, if you would allow me just very quickly a side question—I suppose it involves money as well—if we have that facility where it is now suggested that we have it, the patients in the hospital are going to be under a great deal of discomfort. Perhaps, we would have to spend more funds in treating them for various mental illnesses, in addition to their physical illnesses. *[Laughter]* I think what we should do is build a proper facility in an area where we would not have to spend various sets of money for correcting the problems that we have.

In the view of expenditure as well, there is a proposal that the trade fair should could go there. We have just spent a couple of million dollars putting down a site for a trade fair in Golden Grove. Is that to be completely abandoned? That is what I mean by spending public funds. We set up a trade site: Tourism and Industrial Development Corporation sponsors the site up at Golden Grove; the arguments are that it is near to the airport so people bringing in goods for display could come in through the airport, and then we suddenly say, "But no, that site is no good, we have to use another site." And we are building a Millennium Dome, why is it not on that site at Golden Grove? Why are we wasting how many millions of dollars we spent to repair that site? Again, I am afraid it all comes back to money.

I have some recommendations, Mr. President, and I will leave out the ones that may not be directly related to finance. It would be very difficult to, because I

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think it is very much interconnected. I certainly think the Ministry of Works should assess the paving to know whether it means that more money is going to be expended, subsequently, to put it right. The Minister of Finance should certainly ask the question about the expenditure, because they will have to provide the additional funds if it goes wrong.

I think Cabinet should instruct the Savannah Management Committee that any funds which come in from that source, which I believe are public funds, should not go to a private source. If it is necessary to remove the paved area, as I think it is, that expenditure should not be taxpayers' funds. The expenditure in correcting what has been incorrectly done must be the responsibility of the National Carnival Commission; I am very strong on that. No taxpayers' funds must be used for that purpose, otherwise we will have the hon. Minister coming for a Variation of Appropriation next year, because he spent all the money in trying to correct what was wrong there. I will mention about the noise again. No loud sound producing activities should be allowed there.

Mr. President, I am going to try your patience with a final comment. What has happened here has very much, in my opinion, weakened the position of the Government, and I think that is an extremely unfortunate circumstance. One of the things that happened to Prime Minister Chambers is the joke started, and already the jokes have started in Port of Spain about who is Prime Minister. That saddens me. I cannot give the jokes now; I would give them to my colleagues over tea. [*Interruption*]

Sen. Daly: Come on John. [*Laughter*]

Sen. Prof. J. Spence: We will have it over tea. What is going on? What is the reaction? Something has to be done. The Government has to show that it is not condoning irregularities, which involve finances, even if the sums are only \$2.5 million, even if it is only the cost of a standby generator in the hospital.

Quite frankly, my own opinion would be, if the Government does not ask Mr. John to resign, then they certainly have weakened their position. [*Desk thumping*]

Thank you.

Sen. Rev. Daniel Teelucksingh: Mr. President, I use as my guide the Schedule as supplied by the hon. Minister of Finance. I think that I may need some explanation later on, and if I am in error I am sure that he would correct me when he is responding.

I begin with Part I of the Schedule, indicating an increase of \$2.5 million for Parliament. I know that this \$2.5 million in his explanation is for the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Conference, but it comes under the budget of the Parliament. On the day of the blackout rain fell. We are talking about accountability and public spending—I do not think that the figure was ever released concerning the refurbishing of certain rooms in the Parliament. Even here in the major Chamber, rain fell and there was a bucket in the corner there.

Mr. President, there are many homes in Trinidad that would never have this kind of expensive carpet, but this is taxpayers' money, not to talk about the dining room. I felt so sorry that I told one of the girls, "Give me the buckets in the kitchen and we are going to put it there to save the equipment bought by the taxpayers of Trinidad and Tobago, only recently". [*Desk thumping*] We had to collect buckets! Yet one of the ladies said, "Look, we are putting one of the buckets here, let me show you that corner." It was as though there was no galvanize on the top.

How could we find \$2.5 million—[*Interruption*] We are talking about accountability. What about the millions we have spent to refurbish this place that is being destroyed? Here it is the Minister is asking for an increase of \$2.5 million under the budget for Parliament. Mr. President, I feel that we need to do better. It is the small things that really count, maybe the small figures that amount to some \$13 billion, put them all together and that is the budget for the fiscal year closing. This is only the first part, and I am concerned about it.

The question of debt servicing—an increase of \$87.8 million—is extremely important for a developing country as ours. If out of a total of \$13 billion in our budget to run the country, we are spending about \$4.5 billion in debt servicing, that is quite a lot. This has to do with the mega projects that we have in mind and the budgeting for the new fiscal year. There are some very serious mega projects on stream. I have heard about the desalination project, that is a big one, comparable to the airport, maybe. [*Interruption*] I know that all of these are good projects. We are talking about these mega projects, and also the small ones. Prof. Spence spoke about a small one. We will always be speaking about the pageant and the millions we spent there. It is no wonder that out of a budget of \$13 billion we are spending \$4.5 billion in debt servicing, and at the rate we are going, in the new fiscal year, it could be more than that with new borrowings, and we need to look at that.

12.05 p.m.

Mr. President, on page 8 there is some reference to the upgrading of a health facility for \$69 million. It has to do with bonds. We are talking about loans again.

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For the fiscal year 1998 to 1999, the estimates of expenditure indicate a budget allocation to the Ministry of Health of \$802 million plus \$307,000 and so forth for the fiscal year closing. There is widespread dissatisfaction with the health sector which has spanned several years, and with regard to the many issues in health, I do not believe that we could really seriously query and dispute the dissatisfactions experienced and expressed.

In last week's sittings of this honourable Senate, the focus was on accountability, responsibility and transparency and it comes again today. I am sure that this must be uppermost in the mind of the hon. Minister of Finance in the preparation of the budget. Why, we have to ask, when I look at floating bonds to raise a further \$69 million for the health sector or—[*Interruption*] All right, I know you will correct me, but I am talking about health. There is a health facility that is to be upgraded to the tune of this amount. Mr. President, I am going back to the moneys we have just spent in the fiscal year closing, \$802 million plus for health and the reference to \$69 million here, maybe it might be included in that.

The question I have to ask and we must ask is, as one fiscal year closes and we are thinking about another, why with such an enormous allocation—and it is worrying me; it has to bug us—for the health sector there continues to be so much embarrassment as far as health is concerned? I wonder what has become of the health surcharge to which several taxpayers contribute? Is it going to the Consolidated Fund? We all ask these questions. This is a special tax and yet people are dissatisfied with the kind of service one gets from this sector.

I know one time the hon. Minister of Finance told me, unofficially, that his job is just to fix up the figures, balance the figures, prepare the budget and there are others who have to make sure that this thing works. We are talking about accountability but when Cabinet meets, and with all of these criticisms of the health sector, I am sure the Minister of Finance must be worried to know, “I am giving you almost a billion dollars for health and still almost every day there are complaints. Well, what is being done with all this money that I as Minister of Finance and the others, my advisers give—what do you do with all of this money?” It has to be an important question.

Mr. President, we only have two major hospitals in Trinidad—I am not talking about Mount Hope—two general hospitals and a few district health centres. Recently we had administrative changes in health with the establishment of the Regional Health Authorities. Do not forget, if it had not been for the invaluable assistance of private health institutions we would be in serious trouble. They have taken up the slack, and thank God for these private institutions. As we look at

\$802 million and more being put aside for the fiscal year closing, and this item comes up in the Schedule in the appropriation, the Supplemental Bill, the nagging question is about really productivity and management. Who is asking about accountability, productivity and management of the people's money?

Mr. President, I have my doubts about commissions of inquiry but I still would like to suggest—and I know that the health sector pleads for investigation—at this time the need to appoint an independent commission of inquiry to inquire into and investigate these pertinent issues related to the functioning of the health sector. I do not believe that Government must merely make budgetary allocations to ministries and leave it there and come back by the end of September or the beginning of October with a bundle of paper and make more allocations.

I just want to comment, Mr. President, as I close, on the question of accountability and responsibility and administration and management of the people's funds. Sen. Prof. Spence made reference to some job done by the Ministry of Works in the Champs Fleurs area and I know what he is talking about. Mr. President, we—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Prof. Spence: If I could just correct the Senator, it was done by a private contractor not by the Ministry of Works and Transport.

Sen. Rev. D. Teelucksingh: Who pays the private contractor?

Sen. Prof. Spence: The Government.

Sen. Rev. D. Teelucksingh: Government pays, this is what I am talking about. It comes from government funds. That was just a comment on that because we know that finally it comes from the Minister of Finance. He is the one who pays.

In this country ever so often we see works being done on, let us say, our roads. I am not an engineer, Mr. President, but I see mud being put in potholes and I will like—when I say mud I mean the lowest grade of material gravel from the pits, unwashed. I am not talking about this Government but I am talking about a problem that has been there for many years inherited by the Government, but it is true. Just let the rain fall and you will not want to pass there. Now tell me! I would like to see the bills submitted to possibly the various responsible ministries, whether those bills are for expensive materials or for mud.

We need to look at how the people's money is being spent. It is not a question of just coming here and approving allocations such as the Minister is doing. I

really would appeal to the hon. Minister of Finance to go beyond fixing up the figures only and giving it to us and adjusting them and seeing that the sums work out right, but in a right place, in the correct place among his colleagues, he needs to ask questions about accountability, responsibility and management of the funds that he is disbursing to these various ministries.

I know it has not been easy for the Government, never easy for this Government. I know I have heard them say time and time again that they have only had three and a half years to reform, let us say, the same health sector. However, somebody said to me and I would like to—I could say it. A good friend said to me, and he is very politically aware, that the results of the next general elections for the Government in power will depend on what they do with the health sector. I thank you very much, Sir.

Sen. Mahadeo Jagmohan: Mr. President, thank you for the recognition to speak on the Bill before the Senate. I wish to state also the point lamented by distinguished Sen. Prof. John Spence about the way two Ministers were treated recently on that particular project on which I will not elaborate. I recall last week the hon. Minister of Finance saying that some Chief Executive Officers have more powers than Government Ministers. That is the answer. What steps have you taken, Government, to correct that? The Chief Executive Officers do not have a mandate from the people; they have a mandate from the Government. It is totally a matter for you to decide.

Last week we heard in the Constitution (Amdt.) Bill one word being overused in this Parliament—scrutiny. The hon. Attorney General went out of his way to talk about scrutiny, so we are indeed scrutinizing a few things here. Before I proceed I want to state that, although I do not have the genius of Sen. Montano to deal with financial matters, [*Desk thumping*] I want to say indeed he is a genius and his examination and scrutiny of the Bill before the Senate is worthy of admiration. [*Desk thumping*] [*Interruption*] Mr. President, who knows, he will be the next Minister of Finance.

A great deal of money is being managed, handled or perhaps I could take the chance to say some of it is mismanaged as well, by the Ministry of Tourism. I will come to specifics, Sir. Unless the crime situation is controlled in this country, tourism will not fare well. Dr. Ramesh Deosaran of the University has a whole dissertation on that matter. I became bothered when I saw the total figure of \$87 million being taken from the Consolidated Fund as supplemental sums to other ministries and departments. My congratulations, Minister Gangar.

I believe, Sir, ever since I had some dealings with ministries and the public service, in a small way, our understanding was that the Consolidated Fund is money that should be guarded zealously. This money should be looked at in the event there are crises in the country, excessive flooding as we are having, hurricane or earthquake or whatever, and the Government has to hurriedly put programmes in place which it never envisaged or programmed for. I am wondering whether it is a good thing to remove money from the Consolidated Fund. I know it is a good thing to put money into the Consolidated Fund. So this is something that we all ought to be concerned about, but the Minister of Finance, who has a way of explaining these things, will at some time or the other—the large sums of money spent on doing many things that are not really necessary in this country.

I also wish to join with the others who have echoed the shortcomings in the health sector, the Ministry of Health, particularly the larger institutions. If the Government, through the Ministry of Health, had taken into account the performance of medical doctors, nurses and other medical personnel, we would not have had the bad situation that now exists at the San Fernando and Port of Spain General Hospitals. I think it is worse at the San Fernando General Hospital, the question of adequate supply of all that is required to run an effective health service.

Mr. President, there should be no negotiations, there should be no prodding of anyone or pleading or encouraging people to have properly functioning stand-by generators in all our institutions, might I say in the Parliament Chamber as well. Weekly we read about a shortage of dialysis machines, which is a life saving set-up in Trinidad and Tobago. People who need a certain kind of treatment must be taken to where these dialysis machines are and we understand there is an acute shortage.

12.20 p.m.

I do not want to beat that dead horse of paving the savannah. I want to stay a little far from that. But if they had paved a lesser amount and saved half of it, if they had—I am not supporting—they would have bought sufficient dialysis machines to save lives at the hospital.

No longer do they have drugs in the pharmacies of the health centres. The very poor people, poorly clothed and unfed on the days they have to go to the outpatient clinics, will leave with a prescription and they will stay in the line for four hours and, when they reach the pharmacists—some of these pharmacists with

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sad-looking eyes and faces—they will say they do not have these drugs here, you have to go and buy them elsewhere.

But we can do so many other things: an airport for how many billions of dollars, unnecessary spending all over the place. I merely wish to state that we expect the Government to prioritize in these areas, but it seems as though the Government is hell-bent on giving the next government to the PNM on a platter by the way it is dealing with some of those matters. The PNM would prefer a little fight, you know.

I want to refer to this document that is captioned, the Finance (Supplementation and Variation of Appropriation) Bill. I want to refer to page 5, item (b), decrease in allocation in the sum of \$2.5 million in the Ministry of Labour and Co-operatives. Somewhere I saw in some of these documents that the Ministry of Labour and Co-operatives decided that a certain sum of money would have been spent on infrastructure work at the Cipriani College of Labour and Co-operative Studies, but because of some reason this money was not spent, so the Minister of Finance is seeking a decrease in that amount.

We are aware, Sir, that staff is not up-to-date at the Cipriani College of Labour and Co-operative Studies. The library service there is presently rundown. There are not enough reference books and whatever else is necessary in a library. We are wondering why this sum of money, which was actually targeted to be spent on the Cipriani College of Labour and Co-operative Studies is being decreased in the Ministry of Labour and Co-operatives.

I have agitated here over the few years, Sir, that the facilities at the Cipriani College of Labour and Co-operative Studies be extended in a more tangible manner to the city of San Fernando, that is, either a building be built or bought in order to carry out some of the said programmes that are carried out right now at the Cipriani College of Labour and Co-operative Studies. These programmes are carried out in San Fernando in a piecemeal or minuscule manner, in the sense that people do not pay much attention to them, but there is tremendous difficulty for people from Icacos, Cedros, Point Fortin, Rio Claro, Princes Town, Moruga, Erin, Siparia and other small towns nearer San Fernando, to get to Valsayn in order to pursue courses at the Cipriani College of Labour and Co-operative Studies. But these pleas have fallen on deaf ears. It does not seem as though the Government is prepared to strengthen the labour movement and labour studies in the country.

As I say that Sir, I come to a point where I want to refer you to this blue document, *Details of Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*. On page 202, approval

was given to the Minister of Finance to give a subvention or allocation to the National Trade Union Centre for institutional strengthening. We saw nothing in the present documents. Maybe we will hear about it in the budget that is coming up, but we are hoping that that sum of money has already been granted to the National Trade Union Centre for institutional strengthening and that, when the next budget is being presented, that amount would be doubled, trebled, quadrupled or whatever, but there should be an increase.

I have no quarrel about the fact that the Ministry of Finance has allocated to itself \$38 million more in its variation of budgeting procedures. I am enquiring from the Minister, whether part of this money is meant to be the money that would be used for the implementation of the pension plan for Government daily-paid workers, which is long overdue? If so, we are happy to learn about that.

We wish to enquire of the hon. Minister of Finance—what is the status of the pension for Government daily-paid workers? Is it all ready to be executed or about to be executed? Or has it been put on the back burner because the front burners are very hot or not operating presently? Will you kindly tell us about that, Sir?

We have observed that there is an increase—I hope I have read it right—of \$14,058,000 in the Ministry of National Security. We are hoping that this increase will take care of a new fire station in San Fernando. We are hoping that this is part of the works. If it is not so, we hope to hear about it in the budget.

Within recent times, I do not know about the environs of the city of Port of Spain, but in the country districts we are seeing some of the police vehicles shutting down all over the place, and sometimes in times of crises. We are hoping that this increase will see an arrangement for staffing, or whatever has to take place, for speedy repairs and maintenance of these vehicles. I am sure the Government would want to see them work, but we want to see them work much more than the Government would like to.

We have also observed a reduction of \$1.4 million in the Ministry of Culture and Gender Affairs, but then, it is nicely put that this is to forego some development plan of the National Archives. I am sure I understood it to be that way, Madam Minister.

Sen. Dr. Phillips: No.

Sen. M. Jagmohan: No? Well it is for general funding of the Ministry of Culture and Gender Affairs. It is my hope that some of the very vicious debates

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permeating the atmosphere and the newspapers these days—with some key players, like the immediate past Director of Culture and, indeed, my good friend, the Secretary General of the Sanatan Dharma Maha Sabha, and other people engaged in healthy discussions, with respect to assistance in carrying out religious programmes, particularly Divali 1999. It is my hope that the funding would be swift and adequate for all the organizations and that this decrease will not affect the funding. We thank you in advance, Minister, for good consideration.

Sen. Dr. Phillips: Mr. President, just for a point of clarification in relation to the last comment. The \$1.4 million which is identified in the Ministry of Culture and Gender Affairs is not from recurrent expenditure; it is from the Development Programme and, as you know, we cannot shift from one to the other. That was for the work to be done on the National Archives. What has happened to keep that work back was that we had to wait to do the work of getting the contracts, getting them signed, identifying the company that would do the job, and that took several months. However, that has been done and the project is now on line. Therefore, this is the reason that money was deducted, the project is now online, the rest of the money has been used.

Thank you very much.

Sen. M. Jagmohan: I am glad that the Minister gave some kind of explanation, but I did not want to encroach on lunch time, Sir, but I am taking two or three minutes to round off. Do I have your permission, Sir?

Mr. President, I merely wish to point out on page 14 of this long document, something is mentioned regarding the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources. No one is saying anything these days. The critics and the reporters have dumped that question under the aegis of the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources, where it had a crew or section dealing with the Mealy Bug attacking crops. The Mealy Bug is very prevalent in the County of St. Patrick, attacking crops like ochroes and the sorrel as well. We hope the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources will pay attention to this.

Mr. President, I do not know what the Planning and Development people are doing, how contractors are building indiscriminately and bringing undue hardship on poor people who had built their homes long before certain big projects. Whether they have to resite the projects or the homes of the people; some consideration should be given.

Nightly, it is very distressing to see on the television the poorest of the poor being pressured in a way that is hurtful [*Desk thumping*] for us other citizens to

see what flooding is doing, what landslides are doing, and all this is coming about because of indiscriminate planning or poor construction, and we do have systems in this country to take care of these situations. The survey of flooding that is affecting citizens in this country is tremendous. Food prices will soar and escalate if we do not control the flooding in this country. *[Desk thumping]* I wish to state, Aranguéz is most outstanding in producing food, but there are many other areas in Trinidad producing food and need help.

So, Mr. President, it is our hope—we of the People's National Movement—that programmes will be swiftly put into action to alleviate the distress of sick and suffering people who are poor and cannot afford to pay for medical attention at the prestigious private institutions, referred to by my brother Sen. Rev. Teelucksingh, and that, the drainage and flooding problems will get some priority so that the poorest of the poor will not continue to have their lives devastated.

I thank you, Mr. President.

Mr. President: We will break for lunch at this stage. The sitting is now suspended until 1.45 p.m.

12.35 p.m.: *Sitting suspended.*

1.45 p.m.: *Sitting resumed.*

Sen. Cynthia Alfred: Mr. President, I would like to make some fairly brief comments on the Finance (Supplementation and Variation of Appropriation) (1998/1999) Bill and to deal specifically with the PSIP.

Mr. President, I noticed under the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources, that in respect of the Agricultural Sector Technical Assistance Programme, \$9 million were taken from that programme and given elsewhere. The question is, if there is any section that needs its moneys, it is the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources *[Desk thumping]*

When I noticed, that at the end of May, of the original sum of \$21,378,000.00 provided under this programme—so we are going from October to May—only \$1.375 million were utilized and, then I noticed that it was said that it was largely as a result of the protracted nature of the procurement processes experienced by the Ministry of Agriculture. One of the main activities under this programme was the hiring of consultants.

Mr. President, everyone knows that the Ministry of Agriculture is one of the Ministries that has been experiencing great difficulty in getting its programmes

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off the ground. It seems to me, to be able only to spend this small amount of money—when they were fortunate to get this great amount of money—and to say that they did not have time to hire more than two sets of consultants, is telling us that the Ministry of Agriculture has not yet got itself together. From the look of things it would not, because there is only one year for the Ministry of Agriculture, under this present Government, to be doing what it is supposed to do, but it seems not be able to get off the ground. *[Desk thumping]*

Mr. President, I suspect that the only reason why only \$9 million dollars were allocated is because it would look bad to put another figure. I am almost certain that when we come around to the budget, we would recognize that if the Ministry of Agriculture were to spend the difference between the \$9 million and the \$1.375 million, we would find that they would have a lot of money still that would have been unutilized.

Let me look at the Ministry of Education but I want to tie it up with the Tobago House of Assembly. Now, it would appear to me that the Tobago House of Assembly—mention of it is here—the Ministry seems to have been “screamingly” silent, in respect of the Tobago House of Assembly—nothing at all. So because there was nothing, we asked the question, what happened with respect to the Tobago House of Assembly? What I was told is that the Tobago House of Assembly had asked for an original sum of \$5 million under the URP, but they got \$4 million and then they asked for an additional \$1 million which they did not get.

So I mention this to tie it up here with the Ministry of Education because it says: Procurement of Furniture and Equipment for Secondary Schools. Now the particular section of the URP in Tobago that needed the balance from the \$4 million and the additional million—even if they could not get the additional million—is the section that deals with furniture for schools. So here we have noticed that the Ministry of Education has an increase of \$1 million for Furniture and Equipment but the Tobago House of Assembly—apparently, I do not know if arrangements have been made since this came about—but so far we see nothing here for that.

On the other side of the coin—I notice it is not mentioned here, but I must mention—in respect of the Tobago House of Assembly and the National Housing Authority, it would be public knowledge by now, that the Tobago House of Assembly requested the \$4.1 million collected in Tobago by the National Housing Authority, in respect of lands at Signal Hill. I understand that the THA has requested those moneys. I am glad to see that those moneys have not been

appropriated, because by now, it would be common knowledge that the Tobago House of Assembly, under its secretary for Housing and Environment *et cetera*, took it upon themselves to close down the National Housing Office and lock out the people. They went even further to call a meeting of all the stakeholders and tell them that the THA would be given the responsibility to give out lands at Signal Hill.

Mr. President, in itself that is not so bad on the surface, but what is bad about it is, the THA has now imposed new terms on persons who have already paid for their lands. In some cases \$15,000.00 to \$20,000.00 extra. The Tobago House of Assembly has set the figures because persons who were in that position have come to Councillor London, Assemblyman Mc Kenzie, and me. They have been imposed additional fees, that is one; they have been told that they would not get a deed, and also that if they do not pay the additional funds or build in three years, they will forfeit the land.

Mr. President, I ask you what is the Assembly thinking? I make the point because whereas on the one hand, the furniture for schools—I believe that should be looked at because the schools need the furniture—but on the other hand, we cannot see for one moment, how the Tobago House of Assembly expects to ride roughshod over the people, and to demand from the National Housing Authority, funds that were collected, but they want to impose their own rules and regulations on these people.

Perhaps, it is a good thing that this is happening now, for people to recognize that the Tobago House of Assembly does not have absolute power—I do not know if there is any such thing as absolute power—but when one has a certain amount of responsibility and decides to abuse it, then there is cause for concern.

I looked under the Ministry of Local Government and it says: “\$5.485 million for upgrading and improvement of local bridges”. I wondered at one time, if the money for the Tobago House of Assembly had gone under Local Government—obviously, it could not and even though URP is funded from the Ministry of Local Government, it says here, “upgrading and improvement of local bridges,” so that does not handle the question of furniture.

1.55 p.m.

I want to mention that in respect of schools and the Ministry of Local Government, I saw in today's *Trinidad Guardian* September 07, 1999 the heading which says:

“New Term, Old Woes

No school for some, no books for others”

The part that really interested me, apart from what I might consider the disgraceful situation in so many schools not being able to be opened, is where it is reported that:

“Education Minister Dr. Adesh Nanan also blamed the Opposition People’s National Movement for the fact that some of the schools were not prepared for yesterday’s reopening.

He said repairs were to be handled by the regional corporations, adding that in some instances the PNM controlled councils did not do the necessary repairs.”

Mr. President, I ask the question: Is the Ministry of Local Government responsible for repairing schools? The answer I got was “no”. It is not in the Local Government laws or regulations or whatever, but even if some verbal agreement was made to single out the Opposition PNM, that is one; and even if, in fact, the regional council were supposed to repair the schools, we have to bear in mind that we just had an election on July 12. The question is: Did the Ministry of Local Government release the sums through the regional corporation? I have my doubts.

The Minister of Education went on further to say that there was a section in the Ministry which was responsible for repairing schools, but he abolished that section because they were inefficient, but if that was the case, then I would venture to say that he has no authority to blame the Opposition People’s National Movement, and the regional corporations in respect of repairing schools. If the Government knows that it has a responsibility to see that schools are prepared in time, let the Government see to its responsibility and not shift the blame to the Opposition.

The last point I would like to make is in respect of the public sector. I noticed that in respect of the Ministry of Public Administration, it seems to me that a Ministry as important as public administration did not spend something like \$3.7 million and they have the various Heads under which they did not. The one that struck me first, Mr. President, was Construction of Administrative Complexes - \$1,400,000

“This project was allocated the sum of \$2,210,000 in the 1998/1999 PSIP to facilitate design and commencement of construction of an Administrative Complex in Siparia.”

Mr. President, when I saw that word “Siparia” I said maybe that is the key word and maybe that is the reason none of this money—

It goes on:

“It is now anticipated that the design consultancy will commence in the current fiscal year at an estimated cost of \$590,000. As a result, the sum of \$1,400,000 is available for re-allocation.”

Mr. President, when I saw the word “Siparia”, I wondered. When we go down to the other services, we have to remember that the Ministry of Public Administration is one of the most important ministries in the whole country and when there are things like Institutional Strengthening of the Employee Development Division—the Minister of Public Administration is not here and I do not like to say things behind people’s backs, but I know it is common knowledge that the Minister talks very fluently about public administration—but when you have:

“Institutional Strengthening of the Employee Development Division –
Decrease of \$1,200,000

“The project was allocated \$2,200,000 in the 1998/99 PSIP. As at the end of February 1999 no expenditure was incurred. Expenditure in the amount of \$1,000,000 will be spent on programmes for staff development, refurbishment of the Government Training Centre at Chaguaramas and the purchase of computer and office equipment by year end. Funds in the sum of \$1,200,000 will be available for re-allocation.”

Mr. President, I suggest that the word be passed on to the Minister of Public Administration that if that particular ministry does not utilize its funds to the optimum, then the country as a whole would suffer, because you are talking about staff, real estate and all sorts of things concerned with the development of the people. This is personnel, Mr. President, and, of course, the personnel not having the various facilities to do a better job than they are doing so far, the ministry has been rather tardy in utilizing the funds that it was provided.

Having made these points, I thank you very much for the opportunity and hope when the Minister winds up he would give us some explanation, particularly in respect of the Tobago House of Assembly requesting \$5 million and getting \$4 million, and whether, in fact, they will get that extra million to complete the furniture which is needed for the primary and, especially, the secondary schools.

Thank you.

Sen. Dr. Eastlyn Mc Kenzie: Mr. President, I would be very brief because many people have brought up the points I wanted to ask.

Like Sen. Alfred, I would like to get some sort of clarity from the Minister of Finance because in Tobago we have the pronouncements by the Chief Secretary about the starvation of Tobago for funds by the central uncaring government and the stranglehold on our finances, our purse strings, and the act of the Central Government holding Tobagonians to ransom. These pronouncements are made so public that I think we need to have a response coming from Trinidad so that we would understand what is really the situation.

I would ask whether the hon. Minister of Finance included in the \$1 million any allocation for furniture and equipment for the wing at Signal Hill that has been completed for approximately three years and is yet to be occupied.

Mr. President, I would like to find out why is it that we come to the Senate with this type of Bill so late in the financial year. I am sure there is some sort of accounting reason. I think just at the close of the financial year to come to the Senate with a Bill of this nature makes me ask another question.

We are increasing the Elections and Boundaries vote by \$10.5 million because we wanted \$13 million, and I think we know in advance the time-frame within which we should have a local government election, and I would like to know whether this was an oversight, or is it because there is no specific date set that we cannot put that in the budget for the particular year.

Sen. Jagmohan has already asked whether we have any money earmarked for the flooding, or whether we have enough. I want to stress the point made by Sen. Alfred about the situation as regards money between the Tobago House of Assembly and the Ministry of Housing and Settlements. There is a crisis and I am hoping that the hon. Minister of Finance and the Ministry of Housing and Settlements would sit and work things out because it is really getting to crisis proportions in Tobago. If not, I would like to tell the Minister that probably in his budget for 1999—2000, he would need to put in an item called “Legal fees, Tobago House of Assembly versus the Central Government” because I can tell him from the pronouncements on the radio and in the newspapers and the speeches, that there is a financial crisis situation developing and growing in Tobago, and I think we need to ask the Minister of Finance to see how things are working out because already the Tobago House of Assembly is demanding that revenues under the Bill, according to the Tobago House of Assembly Act, No. 40 of 1996, be deposited in Tobago and if this does not happen, there are going to be

consequences. I am not sure these things are written to the Minister or the Government, but I can tell you that they have been made public and he needs to look at this.

Again, in the area of finance, the Tobago House of Assembly is demanding the moneys paid to the National Housing Authority when they had an agreement with the people of Tobago to pay for lands in Tobago developed in Tobago, probably at the expense of the National Housing Authority.

The cry from the Tobago House of Assembly is now that they are going to control this, they are going to change the agreement made between the National Housing Authority and the applicants; the applicants are saying they have no agreement with the Tobago House of Assembly, they have an agreement with the National Housing Authority and are going to sue them. I am saying all this involves money and, therefore, I hope the Minister of Finance is listening and he would question further and try to work this out and see—not only what the financial implications may be—but also what would be the legal implications for this type of—I do not know what to call it—it is really a bacchanal this time.

Mr. President, I see the need for the Bill, I understand, and I thank you for the opportunity of making my contribution.

Sen. Prof. Julian Kenny: Mr. President I also would be quite brief. The only sort of budget with which I am familiar is my own personal one. I do occasionally have to have certain things done and occasionally I hire a contractor. I am always intrigued by the contractor's presentation to me; there was always a mysterious "10 per cent contingencies."

I think we ought to congratulate the Minister of Finance in that if you take the increase, it is a mere 0.65 per cent—it is nothing, it suggests a very, very orderly development of the budget.

Mr. President, I would like to use an analogy to compare a budget with building a road and in a sense in our development, each mile of the road towards development is built in a certain way.

2.10 p.m.

It starts off with a proper foundation called a sub-base on which you lay a layer of crushed stone which you roll and compact down, which you do, of course, in the best time of the year, the dry season, and then you top it with black top, or asphalt of some kind, or pitch.

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Now, Mr. President, roads built to the highest specification do suffer wear and tear, that is, from vehicle use or accidents; falls into potholes and so forth. In fact, to have gone through effectively a year of the budget, or a year of wear and tear to find that the increase is only 0.65 per cent, I think, suggests some very, very careful budgeting and management.

Mr. President, I am sure that you have passed near the Pitch Lake; I am sure that most people here have and, at one time, there used to be signs warning you about, "Pitch creek crossing". When you build a road, you have to be careful that when you lay down your foundation, you are not laying it down on pitch creek, because with pitch creek, the wear of the traffic squeezes the pitch out and, eventually, the road goes as we have all seen. I am not going to speak at great length about a matter which has already been raised by someone with whom I am frequently confused.

I would like to suggest that on this matter and on any other matter, the rule of law prevails. Again, I focus on an issue which has been of some concern to me in this Parliament—I am sure it should be of concern to the Government as well, too—which is, the laws regarding our environment, in fact, if we take that particular place, the savannah, it would have been declared an historic site under the National Trust Act, which has lapsed because we waste our time in one way or the other.

Under the Environmental Management Act, that same place would have been declared a sensitive area. Unfortunately, the rules which have been drafted by the Environmental Management Authority have not come to Parliament because there is need of a minor amendment to the Act to establish the Environmental Commission. I have said it now for about the third time.

The law to come, the Planning and Development of Land Bill, which has lapsed for the second time, would declare that particular place a special interest area. Those are all the terms used in these various pieces of legislation.

Finally, under the Parks and Protected Areas Bill, which has lapsed, that particular place would have been considered a monument. So, here we are as legislators going through, passing or attempting to pass these things to protect a part of the environment which is very, very important to our national culture—and I do not mean one part of the national culture—things are lapsing. In other words, we have permitted a major pitch creek into our culture. [*Laughter*]

Thank you, Mr. President.

Sen. Prof. Kenneth Ramchand: Mr. President, I will be very brief.

Sen. Shabazz: What!

Sen. Prof. K. Ramchand: As usual. [*Laughter*] My contribution is really asking for something, but I hope this will not prevent the Minister from taking it on.

When I heard that the Minister of Finance was coming to Parliament with this Bill, hope sprang up on a matter about which I have already taken a vow of speech celibacy. It entered my head that something further might be possible with respect to the recommendations of the former Textbook Evaluation Committee. I switched into this optimistic mode because, after Government accepted the recommendations of the former Textbook Evaluation Committee, it went on to implement, in its own way, the most immediately necessary, if not the most important of the recommendations, that is to say, the recommendation with respect to prescribed lists. I do not think that is the most important of the recommendations of the Textbook Evaluation Committee but it is the one that needed to be carried out first.

Now that the schools have reopened—some of them—and the prescribed books—one of them—are being enforced, I half expected that the present Bill would have addressed at least two other recommendations, one of which is the most important, the most far-reaching, radical and appropriate for education in Trinidad and Tobago. It is, perhaps, also going to be the most expensive and the most difficult. That is why I hoped that a start might be about to be made now.

I make it clear, Mr. President, that I am not using this place or this Bill as an opportunity to encourage any instability in the school year. The school year has started. A certain textbook policy is in place. I happen not to agree with it, but I am not using this place and this Bill as an opportunity to create any instability. The children are in school; let it be so.

But I refer to something that is very important in the educational system and that is a proposal the committee put forward for the establishment of a Committee for the Creation of Teaching and Learning Material.

I am not able to provide the Minister with the costing, but it seems to me useful, at this point, to outline the proposal to him so that he himself might be able to estimate what would be required to fund this project.

The proposal for a Committee for the Creation of Teaching and Learning Material came out of the realization that the book is no longer the main or the

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only teaching and learning device, either in the schools or in the world at large. There is a need, therefore, without abandoning the book—because we cannot really abandon the book—to redesign the notion of the textbook to make it compatible with some of the other technological aids that have come in.

A child reading the textbook can be led out of the textbook into a computer; the child reading the textbook can be led into the use of video; the child reading the textbook can be led into the cinema or to a film; the child reading the textbook can be led out to theatre; to other forms of presentations; to other forms of performance; to other activities. So that all these technical means in the traditional culture—the traditional culture is very technical—and in the new technological culture that are available, and that are a part of learning, would have to be incorporated into the design of the new textbook.

A committee established for the creation of such textbooks would have to take in specialists in all these areas and they would have to sit and work out what the new textbook would look like. This textbook would get its core from a meeting of minds in that some of the best teachers in the country of the different subjects would be brought together under the aegis of the Ministry to talk about what is essential in these subjects to be part of the textbook. They would have to talk, as I said, with the technical people. I know it would be expensive, Mr. President, and I know the Minister will start to back off as soon as I talk about it and you might think that I am not talking about finance, but I am talking about—

Mr. President: Let me tell you what I am thinking. You perhaps are making a very valuable contribution, but not on this Bill, please.

Sen. Prof. K. Ramchand: Yes, Mr. President. I hope the Minister has begun to be interested and that we can talk. The second point and I hope this will be relevant, and if it is not—

Mr. President: I will tell you if it is.

Sen. Prof. K. Ramchand:—just grant me two minutes to say it anyway.
[*Laughter*]

One of the recommendations of the committee is that if you have a prescribed list and some books on the prescribed list are being used by a school, when the committee arrived at the “one book policy”—because it was the committee that arrived at the “one book policy”—on the grounds of economy and convenience, it felt that there were some educational disadvantages to the one-book policy and the way to offset that was that Government should purchase 10 or 15 copies of all

the other books on the prescribed list to supply to schools. So that if a school were using six of the books, the other 12 would be supplied, 10 to 15 copies of each to the school libraries in each of the 477 schools.

I think this is relevant because I heard the Minister of Education say that the Ministry would be considering this, subject to the availability of funds, so I would be very grateful if the Minister could bear this proposal in mind and listen to the plaint of the Minister of Education that he would be interested in doing this if he could have some money to do it. I urge the Minister, please, in this appropriation, to let the Minister of Education have some money to do what he would like to do.

I thank you.

Sen. Muhummad Shabazz: Mr. President, I, too, will be brief. I would not take my entire hour. I guarantee you that I would not even go more than 55 minutes.

Let me first start off by going directly to a part of this Bill about which I am very much concerned. That part deals with national security. I am watching at what has happened between 1998 and 1999 in the Ministry of National Security. This section kind of boggles my mind and I would really like the Minister to give me some kind of understanding about the Ministry of National Security.

In 1998, the provision for the Ministry of National Security was \$998,972,800. For this year, the budgeted amount was \$1,104,028,100.

2.25 p.m.

This is what I am seeing, either the figures are incorrect or something must be wrong. That, from my calculation, I think is \$105,055,000. This is an increase. Last year there was a decrease by \$120,965,000. If you look at the decrease last year and the increase this year, the ministry was out by approximately \$200,000 from last year's figure. So the ministry was run with \$878,000. Because there was a decrease of \$120,000. The figure for this year is \$1,104,000,000 and you are still asking for \$14 million more. That, seems to be confusing. I would really like the minister to explain. In truth and in fact, that is a difference of approximately \$105,000,000. If the decrease of the \$120,000 is added, the ministry was run with approximately \$220 million more. They have explanations as to where some of the money went, but I would like to know. When I heard Sen. Prof. Spence speaking, he said that maybe, money was padded in the Ministry of Finance. I do not know if this was a pad up or a padding here too. I would really like the minister to explain why there was an increase of so much money and they still have to come for an increase of \$14 million.

Mr. President, it is very simple to understand how well a government and a country is doing. All one has to do is look at the performance of the ministries. The way in which the ministries are performing would tell you how the Government is doing. We look at certain things: we look at the Ministry of Local Government, page 18 of the 1999 report shows that the ministry is asking for an increase of \$16 million. In the 1998 report, page 15, there was an increase of \$2 million. Again, there was a budget allocation of \$532 million, it increased to \$597 million and the ministry is asking for an increase of \$16 million. Not only that, where would some of this increase be going?

San Juan/Laventille Regional Corporation	-	\$475,000
Sangre Grande Regional Corporation	-	\$254,000
Couva/Tabaquite/Talparo Regional Corporation		-\$375,000
Siparia Regional Corporation	-	\$ 252,000

As the Senator said before, when we hear the word “Siparia” it always has a certain kind of effect on us. But Siparia increased by \$252,000. When we look at these allocations they seem to go in special places. Maybe because it was an election year the increase, as they have explained, is that amount. We would like to be clearer on where these increases went and why they went there. There seems to be another reason and another motive for sending this money to the Ministry of Local Government, and the amount that was sent.

With respect to agriculture, page 14 of the 1999 Schedule. When we talk about agriculture, one of the things we are sure about, is this Government came into power saying how much they would do for agriculture. They were supposed to be the government that would take agriculture on the high road, make this country forget the oil sector, and agriculture would have been one of the biggest non-oil places where they would have produced as greatly as they could have. What are we now seeing? Every year—I am almost certain, because in 1998/1999—there is always a decrease under agriculture. They are not doing any work in agriculture. They keep putting a lot of money there. I want to make this point that a lot of the money that is put in agriculture—I have no objection to that, I always wanted to say that and I am going to develop that more in the budget—is really to keep Caroni (1975) Limited happy when they kick up and ask for \$45 million, \$25 million or \$35 million. They keep putting that money there to ensure that payments go in that direction.

When I make the point here that money hardly goes to the Ministry of Local Government, or the money that is sent to the Ministry of Local Government has nothing to do with making sure that the people in these various bodies in Local Government; the Unemployment Relief Programme get work or anything like that. It is money that they are sending there. There is a philosophy in the Ministry of Local Government that the minister—and this is where we are having the big debate—the corporation and the administrative personnel are the ones who are supposed to control the corporation, rather than the elected people. We are saying that it is supposed to be different, send money in there, give it to people, let them use it to develop the areas.

You see the flooding that we are seeing—people are talking about the flooding. I do not want to knock the Minister of Works and Transport, but I find it so strange that since this Government has come into power there has been a strange kind of flooding on the East/West Corridor. There is more flooding in Central. I do not know if the way in which this minister is doing his work and building his bridges and his rivers—like he is trying to send the water out of Central and sending it to us. Send the water out of everybody's area. Try to send that water into the sea or try to utilize that water so that you do not have to build a desalination plant for this large amount of money that you are talking about. [*Desk thumping*]. I do not know what the minister is doing but it is the strangest set of flooding. People are talking about the way this country is being run.

This morning I saw on the news: a 73-year-old man's house is flooded out. He is walking and sleeping from neighbor to neighbour. Not one of the ministers went to visit him or to see what could be done, and we are talking about money to be spent in various places and in various areas.

Mr. President, I am waiting on the budget because I want to hear what the Government is coming to tell the people. I want to talk about this—as I said, I would not go beyond 55 minutes, Mr. President—and I want to let them know that there are a number of things that must be done. You cannot believe, Mr. President, that in a country like this we are having so many problems with spending of moneys. Somebody made the point, you went on a project to build—but I will deal with that under culture. Let me get to culture quickly.

What are we seeing taking place in the Ministry of Culture and Gender Affairs? I looked at pages 17 and 20 of the 1998 report—the Ministry of Community Development, Culture and Women's Affairs. Well since 1998 that has now become the Ministry of Culture and Gender Affairs. I think the Minister is no longer responsible for community development. Even though the Minister is

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responsible for culture many things have happened that she is not aware of, but I will deal with that as I go along. She has to look out through a window sometimes to find out what is happening. But before I go deeper into that what has happened?

An important ministry like the Ministry of Culture and Gender Affairs, every year again like agriculture—two important ministries; the Ministry of Culture and Gender Affairs and the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources towards the development of this country. (which should have been big in agriculture) We see, again, every year there is a decrease. In 1998 there was a decrease of \$1.9 million and in 1999 there was a decrease of \$1.4 million. Every year we are seeing a decrease. This is a very important ministry. We are concerned about that. We are concerned because what we find, what we are hearing now, particularly from the Minister of Community Development, is that certain aspects of the culture for example, Best Village *et cetera*, are too monotonous, they are too repetitive and so forth. But these are places where you need to invest money. Let us start off by saying that we need to have a cultural policy, because somebody on that side would get up and say that the PNM did not set up one. But after three years we need to have a cultural policy.

2.35 p.m.

We need to talk about infrastructure and the building of places, when we are going to do it, and how. That is not happening at all. It is just a lot of talking, planning and committees coming together to plan and to talk about moneys being spent for these planning committees, just as they have been doing in agriculture for the last three years that they have been there.

They talked about setting up a planning committee, and they paid the people last year and the year before. This year again money is coming back to do the same thing, only talking and planning. We are saying that we need action. As far as culture is concerned we need some sort of plan. I thought that they might have set up that plan and would have said, "We will spend "X" amount of dollars here."

The environmentalists may have their views about it, but now that I have seen the water running down Chancery Lane I have a slightly different view. I have said it before publicly, that if they are going to pave the savannah, fine. If as they said, they are going to get more people to skate on it or come in to play and more things to happen, fine, but you cannot do it in the manner in which it was done. The Government must be the people responsible for running the show. The show cannot run the Government.

Mr. President: Sen. Shabazz, we have had sufficient discussions on the paving of the savannah. Will you address this Bill please?

Sen. M. Shabazz: Thank you, Mr. President. As I was saying, Sir, there must be a policy for culture. Money must be spent on culture. There should be something in Trinidad and Tobago called a "Cultural Hall". I would like the Minister, in his budget, to speak about building this "Cultural Hall", but not the way they spoke about building the library, just starting it and letting it run for three or four years without being completed. I would like to go so far as to even say that when we build the Cultural Hall, maybe we would have to call in all the interested parties and discuss it, probably even take it to the Savannah—I do not know—or find a place. It may be the best place, when we hear about the noise level and all these things. Mr. President, but again, it cannot be done in the manner that certain things are being done in that geographical area. That must be wrong.

We looked at the question of money for education. Mr. President, you must remember what we told them when they said that they would remove the Common Entrance Examination. There is a newspaper clipping which said, "Do not fool the children of this nation". When they said that they were going to do that examination they should have put the infrastructure in place, find the money, put up the schools and all that was necessary and then say that they were going to remove it. Instead, they are taking \$1 million from the Ministry or adding \$1 million to it, so no money is going towards that. Some schools are not even ready. In fact, schools that are already built are not even ready. What did they say to the people? "We will spend money on a continuous assessment plan to ensure that all children would be in a school by the year 2000 when we remove the Common Entrance Examination." Now, they have come back with a different story.

They have fooled, not only the elders, but also the little children of this nation, the 11-year and 10-year olds who are going to sit the Common Entrance Examination. They are saying that the children must still do an examination to enter secondary school, but they are not calling it the Common Entrance Examination. I do not know what kind of entrance it would be, but as a little child told me the other day that is a very common way for this Government to behave, to raise people's expectations and then do something else; and they continue to do that.

They say that there would be water for everybody by the year 2000, but we could laugh at that, because we know that would not happen. When we look at the figures here, we ask ourselves, what is happening with the Ministry of Public

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Utilities? There is going to be no water—[*Interruption*—well, I guess by natural means there will be water for everybody in Trinidad and Tobago by the year 2000. Maybe they meant there would be water through flooding, they could not have meant by doing the proper things. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. President, before you stop me let me just get back on course again. People talk about the health sector, how much money is coming out from the Ministry of Health? When we look at what has happened during the year in this country, it is difficult to talk anything about finances or what is happening with the people and really not go to the Chaguaramas Centre. Let us look under culture. Although under culture we are seeing no money, over \$100 million has been spent in Chaguaramas and, in the absence of a cultural hall, they have already started to dismantle the Chaguaramas Centre.

Mr. President: Sen. Shabazz, you have me confused. Would you tell me on which part of the Bill you are speaking?

Sen. M. Shabazz: I said culture, Mr. President.

Mr. President: What part of it? You seem to be rambling.

Sen. M. Shabazz: Well, Mr. President, I was taking a little ramble because—
[*Laughter*]

Mr. President: No, please speak on the Bill.

Sen. M. Shabazz: Okay, Mr. President. Under the Ministry of Culture and Gender Affairs, as I have told you, is the sum of \$1.4 million. I want to talk about culture because it is an important issue with what is happening in this country. If they had taken that \$100 million from Chaguaramas and used it properly in the Ministry, they would not have been here asking us for an additional \$1.4 million to go somewhere else. I want to ask them, in their continued planning, to look at the projects they are doing. I think it might be very difficult for them not to come back sometimes and ask for more money, but we would want to know that when we approve the money that they ask for, we feel very comfortable in our hearts.

Mr. President, I would now look at the Elections and Boundaries Commission (EBC). I see that the Government is asking for a big increase this year for the EBC. Last year they wanted none, they said that this is an election year—[*Interruption*—“Oh gosh, leh meh talk nah, allyuh not getting up, but allyuh only getting up when other people talking.” On page 2 they are asking for an increase of \$11,203,804. under the Elections and Boundaries Commission. I looked at the explanation on page 9. What they are saying is that this money was used for the

corporations to ensure that there would be enough money to run the Local Government Election. Having said that, and having looked at the Elections and Boundaries Commission, I just want to close off by telling the other side, that although the elections are completed, the purpose for this money, to ensure that we had a proper election, was not completed, when we look at what has happened, and is still happening, in Siparia.

We are asking them to spend money to ensure that the proper thing is done in Siparia; let the games playing and fooling be done with. The fact that they have spent money in the Elections and Boundaries Commission to ensure that all the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago have proper elections and good corporations to run their areas, tell them to do the same for Siparia/Fyzabad, a constituency that they control.

Mr. President, I want to end by telling this Government that as far as we are concerned, the PNM, the framers of this great democracy that we now have, stand prepared to be the defenders of it, if they continue in the way they are going at this point.

Thank you.

Sen. Nafeesa Mohammed: Thank you. Mr. President, I would make a very brief contribution on the Bill before us this afternoon. After sitting and listening to the hon. Minister of Finance present this Bill, one would have gotten the impression that, as usual, it was a very simple measure where he is seeking an increase from the Consolidated Fund in the sum of \$87,820,928, in order to meet certain expenditures.

In his presentation, he made a lot of references to the prime lending rate and so forth, and he also made the point that he is coming by way of supplementing of the Appropriation Bill as opposed to a Variation of Appropriation Bill. My colleague Sen. Montano certainly has more expertise in this field, and in terms of the actual accounting terminology, I would be the first to admit that it is not in my field. However, when we read the documents provided by the hon. Minister in support of this Bill, particularly the document entitled, "The Finance Supplementation and Variation of Appropriation Bill 1999, it gives an explanation for the variations that are, in fact, taking place.

In looking at this document we would see that one of the first items deals with the increases and decreases with respect to the Public Sector and Investment Programme. At page 4 of this document we see an increase in the allocation in the sum of \$1 million under Head 26, under the Ministry of Education. I thought

today we would have heard from the Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry of Education, Sen. Vimala Tota-Maharaj, but after listening to my colleague, Sen. Alfred, when she made her contribution this afternoon, reference was made to today's headline in the *Trinidad Guardian* newspaper with respect to the Minister of Education blaming the Opposition People's National Movement for the failure of so many schools not opening on time for the new school term. It is an issue that I have to raise in this particular debate taking place this afternoon.

Mr. President, under this Head it says that the sum of \$2 million was allocated in the 1998/1999 Public Sector Investment Programme for the procurement of furniture and equipment for secondary schools. This amount was insufficient to meet all the needs identified in 1998/1999 so, accordingly, additional resources in the sum of \$1 million are required to outfit various secondary schools. When we consider the large number of schools that did not re-open yesterday, I wonder if this sum of money is, in fact, sufficient to equip all these schools that are complaining.

Yesterday, on such a significant day, when so many thousands of the children of our nation would have been returning to school—and everybody knows that it is around this time of year that schools reopen—one would have expected that things would have been put in place so that these children could go to school in a very positive way, confident that they are going to start the new term with a lot of enthusiasm and a desire to do well during the school term. Instead we have been hearing and reading of the disappointments in so many areas in our country where these schools were not opened on time.

2.50 p.m.

When the Minister seeks to blame the PNM for the fact that some of the schools were not prepared for yesterday's reopening, in this article it says that the Minister said:

“He said repairs were to be handled by the regional corporations, adding that in some instances the PNM controlled councils did not do the necessary repairs.”

Only yesterday, Mr. President, I was listening to a radio programme and the person on the air at the time was referring to a particular school in the Charlieville area. Reference was being made to the extent to which the furniture in that particular school was affected by termites and how dangerous it was for these children to attend that particular school. In fact, a call was being made even for those many private sector businessmen, who have been in support of this UNC

Government, to come forward and assist in the school operations. So that school is in an area that is controlled by the UNC. The Chaguanas Borough Corporation would be in charge. So what point is the Minister of Education trying to make?

If the rain falls too heavily they are quick to blame the People's National Movement for it. What is very clear is that the failure yesterday of so many schools to reopen is a clear indictment of the bungling and incompetence that is coming from the Ministry of Education. [*Desk thumping*] In this article it goes further to say that it was the Minister himself who:

“...disbanded the unit known as the Education Facilities Management Unit because of what he called its ‘disappointing performance’ over the last four years.”

Who is this Minister of Education to disband a unit just like that for disappointing performance? It is just like when the textbook fiasco erupted two years ago and it was because of the Minister who caused the short-listing of the books and caused that fiasco to erupt.

Mr. President: Senator, you know very well that you should not be criticizing someone who is not in this Senate. Would you refrain, please?

Sen. N. Mohammed: Thank you very much, Mr. President. I wonder if I will be able to criticize the Government, then, in terms of what I am talking about? And if it is—[*Interruption*] Okay, the Minister of Education is not here but the Parliamentary Secretary is here and I hope that the sentiments being expressed here would, in fact, be conveyed.

Apart from the Minister of Education, Mr. President, we move on to an increase in allocation in the sum of \$5.485 million under Head 42 for the Ministry of Local Government. It talks about reconstruction of local bridges in the sum of \$5,485,000.00:

“The sum of \$2,500,000 allocated in the 1998/1999 PSIP for reconstruction of local bridges was insufficient to meet the urgent needs of the communities in the various Regional Corporations. An additional provision of \$5,485,000 will be required to expedite the upgrading and improvements of local roads and bridges throughout the various Regional Corporations.”

We would like to know, where are these roads that are being upgraded or improved? I know the Minister of Works and Transport is here. Perhaps he can help us. We just came out of a Local Government election and in some areas, Mr. President, money was flowing just like the flood waters flowing down El Socorro

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Road and Aranguez Main Road by this Government where they were rushing to open bridges and paving roads overnight. We would like to know where these roads were improved so that today the Minister of Finance has to come and increase the allocation to cover this obvious election gimmick.

On page 5 of this document it refers here to a decrease in allocation in the sum of \$9 million, Head 25 the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources, and it refers to a reduction of \$9 million from the Agricultural Sector Technical Assistance Programme. This is a clear reflection of the *modus operandi* of this Government. Whichever Ministry one looks at, one would see the Government sidelining technical competence for cheap political purposes. Just like in the Ministry of Education where a whole unit was disbanded, now we see where \$9 million is being moved from the Technical Assistance Programme in the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources.

Mr. President, I have seen documents pertaining to this programme from day one when we came into this Parliament. The former PNM government that has been blamed so much for neglecting the agricultural sector had, in fact, negotiated an agricultural sector loan in order to improve our agricultural sector. We have to ask this Government to give us an account of the status of this agricultural sector. I am sorry our friend, Mr. Kelvin Ramnath, is not in the chamber at this point in time because he comes from the heart of the sugar belt. In terms of this agricultural sector loan we know that there were certain things that had to be put in place. Part of the whole package involved the institutional strengthening of the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources. It involved this Technical Assistance Programme as well and four years after this Government has come into power we read where they are removing funds that had been allocated to it and shifting them elsewhere.

Mr. President, when we look at statistics for the agricultural sector for this last year, in fact the last three years, the documents will show and prove that the agricultural sector has been declining under this UNC Government. [*Desk thumping*] If ever there is a Ministry that requires technical competence at this point in time, it is the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources. [*Desk thumping*] Because, left up to those who are in charge, we know that we are going to get nowhere just like the froghopper disease. So that, it is a sad day, especially when we are seeing such a great decline in the agricultural sector, Mr. President, to see them removing \$9 million from this sector.

Whilst we are on that score, I should like to ask the Minister of Finance if, perhaps, it may not be too late for him to give consideration to making funds

available to compensate the hundreds of farmers who have recently been devastated by the floods in Aranguez, El Socorro, Barataria and so many other areas in this country, Mr. President. These people have suffered tremendous losses and all we are asking is for a little assistance to buy some seeds or to get some seedlings to restart a new crop.

We are pleading for the Government, particularly through the Ministry of Works and Transport, to come and alleviate their plight by doing some proper drainage works. In much of the discussions that have taken place here today on these variations, Mr. President, we have heard a lot of talk about drainage. That is a critical problem that is causing the flooding in these areas in recent times. The Minister of Works and Transport is here and everywhere one goes people are complaining that the drains are not being cleaned and maintained properly, especially over the last two or three years.

I call on the Minister of Works and Transport to do something quickly to try to alleviate this problem, especially in the Aranguez area. The people will tell you that recently the Ministry contracted a company to do some work and the work already is in a poor state where the tunnels that had been placed are too small to accommodate the flow of water. It is only when a disaster strikes, Mr. President, that one sees the Minister of Works and Transport jumping in with bulldozers and all sorts of heavy equipment to give the impression that he is doing something. Last year it was the Caparo River and this year it is in the Aranguez area. In that area one will see where they started work two or three years ago to dredge the river, not from the mouth of the river coming up but from the northern side going down, and they have stopped three-quarter way so that all the water is backing up.

Again, whilst we talk about this Technical Assistance Programme, one sees that under the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources there is a rural access roads programme that has been going on long before the UNC came into power. This is a programme that the PNM had gotten off the ground. When we talk about rural access roads, Mr. President, it is an important issue in our country. This is why I have to link this flooding problem with the removal of the allocation from the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources.

Under the last PNM government negotiations had, in fact, been taking place for a special programme called a flood and drainage programme. Some US \$80 million was being negotiated in order to tackle this serious problem of flooding that has been affecting us in north, central and south Trinidad for a number of years. Yet they are quick to say that the PNM was there for 30 and 34 years and did nothing. This was a clear example of the PNM government trying to tackle this

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problem in a significant way. I want the Minister of Works and Transport to tell us, what is the status of this flood and drainage control programme? It seems to be at a halt. We do not know. If you look at the budget documents you will see where every year it is a question of delays.

Sen. Baksh: Mr. President, the 40 years that it took to negotiate the loan by the PNM is still incomplete. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. N. Mohammed: Mr. President, I stand here and I accuse the Minister of Works and Transport of misleading the Parliament and the country once again.

Mr. President: Let us get on to the Bill, please? Stop this. [*Interruptions*] Just deal with the Bill, Please? [*Interruptions*] Members, some order, please?

Sen. N. Mohammed: Mr. President, recently I read where the Minister of Works and Transport said that since 1967 a road or a highway was being promised to Point Fortin.

Mr. President: Senator, please, please, you are rambling quite a lot also. Please deal with the Bill?

Sen. N. Mohammed: Mr. President, I do apologize. I can recall seeing in these documents that we are debating here today an allocation referring to some works with the Point Fortin Highway. However, if it is that you do not wish for me to deal with the issue, I will not deal with it.

Mr. President: If you want to refer to it, identify the page and the item and speak on it but do not just make remarks that one has to conclude that you are rambling.

Sen. N. Mohammed: Mr. President, in any event, we were dealing with the Technical Assistance Programme and I will not be sidetracked by the present Minister of Works and Transport. They say you can fool the people some of the time but you cannot fool the people all of the time.

So, Mr. President, coming back to the reduction in the allocation to the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources, I ask the hon. Minister of Finance to please tell us what is the status of the agricultural sector loan. I remember this was a loan that involved the disbursements of funds in three tranches. In fact, I understand that some time ago the Minister of Planning and Development made some pronouncements saying that some \$30 million will be obtained. Please give us some facts. What is the state of that loan? In order to access the funds for that loan there are certain conditionalities that must be met. We have discussed this so many times in this Parliament. One of those conditions involves the economic viability of Caroni (1975) Limited.

We have spoken so many times about the tripartite report. In recent times we have been hearing about trips, some transformation imperative plan that they have formulated, and they have left out the people who are going to be affected the most by this transition. These people are the workers who are involved in the cane fields and in Caroni (1975) Limited as a company. They talk about accountability, transparency and consultation and the people who are involved in this process have complained about being exempted from the process.

I raise this issue of the agricultural sector loan, Mr. President, because for every day that goes by that we do not access these funds, we have to pay a penalty. There is something in the loan contract that was laid here in the Parliament for all to see called a commitment fee. That fee has to be paid whether the money is accessed immediately or not. The Minister of Finance should be telling us how much money this Government is spending simply paying the commitment fees with respect to that agricultural sector loan and which of the tranches we have accessed now. Mr. President, we want some more accountability in this country and in this Parliament. We want more transparency.

3.05 p.m.

Mr. President, there is an item here that deals with the construction of administrative complexes. They are actually decreasing a sum that was allocated to the Ministry of Public Administration. You know, what is very bothersome to us, is that they go around the country saying that the PNM neglected the rural areas and the PNM did not care for the rural areas. That is so far from the truth. It is almost an obsession, and there are some who seem to be stuck in the past, they are too caught up. As I said once, maybe they need to have a back in times party.

I remember seeing in certain documents where, in fact, allocations had been made for the construction of administrative complexes in several parts of this country: Tunapuna, Chaguanas, Princes Town. So far, I think it is only one complex which has been opened, it might be the Tunapuna Administrative Complex, which was initiated and built under the PNM. What is the position with the Chaguanas and the Princes Town Complexes? Now we are seeing that the Siparia Complex is falling by the wayside too! Nothing is happening! The whole idea was to bring all the Government agencies in a particular area all together in one building.

If one goes to the Tunapuna Complex one would see the lovely facilities that exist there. There is the Magistrate's Court; one can pay one's land and building taxes; I think there is a branch of the Town and Country Planning Division

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operating there. It is such a beautiful one-stop building where one can go and get one's business done. What is happening at Princes Town and Chaguanas? I hope the Minister would tell us something.

Mr. President, there is just one last item to which I want to refer. It is on page 11 of this document, I think this is the part of the document which deals with the explanations for the variation of the programmes under the recurrent expenditure. On page 11, it deals with increase in allocation of the sum of \$10.5 million, Head 42, Ministry of Local Government—Unemployment Relief Programme, \$8.7 million. It says here:

“Cabinet on May 27, 1999 agreed to the provision of funds in the sum of \$13.10 million so as to enable completion of the 1998/1999 Unemployment Relief Programme. However, after inter-Ministry transfers, the sum of only \$8.720 million is required as supplementary funding.”

You see, they exhausted what was allocated to them in the Budget, and in the recently held Local Government Elections, especially in the marginal constituencies, we know how they were “mamaguying” the people there by trying to recruit them and have them work in the Unemployment Relief Programme. In fact, they were holding the people to ransom and telling them if they did not come out to their meetings and support their party, they would not get jobs in the Unemployment Relief Programme. *[Interruption]* That is not misleading, that is a statement of fact.

The PNM has been accused of using the Unemployment Relief Programme as a political tool. The NAR talked about improving the management systems. This Government started off by saying they were going to depoliticize the Unemployment Relief Programme and, if ever the Unemployment Relief Programme has become politicized, it is under the United National Congress. *[Desk thumping]* If they want evidence, I invite them to go to the San Juan/Barataria area where the Member of Parliament has a direct hand and controls who gets employed in the Unemployment Relief Programme there. That is how they operated it. They are just using the regional corporation to simply do paperwork. The people are held to ransom because they are told that if they do not identify and support them, they will not get work.

The money has run out now. The money is finished! Where has the money gone? We have to wonder. I do not know if the programme has reopened. What is the position now? So here it is they are seeking to increase the sum by \$8.7 million, that was part of their campaign funds, Mr. President.

With these few words, Mr. President, I thank you for the opportunity to contribute to this debate.

The Minister of Finance (Sen. The Hon. Brian Kuei Tung): Thank you very much, Mr. President. Let me also thank Senators on the other side, both the Opposition and the Independents for the contributions they have made.

As I said in my presentation of this Bill, a review of the PSIP had been done as at the end of May, and if it is one thing I would like to apologize for is the fact that I am coming here a little late in the day, pretty close to the end of the year and, obviously, I had to try to make it here before the end of the year, if not, it would have had very little value.

I am also glad I brought it towards the end of the year, because it reminded me, on more than one occasion, that I do have a budget to write. It reminded me of that merely because the debate was slowly slipping into a budget debate. We were hearing about the paving of the savannah and whether I had provided funds for the paving of the savannah and we were hearing about the textbook issue.

Maybe, Mr. President, we must find some way to let these very topical issues be aired, not so much because it cannot be entertained under the Standing Orders—and I certainly appreciate your rulings on all of this—but it simply means that there is a very crying need for information. Maybe, we ourselves as part of Government have to look at it and see whether we are not starving the nation of critical information and, therefore, have a need to find a way to get the information across in a more orderly and a more sober manner, because this is certainly one of the most sober ways that we can discuss issues that are considered to be extremely paramount and topical.

I certainly enjoyed the comments being made and I am glad that we had an opportunity for a, sort of, dress rehearsal for the budget debate. I am glad I gave you the opportunity to start getting your debating skills in tune and I hope that I will be able to answer as many of the questions which were raised without myself being ruled out of order.

I imagine that as Minister of Finance, it cannot be an easy task trying to meet the expectations of people. There was no greater example of that than what happened last week Thursday when we were meeting here. Suddenly we were pitched into darkness—there goes that word “pitch” again. *[Laughter]* We do not seem to be able to avoid the word—and I remember making a joke with my colleague, the Minister of National Security, by saying, “Joe, you better smile because I would not know whether you are still sitting next to me”. *[Laughter]* It

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was that dark. I thought then that, here I am, coming to ask Parliament for \$2.5 million, which I understand is precisely the amount of money they are going to need if they had to get a generator. Therefore, I am being given the unfortunate choice: should I provide for a generator or should I provide for the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association? Maybe we should cancel the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Conference and buy a generator? Then, when you do that, we will now have back up electricity in the event of a failure. But suppose there is no failure for the next two years? We would not have had the benefit of a Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Conference in Trinidad and Tobago, and we would have a stand-by generator sitting there for two years literally lying idle.

As Minister of Finance, I am now given the other task. Should I not invest that \$2.5 million to ensure that the supply of electricity is uninterrupted in Trinidad and Tobago? Would it not be better served then, rather than buying a stand-by generator for one building?

I give you all this because there is always emergencies which will arise that people will have to deal with one way or the other. Some people take actions that other people may consider worthwhile or subject to admiration; other people criticize it because they think they are a little too impulsive, a little too—I am not sure if I can find the words to describe it. Today, I kept hearing that Mr. John—who is a friend of mine, I want to admit—who, I know, might have considered in his mind that he had a pending emergency and he dealt with it how he thought he should deal with it.

On sober reflection, I am not going to add to the debate. I do not think—and I am saying this, because as I said, I know the gentleman very well—he never meant to embarrass the two ministers, I do not think he meant to embarrass the Prime Minister or the Government. I think he had a task in front of him and, if it is one thing we can admire, is the fact that, at least, he did not sit on his hands, as other people have been known to do. He may not have done an action that we could all—and I use that word “all” deliberately—say is correct. As I said, some people may admire him, some people may accept the action, some people may ask a lot of questions about it, and we are entitled to all of that. What I have to say, is the one thing I can share with a great deal of assurance, it was never his intent to embarrass the Ministers of Culture and Gender Affairs; Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources; or the Government.

I say that in his defence because I myself have had a couple discussions with him. I certainly share the concerns you have raised Sen. Prof. Spence, with

respect to his action, the fact that he has not consulted with me, the fact that he literally preempted me! If he has gone ahead and committed the Government, as the Minister of Finance I may have no choice but to honour that commitment. But, as I said, having had a chat with him, having understood that it was not done to embarrass me or any other Minister, I think I have no choice but to try to find the best possible solution to his actions. I know you have raised a number of—

Sen. Prof. Spence: Given what you have said, would it not have been appropriate for some apology to be made to the Ministers? We do not have the situation in Trinidad and Tobago, unfortunately, but the best apology would have been to offer his resignation. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. The Hon. B. Kuei Tung: Again, Sen. Prof. Spence, I am not going to sit here in judgment of it. I accept that people think differently, and the one thing I could tell you about myself, I admire everybody's opinion. I admire it in the sense that I do not think that any one of us could sit here and say we have a monopoly on knowledge and, therefore, we have a responsibility to listen to everyone.

That is why I said that even though this is a money bill, I certainly take very careful consideration of every comment that is made. That is why, when I stand I make sure I give as much as I can in terms of information I have available to me.

Unfortunately, today's debate was a little short and many of the points that were raised, I, myself, may not be able to provide, but I will undertake that in reviewing the *Hansard*, if there is anything I would have missed I will be happy to supply at a later stage.

I spoke to Sen. Montano, he told me he had to leave because of very pressing matters. Some of the points that he had raised, I discussed with him at lunch, and I do not know if it is very necessary for me to talk about it. I did want to correct one notion, though. He raised the question that I seemed to be running, post-haste, to sell off what is now known as National Enterprises Limited to balance the budget. I want to remind Senators that when I presented the estimates, we indicated that we were going to have certain divestments made, the proceeds were about \$600 million at the time. We indicated that the assets we were going to sell—one of them, incidentally, was going to be Tringen, because Tringen is an ammonia plant and I am glad that he supported, at least, my thinking that we have no right, as Government, managing ammonia plants. I mean, governments do not manage plants very well, as you know. It was part of my thinking. We have found a different approach.

So I want to say first that we budgeted the divestment proceeds coming in, and those divestment proceeds were meant to help support the capital projects, part of which I am dealing with today. I had provided capital projects to the tune of TT \$1 billion, I think, and therefore, they were being financed by the sale of—as he called it—one asset or one family asset with another asset, which would have been roads, bridges, schools and so forth. Therefore, we are not, as a policy, pursuing the sale or divestment of assets for the purpose of meeting—as he called it—living expenses.

On the contrary, we do not do that. Our approach is to sell these things off in order to finance the PSIP or the development of capital programmes.

I spoke to Sen. Rev. Teelucksingh as well, because he did raise a point and I knew that he may have misunderstood what I was doing with respect to the Government bonds. These are not new Government bonds. I could not very well get \$69 million in Government bonds, or the host of Government bonds that I have shown here, out of the money I am asking for from Parliament today.

The problem has been the question of the way we manage the debt servicing. In one case we budget based upon an anticipated rate of interest. Now we have a mix of Government bonds. Some are based on mixed rates, meaning that we are committed to pay a specific rate of interest, in some cases it could be 9 per cent, 10 per cent and so forth. There are others that are known as floating rate notes. What we mean is that when these loans—and many of these loans, incidentally, are 8, 10, 12 years old—were negotiated, they were negotiated by the Government and lender on the basis that the rate would change based upon how the prime rate moves. So if the prime rate went up, then the rate of interest at the cost to the Government went up; if the rate went down, similarly the rate followed whatever the prime rate did. Some of them are expressed as 2½ and 3 per cent below the prime rate, and when that rate changes, then we obviously could not have anticipated any dramatic change in the costs.

3.20 p.m.

It is not that all our loans are like that and, therefore, when Sen. Montano asked me, I felt—as an off the cuff—that we are probably paying approximately 13.5 per cent all toll. Some you pay less than 13.5 per cent and some you pay as high as 15.5 per cent; depending on the rate of prime and the rate that is negotiated on that particular loan.

So that I wanted to assure Sen. Teelucksingh, even in his absence, that we were not issuing health bonds as he saw it there. Instead, we were merely

indicating that we had to service those health bonds. If my memory serves me correct, I think that \$69 million, as a matter of fact, might have been negotiated by the previous administration, when they built Arima and I think they upgraded the San Fernando General Hospital. I think the proceeds were used for those two projects. It is not a new bond, it is an old bond and that might have been one that was negotiated on a floating rate basis.

Both Sen. Alfred and Sen. Shabazz asked about the \$9 million agricultural loan. Let me correct the notion: it is not in the strictest sense, a technical expertise loan for agriculture. Parts of this loan and the conditionality was based upon—you would not believe it—land use and land distribution and the technical expertise was to decide again, a policy on land use and land distribution.

If I have to take any blame for part of this, as to why it was delayed, is because I am one of those who in Cabinet insisted that there have been so many studies done in Trinidad and Tobago, for land use and land distribution, I could not see the need as to why another loan was negotiated to do another study, for land use and land distribution. Incidentally, the last land use and land distribution study was done by the University of Wisconsin or something like that in 1990/1991, and they were coming here to do another study. Well, we tried to renegotiate the matter and what I am told now, is not that they are going to do another study but to give us an implementation plan as to how to implement the last study that was done. So we have now, a full implementation plan and that got slowed down a bit and, therefore, we could not have done it.

It is really not for the technical expertise for direct agriculture, although, I imagine agriculture would still benefit from it. The reason it is in the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources is that in those days we had Lands and Settlements under the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources. We have kept it there for the purposes of the loan but it is still going ahead and, basically, we have a sort of joint effort between the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources and the Ministry of Housing and Settlements to get these matters done quickly. So I hope I really tell you why...*[Laughter]* I understand that contracts were awarded last month and they are foreign consultants, and they are going to give us an implementation plan to do some of these studies.

Sen. Dr. Mc Kenzie, I am going to tread on a bit dangerous ground now. I do not think that this Government wants to court any form of confrontation with Tobago or the Tobago House of Assembly. As a matter of fact, we would welcome the opportunity to work with the Tobago House of Assembly for the good and betterment of the people of Tobago. I have said this publicly before that we have

no intention of starving Tobago of funds. Maybe you are right, that the time has come, when some sort of public discussion has to be made, where we can sit and the people can talk about their problems. I would welcome an opportunity to go to Tobago—even before the budget—and listen to the expectations and the aspirations of the people of Tobago, but I cannot sit and think that I am going there to negotiate with the Tobago House of Assembly. The Tobago House of Assembly—let me assure you—like every other ministry, has the same problems with me. I do not print or create money. I manage the money that forms the resources of Trinidad and Tobago and I have to do it within the context of priorities.

You heard my first set of statements being, that if I have \$2.5million to be given, I could give it to the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association; to buy a generator for the Parliament, or Trinidad and Tobago Electricity Commission, so that I ensure that they do not have power interruptions. Which one should I give it do? There are three different people and they all want the same thing and, if I decide which one I am going to give it to, obviously, I would please one and displease two, and that is how it would always be.

I have had continuous discussions with the Tobago House of Assembly. Sen. Alfred asked why there was nothing here for Tobago House of Assembly and it is simple. At the time of May 31, when the review was being done the Tobago House of Assembly did not ask for additional funds. I understand that since that they have asked for additional funds. I come here, as I said, on the eve of the end of the year and it is regrettable that I am not in a position to do that now. I will have to see if I could improve on the allocations for Tobago in the next budget. But I want to close by saying, that I assure you that no confrontation is necessary or is being courted by us.

Sen. Shabazz asked me a couple questions about the Ministry of National Security and so forth. The Ministry of National Security has asked us for money for two areas: one was they did not provide in their ministry for an increase in the National Insurance contributions and this has gone up. So, we had to go and find money for them to pay—I think it was approximately \$4 million to \$5 million more—in national insurance contributions for your good friends, the police, regiment and so forth. I think there were some other moneys that they needed with respect to some other loans they were negotiating for equipment and so forth.

As I said, I hope I was able to address all of the issues that were raised by the hon. Senators today, and I want to thank them very much for the contributions they have made. I want to assure the Senators that Government is listening very

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carefully to the comments that have been raised and I am sure that we would be able to find solutions to meet the expectations of everyone here.

Mr. President, with these few words, I beg to move that a Bill to supplement and vary the appropriation of the sum of the issue of which was authorized by the Appropriation Act 1998/1999 be now read a second time.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a second time.

The Minister of Finance (Sen. The Hon. Brian Kuei Tung): Mr. President, in accordance with Standing Order 63, I beg to move that the Bill not be committed to a committee of the whole Senate.

Question put and agreed to.

Question proposed, That the Bill be read a third time and passed.

Bill accordingly read a third time and passed.

ADJOURNMENT

The Minister of Finance (Sen. The Hon. Brian Kuei Tung): Mr. President, let me just indicate before proposing the adjournment, that we are adjourning a little early today, in order to accommodate the parliamentary staff, so that they can prepare for the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Meetings. I do look forward very much to meeting you during these meetings.

Mr. President, with these words, I beg to move that the Senate do now adjourn to a date to be fixed.

Question put and agreed to.

Senate adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 3.30 p.m.